

## **1<sup>st</sup> John 3:18-22**

### **18 Little children, let's not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.**

John says that we should meet each other's needs; that we should not close our hearts toward one another, but should demonstrate our love through action (similarly to what James said in 2:14-16). The Holy Spirit will not only inspire us to do works to help our brothers and sisters in Christ, but will cause us to have genuine love toward all of our fellow believers in Christ. Real love will express itself through action in meeting needs. If a love is sincere, genuine, it will result in the desire to help in times of trouble. John is saying "Instead of talking about it, do what you know ought to be done!"

### **19 We will know by this that we are of the truth,**

When we obey the Holy Spirit's urging and Jesus' command to love one another by fellowship with each other and meeting each other's needs, then this has a practical effect: it is proof to us that we are saved. We have convincing evidence of a life spent in service to other believers when we are confronted with the eventual end of our life, and subsequent meeting face to face with our Creator. So, these works motivated by a love for God's Children because He loves time is the fruit of the Spirit, the "fruit of love", persuades us of the validity of our relationship with God, which results in a confidence and reassurance when we stand before Him.

### **and will set our heart at ease before Him,**

This evidence of following Jesus by listening to the Holy Spirit's urging to love our brothers and sisters in Christ has the effect of peace deep inside. Our troubled conscience over the areas that God is still working on in our lives; those areas where we are not completely obedient is put at ease by the fact that we see that God is working to mold us, and transform us into the image of Christ. And we see this evidence by the love we have shown in real, concrete ways to other believers. We are "persuaded", convinced of our salvation because we see the evidence of our transformed life.

Our love for Jesus; our faithfulness in obedience to Him as our bridegroom, affects our relationship with Him John 14:23-24 **23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will follow My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him. 24 The one who does not love Me does not follow My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.** There is no shortage of love toward us on God's end of the relationship, but it can be limited by our lack of faithfulness.

This urging of the Holy Spirit to love and serve one another is so that we can give and receive blessings of God through our mutual service to one another as we use the spiritual gifts that God has given us for this very purpose. And as we live this way, someday we're going to meet our Savior face to face. And as we have allowed His love to pour through us, as a clean vessel, pouring His true love to those around us, we will be in utter delight and joy. That is what the Holy Spirit is trying to counsel us in these verses. As John says in 1 John 3:2-3 **2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope set on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

### **20 that if our heart condemns us, that God is greater than our heart, and He knows all things.**

Self-doubt is a reality of Christian life. Any Christian who is serious about obeying the commands contained in the Word of God knows that they fall short of that commitment. The Bible teaches that the law, or God's Commandments were given as a mirror. When we look into God's Word, we see what true righteousness is. Any sane person wouldn't smash a mirror because it reveals our physical defects, but use it to identify them and correct them, if possible. It's the living out of the word in our lives that causes us to see whether we've actually incorporated these truths that we've learned into our character

and manner of living. James 1:22-25 says **22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.** Sometimes we succeed in this, and sometimes we fail. And when we fail, we cause a confidence problem in our spiritual walk with God. Self-doubt, and a lack of confidence before God enters our lives because of sin. And this affects our prayer life, our walk with God, and our feeling of closeness in relationship with God. So, what do we do? We realize that we are called to examine our own heart, but even more-so to allow God to examine our heart. With David in Psalm 139:23-24 we cry out **Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.** We allow God to search us and let us know what's really going on. When we search our own heart, and judge our actions, it is always for correction, not condemnation. Guilt will paralyze us, if we let it. But in the life of a believer, this sorrow over sin serves a very different purpose. As an example, we read in 2 Cor 7:9-10 **9 yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. 10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.** Their guilty consciences have driven them to seek God in the matter, and the Holy Spirit has convicted them that they were truly sinning, just as Paul had said. Conviction of sin is part of the work of the Holy Spirit. And by listening to the Holy Spirit, they agreed with God that they were sinning, and confessed and repented of that sin. They saw that the sins were paid for, and forgiven, not by their actions, but by Jesus' payment for those sins on the cross. Justice was done, and they were rightly declared innocent! And they, seeing that they were innocent in the eyes of God, could continue in relationship with a Holy and Righteous God, not looking back in shame at sin, but in looking forward in Faith in Jesus. And Paul says that that was great proof that they were Children of God.

We can approach God's throne with boldness, even in confession and asking for forgiveness, not because our sins are not red as scarlet, but because we can trust Him to wash them white as wool, as Isaiah 1:18 tells us. We're going to fail in our walk with Jesus, and in our expressing love to other believers sometimes. But, when we do, we need to remember that ultimately we're looking to God's Work for salvation, not to our own works. And we do this **"because God is greater than our heart."**

**21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;**

But it is better not to sin in the first place, so that we don't have to wrestle with our consciences tendency to condemn us, and our heart and the enemy's accusations! But we who have approached God in confession and repentance do not need to even think about those sins when we come before God. When we come into God's presence in prayer, we can have a clean conscience, knowing that we have approached God with our sins removed from us, having been cleansed from all unrighteousness and forgiven. We have allowed God to deal with our sins.

**22 and whatever we ask, we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.**

We approach God's throne of grace with confidence! John links this confidence he's been talking about with answered prayer. Obeying God's Word and Serving God by serving our brothers and sisters in the spiritual gifts that we've been given allows us to have the confidence that we need to have faith that God will answer our prayers. They go together! That's why the author of Hebrews in 4:16 **16 Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need.** In other words, it's our confidence in our relationship with Jesus that allows us to approach the throne of grace with assurance that our prayers will be answered. It's faith in Jesus, and our relationship with Him that gives us the confidence. That's why Jesus promised us in John

**15:7-8 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**  
God doesn't want to hold back on us—He wants to bless us and provide for us in the life that He has planned for us, answering our prayers as a result of our abiding in His Will, and confident to come before Him as His Children, as Jesus' disciples because we obey in Love, and want His will to be done.