

Biblical Assurance 4 - Austin, Tx

by Paul Washer

The true tests of salvation are the working of God in our lives, the things written in 1 John, and love for others, as demonstrated by Jesus' new commandment to love one another.

Duration: 35:09

Scripture: John 13:34-35, 1 John 2:7-9, 1 John 2:11, 1 John 3:14

Topics: "Assurance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of love and its connection to God. He states that love is from God and those who love are born of God and know Him. The preacher highlights that God's love is beyond human comprehension and gives an example of how prisoners in third world countries are completely dependent on others for their basic needs. He then relates this to the love of God, exemplified through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The preacher also emphasizes that love is not just a feeling or emotion, but it requires action and involvement in the lives of others.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to the book of 1 John. The book of 1 John chapter 2, verse 7. Let's stand. 1 John chapter 2, verse 7. Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning.

The old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. Let's pray.

Father, I pray that you would use your word in the lives of many according to the need and according to that which would bring you the greatest glory. In Jesus' name, Amen. You may be seated.

We have been in 1 John for a while and we are discussing the true tests of salvation. How can a person know that they are truly born again? It is not simply because they repeated a prayer. It is not simply

because they joined some religious organization or gone through some religious rite.

The evidence of salvation is the working of God in our lives that causes us to grow in conformity to His character and conformity to His will. We have the assurance that we have truly been born again because the things that are written in 1 John are found at least to some degree in our lives. A life that has not been changed has not been saved.

I know we live in a country where everyone and his brother is a Christian because at one time in an evangelistic crusade they prayed a prayer. My friend, that is not biblical. We are saved by the power of God because salvation is the power of God.

It is brought about by the power of God. And we are saved not by repeating a prayer, but by repenting of our sins and believing the Gospel. And the sign, the true sign that we have done that are the things written in Scripture that identify true Christianity.

In the beginning of our study we saw that the true Christian will walk in the light. That means they will live a style of life that reflects something of God's character and reflects obedience or conformity to God's will. We also saw that a true Christian will be sensitive to their own sin and that sensitivity will lead them to repentance and confession.

We've also seen that the true Christian will have a new relationship not only with God and not only with sin, but with God's Word. That a true Christian's life is marked by habitual obedience. Our obedience will not be perfect.

A true Christian will sin, that's why he must be sensitive to sin. But the life of a true Christian will be marked by a new relationship, a real relationship with the Word of God. And then lastly we studied that the true Christian will walk like Jesus walked.

That doesn't mean that we will be able to do all the miraculous things that Christ has done. It doesn't mean we will live a life of sinless perfection as He did. But it means that our style of walking, of living, of being, of talking, every aspect of our life will somehow be brought into conformity little by little to the life of Jesus Christ, to the life of Christ.

Now we see another test in verse 9 of chapter 2. The one who says he's in the light and yet hates his brother is in darkness until now. Possibly the greatest sign of true Christianity is that you love the brothers. You love the brethren.

Now the word brother here does not refer to someone of another race because Scripture simply does not acknowledge that there are other races. There's just one, it's human and we're all a part of it. It's not referring to someone from another culture, it's not referring to the poor.

Even though we should love the poor and we should love people from other cultures, all cultures, every walk of life. We should love our enemies, those who persecute us and nail us to trees. We should love.

But here, he's talking about love for other individuals who profess Jesus Christ as Lord. Now let me give you an example of how this works. Do you remember the teachings of Jesus where He said, I was in prison, you didn't visit me.

I was sick and you didn't come to me. I was hungry and you didn't feed me. I was naked and you didn't clothe me.

And that verse is so often used as a proof text for prison ministries and ministry outreach to the poor. Well, we should do all that, but that's not what that verse is teaching. Let me give you an example.

In many third world countries, when you are thrown into prison, you are not fed. In prison, in many third world countries, some of the countries that I've been to and even lived in, you are not given food, you are not given water, you are not given clothing, you are not given shelter, you are not given anything. You are thrown in behind four walls.

Now what does that mean? It means that if someone on the outside does not come and slip you food through the bars, you're going to starve to death. If someone does not come and bring you a change of clothing, you're going to be ragged. If someone does not come when you're sick, you're probably going to die of that sickness.

But now, let's take that into Christian context of the first century. There's someone who is thrown into prison. Why? Because they profess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Not Caesar, Jesus. And because of that, they are thrown into prison. Now, they are going to rot there.

They are going to die there. They are going to starve to death there, unless someone from the outside ministers to them. Now there's the catch.

The prison officials are going to be watching. Anyone who brings this Christian food is obviously a Christian and will get him too. So when Jesus says all that He says about visiting Him in prison and all the such, He is saying that your love is so strong for other Christians that you willingly lay down your life.

And if your love is not that way, a red flag should come up. That maybe you know not the Lord. Again, in this new covenant, love is not something.

It's everything. It's the manifestation of all your godliness. It's love.

It's love. The one who says he's in the light, the one who says he is a Christian, what does it say? And yet hates his brother. Again, this verb, present tense, it's a habitual hatred.

A habitual animosity. You say, well, I don't have that great animosity and I don't have that great hatred towards people who call themselves Christians. But love is much more than just not doing the negative.

What positive actions of love do you demonstrate to the people of Christ? Now, let's just step back for a moment and think about this. How many times have I heard men say and women say, I don't need to go to church. Church is so filled up with hypocrites anyways.

I can worship God in this bass boat. I can worship God on this golf course. I don't need to be there.

They're all a bunch of hypocrites anyways. If you've ever said that, you're doing the work of your father, the devil. His name means slanderer, accuser.

You're standing outside of the people of God, judging them. I want you to know something. It is true that within the people of God, and first of all, let me say this, not everyone who goes to church on Sunday

morning is the family of God.

There are church members who are not Christians. You say, well, how can you tell them apart? Watch their life. But even among the true Christians, there is failings.

There are problems. There is stumbling. But the one thing that's going to happen to you if you have truly been converted is you are going to have a love for the people of God because you are one.

You say, blood is thicker than water. I'm sure it is and that's the way it ought to be, but the Spirit is stronger than blood. How many times have I sat down on an airplane with someone from a totally different culture, totally different country, whether it be from Switzerland or England or wherever, South America or Africa, sit down, begin to talk, find out they're a Christian.

And within just a few seconds, it's like we have known each other forever. We are family. Why? Spirit bears witness.

This is a child of God. And we are to be marked by love. The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in darkness until now.

He is in total and absolute spiritual darkness. I have said this. I don't know if I've said it here.

I probably have. I repeat things quite a bit. But I can remember as a young seminary student crying out to God to be able to preach with the power of God on my life.

Crying out to God to be a missionary. Crying out to God to know His Word. I know this friend of mine.

He cried out to God to be like Jesus, to serve people like Jesus and to love people like Jesus. He's not the greatest preacher in the world. But I give every gift I have to be like Him.

He chose the greater thing. Donkeys and rocks can preach. Our great goal is to be like Jesus.

It's the end of all things we do. It's the end of preaching. It's the end of praying.

It is to be like Jesus in the most difficult place on the face of the earth. To be like Jesus. And that's the people closest to you.

Because I want to tell you something. People in China that you don't know are real easy to love. But the closer you get to people, the more difficult it is to love people.

And that's where we're coming at here. That's where we should be here in this church. Loving people.

Caring about people. Biblically. In the truth.

Sincerely. With all our heart. Now He says, "...the one who says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is in the darkness until..." He knows nothing.

He knows nothing. Well, you know, I've studied here. I've studied there.

I've done this. I don't care. Do you love? Now He goes on and He says, "...the one who loves his brother abides in the light." The one who loves his brother.

He's not saved because of his love. But he is demonstrating that he has been saved by the power of God because of his love. And then it goes on and it says, "...and there is no cause for stumbling in him." Let me just try to put it in my context.

You say, That's the boringest preacher I've ever heard in my life. Someone might say that about a preacher. He's the boringest preacher I've ever heard.

And then someone stands up and goes, Yeah, but I've never met anybody who loves like him. I mean, that's the goofiest person I think I've ever met in my life. Yeah, I know, but I have never met anybody serve in the name of love like that person.

You see, it kind of removes all stumbling blocks, doesn't it? It's just not important anymore. They're not big. They're not great.

They're not fast. They're not smart. They can't do it as well as anybody else can do it on the face of the earth.

But when you say, But they love like no one I've ever seen before. It just clears the air. What else matters? What else matters? I had a friend of mine that had a terrible, terrible relationship.

His wife just... I mean, I was in there. I was privy to what was going on. It was a horrid thing.

He spent 14 years of his life just living. It was a horrid thing. She left him.

She left the kids. She left absolutely everything. Left him high and dry.

And I said, Brother, what are you looking for? He said, I don't care. I don't care what the woman looks like. I don't care how smart she is.

I don't care the way she dresses. I just want someone to love me. That's all I want.

You see what he's saying? Nothing else matters when you get the one thing. But if you don't have the one thing, nothing matters. Nothing matters.

Look at this. Verse 11, But the one who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in the darkness. That means not in just this one area of his life is he in darkness.

He's dark everywhere. He knows nothing and has nothing to say to anybody about the Christian life. His mouth is shut up because he doesn't love.

And then he goes on and he says, He does not know where he's going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. Church, let me share something with you. It is impossible to have a proper vertical relationship without proper horizontal relationships.

You cannot have a great, magnificent, fire-filled, on-powered, divine relationship with God if your relationships with the people around you are not right. You don't hear from God because God doesn't speak to you. You're dark everywhere.

You're dark everywhere. How many times, and I have had to do this, how many times have I left the house in a hurry or just troubled or just too quick with my wife and just jump in the car ready to go preach somewhere to save souls and God just basically say, Well, you can get in this car and take off, but I'm not

going with you. I don't know what you think you're doing, but you better get back in that house right now and start doing some serious apologizing.

Why? Don't think about going up if you haven't gone across. Oh, we are to love and that is a hard thing to do. You think that if I were to get up here right now and to give you all the commandments of the law, I mean, I was to go and say to you, Folks, we've got to keep everything in the book of Leviticus.

We've got to keep everything in the book of Numbers, Deuteronomy, Genesis, every law that's ever been given. We have to keep it. Do you think that would be hard? That's not half as hard as what I'm telling you to do right here because this is the fulfillment of the law.

This is the fulfillment of absolutely every bit of it. Just love. Love.

Well, who do we love? Who do you got? That was the question they asked Jesus. Who's my neighbor? Looking for a loophole. Who's not your neighbor? Well, you don't understand what they've done to me.

They haven't put a crown of thorns on your head. They haven't nailed you to a tree and they haven't thrust a spear in your side. Any more questions? It goes on.

Now, I want us to go back up to... Well, I want us to go over to John 13 for a moment. John 13, verse 33. Little children, I am with you a little while longer.

You will seek Me. And as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, where I am going, you cannot come. Now, folks, listen to this.

If I knew I had just a few short hours left with my wife and my children, I would not be talking about silly things. I would not be talking about who won a ball game yesterday. I would make sure that in those few short hours I had left, I would be talking to those I loved about the most important, most important, most important things concerning me and concerning them.

And that's what Jesus is doing here. He goes down to verse 34. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Now you say, well, what is this new commandment? We go over into 1 John and we begin to get an explanation. He's talking about a new commandment. A new command.

But in 1 John he'll say, it's an old command. It's not a new command. Here he says it's a new command and not an old command.

What is he saying? He's saying this, God has always been love. God has always been love. His character changeth not.

He has always been love. God is love. And He has always commanded His people to love.

And therefore, it is an old commandment. It is the oldest commandment. And to sin is to violate that commandment.

And to keep that one commandment is not to sin. God has always told us to love. Then how is it a new commandment, brother Paul? A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you.

Jesus raised the bar so high, that when He says love, it means something totally different than when anyone else says it. I'll give you an example. You sit down with me and say, Brother Paul, are you a good basketball player? I say, yeah.

Yes, I am. I'm a good basketball player. I was good in high school.

Two replaced hips, one broken arm and a bad elbow. But yeah, I can still put them through there when I have to. But if you ask me if I'm a good basketball player, I can tell you yes, and within the context of my life, that's a pretty reasonable answer.

Yes, but it means something totally different when you ask Michael Jordan if he's a good basketball player. It means something completely different when he says he's good, and I say I'm good. Two different worlds.

It's exactly what Jesus is saying here. Yes, God has always commanded you to love, but I'm raising the bar so high, it becomes a new commandment. I hear all these people saying, Boy, I'm glad I didn't live back in the Old Testament times when it was really rough to obey all those laws and follow God.

My friend, the bar has been raised so high. The Old Testament said give 10%. New Testament says, Your brother's in need, you might need to sell your house and give everything you've got to him.

You want to talk about raising the bar? Love. Now, he says, How are you supposed to love? The way I loved you. The way He loved you.

You want Him to love the way He loves you, but you do not want Him to love you the way you love others. You do not want that to happen because we all go to hell. Isn't it amazing? We will sing about mercy and sing about grace and then be like a miser when it comes to giving it to others.

I crucified Him to a tree. I put a crown of thorns on His head. I thrust a spear in His side, but praise God, He loves me.

You didn't shake my hand, Sunday. You're out. What are we doing? I was supposed to teach on family this morning and the reason why I didn't is because I began to study and realized, Man, I'm going to have to finish this and go into that family thing just full barrel.

But one of the things I teach on family and the sovereignty of God is that the purpose for your marriage is to conform you to the image of Christ. That's the primary purpose of your marriage. It's to teach you to love someone who does not meet all your conditions and thus become like Christ.

It's love. Now look at verse 35. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

As I was sharing, a fellow in Romania came to me one time, stuck a pin on me and said, Here, everyone know you're a Christian. And a guy who mentors me looked over and he goes, Well, by all these things, they will know you are His disciple. By a pin on your lapel, by a cross around your neck, by a Bible under your arm, they're going to know that you are a disciple.

By your knowledge, they're going to know, no, by your love in the name of Christ. Now, let's go back to 1 John quickly. Run over to chapter 3 for a moment.

Verse 14, We know that we have passed out of death unto life. How do we know that? We're no longer spiritually dead. We're no longer reprobate.

We have passed out of death into life. How do we know that we've done this? Because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

The word abide here, present tense, means it's a habitual living in death. The word also can mean not just to live in, like in the context of a dwelling place, but to walk with, to sojourn with. You are literally walking hand in hand with death.

And you are unconverted, and you know not the Lord if you do not love. It's a frightening statement, but a wonderful statement at the same time. And he goes on.

He says, everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. People have used this text to say if you commit murder, that you cannot be saved.

No, what it's talking about is someone who continues on in the habitual practice of murder. To continually hate your brother is to be a serial killer. You just keep hating and keep killing.

You're an assassin. Now, verse 16, And we know love by this, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. How are we supposed to love? You know, we have this idea.

Well, I love them. How do you show it? Well, I don't do anything bad to them. No, you love because you laid down your life for them.

Let me share something with you, believer. If the extent of your Christianity is just coming into this building and hearing a sermon and worshipping, you're not loving. You're to be loving the brethren in practical ways.

But let me also say this. Many Christians, because their families are such chaos, and there's so much animosity there, they come to the church to love because they can no longer love in the context of their families. And that's wrong.

We have to, in this church, build strong families based upon the Word of God. Husbands who are husbands of God. Wives who are wives of God.

Parents who are godly parents. Children who know they are loved and learn how to love. This has got to happen, or everything else is just, well, it's so much sawdust on the barn floor, that's all it is.

And why would we want to export anything here to someplace else unless we're right? I've always said the greatest thing that could happen to missions in the world today is for most Americans to stay home because when they get over there, they teach a gospel that's not true. We don't want to be the problem. We want to be a part of the solution.

Now, look at verse 17. But whoever has the world's goods and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. Now, I don't have time to preach this text, but the whole point that I want you to see is love is not just a feeling.

It's not just emotion. It's not just coming together and all of us giving a group hug and singing Kumbaya. And love is not just all of us coming here and praying here down at the front.

It's ministering to people when they go back. It's loving people. Caring for them.

Getting involved. Getting involved. And that's the thing we don't want to do because we've all got fences around our houses, don't we? Little cards that you have to have in order to pass through the gate.

We don't want anybody that close. Well, you can't love somebody far away. Now, I want to close in verse 7 of chapter 4. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God.

And everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this, the love of God was manifested in us that God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

Never forget this. God is holy. God is just.

He will judge the wicked. God is love. He really is.

He really, really, really is. And there's very little meaning in what I'm saying. You can't understand the strength of that statement because you can't really find a great definition of the Word because you've never seen anything like this in your world.

You try to find a definition for the love of God, there's just not words enough. The human mind cannot comprehend. There's not enough in the human language to be able to express the love of God.

But we do have an example. God's Son crucified over a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem. Crying out all the while, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.

God is love. And everything God does is in the context of love. And God's commandments are expressions of His love.

And God's morality are expressions of His love. And God's directives, God's prohibitions, they are all manifestations of His love. We look at a culture today that has literally gone wild.

Gone wild. Turned over to the wickedness of its own heart. And that is true.

But anytime you hear Christianity spoken of in the media, it's always these horrible people who want to oppress other people's liberty by telling them what they cannot do. And this horrible God of theirs that says, there is a certain way to live, and apart from that way, there is nothing but death. That's what our culture hears.

That's what the media portrays about Christianity. My dear friend, let me tell you something. I love my two little boys.

I love my wife supremely. And I want you to know something. I will tell my little boys when they're going close to a flame, no, do not do that.

Do not do that. Is it because I want to oppress their freedom? No, I want to save their life. And one of the things that we've got to understand is, yes, God does come to our godless culture and say, you are all wrong.

Every last one of you, you're wrong. But I love you and this is why I'm telling you you're wrong. And you can be right.

Well, what do you know, God? I made you. That's what I know. I made you.

Don't try to oppress my lifestyle. Oh, I'm not. I'm not at all.

I'm trying to save your life. I made you. I know how you work.

I know how you can be saved. Well, it goes against everything. Let me tell you something.

It went against everything for me. And it went against everything for every other person that's ever been saved. You say, well, I have to renounce this.

We all had to renounce something. Because we were all wrong. Now, it might have manifested itself a whole lot of different ways, but all of us were wrong and all of us had to turn and all of us had to say, God, be merciful.

All of us. I'll tell you what. I'd like to take out a full page ad in whatever newspaper there is in this city and just say this.

Okay. This is who we want in our church. Every thief.

Every murderer. Every prostitute. Every crack addict.

Every person that's ever done anything so horrible they don't even want to mention it. We want them in this church and this is why. Because such were some of us.

But we have been washed. We have been bought. That's what we want.

That's what we want. That's what we want, church. That's what God desires.

For us to promote in a godless, loveless world a true God who is both holy and love. Who is both mercy and justice and has been able to show the perfection of both those attributes the day His Son died on that tree. I don't care what you've done.

I don't care. Because for most of you, I've probably done worse. I don't care what you've done.

I don't care what you've become. Not at all. What you need to understand is your sin and your life could be killing you because you're not reconciled with God and you have no relationship with Him and you were made for Him and you will be restless until He finds you.

But you have sinned, you have broken every one of His laws and because of that, you're not a victim, you're a criminal. And criminals deserve justice, but God has satisfied justice. And how did He do that? He paid for your sins when His own dear Son died in your place.

And yea, He not only died, He rose again from the dead. And now He sits at the right hand of God and He is powerful, as the old preacher used to say, He is powerful to save to the uttermost and to the guttermost. He is powerful to save.

I think in one place Spurgeon says, if I had only two words that I could ever say again, Let's stand to our feet. We're going to have an invitation if you have any need whatsoever. If you feel like today, you know, you're saying, I need to be saved.

Well, come down and talk to us. Walking down this aisle, we'll not save you, but we will know who you are. You come down, we will talk to you.

We'll go off somewhere. Whatever you want to do and just sit and talk. You say, well, I know I'm saved, but my life is messed up.

Okay, we're here. We're here. Well, don't you have to go eat? No, we don't have to go eat.

We'll stay here all day. What is the need? What is the problem? We're here because there's a mighty God who can save you and who can help you. Let's sing.

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