

Series: 1 John  
Title: Proof of Life  
Text: 1 John 3: 14-19  
Date: December 20, 2018  
Place: SGBC, NJ

How can I know that I have eternal life? How do I know that my brethren have eternal life? Is anyone interested in the answer to that question? At one time or another, every believer has asked this question, “How can I know that I have passed from death to life?”

We know that we come into this world spiritually dead in trespasses and in sins due to our first father, Adam. We know God has an elect people to whom he gives eternal life. We know Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life: he took the place of God’s elect—he bore our sin and our curse—and by his blood made his people the righteousness of God in him. We know spiritual life is *not of blood, nor of the will of man nor of the will of the flesh but of God*—by the irresistible grace of God, by being born-again of the incorruptible seed, the word of God, which by the gospel is preached unto us, by the Spirit of God.

But how do I know if I have passed from death to life? We see that question answered for us in our text. It is answered, not by me. It is answered not by the apostle John of himself. We have the answer given to us by the Spirit of God from the very word of God. Be sure to get that! This is God’s word to you and I who believe. This is God telling us how we know we have passed from death to life. In fact, it is the point of this whole first epistle of John

1 John 5:13: These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life,...

**Proposition:** The Holy Spirit of God declares that faith which worketh by love is proof of life!

**1 John 3: 14: We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.**

## **TWO SURE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT ARE FAITH AND LOVE**

In every sinner that God has given spiritual life there will be faith and there will be love for brethren. That is why the Spirit of God gives John such dogmatic certainty to make this statement—“*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*”

When born of the Holy Spirit, faith and love are the fruit of the Spirit produced in each believer. Faith and love are inseparable. Where you have one you have the other. It is impossible to do one without the other. Think about that, it is true.

Galatians 5: 22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23: Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Paul begins with love because it is the fulfillment of the law. Love is the bond of perfectness. It is that perfect end to which the love of God brings his child by creating within him a new man. Without love a profession of faith in Christ is vain.

1 Corinthians 13: 1: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2: And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove

mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3: And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

## **THE FIRST BROTHER WE LOVE**

When the Holy Spirit gives us faith in Christ, he sheds abroad the love of God in our heart. (Rom 5: 5-10) He gives us spiritual life to behold the faith and love of God toward a sinner like me. He sent his only begotten Son who laid down his life for me, a sinner who did not love him. Christ reconciled me into friendship with God while as yet I was a God-hating sinner. So when given spiritual life and faith in Christ, the first Brother we love is Christ, our Elder Brother. The same one we believe, the same one we cast all our care upon, is the first brother we love, Christ Jesus our Elder Brother.

Romans 8: 29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that HE MIGHT BE THE FIRSTBORN among MANY BRETHREN.

John 8: 42: Jesus said unto them, IF GOD WERE YOUR FATHER, YE WOULD LOVE ME:..

If God is our Father—if we are born-again of God our Father—then we love Christ and receive him by faith. We love God and his Son because he effectually makes us hear of how he first loved us. We love Christ because he makes us hear how *he came in his Father's name* to uphold his law as he justified us from our sins. Christ said to some,

John 5: 42: But I know you, that ye have NOT THE LOVE OF GOD IN YOU. 43: I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

We love Christ because he makes us hear how *he came in his Father's name* to uphold his law as he justified us from our sins. When we are born of God and the Spirit has given us faith and love in the new man, we receive Christ by faith and we love Christ because the love of God is in our new heart.

## **WE LOVE ALL BRETHREN BORN OF THE SAME SPIRIT**

Having this union with Christ, we believe on him and love him and love all who are born of his Spirit.

1 John 5: 1: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.

Do you see the inseparable union between *faith* and *love*? It seems like it should read "*whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that believeth him.*" But after speaking of faith in Christ, he speaks of love of Christ. He takes it for granted that we know that where faith in Christ is produced, so too, love for Christ will be produced. When you are born of God, you *believe* on Christ and you *love* Christ.

Likewise, *every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

1 Timothy 1: 5: Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and *of* a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned:

1 John 4:21: And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

This is God's commandment that we have from him—"that he who loveth God love his brother also"—that is God's commandment. Well, how do we know that we love the brethren? When we love God and delight in whatever commandment God gives us.

1 John 5:2: By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

So God declares to us, brethren, that where God has given life, he gives both faith in Christ and love for brethren. Therefore, "*we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.*"

## CONTRAST OF LOVE AND HATE

**1 John 3: 14:...He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. 15: Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.**

As he contrasted love and hate using Cain's hatred and Abel's love, so here, he continues that contrast. He contrasts God-given love and the hate of our natural heart. He says that as surely as love exists where spiritual life exists; "*he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*"

1 John 4: 7: Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8: He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love....

1 John 4: 15: Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. 16: 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.

God is love. All who are created anew are united to God. God dwelleth in him and he in God. By this union, the new man is made in the image of God our Father, after the image of Christ who created him. Whoever believes on Christ does so because he dwells (or lives) in God and God in him! We dwell (or live) in the love of God for the same reason! It is impossible to do otherwise. But "*he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*" He does not have a new man created within therefore he does not have this union.

So we see something of the difference between God-given love when we contrast it with the enmity of the natural, sinful, nature—"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." The sinner who does not love his brother, hates his brother. There is no middle ground because the carnal heart is enmity against God. (Rom 8: 7)

And "*whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.*" The word from which "murderer" is translated is only used here and in John 8:44 where the Lord said the devil was a "*murderer from the beginning.*" It means a man-killer who would kill, not only the body of a believer, but his very soul. He would kill Christ, he would kill God the Father, he would eradicate the gospel out of this world if he could. That is the enmity—the hatred—of the natural, sin-dead heart—"and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

When we look to Esau, we see what every unregenerate sinner would do but for God's restraining hand. God took the restraints off Esau. Therefore, he manifest what was in his heart—murder. Why did he kill his brother? The gospel of Christ declared all Cain's works wicked because he believed not on Christ but tried to approach God by his own works. That is the only thing scripture says Cain did—he did not believe on Christ but trusted in his own works which was manifest by him coming to God with the fruit of the cursed ground with no blood. So Cain hated hearing that his brother's works were righteous due to the simple truth that Abel came to God through faith in Christ alone. Abel's faith was manifest in that he came to God with the blood of a lamb and the fat thereof.

Cain manifests the heart of every unregenerate sinner. But the believer is given a new heart to believe on Christ and to love Christ. Being born of the same Spirit of his brethren, he loves his brethren who are born of Christ.

Now, let us examine ourselves. Do you still hate Christ? Do you hate his gospel? Do you hate his people? Or do you believe on Christ? Do you love Christ because he first loved you? Do you love others who are born of Christ who delight in Christ and his gospel? If we are born of God there is a difference which the grace of God has made. If we are born of God there is faith in Christ and love for Christ that was not there and we know old things are passed away and all things are become new.

Now, be sure to understand, we are not talking about the quality of our faith and love. We certainly do not believe Christ perfectly or even as we ought, and the same is true of our love. We certainly do not love our brethren as we ought. Sin is mixed with our faith and our love. At times, we wonder if we even possess faith, much less love.

We must keep two things in mind when God speaks of a believer's love. One, God is not speaking of the quality or quantity of our love. Two, we need to understand that the love which God speaks of between brethren is not the love this self-righteous religious world speaks of. We will see that more as we go.

But if we are born of God, God says, there is a difference that we certainly did not make. It is a difference only God and his grace could have made. And it is a noticeable enough difference for God to say, "*We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.*"

## THE LOVE OF CHRIST PERCEIVED

**1 John 3: 16: Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17: But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?**

In order to keep us from looking to our love or putting confidence in our love, the Spirit of God reminds us where we see perfect love—in Christ alone. But the main point here is that it is by God laying down his life for us that we "perceive" his love for us. The word "perceive" is the same word translated "Behold" in verse 1. It means "*Hereby know we the love of God.*"

Who were the "us" that the Son of God loved and laid down his life for? I could say God's elect and that would be true. But stay with the context. It was not sweet, kind, loving brethren. It was "us" who did not love him. It was "us" whose hearts were like Cain's, full of hate for God.

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

As we just saw, *to not love is to hate*. Christ loved us and laid down his life for us whose hearts were *hatred and murder* toward him.

Romans 8:7: Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

It is one thing to suffer for those you know love you. But Christ loved us, when we hated him and would murder him. Nor did he love us in word only. He did not merely say he loved us and would lay down his life for us when he entered into the eternal covenant. But when the time arrived, Christ loved his people in

deed and in truth by laying down his life for us on the cursed tree. He did it when we hated him and showed it by murdering him.

God says "*and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" It means even when we see more of our brethren's old nature of hate than their new nature of love; even when they are not at all loveable but are hateful toward us. Christ said,

John 15:12: This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

But here is the opposite of love—"*But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*" The man who says he loves his brother yet does not act on it when he sees his brother have need, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

## THE APPLICATION

**1 John 3: 18: My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. 19: And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.**

Let us, who are truly little children born of God our Father, not only tell one another we love them, but let us love in deed and in truth.

Let's see this illustrated by considering Abel and Cain again. Now to better understand love remember that when Christ spoke of laying down our lives for brethren, he said we do so by denying ourselves, taking up our cross (of suffering and persecution) and following him in faith as his true disciples, not ashamed of him before men. He also spoke of laying down our lives by losing our lives for his sake and the gospels. Laying down our lives by suffering rejection and persecution as we preach him to perishing, lost sinners. This will help us to better understand what love for Christ and love for brethren is, in deed and in truth, according to Christ Jesus our Lord.

Mark 8: 31: And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and *of* the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32: And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

Peter did what it is our carnal nature to do. He did not want Christ to lay down his life and Peter did not want to suffer himself.

Mark 8: 33: But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. 34: And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will COME AFTER ME, let him DENY HIMSELF, and TAKE UP HIS CROSS, and FOLLOW ME. 35: For whosoever will SAVE HIS LIFE shall lose it; but whosoever shall LOSE HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE AND THE GOSPEL'S, the same shall save it. 36: For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37: Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38: Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Whosoever will come after Christ—professing in word that we believe on him and love him—then let him lay down his life and follow Christ. Let him love in deed and in truth by not being ashamed to confess Christ

publicly and by not trying to save ourselves persecution. Instead, let preach only Christ and him crucified. Let us love Christ and our brethren by promoting his gospel far and wide in search of our lost brethren. Let us love Christ and our brethren by assembling together under the preaching of the gospel with our brethren. Let us love Christ and our brethren by providing for our sick brethren. Let us bear the burden of our brethren who are fallen into sin. Let us do this so that our brethren are able to get back under the gospel of Christ which we need more than daily bread. This is love for Christ and love for brethren in deed and in truth.

Now, let's "perceive" love which is "in word only" which we will see manifest in Cain. Let's "perceive" what hatred for Christ and for brethren really is. God made Cain know that all Cain's works were evil. It was because he came before God with no blood, only the fruit of the cursed ground. It pictured coming to God with the dead works of our cursed flesh. When we "perceive" will-works religion we perceive hatred for God and for brethren.

But Cain professed, in word, to believe God. That is why he came to the place where God was to be worshipped. I am sure he professed to love Abel in word. But when Cain heard that God rejected him and declared his works were wicked, did he lost his life for Christ and for his brother? No, it enraged him. When he heard God say that if he believed on Christ then he would be accepted but if he did not believe on Christ then sin was the cause, he heard the gospel. And what did it do? It only stirred up the hatred of his carnal heart. The same gospel that stirs up faith and love in the regenerated heart of the child of God, stirs up hatred in the heart of the child of the devil.

Then by his actions, Cain manifest outwardly that he had no love for God or his brother in his heart. How? Cain would not lay down his life. He would not lay down the vain works that he thought was his life and profess faith in Christ. Cain would not lose his life for Christ nor would he do it with love for his brother Abel. Instead, he manifested (and we "perceive") the hatred and murder that is in the unregenerate heart by Cain's actions. He endeavored to save his life, to save his vain way, to save his vain works. Christ said he that will save his life shall lose it. In all this, Cain did not manifest love, he manifest hate. His so-called love was in word only. But his actions make us perceive what was really in his heart was hate for Christ and hate for Abel.

Next, let's "perceive" love that was "in deed and in truth" by looking at Abel. Abel had heard the gospel before, probably from his father Adam. God had regenerated Abel and given him faith in Christ. He had love for Christ and love for his brethren in his new man. We do not know how many brothers and sisters he had, nor how many believed God. But we do know that Adam and Eve were Abel's brethren in Christ. Now, here is the difference in one who has passed from death to life. Here is one in whom the Spirit has created faith and love. Abel laid down his life for his brethren—first and foremost—by laying down his fleshly ways and his vain works for Christ our Elder Brother. He believed Christ and loved Christ. How do we perceive it? He laid down his life by confessing Christ because he desired for Christ to be glorified. He desired for Christ to have all the honor in his salvation. Abel loved God and kept his commandments. How do we know? He came to God with the blood of the firstling of his flock and the fat thereof. A picture of coming to God through faith in Christ, putting no confidence in the flesh.

Abel also laid down his life for the good of his brethren. He even did so in hope that God might regenerate Cain and manifest him to be a brother in Christ. How so? When Abel saw Cain come before God with an offering in which was no blood, Abel perceived that his brother had great need. And Abel knew he had the good that his brother needed—he had the gospel! Did he shut up his bowels of compassion from him? Did he save himself the anger and persecution he knew would come from Cain? No, Abel did not attempt to save his own life, Abel laid down his life. How so? He came publicly before God with the blood of a lamb. Doing so, Abel manifest the greatest love he could manifest to Cain, he told him the truth of the gospel. He manifest love to his father Adam and his mother Eve who were his brethren. And he even manifest his love

for his brethren in our day. Here we are, still talking about how Abel glorified Christ—"*Hereby perceive we the love because he laid down his life for us.*"

But that is not all. Then scripture says when they were in the field, Cain came to Abel and they talked. Did Abel shut up his bowels of compassion? Did he take the offense out of the gospel to save his life. Did he attempt to save himself the persecution and literally from being killed? No, Abel laid down his life. Obviously, Abel told his brother the truth of the gospel because Cain became so enraged he killed his brother. We "perceive" Abel's love for his brethren because he laid down his life for us and it is still giving us assurance today.

God declares that faith which loves in deed and in truth manifests proof of life—"*And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*" I perceive and am assured of Christ's faith and love for me because I see it in his actions. He laid down his life for me, even when I did not love him. Christ loved me in deed and in truth and I am sure of it because he laid down his life for me!

I perceive and believe that brother Abel believed on Christ and loved Christ. I perceive that he loved his brethren! I am sure of it in my heart because I see how he laid down his life for Christ and for his brethren.

You and I who believe, do not believe or love as we ought. At times, when our sinful flesh has taken us captive, we wonder if we believe or love at all. There are times we do not speak as we ought when given the opportunity to declare the truth to others.

But if we have been born of God then we *do* believe on Christ. We *do* love Christ. We *do* love our brethren. If we have been born of God then we *have* laid down our lives (our vain thoughts, vain works, vain will) and professed Christ openly in believer's baptism. We *have* united with our brethren in the cause of Christ and his gospel because we believe on Christ and love our brethren. Though it may not be as much as we would like, we *do* support the gospel and assemble to hear it preached publicly. We are not ashamed to publish the gospel of our Redeemer publicly and encourage brethren, as well as our lost friends and family, to hear the gospel of Christ. If God dwells in us and we dwell in God then we *do* deny ourselves personal things so that we can provide for our brethren. So that we can continue together under the preaching of the gospel. When a brother or sister is sick, brethren I know, go visit them and help them in every way possible. All these things are loving in deed and in truth according to the scriptures.

Brethren, where God has given life, the Holy Spirit produces faith and love that was not there when we were dead in our sins. Did we do any of these things when all we had was a sin-nature that hated God and hated his people and hated his gospel?

Therefore, God declares faith, which worketh by the constraint of Christ's love for us is proof of life. When the Spirit of God has given us life, he gives love in our inner man for Christ our Elder Brother and love for our brethren who are born of him. And God says this is proof that we have passed from death to life!

It is not of us and not maintained by us. It is by the grace and power of God. It is sure and certain because Christ never fails! It is to the praise and glory of God our Father and his Son our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, if you believe on Christ and love his gospel and you love others who do the same, then let nothing steal this comfort from you! As he said earlier in the chapter, "*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that [believes on Christ] is righteous, even as he is righteous.*" So let no man deceive you in this. God says, "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*"

**Amen!**

