

What you have heard from the beginning.  
1<sup>st</sup> John 3:10-24

Responsive: Proverbs 3:1-8  
John 14:8-21  
Ephesians 2:1-10

1<sup>st</sup> John 3:1-10

This week here in chapter 3 John puts forth one of these tests of faith that I mentioned during the introduction. The 3 tests that he sets forth are Doctrine, Obedience and Love. In the beginning of this letter he set forth the doctrine that he works through out this writing. The humanity, and deity of Christ has been his focus through out this book. He argues that the incarnation, is a central doctrinal belief, so much so that if you deny it then he says you are anti-christ, against Christ and if you are against the Son, then you are against the Father.

John said, those who abide with the Son, also abide with the Father. Just as we read this morning in the Gospel of John, Philip asked to see the Father, Jesus response was “ Have I been with you so long and yet you still have not known me? He who has seen me as seen the Father” I think this maybe exactly what John is pointing to here when he talks about having fellowship together with the Father and the Son. Jesus goes on to say, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? Now looking at what John wrote in chapter 1:2,

“The life { Jesus Christ } was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.” Interesting little side note here, notice that John uses the term Eternal Life when talking about Jesus. “That eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us” if we go over to chapter 2, verse 24, “Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us- Eternal life.”

Now maybe this is just a wild tangent here, the commentaries did not make any mention of this, but as I was reading this it appears to go hand in hand. Verse 2 in chapter 1 is referring to Christ, and in chapter 2 is doing the same. Christ is the eternal life, promised from the beginning which is granted to us by abiding in him, and if we are abiding with him, we are also abiding in the father who promises that his children, those who abide in him, will inherit the promised land.

Ok, back to my point, verse 3, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. This is all just one big beautiful bouquet, We have these past weeks looked at the different flowers, but now looking at it all together as a whole, each part and each piece working together to create something profoundly beautiful. God the Father, sending his son to pay the price of our sin on the cross so that we maybe his children and heirs with Christ in whom we abide in, who our life is hidden in, in which we have fellowship with, and because of that we have fellowship not only with Christ but with the Father, such fellowship that we may now come to the throne and seek forgiveness, wisdom, peace, and understanding.

One of the biggest joys I have had now that I have been preaching, is seeing a bigger picture of scripture, and of God. Sure I would read the bible, but I wouldn't READ the bible. Going more in depth, being more immersed in scripture has truly been exciting to see more how each and everything links together.

This book has been both a book of encouragement and challenge. These tests that he puts forth work in God's people reassurance and peace but to those who may have deceived themselves, asking them to examine their lives, their hearts to see where they stand and if they meet these qualifications that John sets forth of a true Son can be quite the challenge and maybe even discouraging to some. But they are necessary, and as I have said before they may even be more necessary today than in recent history with the trend we see with in the so called christian society we live in today. A call, and a challenge for truth, and conviction instead of empty encouragement, and hollow spirituality.

These 3 tests that John puts forth here I think honestly become increasingly more difficult and strike further, and closer to the heart with each one. The test of doctrine, may not be that hard for some one to think they pass if they have been raised with in a solid bible teaching church. Having a good biblical understanding, and solid doctrinal belief....yet it may be just that, knowledge and understanding without true belief. There have been many reports of ministers, scholars, and professors, who have left the faith, who have studied, have taught and now deny scripture. So just passing John's test of doctrine here does not get you in the clear..you haven't made it yet.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> test which we looked at a few weeks back, the test of obedience, strikes a bit deeper than the first. You may know what scripture says, but do you do it? True faith is more than words, true faith is action, it is vibrancy, it is a life lead by the spirit who seeks spiritual things. God's children obey his word because they know that they owe God everything. They seek righteousness, and purity not for righteousness sake, not because they want to be a good person, but because God has made them so.

That is why this test strikes even close to home, it helps to weed out the fakers, the self deceived, because what they do, does not line up with what they say. Instead of obedience, we see rebellion. I think of the big problem churches have today, the bleeding of the youth from the faith. They are raised in the church, only to when they go off to college to leave it behind yet cling onto the words, claiming Christ, yet not living in obedience toward him. I am sorry, but I think those who are looking at this mass exodus of college age people from the church are looking at it all wrong. This is not christian people backsliding, these are non-christians going into the life they desire to live.

John says, those who walk in the light as he is in the light have fellowship with one another and the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin, but if we claim to have fellowship with him and walk in darkness we lie, and do not practice the truth. This is a scary thing, John is not messing around here when he challenge us in our obedience. You either obey, or rebel, it is an either or, not a together both. I really can't stress this enough, because I see it all the time...your belief in God is more than you say it is...it is your LIFE! It is not only what you say, it is what you do! Do you forsake the gathering of believers? Do you find other things to do then to be in fellowship with God's children when they gather?

This fellowship is such a blessed, wonderful thing. John says they left us because they were never a part of us to begin with. That is the problem the churches are faced with in this mass exodus of our kids, they were never really a part of us to begin with. I think that the church has failed our children being more interested in keeping them entertained and so called engaged instead of giving them the gospel they so desperately need. This test of obedience is a hard one, it cuts right to the heart. As a parent which teenagers this is on my mind daily. I would be lying if I said I was not concerned for them, for their lives, and for their souls as they are growing ever closer to becoming adults, who will be making their own mistakes, dealing with those consequences and working out this test of obedience when faced with the temptations of this world, to see for themselves if they may have true faith.

In the account we read this morning Christ said those who love him will keep his commandments. Those who love him, will be obedient, they will abide in him. This second test that we find here truly does strike deeper than the first test of doctrine. You can understand and have been taught right doctrine and have a certain knowledge of it and yet be disobedient and rebellious in your life. Even if you can recite and articulate good and sound doctrinal belief, if your life shows that of rebellion against God then your doctrinal beliefs mean nothing. Also reversely, you may show a holy, devout life style yet deny Christ. This series of tests that John has put here is not a best 2 out of 3 for a passing grade. The reality is if you don't pass all 3 tests then you probably have a problem and need to reassess your claims.

That brings us to our passage today. Let's read starting in chapter 3:10. We will be focusing here at the 3<sup>rd</sup> test of true faith that John challenges his readers with, which is the test of Love. In verse 10 he says, This is how we know who are the children of God, and who are the children of the Devil. He continues here saying that who ever is righteous, if one is obedient to God he is a child of God, and not only that, but he who loves his brother is a child of God. So simply put, if you have right doctrine, and you appear to live a life of obedience, yet you do not love your brother, or sister in Christ then you are not a child of God.

He continues on and says that the message we should love one another isn't something new, it isn't a new concept, it isn't a new thing that he is teaching but rather it is something we have heard from the beginning. This message of brotherly love, is central to John's teaching. This is what he has been building up to. As we have seen, these tests have become increasingly more challenging. This final test, strikes right to the core and center of faith. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 13:1.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophesy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind, love does not envy, love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

This message we have heard from the beginning, that John focus's on here is from the teachings of Jesus himself, recorded in the gospel of John 13:34 and 35 when he says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” He doesn't say they will know you are his disciples because you observe the Sabbath, or hold to any certain political ideology, he simply says the world will know you are a Christian because of your love.

This is the hardest of the 3 tests because in reality this is impossible for all of us to achieve. We are unable, and incapable of expressing and sharing the kind of love that Paul wrote about in Corinthians on our own. It goes against our very nature. This is a supernatural love only granted to us by God's grace. We love him, because he first loved us, and only through him and his love can we truly love our brothers and sisters, and not only that but extend it out to our neighbors, our coworkers, and even strangers.

In verse 12 we see John uses Cain as the opposite example. Continuing from verse 11, he says “We are to love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous, do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.” John is reminding us that even though we may be hated by the world, we are still to love and not return anger for anger, and hatred for hatred. Cain stands as an example of the sinful world here, Cain hated his brother because of his righteousness, just as the world hates us because of our righteousness,

So, with this in mind, I ask the question...does the world hate you? As Paul wrote, we are to strive to be peaceable to all men, yet we will still find those who hate us because of Christ. If we have not ever felt this hatred we need to ask ourselves if our lives truly are reflecting what we are claiming.

Verse 14, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren” Our love for the fellowship of believers is an assurance to us of a true and valid faith. It is proof of a resurrected life, of one who has passed from death to life. This resurrected life is something that we enjoy today. Ephesians 2 that we read this morning, verse 4 and 5, But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, has made us alive together with Christ.

This fellowship we have, is the fellowship of a resurrected life, of a life that is not our own but a life hidden in Christ for God. It is because of this new life, that we are able to have this type of fellowship together around the throne of God, it is because of this new life that we are able to love one another, not as the world loves, but as Christ loves. For this very reason John says here in verse 14, who ever does not love his brother abides in death. They are not in the resurrected life, but are instead still dead. It is just another way of saying that are outside of Christ, they are false, they are unbelievers.

John explains why hating your brother is such an unforgivable act, he says in verse 15, Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know this to be true because of what Jesus taught on what we know as the sermon on the mount. Matthew 5:21, Jesus says, “ You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment, but I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment, and whoever says to his brother Raca shall be in danger of the council, but who ever says You Fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”

Someone who has the love of Christ working in them, and through them will love their brothers and sisters for they too shall see Christ whom they love reflecting in them also. Skipping over a bit, to chapter 4:20, If someone says I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen. This can be a challenging pill for us to swallow, it is against our human nature to love another unconditionally, as we love ourselves. Yet that is exactly what scripture says God's children must do, and not only must do, but according to John here.. will do, for this love is a test, a mark of true faith.

John Stott wrote, “ Great stress is laid in the New Testament on love as the pre-eminent christian virtue, it is the first fruit of the spirit, the sign of the reality of faith, and the greatest of the three abiding Christian graces, which never ends, and without it we are nothing.

So it is pretty apparent that this love that John is talking about here, is not a flippant use of the word. We use the word love a lot today in our society, we love our house, our car, or we love eating grilled hamburgers. We know the term love largely to represent emotion, and feeling but what John is

talking about here is beyond that. For truly if it was just a feeling, or emotion, it too would change like all of the others. We would love one day, and no love the next, but that is not the case here.. this Love is an abiding, stable, lasting love that does not seek its own, but rather seeks for the benefit of others.

This love, this brotherly love that is a mark of our faith, is a self sacrificing love. That is how even though we are hated, we are still to love. This can be the hardest thing for us to do, it is difficult to have patience, and display kindness to someone who is attacking us, coming at us with anger, our flesh wants to rise to the fight, our flesh wants to beat down the aggressor, but God calls his children to love, even when hated. Christ is our example of this love, he died, for us while we hated him! It is rare that any of us are called to make that sacrifice, to lay down our lives for our enemies, but that is what Christ did, and that is what he tells us to do.

Quickly here I am just going to quote some passages throughout the New Testament, you don't have to turn there. John 15:12 “this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” There we see that Christ is our example, his love, is the love that we are to show toward each, and not only each other, but those who are around us.

Philippians 2:3-8 “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourself. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ. (notice he says that our mind which is in Christ, it is not our natural selfish mind, but our mind that we have now in our new resurrected life in Christ,) Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even on the cross.

Christs example of laying down his life, for us, for those who were enemies, who hated him he died so that they may become children and share in the fellowship with the Father and the Son and abide in the light being made righteous and pure through the blood of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:21 “For this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow his steps.” Christs suffering is an example to us, it shows how deep this love truly is, that we would be willing to suffer for each other, to share one anothers burdens.

And lastly, Romans 15:1-3 “We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproach you fell on me,” We are to seek the needs, and the benefits of others, even to our own cost. One thought that comes to mind when I read this, bearing the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. In light of this love we are called to have toward each other, our brothers and sisters are going to fail us, they may fall into a time where they are not living up to what God commands, but those who are strong, have an obligation to bear with those people, to not please ourselves and respond back in kind as we may desire to, but instead we are to continue in kindness and love,

verse 16, in Chapter 3, of 1<sup>st</sup> John, “BY this we know love, because he laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, but whoever has the worlds goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him.? Interestingly, John uses the plural from brethren in verse 16, and the singular, brother in verse 17. To

Quote Blake White, he says “ the switch from plural to singular is deliberate. IT is easy to say we love the church, without having to give of self in specific ways for specific individuals. Loving everyone may very well be an excuse for loving no one. Love must be prepared to meet the needs of others whatever the cost in self sacrifice. If we are called to lay down our lives for each other, to love as Christ has loved us. How can some one who with holds helping a brother or sister who may be of need claim to love Christ.

Verse 18, My little children, let us not love in word, or in tongue, but in deed and truth, and by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. The word here used for assure is *Peitho*, which occurs 52 times in the new testament and when used it usually means to convince. Which makes more sense here. We must convince, or persuade our hearts when they condemn us, when we are tempted to avoid selfless generosity toward our brothers and sisters. This is how we know we are of the truth, if we convince ourselves to do what would normally be against our nature, and we can do this because God is greater than our heart.

Verse 21, and 22, Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God, And what ever we ask, we receive from Him because we keep his commands and do those things that are pleasing to him. God has given us all that we have, all of our earthly goods are given to us by him, so when we are asked to sacrifice them to help a brother or sister in need we can have confidence that even though we maybe sacrificing and may suffer some because of it, that God will provide what we need, we need only to ask. We can have confidence that God will provide for we are abiding in him, and this is proved out because we obey his commands, and walk in the light as he is in the light.

Lastly, closing out chapter 3, John tell us what God's commands are. Verse 23, And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. Now he who keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the spirit whom he has given us.

The spirit gives us assurance, for it is by the spirit we know that we are abiding in Christ. Paul in the book of Romans explains how the spirit grants assurance. Chapter 8:14 For as many are lead by the spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba Father. The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and join heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together.

The holy spirit which abides in us, This helper whom God has sent after Christs work on the cross ministers to us, guides, convicts, and assures our spirit that we are indeed children of God. These 3 tests that John gives his readers are impossible to do on our own, we need a wisdom that is not our own to understand God's word and to believe right doctrine, we need an obedience that is not our own, to lay aside our rebellion and to follow Christ, and lastly we need a Love that is not our own to be able to put aside our selfishness and love others as Christ has loved us.

Neither of these things are truly possible for man to do on his own, these are not things that you can work on to make yourself holy, but rather they are the mark of a true Christian. Some one who is abiding in Christ will have wisdom to discern false doctrine, they will have obedience to Christ because

they know that they owe Christ everything for he has laid down his life for them. And they will express love to their christian brothers and sisters because the spirit that works in them, can not help but work love toward others who are also abiding in Christ.

I will close today, Quoting Blake White, “Christians are called to walk in love as Christ loved us; we are to seek to please our neighbor because Christ did not please himself; we are to forgive one another even as Christ forgave us; we are to be conformed to the image of his Son, till we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; we are to lay down our lives for our fellow Christians as Christ laid down his life for us; we are to love him because he first loved us; we are to walk in the light as he is in the light; we are called to run looking to Jesus; we are summoned to go outside the camp because Jesus suffered outside the gate. Jesus looked away from his own self interests and to the interest of others. To imitate Jesus is to follow his example of surrendering our own will and desires. That is the life of a Christian, that is what walking in the light, abiding in Christ looks like. Be sure that your faith is true, test yourself with these 3 tests that John gives to know if you really are his.

Repent, and believe, obey, and love, abide in Christ, and walk in the light. Put down your rebellion, your selfishness, arrogance, anger, and pride and come to Christ in whom is every spiritual blessing, in whom there is wisdom, peace, forgiveness, and love.