

11/3/26

1 John 3:11-24
Well, several people have reached out to say they're praying for Tim to get better. I really appreciate that. He's getting better. No fever for about a week now. His energy just seems to be slow to come back. Praying he recovers more each day. I hope you and your family are doing well!!!!

Blessings,
Jonna

I don't think I can go very far in scripture without seeing that God wants me to walk so as to please Him. What pleases Him will ultimately satisfy me, because everything that pleases God is good and perfect. The thing that pleases the Lord above all things… and in fact, I cannot please Him without this… is love. God wants me to love Him and others more and more. There is no limit to His love, so there needs to be no limit to mine. He's the source of my love. 1 John 3:11-24 gives me understanding of what this love does and doesn't look like.

Vs. 11 reminds that this command to love has been from the beginning ~ "For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."

This love is "agape" love. It's supernatural, divine, sacrificial, unconditional, unfailing, tender, affectionate love. I'm not just called to direct that kind of love to the Lord who loves me with perfect agape love. I'm also called to direct that love to others regardless of how well they love me.

Vs. 12-13 speaks of the opposite of that love found in Adam and Eve's son, Cain ~ "We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you."

Where does hatred of people come from? The evil one. The devil. He hates and because Cain

was "of" him, he hated. Cain hated and murdered simply because he resented Abel's righteousness. Abel did nothing wrong to Cain.

The world hates God like Cain hated Abel… and he hated God. The gift Cain offered to God was not an act of worship, and instead of being grieved over his own sin when God saw through his offering, he decided to take out the "competition." But there is no competition between people who love the Lord. God receives EVERY gift that's offered to Him in genuine love, big or small.

The world is like Cain. The world is of the devil. The world hates those who love God.

When I was 15, I got the female lead in our school musical. Someone who I considered a friend wanted that role, though I didn't know it. She started treating me really badly when I got the role. I was so confused. I didn't know why she was mad at me. I went to her and asked her what I did to offend her, and she said that was supposed to be HER role. The crazy thing is, I had no power over her getting the role. That was the decision of the director. But that's what we do. Instead of recognizing the sovereignty of God, we resent the people who stand in our way. That's the way of the world, not the Lord.

I could judge my friend for being mad at me, but how many times have I inwardly done the same thing to other people, resenting them for having what I wanted? Amy Carmichael says in her book, IF, "If I covet any place on earth but the dust at the foot of the Cross, then I know nothing of Calvary love." O Lord, let me not look like Cain in any way!!! Help me to trust Your sovereign plan!

Vs. 14 helps me understand what it looks like to not be like Cain, to not be living in the darkness of death, but in the light of life ~ "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death."

The evidence that I truly belong to the Lord is found in how I treat others… with love. This is sobering, and I praise God that He doesn't expect my love for others to start out perfectly at the moment I'm saved. But He does expect the evidence to grow. If someone has claimed to be a believer for years and years but there's no evidence of "agape" love, there's a good chance that person's faith is in word, but not in truth. O Lord, I pray that I will no longer try to be as close as I can to the darkness of death without actually being there… but that I'll see it for what it really is… hatred, evil, hostile to You.

The truth is, according to vs. 15 ~ "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

Hatred is murder… murder of relationship. Hatred is evidence of a life that dwells in death and not eternal life. O Lord, let that be repulsive to me! Let me RUN from that!

But what does genuine love look like? What is the tangible evidence of love? Vs. 16-18 explain ~ "By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for

the brothers. 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? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

Jesus is my example. He literally gave up His rights and laid down His life for me. Honestly, I think this is hard to follow, and my flesh is tempted to ignore it. I can't love ALL people like this unless the Spirit works this in me. My job is to let Him, not to make it happen in myself. I do this by keeping my eyes fixed on Him and asking Him to work this in me.

What does it look like for me to lay my life down for others? Open my eyes to see their needs and, if I have the resources to help, then help them. This doesn't mean I enable them to be lazy. This is about seeing their NEED. This is about opening my heart to them and loving them, not just with my words, but with my actions. Being apathetic to the needs of others is not love.

Jesus modeled this during His three years of ministry. He healed the sick and fed the hungry. He had compassion on the hurting. Jesus even cared for those who didn't care for Him. Do I? O Lord, please make it so!!!

Sometimes as a believer I can feel a lot of shame. I have often lived with a cloud of shame over my heart. I'm so thankful that God is removing that shame from me, but I see that He has a way for me not to condemn my heart. I see this in vs. 19-20 ~ "By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before Him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and He knows everything."

By what shall I know that I'm of the truth and reassure my heart? By loving Him and others with His supernatural, divine agape love. My heart may condemn me for the fact that I fail, but when I'm seeking His pleasure and growing in love, He reassures my heart that I belong to Him. He's greater than my heart. His love is greater than my failures. 1 John 2:1 says that He's my Advocate. 1 John 1:9 says He forgives me and cleanses me from my unrighteous thoughts and actions when I confess them to Him in repentance. He reassures my heart that the cross covers ALL my sin.

I am so thankful that God is greater than my heart!!! My heart is deceitful above all things, as it says in Jeremiah 17:9, but God is greater than my heart and He frees me from the deception!

So as I walk with the Lord, seeking to please Him, loving others tangibly as Jesus loves me, vs. 21-24 tells me that there's even more hope from Him for my heart ~ "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him. And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us. Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

The thing that takes away my own condemnation of my heart and replaces it with confidence is walking and loving as Jesus loves. When I have that confidence, I can know that the Lord answers my prayers with a yes. Wow. That's a big statement. That definitely needs to be understood in context…

Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourselves in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."

John 15:7 says, "If you abide in Me (Jesus) and My word abides in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you."

This is what I need to remember. God wants me to obey Him, please Him, delight in Him, abide in Him, and let His word abide in me. Why are these the conditions He sets for me to receive His gifts? If I'm not delighting in Him and seeking to please and obey Him, the things I ask for will actually be bad for me. He will say, "I love you too much to say yes to that, even though you really want it and don't understand." The thing I'm asking for may not be a bad thing, but if I'm asking from a selfish, rebellious heart (whether I want to see that or not), it will be a bad thing for me.

God wants to bless me more than I want to be blessed. That's hard for me to see because sometimes I'm blinded by my limited perspective and not trusting His infinite, wise perspective. God never withholds good from His kids.

I need to see myself with the Lord the way I see toddlers. Sometimes they want something so bad that they throw a tantrum when they don't get it. But the parents who love them understand that getting what they want in that moment will hurt them. The toddlers don't understand, but the parents do. I may say, "Yes, but I'm an adult. I think more clearly than a toddler." Maybe… or maybe not. No matter how clearly I think, the Lord knows better.

So my delight, my focus needs to be to obey Him and please Him. What does that look like? Believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another. Let all my feelings, desires, and choices bow to Jesus because He's my Savior. Let His love pour through me to others.

If I'm asking God to help me show my faith in Jesus and my love for others in a tangible way, do I really believe God will be stingy with His answer? God LOVES to say YES to a prayer like that.

Here is the beautiful treasure He gives me as I seek to please and obey Him… God abides in me. He dwells in me. I abide and dwell in Him. The evidence that God and I are one with each other is that God gives me the Holy Spirit to seal me, dwell in me, transform me, teach me, lead me, sanctify me, help me understand the things freely given to me from the Lord, and pour the love of God into my heart. I cannot outgive God. Whatever I offer to Him is a drop in the ocean compared to what He lavishes on me. If I will just choose to walk with Him, seek to

please Him, obey Him, love Him, and love others… I will get to find out how true this is.

Lord, I know You're working this in me. I'm watching as You change me from one degree of glory to the next. I'm watching as You grow my love for others. I'm seeing the sweet gifts You give as I learn this. What astounds me is that You don't wait for me to have it down perfectly. You give me grace upon grace and unending mercy with patience as You work with my heart to make me holy like You. Please continue this work in me that I might seek to please You and love others more and more. Amen.