

Lesson 22 – 1 John

3:16-18

Intro: John continues to draw on the “Farewell Discourse” of Jesus (John 13-16), now discussing the radical nature of love

Love is Immoderate

Christ gives the definition of love in John 15:13 as giving one’s life for another, then goes on to exemplify this definition in his death on our behalf (1 John 3:16)

The very idea that Christ “laid down his life for us” has major implications:

1. Our lives were at risk – it is impossible to die in someone’s stead if they weren’t already in jeopardy of death.
2. His life was not at risk – It is impossible to die in someone’s stead if you were already going to die.

Even the idea that Christ died for us carries in it the weight of our guilt and the glory of Christ’s sinless righteousness.

Christ demonstrated his love not by asking what it would take to rescue us, but by emptying himself entirely.

“As Cain has been given as the supreme example of hate, Christ is presented as the supreme example of love. A person’s life is his most precious possession.

Consequently, to rob him of it is the greatest sin we can commit against him, while to give one’s own life on his behalf is the greatest possible expression of love for him. This, then, is the ultimate contrast: Cain’s hatred issued in murder, Christ’s love in self-sacrifice.” – John Stott, *The Letters of John*

Lakeview Christian Center
School of the Word
1st John
Nick Missios

Love is Imitative

Christ's death: Substitutionary vs.
Exemplary

Did Christ die in as our substitute or to serve as an example to be imitated?

For John, the dichotomy makes no sense: In one verse (3:16), he affirms both positions "he laid down his life for us" and "we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."

Christ's death for us is more than exemplary, but not less than exemplary

"And Love must reproduce in us what it was and did in Him. If we have, so to say, a drop of the blood of Jesus Christ in our veins, we are under bond and pledge, whensoever the call comes to us, to manifest our Love in the same way of uttermost sacrifice. For, though to think of Christ's Love to us, and then to think after what fashion it may be repeated in our relations to our fellow-men, is to compare the infinite with the infinitesimal—the sun with a flickering candle; yet, as light is light whether in the candle or the sun, as it has the same properties and the same laws of action, so Love is Love whether in Christ or in us. Our lives must exhibit the same properties, obey the same spiritual laws, must be built upon the same ground-plan, as that Life of which the Cross was the perfect expression. This is the test of our union with Him and of our Divine sonship in Him." – Robert Law, *The Tests of Life*

Love is Individual

v. 17 – But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

It is much easier to love everyone than it is to love someone

Lakeview Christian Center
School of the Word
1st John
Nick Missios

Who is my brother?

v. 14 – “We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers”

v. 15 – “Everyone who hates is brother is a murderer”

v. 16 – “we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers”

The clearest answer: the church

John has been clearly drawing a line delineating two groups: children of God and children of the devil (see v. 10)

John’s use of family imagery makes clear that those who are called into Christ are spiritual siblings

What about those who are not my brother?

Am I only obligated to sacrificially love my brothers and sisters in Christ?

The church visible vs. invisible

Romans 5:8 – But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us

Our sacrificial love will never atone for the sins of another, but it could be the light that draws them to the one who can

Love is Incarnate

A curious question: “Do you love your wife?”

John makes a point of highlighting practical, material means of loving others

v. 17 – ‘But if anyone has the world’s goods...’

John is explicitly contrasting hollow, sentimental, cheap “love” with real, demonstrated, costly love.

The post-Roe Church