

# 1 John 3

by Robert F. Adcock

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of love as the greatest gift and the first commandment, and encourages listeners to choose to love God and others through obedience and service.*

**Duration:** 46:36

**Scripture:** Matthew 22:37, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:30, Mark 12:37, Romans 12:1, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 4:8

**Topics:** "Divine Love", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of showing love through actions rather than just words. They reference Mark chapter 12, where Jesus describes that love is not about performing rituals, but about obeying God's commands. The speaker also highlights the sacrificial love of God, demonstrated through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. They emphasize that divine love is immeasurable and can only be understood through the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God's love will ultimately bring believers home to heaven.

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## Transcript

This week, and she said, I know what you'll be preaching on, on Sunday, and she caught me a little by surprise, but I said, what will I, what, where will I be preaching from? She said, First John, and I said, how did you know that? She said, that's what you said the last time we spoke. We were in First John, and I think I made the comment that we were going to stick with that for a little while. You know, the verse of scripture found in scripture, his banner over me is love.

You know, that's the one thing that characterized, or should characterize, Christianity. I think we'll discover a little better insight into some of that as we go along. But if you will, turn to First John, Chapter 3, and we're going to read the first three verses, and then we'll read a few verses in Chapter 4. First John, Chapter 3, and verse 1, Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God, therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Turn over to the fourth chapter, and let's read a few verses here, starting with verse 7. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth

not knoweth not God, for God is love. And this was manifested, the love of God toward us, because it God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him, here in his love.

Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time.

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. If I know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

We love him because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

And shall we just bow before the Lord in another word of prayer? Our gracious Heavenly Father, as we gather this morning in this place, we are so thankful that we have found our way here this morning, and we are so thankful that we had the wonderful privilege of sitting around the table and remembering our Lord Jesus Christ, the lover of our souls, our Savior. We are so thankful now that we have the word of God open, and we can read and meditate and consider what you have said to us, that the Spirit of God will kindly remind us of the truth that is set before us. O Lord, we pray for your blessing upon us.

We remember all those less fortunate. We think of those that today are found in hospitals and nursing care homes and so many other places out across the face of the earth. Your dear blood-bought children, and they are going through trial and testing.

Many are being persecuted. Many are suffering martyrdom for their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. O God, be merciful.

We ask all of this, giving thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. I would like to start with some comments about what we have read in 1 John 3. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

That is a wonderful promise. In reading in Scripture, we discover that the greatest of all gifts is love. You couldn't have a spiritual gift that was greater than love.

And when we think about so much that our Lord said about love, that was a very, very prominent statement in all that our Lord had to say. We look at something in a few moments that reminds us, and some people that I have used this and commented to them about the meaning of it just couldn't seem to grasp the full significance of it. He says, If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And of course, his command is anything that he asks us to do. And yet there are those so often believers, and at some point I think all of us have to say, Yes, that means me, too. Because I know the Lord has asked us to do this, and I'm going to be honest and right up front, and I trust everyone in this room will be, and I didn't do it.

And I didn't do it. And I'll grant that if you search your heart a little bit, you're going to find out, and no, I didn't do it. So we need to look in our own hearts and evaluate just how much love we have in our hearts for the Lord and for each other.

In just a moment, we're going to find out that God has a way of balancing things. There's a statement made in scripture that helps us to see that and see how important it is. I love you.

Those are just words. They're just words. I don't know how many times perhaps it's said in the course of every day.

I love you don't mean a thing. Don't mean a thing. And I would base that upon what our Lord has said.

So often the one that says that, there's absolutely no evidence in their lives that they love that person. And let me define love for you as it's found right here. As most of you know, at least there are two words in scripture, agape and phileo.

If you go to that 21st chapter of John's gospel where the Lord is talking to Peter, Peter must have felt terrible, and I feel a sense of sympathy for him. You know, he denied the Lord three times. I don't know him.

I don't know him. Can you imagine this man that had said so boldly, Lord, if it comes to it, I will die with you or for you? Yeah, it was a high point. Emotions had been stirred.

I'll never deny you. I will die with you and for you if that's necessary. And then a little servant girl says to him, I believe you're one of them.

No, I don't know him. I don't know him. Three times over.

And then finally that old cock crow, you know, and it came back to his mind before that cock crow, you will have denied me three times. Well, you know the account there in chapter 21. The disciples had been fishing, and as they came ashore, there was breakfast on the table waiting for them.

There were fish there. I think someone said here one time, I really never have relished the idea of eating fish for breakfast. And somebody responded and said, if the Lord prepares them, I'll eat them.

So you know, there are thoughts like this that come to our mind. But Peter, recognizing that it was the Lord, I think he was very cautious. I would have been.

Some sense of embarrassment, remembering what he had done, knowing that the Lord knew what he had done. And the Lord had a conversation with Peter. He said, Peter, do you love me? Now, the one thing, you know, if you were in Peter's place, I wish he hadn't said that.

I wish he hadn't said that. Do you love me? Well, Peter used that word which means, I have a real strong affection for you. He didn't commit himself.

Evidently, he knew and realized how much more weight agape has, that word for love. He realized it carried a whole lot more weight than had been proven in his life. Well, that dialogue went on, and the Lord asked him again.

He asked him three times. And each time Peter responded, I have a strong affection, until finally exasperated, he said, Lord, you know everything. You know exactly how much I love you.

If this, if this, please don't ask me anymore. You know exactly how much love is in my heart for you. And you know, before the Lord right now is looking in each of our hearts, he knows exactly how much we love him and what we would sacrifice for him.

He knows. That's so important. And sometimes we know, don't we? We know.

Because as you apply that word, the use and the way God uses it, it expresses that deep and constant love and interest of someone who is perfect. Now, this is God speaking, and it comes in the form of a question, perhaps, as to how much we love him. We're such unworthy objects of divine love.

We don't deserve it. Most of us would say that. No, I'm not deserving of the least of his love and his devotion.

But by the grace of God, he loves us. And you can't take that away. God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

But this has been proven. Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. Love can only be known by the actions it prompts.

You love me, Peter? There's no evidence of it. You've denied me three times. You've proven that, indeed, I can't pay much attention to what you say about love.

What does it take in our lives as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to prove that we love him? It can be summed up in one word, obedience, obedience to what he asks us to do. You've got a Bible. You read the Word of God.

Most of us do, and we read it every day and we pray. Do we do what he asks us to do? I want to prove my love, my Lord. I want to prove my love.

Love can only be known from the actions it prompts. And the love of God is summed up in the gift of his Son. We read that in 1 John 4, because the love we're talking about is a sacrificial love.

It's not words. It's not just speaking words. It is something that will go into action the very moment that it's in need.

It'll go into action. That's what divine love is all about. And I think we can all see that in what God has done for us.

Isn't it wonderful that he's been loving us ever since he created all things? All things were created by him and for him. And he loved us even then. The love of God.

Scripture lets us know that it is immeasurable. How high is it? How deep is it? How wide is it? You can't measure it. It's immeasurable.

Greater than anything that you or I can think of this morning, the love of God should be overwhelmed by it, should be humbled by it, because if we make some kind of measurement in our own lives based upon our actions, we say, I am ashamed that I know so little about love. And I call myself a Christian, I call myself a believer in Jesus Christ, and God has given this love gift to the world. He gave it to the unworthy ones, gave it for poor sinners, and we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Oh, this love is something that is deep and meaningful. It's something that we need to take into account as being very important to God. You know, we've already read several times over since we started in 1 John, God is love.

God is love. And God has acted, and he has proven without any shadow of doubt that he loves us. And you've heard people say this.

Someone in this room may have said it. Nobody loves me. Nobody loves me.

That's not true. God loves you. You may be pretty accurate as far as thinking about how many people love you in terms of people that love you.

But if we narrow it down to people that really understand what Christian love is all about, we can be thankful for every Christian that loves us. Some of God's people don't even know how to love. Keep going on, living in those little shallow lives that they live in, so often just eat up with self-interest.

I just do what I want to do that appeals to me and helps me and my own. You don't believe, maybe, that a Christian could be so confining as far as expressing what God wants them to express in their lives, but brother and sister, it's true, it's true. It's borne out in the lives of many every day.

But we are loved of God, and that's not shallow. I've already told you, you can't measure the love of God. It's too deep for you, it's too wide for you, it reaches too high for us.

The love of God and his banner over us is love. I love you. Lord, I don't feel like I deserve that kind of love.

Never mind. I love you, and I have given heaven's best for you. Well, let's think in terms of this kind of love toward God.

If you will, and I'm not going to have you search in the Scriptures this morning, just a few. If you will, turn back in Mark's Gospel to chapter 12. So often the Lord was kind of interrogated by scribes and Pharisees.

On this occasion, one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? Well, what's the first one? Let's do it right. Let's start at the top. The Lord Jesus said, The first of all commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength.

This is the first commandment. How can a man measure his love for God? It's got to surpass any other love that he has for anything else. I think it just takes a little self-examination, that's all.

What do you love most in your life? What comes to mind when you think of the thing that comes first in your life? What is it? And did you say God? God comes first? If so, you have fulfilled the first commandment. But if something else popped up, if something else popped up, and more than likely most of us have to confess, sometimes he does come first. I'm thankful for those times when the Spirit of God

carefully helps me to see that I've gotten off track and I confess to it and get back to loving the one that deserves to be loved first.

I would say to us men, as far as our wives are concerned, the Lord Jesus said that we are to love our wives even as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it. I'm telling you, brother, she comes pretty close to the top. Your wife, yes, your mate.

She comes up there real close and wants you to love your wives even as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it. Boy, that agape love has got to swing into action. She deserves it.

Our Lord said she did. He wants you to love your wives. Wives, I don't think that means you.

That means you, too. You are supposed to love your husbands. You are supposed to have that love for your husband.

But this certainly brings things into sharp focus if you want to know what the first commandment is. It is that we love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. It pretty well covers us.

The soul of a man under the control of the Spirit of God, and he is activated to love God the way God deserves to be loved, sacrificially I will give of myself. I will present my body as a living sacrifice to God. He comes first.

Yes, he comes first. My mind, I try to just keep my mind saturated with thoughts concerning my God. How wonderful my God! He is love.

He personifies everything that love really means. He gives us a good example. And does he know how to give? Oh, he gives the best, the most treasured gift of heaven.

He gives it for the likes of us poor sinners. God knows how to love, and he has proven it to you and me. Well, if we think about the first commandment, we could examine it a little closer and look in at that same passage, and we could ask ourselves the question about what comes next.

That's the first commandment. And just read the next verse. And the second is like, namely this, I shall love thy neighbor as thyself.

Love your neighbor as yourself. There's none other commandment greater than these. Those two commandments, there's nothing greater than these.

You know that lawyer that asked the Lord that day, Who is my neighbor? Who is my neighbor? Is it the guy that lives next door? You remember the account that he gave him of the good Samaritan? I think living in the world we live today, it would be safe to say anybody that needs me and needs my help is my neighbor. Do you try to practice that? I look for an opportunity to practice that in my own life. I don't even like to make that reference, but if I see somebody that has a need and I can help them, I try to help them.

You say it can be dangerous trying to help people today. I know it. But I think that's what God wants us to do.

Don't go around scared all the time and frightened by this world we live in. Greater is he that is in us than he that is in this world. The devil wants us to be scared and afraid and hide and not do what God wants us

to do.

Don't let him do it to you. And perfect love casteth out fear. Some people are afraid to go out at night.

Too often I say, I can't do that, I don't do that, I'm not going to place myself in harm's way. Don't you be so sure of that. If you're still breathing and you're still going outside, if you're living, you're in harm's way.

You can enlarge on that if you want to, but you can't escape it. Brother Henry Janetta, I remember when he found out he had cancer and his nephew reminded me the other day over at the hospital, he said, God has some way of getting us all home to heaven. And he'd already told Henry, you're going to live just a few months.

The doctor said, you won't live long. And Henry said, God has his way of getting us all home to heaven. He's going to get you home one day, brother and sister, if he doesn't come.

He's going to get you there. Robert, it ain't going to take long, according to what the doctor said, six to nine months and he's going home to heaven. It's not so bad, is it? God loves us.

He knows what's best for us. And he wants to see us manifest that love that he expects from us. And he likes to be loved.

God likes to be loved. Your neighbor would like to have some of your love, your sacrificial giving of yourself for him. He'd like that.

He'd like that. You say, well, they might not even appreciate it. So what? You're doing what God asks you to do.

You help them, and they've never helped you. They don't even like you. And you still did something for them.

You manifest the love of God toward them. Don't you feel good about it when you do something like that? I know they don't particularly appreciate this. They probably said something unkind after I did what I did.

That's what God wants us to do. Your neighbor manifests the love of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, great lover. And in that same chapter in Mark, there's just a verse there or two, to prove that it's not ritualistic.

It's not those things that when we think about loving, that you have to perform some ritual to prove your love. In the 35th verse, Jesus answered and said while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of God? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit there on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord, and is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly, and he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplace, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the edimus peruns at feasts, and which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.

These shall receive greater damnation. Well now, what we have to remember is, it's not necessarily what you're doing. You bring the best sacrifice you can think of.

That could happen to the Israelite, of course, and they could say, You know, I brought the word there. And yet if you haven't fulfilled that first commandment, that second commandment, it don't mean a thing. It don't mean a thing.

You've got to get back to basics. You've got to go check up and find out just how much you really love the Lord. I mentioned about true love, and that kind of love that's practiced in your life casts out fear.

You live a fearless life. God hath not given to us the spirit of fear. He doesn't give that to you.

That comes from some other source, and after all, he has by his Spirit spread abroad in our hearts. This is Romans, chapter 5, the love of God, the love of God. And the Apostle Paul knew something about that.

He says, The greatest of all gifts is love. And then we think further, and we're reminded that, indeed, if that one thing is lacking in our lives, the whole thing just seems to fall apart. A relationship that is based upon love, this kind of love, I'd say it's on a good, solid foundation.

Marriage that starts out on that foundation, including God. I used to think about young couples that I knew, and I admired them so much. Even when they met and when they were dating and all of that, they prayed together, read the Scriptures together, let it be known, I seek nothing but the mind and the will of God, and would not dare say to the other party, I love you, until they really, really had examined this thing carefully before the Lord and said, Yes, I do believe I love you.

I want you to be my wife. I want you to be my husband. Man, that's a good, solid foundation to start out marriage on.

So often marriage starts out, and you don't spell it L-O-V-E, L-U-S-T. That's right. That's all it is.

One party lusting after another. She's pretty. She's beautiful.

I want her. And there's no seriousness in fulfilling what God's plans and purposes were for a man and a woman when they enter into marriage. And it falls apart.

There's no love in it. There's no love in it. And in that passage that we read in the 4th chapter of 1 John, we develop a holy boldness in expressing this love.

As you mature as a believer, and you should develop some maturity about seeing things as God sees them, the Apostle Paul uses this expression several times. We all feel guilty, I guess, when we read it. I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, you know, so often.

Well, I don't understand that. I don't understand. Why don't you understand it? He says the Spirit of God as our teacher, as the one that can enlighten us concerning the mind and the will of God, He's not hiding anything from us.

We're just not looking for it. We're not searching for it. We're not applying ourselves to wanting to know the mind and the will of God.

I've got a suspicion sometimes we don't want to know. Hey, I'd better stop right there. I'm going too far.

First thing you know, I'm going to know exactly what he wants me to do. I've got my mind made up, I don't believe I'd like that. I guarantee there's somebody sitting in this audience this morning that knows exactly

what I'm talking about.

I don't want to know the will of God. You're cutting it too close, brother. I'm contented just to go along with things as they are.

I don't want to stir up anything. I don't want to be brought right there to the edge and be presenting myself to God. And I'm doing it completely.

I'm presenting my body. I've got all my resources together right here. It all belongs to you, Lord.

You can do anything you want to with it. Just help me to be guided and directed by the Spirit of God. Well, I do want to make a few comments on this passage that we read at the outset.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. What manner? What kind of love is this? It's divine love, brother, sister, and it's something this world doesn't know a thing in the world about. They don't know what this is.

They don't know what it is, because only the Spirit of God getting a hold upon a man and spreading abroad in the mind, the heart, and the soul of a human being can let them know what divine love is all about and then bear fruit in your life. The fruit of the Spirit is love, and he can do it. You can't do it.

I can't do it. But he can do it in and through us if we just let him. If we just let him.

That's what it's all about. What manner of love? It's divine love. See, look what God has done in his love for us.

He gave us a Savior. I'll start at the top. I'm starting right where it really is.

He gave us his Son, the Son of God, the one who knew no sin. That's the one he gave. The only one that could pay the penalty for our sin.

He gave him to us. Here's my gift to you. This is proof of my love.

This is divine love in action. It's giving his Son, the sinless Son of God, for a poor sinner, a poor old rotten sinner. Don't deserve heaven's best.

Couldn't you do something else, modify that a little bit? No. To save your soul is going to take what God, and God alone will recognize as a payment for your sin. And don't become ritualistic and try to do anything.

Just trust him, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you'll be saved. You try to do anything else, some people say God laughs. He could laugh at that.

Look at that poor, worthless, hell-bound sinner, and he's trying to clean up his act. He's trying to get fit for my presence, and you don't have to get fit for his presence because you won't ever get there. You've got to come just like you are.

You want to clean it up a little bit, so be it. But be sure you don't forget the only way you get saved is trusting him. I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man ever comes into the presence of God but by me.

I don't care what this world says. I don't care how beautiful that religion is, and all of its rituals, and all of the singing, and things that people think are so important and so beautiful. There ain't but one beautiful one, and it is the Son of God who loved us and died for us.

God sees beauty in him and what he accomplished upon the cross. It's ugly what happened. Had to be ugly because we contributed all of our sin to it.

That's what uglified the picture up. That's what made that cross and the agony and all those cries that went up from the Son of God. That's what made it ugly because he was paying the penalty for our sin.

He had no sin of his own. He took your filthy sin and my filthy sin, and God laid it on him, and he paid for it. That's what our adopted love, that's what the love of God will do.

Do you recognize that? Oh, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. He's lavished his love upon us. Beautiful is wonderful.

Now we can be called sons of God. Someone said one time, I'm a born-again Christian. There ain't no other kind.

There are no other kind other than those that have been born again spiritually. You claim your spiritual birth. You celebrate your natural birth.

You celebrate your natural birthday. Some people have it marked on a calendar. They know exactly when they were saved, and they celebrate that day.

I ain't going to celebrate it every day. I'm saved. I got up this morning.

I'm saved, man. I'm ready to go to heaven. I'm ready to meet God on his terms, not mine.

My terms stink. Oh, the love of God, how wonderful, how beautiful it is. And now I'm a child of God.

It says sons of God, but we're children of God. We're in the family of God, and certainly in the family of God, love should really be working among the children of God. Love for one another.

I try to love everybody. I know some people I don't like, but I love them, because God says so. Love them.

I know a lot of people that don't like me. I said, so what? I just hope you love me. And if there is ever a need for you to reach out in love to me, forget you don't like me, but love me and minister to me.

That's what I want. I want the will of God. Oh, you can like me if you want to.

It's okay. But for believers to love each other, love your neighbor, all of this becomes a real part of this. The world doesn't understand this, but I expect every believer to understand this and to believe this.

But among God's people, sometimes you can't tell that they understand this and that they even believe this. You can become so prejudiced in your mind towards somebody just because they don't think the way you think, do the things you do. You become prejudiced.

The first thing you know, so what? So what? God don't work that way. The world may do that, but no. Beloved, now are we, now, you like that, M-O-W? We are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

I've never seen Jesus Christ face to face. Songs tell me, face to face, one day we will see him. The Word of God tells me we will see him.

When you do, when you do, you're going to be different. You know, people think about predestination, well, we've been predestined to be just like Jesus Christ, the Son of God, predestined by God. Every person in this room that knows Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is their Lord and Savior.

They're going to be just like him one day. That includes me. That includes me.

Think everybody in heaven will love each other the way God wants them to? Think we'll go form a little clique over here in the corner and say, these are my buddies over here. No, no, these are my buddies over here. Uh-uh, none of that.

We're going to be just like him, just like him, the Son of God. Every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure. You want to have something in your life that's pure and holy and needs to be nurtured more and more, and the Spirit of God wants to work in your life and in my life and help us manifest more and more of that purity that we are talking about.

Well, let him produce spiritual fruit in your life, the love of God, the love that we should manifest toward him, our Savior and our Lord and our God, toward our neighbor, toward each other. I didn't even want to use that word, hatred, that a brother or sister in Christ would hate somebody. That's like being a murderer.

It's like being a murderer, hating somebody. God, by his mercy and grace this morning, if you've got a thought in your heart and soul like that this morning, get rid of it. Confess it.

Lord, I don't want it there. I want a pure mind. I want a pure heart and soul.

I want to be like Jesus Christ, the Son of God, my Savior. L-O-V-E. L-O-V-E.

A love that we should manifest toward him, the love of God, the love that we should manifest

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