



Lesson 10 November 14th, 2020

Confident Love

Study Scripture – 1 John 3:11-24

Background Scripture – 1 John 3

Key Verse:

“The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”

1 John 3:24

INTRODUCTION

The most important question on which this Study hinges and which we have to answer as we begin this Study is, who is your Father? Who is your Dad?

In Scripture family connections are most important and so the deepest truths of God are revealed to us in the language of family, parents and children, brothers and sisters.

Believers are named as the children of God because we are given this extremely greatest and unimaginable blessing because we are His Children. This formal declaration of God where God declares that He is our Father and therefore He lavishes His divine love on us, speaks to the inner reality in which we live.

We know however that in our human experience not all fathering involves love and in fact the word father reminds many of hurt, abuse, and disappointment.

But God's love stands in complete opposite to the love that the world speaks about and recognizes. The children of God are guaranteed and they slated for a breathtaking future, a future that the world and the people outside of God would not share. The children of God accordingly therefore will imitate the ways of their Heavenly Father just as children who are loved imitate the ways of their parents. They are generally often like their parents.

John, the Apostle of love makes no bones about his seriousness and he refuses to blur or soft pedal what should be obviously clear to those in the Christian life.

There is no middle ground for those who were born as a captive of death for they will either pass from death to life or remain in death. These are the only two categories. Confident Love will identify those that have life and they will show it by loving their brethren in Christ.

It is most important now for brethren to understand that there are two Fatherhoods. One Fatherhood involves the presence of *light* for God is *light*. All Love and truth is in Him and so there is no error or falsehood.

The other 'fatherhood' involves the Devil, the father of lies and hate. And he is the opposite of truth.

Love and hate, the two most powerful forces in the world today, are the focus of our Study. We are pointed to the confidence that those in Christ have, for they display agape love.

The Apostle John will look at the origins of both of these powerful forces and show us forcibly, that both originate outside of man. This passage dispossesses us of the idea that we in ourselves have the ability to love, or the ability to hate. We are told bluntly that love springs only from God.

John identifies the Devil as the source of hate and analyzes his work beginning in the first family on earth.

Hate is really love which is twisted and centered on a false object, including the self. Everyone who hates is really in the grip of the Devil, the "evil one". The terrible fact is that persons who express hate are the expressing the fact that they are as one writer puts it:
"fallen into the silent remorseless grip of the devil. He is a slave of the devil's will".

The Scriptures provide believers with many benchmarks, mileposts, criteria and tests whereby we can be assured of the certainty of our salvation, of eternal life and of our acceptance in Jesus Christ. This is the source of our confidence for we know that we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us. Invariably the word 'love' is part of these statements and it underlies all the commandments of God.

Jesus Himself provided proof of this in Matthew 22:36-40 when He responded to a question about the greatest commandment in the Law ...*"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

Love then is the defining quality of the people of God in both the Old and New Testaments. Importantly the Bible does not define Love as an attitude or an emotion, but invariably ties it to an act of the will, of self-sacrifice or an act that benefits others. We shall look at the importance of the act, or deed of love, for Love must result in something that a person does or says. It is not simply a warm collection of thoughts and feelings, nor is it an intended or imagined set of actions. It is a deed.

John 3:16 is the quintessential model of true love. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*



Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10).

This is confidence.

John points to three critically important benefits to be derived by believers when love acts, namely:

- It reassures a doubting heart.
- It gives boldness and effectiveness to prayer.
- It demonstrates that a person's life is guided and filled by the Spirit

Writing in his first epistle, the Apostle employs the fail-safe tests of 'love for the brethren', law abiding and sin hating obedience to separate true believers from the false. Note that the three areas he highlights are inextricably intertwined. His arguments typically revolve around 'love' and are mainly presented by way of sharp contrasts. The Apostle sees only "night" and "day" and no twilight.

He establishes two diametrically opposed poles which are represented as Cain and Abel, Jesus versus the Devil, righteousness versus lawlessness, eternal life and death, sin against obedience and love for the brethren versus hate.

John would have his readers expect the same hate from Cain's posterity as Cain himself exhibited. He points out that Cain was a tool of the Devil and lawlessness, sin, death and hate are the things that define the Devil and those who are his children. The Apostle's words are reminiscent of Jesus' own words as He addressed the Pharisees in John 8:44;
*Ye are of your **father** the **devil**, and the lusts of your **father** ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the **father** of it.*

Conversely Jesus' character is seen in His sinless-ness and Love for the brethren, in that He sacrificed His life on their behalf. His children are similarly identified: by their love for the brethren in practical terms, by righteousness and their possession of eternal life.

The lines between the two groups are so clear-cut, there is no chance of one being mistaken for the other. Consequently the Apostle has no difficulty pasting the labels and neither should we. We know if we love the brethren! A person who claims to be a Christian but does not habitually practice righteousness and love is no Christian at all.

Note that while John uses an 'either' 'or' approach, he is not dealing with perfection but rather with the bent of our lives. For he says: *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 1 John 2:1. (See also 1 John 1:8, 1 John 1:10).*

John faced a situation where believers were being influenced by some false teachers that had left the church but who were still trying to influence the congregation to deny Christ (2:15-23).



His readers needed to be reassured that they had indeed embraced the truth; namely that Christ had come in the flesh. John emphatically assures his audience of this truth and of the fact that Jesus Christ is the only access to the Father and eternal life. An acceptance of this truth will result in confident belief in Him and a confident response of love for one another. The love John speaks of is grounded in the love that Jesus demonstrated in the sacrifice of His own life for the brethren.

Our natural state is that of selfishness, to love one's self, to look-out for and be only concerned with one's own interest. Love for the brethren shows evidence of the change which must take place when we become Christians, when we are no longer in our natural state. Are we doing what is righteous and loving the brethren? This is the criterion for those who are Christians, as far as the Apostle is concerned.

In our section of Study John points to two things that mark out the child of God: righteousness and love. Verses 1 through 9 deals with righteousness while 11 through 24 focus on love. Verse 10 is a transition verse. Note the connection, love for other Christians flows naturally from a state of righteousness.

'Love for the brethren' is the defining mark of a Christian, as is so often seen in the Scriptures. Romans 5:5 *...the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost...* The love God places in our hearts will transmit itself to others as Paul told the Thessalonians: *But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another,* (1 Thess. 4:9). There will be occasions when we will not love one another, but the habit of our lives will be to love each other.

(See John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17, 19).

Interestingly many present-day believers tie their salvation to a memorable experience or event that happened at a particular time in their lives. John on the other hand says that love for the brethren is the basis for one's confidence that they have *passed from death unto life*. Clearly in the Apostle's mind, love for the brethren is the ultimate test that one is 'saved' and is the basis of our assurance in Christ.

Love for the brethren is commanded and enjoined on all believers. It is not merely a duty; it is proof of true Christianity.

The Apostle uses very strong language and sharp applications to drive home his point about the imperative of love and its practical out-working in the lives of Christian. While the secessionists would have been unmasked by John's epistle, readers today must apply the test of 'love for the brethren' to themselves and draw their own conclusions.

He provides not only assurance but comfort in the inevitable struggles that believers experience with their consciences. He says God is greater than our conscience.

John delivers a first-hand, eye-witness account of the commands of our Lord; let us appropriate the message and make the proper applications to our own lives as we study the text.



THE TEXT

We recall that John has been posing several tests which would reveal what we are like as individuals. There is a doctrinal test which is simple, and which asks whether one believes that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. This involves the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Messianic King as expounded in the Old Testament Scriptures, the God-man, a divine person with a human nature. This doctrinal belief means of course that we are in the light and not in darkness.

The second test is the “moral test” and this is discussed in chapter 2:3. This is the moral test of obedience which all believers must face up to. John states: ***And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments***”.

The third test is the “social test” and this one is difficult also for the test is loving the brethren and loving one another. Verse 10 explains: ***In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever loveth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth is not his brother***”.

Our study therefore looks at the “social test”.

Verses 1-3 extol with wonder, the boundless extent of the blessings of the love of God for His people.

Verses 4-10 talk about sin and the ‘child of God’ in very stark terms. Those who belong to Jesus demonstrate Christ’s likeness in that they do not sin. The sin nature has been replaced by the presence of the Holy Spirit which indwells all genuine believers.

On the other hand those who sin are said to be ‘of the devil’ since sin is his trademark. He controls all natural men, the unregenerate who are not yet ‘born again’ and who remain in the same kind of life into which they were born.

In making these distinctions John is not speaking in an absolute sense but rather he has in mind the normal tendency of our lives. These verses dealing with righteousness furnish the first part of the test and in the upcoming verses John proceeds to illustrate ‘love of the brethren; the other side of the same coin. First, he will characterize the children of the devil, then he characterizes the children of God.

Verse 11. ‘For’ ties what he is about to say, with the foregoing. The phrase *from the beginning* is a reference to the beginning of Jesus’ self-revelation to His disciples during His earthly ministry.

...*we should love one another*, is a restatement of Jesus’ command to the disciples in John 15:12, which is itself a restatement of the “new commandment” of John 13:34. *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

But we should note that this message of love is found in Scripture from the beginning of the book of Genesis.



In the Old Testament there was the command to love God and love thy neighbour as thyself and so the Old Testament instructions were based on love, Christian love.

Verse 12. John begins to describe the love that was from the beginning and so he now speaks of the children of the Devil of which Cain is typical and serves as the example not to be followed. Note the sharp contrast with the command of the previous verse.

Cain slaughtered his brother, for that is what the word means. Note that his act was not out of character or an isolated departure from what should be expected of Him; we are told *his works were evil*. Here are some things we know about Cain from this one verse. His normal behavior was evil, he hated, envied and was a tool of the Devil. All the above are typical of all the children of the devil and if they are not yet manifest, they are just waiting for the opportunity to happen.

Now look carefully at the origin of hate, as well as its character and nature. We are told that Cain did not murder Abel because Abel was a bad person, or because he had done something bad to Cain and Cain was simply exacting revenge. Cain murdered or literally “violently slaughtered” Abel because Abel was good. Murder was committed because Abel was doing something proper, right and good in the eyes of God. So Cain was the kind of person who would never accept God's judgment of what was right and wrong. He rejected the rule of God over his life and was angry with God. He thought that whatever he wanted to do was fine. He rejected God's instruction not to allow the sinister forces of evil to take control of his mind, twisting and distorting his judgment and making him live out of step with God's commands.

Hate is a force that is deeper and more sinister than we often imagine. It is not just a simple psychological matter involving one human being and another. There is always another being involved when there is hate.

In light of the on-going situation where the congregation was under threat of false teachers (2:18-24, 27), John is keen to alert his readers to any deviation from apostolic doctrine. He wants his readers to appreciate the seriousness of the issues involved and so he presents them in mutually exclusive terms that are completely opposite.

Understand therefore though we might not like it, that failure to love the brethren is really murder.

Verse 13. It is very logical that the world will hate the believer for hate is really an attack on God Himself; and so agreed David in Psalm 51:4.

‘Do not be surprised, it is to be expected’. Cain's example is still fresh in our minds and the ‘world’ is his natural successor. He was the prototype of the world and exhibited the ugly qualities Satan generates in every one of his children. The hatred the world has for righteousness began with Cain and has continued unabated. Undoubtedly the Devil hates God and we should expect his children to hate God's children. Jesus warned His disciples about this very thing (John 15:18; 17:14). The world hated Jesus and will treat His people no differently. Believers should understand and expect to be hated by the unregenerate. Rebellion, like that of



Cain leads to anger, murder, lying, denial of responsibility, and rejection of religion as well as cultic duties. We, as one writer says, live in a Cainitic society which is divorced from God, and like Cain will do evil in a religious context.

Hate is the egg that hatches into murder, the only difference is the act itself, the attitude is the same. There is no shortage of haters in this world who don't murder for fear of the consequences. If they could get away without punishment they would. In God's eyes, hatred is the moral equivalent of murder.

Verse 14. Here we begin to look at what love is and what it means. It must be acknowledged that God has given love to everyone He created, just as He has given sunshine and blessings upon the just and on the unjust.

Everyone loves and even atheists and cruel monsters can and do love their children, wives and friends.

Scriptures tell us that love of the highest quality, the true love that God intended men to have, only comes out of the Christian experience. There is a difference between the love of a Christian and the love of a non-Christian.

In the non-Christian the love of God is diverted from where it should go and becomes self-centered love. It is directed to friends and persons who please us, to the things which benefit us in some way. So in Matthew 5:45 Jesus points out that if we love those who are kind to us we are no different from anyone else and should not expect rewards.

So there is a quality that comes at Christian conversion, for then a different kind of love is born. The person that is 'born again' begins to love those he never loved before. The pure unspotted love that God intended all men to have, begins only at the new birth and so it is the evidence that God has imparted new life to that person.

Love for the brethren must follow our passing from *death* (spiritual – separation from God) to life (eternal life – unbroken fellowship with God). Thus 'love for the brethren' becomes the proof, the test of true Christianity. It is the infallible evidence of salvation.

This is what Jesus set down as the defining mark for His disciples, (John: 34-35).

Here is the antidote for any doubting of our salvation. We are assured of our salvation if we have a continuous and habitual love for Christians. 'Dead' people don't love (Eph.2:1), only living people do. Love is the surest sign of divine life. It is the inevitable fruit of Divine Love. Where there is no love, there is spiritual death.

In this new life love does not depend on any exchange, where we only love those who love us. In Christian love one begins to see people as people, who have problems, fears, anxieties, who feel threatened and who have troubles. One does not look on people as either rivals or helpers, people who can help us achieve what we want, or people who are simply obstacles in our way.



We must examine our hearts. Do we love other Christians? Do we seek the fellowship of Christians? If we do, we have passed from death to life. If we do not, we are still dead in our sins, still unconverted and lost!

Those who claim to be Christians must face the question of how to control hate. There is no answer for those who are in the world, for there is no possible control of the force of hate outside of 'the cross of Calvary'.

John tells us how to deal with that problem in this book. He tells us to look at it the way God looks at it and simply call it hate, something that comes from the Devil. John says we should confess it, tell God that it is the work of the Devil and agree with God's evaluation. Then on our confession, the Spirit will work to change our hearts. If there's any excusing or justifying, there will be no remedy.

Verse 15. John brings the hammer down; haters are murderers in the eyes of God! When we harbour malice, grudge and envy in our hearts, we sow the seeds of hate. If these evil passions are allowed to run their course, murder will be the likely result, even if only in the heart.

The language is strong and is an indication of how seriously John regards the failure to show love for fellow believers. As those who love have eternal life (vs. 14), so those who hate do not have eternal life. The general pattern is, a believer loves and an unbeliever hates. Our attitude towards our brethren is as significant as our actions towards them, (See Matt.5:21-22).

Note how terrible it is to hate and how hate reflects the unconverted heart. Judas sat at the table eating with Jesus and yet Scripture says Satan 'entered into his heart' right there at the dinner table. Judas did not show any signs of anything happening to him, did not behave differently, but yet he was in the grips of a terrible force from which he could not or did not want to escape.

Ananias and Sapphira similarity came under the grip of the devil and Satan filled their heart. (Acts 5:3).

John is not saying that every individual who hates will inevitably become a murderer at some future point, nor is he denying that a murderer is beyond repentance and forgiveness. He is saying that hatred is in the same moral category as murder. Those who disguise their hate will go the way of Cain if given an opportunity.

...no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him... Taken with verse 14 this raises the question as to whether or not the person who hates was ever saved, since John says they have remained in 'spiritual death'.

Let us be warned, if our hearts burn with hate toward another, if we cannot stand him or her, we would murder that person if we could. It is only a fear of reprisal that is stopping us from acting.

So we implore believers to heed God's word. The issues of those who hate are all internal. They are heart problems. Hate in the heart, with its accompanying envy, jealousy and rivalry will



show itself in the home, in the neighborhood, at work, at school and in our behavior everywhere. It is murder in the heart. For God the murder is as good as done. God does not need to wait for the action. Matthew 5:21-22.

Unfortunately in Christian circles hate is all too common. It means that eternal life that Christ gives does not control. There is no “abiding” in Jesus. Those who hate the brethren know exactly what they're doing, the Spirit is always convicting them. Their fruits are clearly seen by all. Abel did not have to do anything against Cain to bring his wrath on him, so hate will spring up from any source, instigated by Satan against anyone following after God.

Verse 16. We are told now to be like Jesus. This follows the instruction not to be like Cain. The Apostle shows the true standard for love to be the sacrifice of Christ for Christians. In that ultimate act of selflessness, the true essence, the real nature and power of love can be seen ... *we know love.* (See John10:11; 15:13).

Love is not defined as an attitude or an emotion, but as an act of self-sacrifice. Something was done, it was not just talk. The doing involved effort.

The essence of true love then is the giving up of self-interest. It means voluntarily giving up, surrendering rights to meet the needs of others and to minister to others. This is the quality of genuine love and it shows itself not in words but in deeds. We know God loves us because He sacrificed his life for us. Cain hated and murdered his brother showing how Satan's children behave. Jesus gave his life for those he loved.

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example,” (1Peter 2:21).

John believes Jesus’ sacrifice on behalf of Christians forms a strong motivation for them to *lay down their lives* for fellow believers. Jesus set the example, the Apostles and many martyrs followed the example of our Lord.

Even in the ‘world’ a man who sacrifices his life for the good of his country is lauded and called a hero or patriot and people in certain fields put their lives on the line daily for the general good.

Of course we are not to throw away our lives recklessly but as one writer notes: **the general principle would seem to be, that it is to be done when a greater good would result from our self-sacrifice than from carefully guarding our own lives.**

Verse 17. Here we see a sharp contrast with Jesus’ example in verse 16. There Jesus was willing to lay down his very life but the person in view here is not willing to give even a part of his material possessions for the sake of his fellow Christian in need. Also if we should have a willingness to *lay down our lives* for others (vs. 16), how much more should we be willing to help out the needy!



The person with material possessions who ignores the need of a fellow Christian, shows that he or she does not have the love of God. John uses a rhetorical question which assumes a negative answer to make the declaration that such a person does not have the love of God.

Note that the phrase *seeing your brother in need* implies that your eyes are wide open, just as the eyes of the priests and the Levite was in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Seeing your brother in need means that we are willing to be sensitive, to be aware of what is happening around us, rather than being self-interested, self-absorbed, wanting to avoid any sight of pain and unwilling to help.

Note, Christians are to meet the needs of their brothers in Christ. John is not teaching us to give out money and resources to all people indiscriminately. We should be meeting needs within the church. We can also meet needs outside that community, as God brings us in contact with people. (See 1Tim. 6:17; Heb. 13:16).

God's love involves seeing others in need and not passing them by without concern. If there is physical, emotional, or spiritual need, there must be concern, for that is how the love of God is manifested.

Verse 18. *My little children...* He uses the endearing term likely making a contrast with those that *'went out'* (2:19) who cared little for the brethren. John exhorts his readers to love the brethren not merely with words, but with genuine actions that spring from their relationship to the truth.

Love is certainly an abused term these days, but John is calling for actual acts of love, whether anything is said about it or not.

...in tongue... implies hypocrisy.

Verse 19. *...by this...* is a reference to the righteous deeds of the previous verses. When Christians engage in these righteous acts as a matter of course, they assure themselves that they belong to 'the truth'. The outward action reflects the inward reality of our relationship with God.

...we know that we are of the truth... We are not deluded in our profession that we are true Christians. To be of the truth stands opposed to cherishing false and empty hopes.

...assure... means to persuade and the idea is that in the times of doubt and uncertainty concerning our faith, reflection on our past and on-going sacrificial deeds of love, convinces our hearts we are in the truth. So we assure our hearts by loving in *deed* and in *truth*.

We will from time to time experience uncertainty, insecurity and even self-condemnation. The remedy for that is loving in deed and in truth and the 'fruit' of love is assurance. So while there is much for which our conscience might rightly convict us, there is always evidence that we are the children of God and we are persuaded that all will be well.



Verse 20. Here John turns to examine a practical problem, for when we are told to love one another and try to do it, we immediately realize that there are many responsibilities that come with showing real love. These can make us feel inadequate, for loving is a long and difficult business. So John moves to reassure us by examining the 'condemning heart' issue.

When the heart condemns a person, it means that one has come to believe that there is something wrong with him or her and there is no hope. They come to believe they are worthless, inadequate and a failure.

Sometimes our heart will rightly condemn us, sometimes it's wrong and there are instances we might have difficulty knowing our guilt or innocence.

At other times the evil one attacks us according to Ephesians and makes us feel condemned. The aim is to make us lose our faith in Christ, reduce our effectiveness in the work of God, or to simply overthrow us.

There are times we feel very happy and have no reason to experience the troubles of a 'condemning heart', but suddenly a feeling of guilt and condemnation comes to us and we feel uneasy, with a vague sense that something is wrong with us.

Physical problems can also affect our spiritual feelings.

Sometimes there is a problem in our hearts, because we have committed some sin, or find ourselves repeating some sin such as indulging in lust or showing a terrible temper. The Spirit makes us feel guilty then. If that is the situation all one has to do is to confess the sins and God is faithful to forgive and cleanse.

If we are rightly condemned, we should confess but in instances of uncertainty, we can be comforted in the knowledge God knows all things and is greater than our conscience.

Sometimes condemnation of the heart comes from simple things such as feeling resentment at being misunderstood, even though one has acted with the best of motives. Sometimes one feels for no good reason that they are not doing enough.

If we are rightly condemned, we should confess but in instances of uncertainty, we can be comforted in the knowledge God knows all things and is greater than our conscience. Further Romans 8:1 says: *There is ... no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.*

This is also a warning against indulging secret sins even when our conscience flashes the red signal. Outwardly we might show signs of piety, but we will find no peace since God knows all that is in our hearts. One writer notes in part:

The object is to induce Christians so to live that their hearts will not condemn them for any secret sins, while the outward deportment may be unsullied. The general sentiment is, that if



they should so live that their own hearts would condemn them for present insincerity and hypocrisy, they could have no hope of peace, for God knows all that is in the heart.

Another view on this verse holds that because God knows all things and is impartial, He will be more objective in judgment than believers' own consciences. He will be merciful to those who have loved their fellow Christians and severe toward those who have failed to show love to their fellows. In either case, God will be completely fair and impartial in His judgment.

It is comforting to know we can appeal to God's knowledge as was the case with Peter in John 21:17. After denying Christ and weeping after the resurrection Jesus said to Peter: "*Lovest thou me?*" Peter replied, "*Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.*" He appealed to the Lord's omniscience and so can we.

One writer gives some important insights that will benefit honest Christians who at some time or other experience the condemnation of the heart telling them that they have been a failure, a phony, or a hypocrite. He states:

"John has an answer that is profound and simple at the same time. He doesn't suggest introspection or efforts to discover the nature and source of negative emotions. It is characteristic of our era to explore our subjective inner experiences, and good can come of this, but John's instruction is to attend elsewhere. The word of the Father, filled with love and faithful to forgive, is greater than our hearts. God has the right to veto our interior messages and deny their condemnation. He is greater than our hearts and he knows everything. In verse 21 John begins consideration of the alternative to a condemning heart and a downward spiral of guilt reinforcing self-hatred. We read of "*confidence before God*"- a circle spiraling upward in which faith, obedience, and God's gifts build on one another. Confidence leads to asking, obeying to receiving. Belief reinforces love. We live in him and he lives in us, and the more we live in him, the more he lives in us. As God gives one gift, he gives more gifts, and as something becomes good, it becomes better, and the Spirit grants us confidence amidst growing obedience, faith, and love.

Verse 21-22. ...*confidence* relates to the Christian's boldness in asking things of God. It may also allude to the Christian's assurance of hearing '*well done good and faithful servant*' at the judgment when Jesus returns. This is a reasonable application if we keep in mind the mention in the preceding verse of God's impartial verdict in judgment based on His omniscience.

This of course seems to describe the behavior of a mature Christian. This is one with confidence and a history of intimacy with God, who is always willing to approach God.

If we accept the fact God does not condemn us, if we confess our sins and repent and if we recognize the deeds of love in our lives, our heart won't condemn us. Instead, we will have confidence in God, and we will receive of Him what we ask according to John.



So Believers who have a clear *conscience* (v. 21) have *confidence* (v. 21) that God will answer their prayers. The promise of answered prayers however is conditioned on certain factors. There must be no unconfessed sin. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* (Psalm 66:18). According to 1 John 3:21, when we confess our sins, our hearts will not condemn us.

Christians must be obedient to the word of God and do those things that please Him.

James says most people pray for things to satisfy their lusts (James 4:3). The normal behavior of a Christian is love, obedience and doing what pleases God. As a result, his prayers are answered. Love characterizes God's children and results in assurance and answered prayer.

This should not be taken to mean that an obedient lifestyle on the part of the believer merits or guarantees answered prayer. It means that, if our conscience does not condemn us and if we are living in line with the commandments, our will, will merge with God's will and so we may reasonably expect to receive what we ask of God.

Verse 23. This is the foundational commandment in its two constituent parts. These are to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ and to love one another.

The *belief* John has in mind is not mere assent or accepting certain information as true. The readers are commanded to believe in Jesus: as the Christ, as the Son of God and as Christ incarnate (come in the flesh). There were some then as now that were disputing the person and nature of Jesus.

Note that everyone can do something to show that they love the brethren. It might be a series of small things, or it can be one or many things. God knows what we can do and so we should give of self and resist the natural tendency of the human heart not to love.

Verse 24. John has characterized the believer as one that believes, obeys and loves. The result is we reside '*in Him*' and he in us. Here we have the ultimate confirmation of our position with God. The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit is the *seal* (2 Cor.1:22) of our salvation and the assurance that we have eternal life and are forever God's children.

CONCLUSION

So. You should now be able to answer the question. Who is your daddy? The answer will give you confidence love.

The children of God are characterized by love, which originates in God, issues in self-sacrifice and is evidence of eternal life.



What of our prayer life? If it seems as though God is not responding, maybe we have not met the conditions for answered prayer

(vs. 22-23). If it is unconfessed sin, we should examine ourselves and confess any sin we uncover. If we are being disobedient to God, we must confess and repent. We must spend more time reading and studying God's word, so we will be more sensitive to times of disobedience. If we are not doing things that are pleasing to God, we should begin to view God more as our Father. Just as a small child wants to please his human father, we should seek to please your heavenly Father in all we do.

The child of the devil is characterized by an unloving heart full murder, hate and indifference. The children of God are characterized by love, which results in assurance, answered prayer, and knowledge through the Holy Spirit that we abide in Him and He in us. The proof that you are a Christian is simple: Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love the brethren? Do you obey His commandments?

The answers to these questions identify us as either the children of God or the Children of the Devil. For the 'children of the Devil': *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* (Acts 16:31).

