

LOVE & FAITH WITH HANDS & FEET

I. 1 John 3:16-24

A. C.S. Lewis, in his book, *The Four Loves*, writes: "There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket--safe, dark, motionless, airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside of heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is hell."

B. Today we'll hear from the Apostle of Love, formerly one of the *Sons of Thunder* (Boanerges). One of the things that's likely fair to say about Zebedee's sons is, no one ever dared steal their fish or intrude upon their favorite fishing spots.

C. As I've mentioned in times past, 1 John reads more like a treatise than it does a letter. It's chock full of good stuff. You can read John's three letters in one setting but I recommend you read them slowly with a highlighter handy. The text I've chosen for today is meant to set us on course towards the "*Holy Days*." If our culture influences our approach towards the *holidays*, we will wish they were already past. If God's Word and the Holy Spirit influences our approach, we may experience many fruitful opportunities...

D. 1 John 3:16-24 (ESV) are the words of God written to us...

1) V16: 16 *By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. (Jesus at the Last Supper, the eve before His cross: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." [John 15:13] The cross is the greatest symbol of peace there ever was; likewise the greatest symbol for love! This is the essence of the Gospel and the Gospel lived out...)*

2) V17-18: 17 *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18* *Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (Wearing blinders to the needs around us; being tight-fisted; mocking the disadvantaged; avoiding the wounded by passing by on the opposite side of the road--these are all supreme acts of hypocrisy and they betray the Gospel we preach and all that Jesus personified and exemplified!)*

3) V19-20: 19 *By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before Him; 20* *for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and He knows everything. (Let's check out a couple important Scriptures relative to the heart...)*

*** Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB) soberly says: 9** *The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? (Heart checks are better than gut checks.)*

*** Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV) is more encouraging when it says: 26** *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a*

heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. **(The evidence of someone having been regenerated, reborn, made a new creature in Christ, truly is, a new heart.)**

4) V21-22: 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; **22** and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him. **(From 2 Cor. 5:9 a few weeks ago: "...we make it our aim to please Him." Slap that banner--going out and coming in!)**

5) V23-24: 23 And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us. **24** Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. **(Please hear this important distinction: Our salvation is owned by faith but it is shown by obedient acts of love. May the days of *easy believism* be over and let faith-filled, faith-driven, faith-saturated acts of love take its place!)**

E. Jesus' brother James describes having love and faith with hands and feet.
James 2:14-17 (PHILLIPS): 14-17 Now what use is it, my brothers, for a man to say he "has faith" if his actions do not correspond with it? Could that sort of faith save anyone's soul? If a fellow man or woman has no clothes to wear and nothing to eat, and one of you say, "Good luck to you I hope you'll keep warm and find enough to eat", and yet give them nothing to meet their physical needs, what on earth is the good of that? Yet that is exactly what a bare faith without a corresponding life is like--useless and dead.

F. You tell me: When you read through the Scriptures are you inspired by the Priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan who actually stopped to help the bloody victim? The rich young ruler or the widow who gave all she had to live on? The beggar Lazarus covered in sores or the purple-clad rich man who ignored his suffering? Judas who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver or the little boy who offered his five loaves and two fish to feed the multitudes? Which of those characters do you want to resemble? Which of those people do you want your children and grandchildren to resemble? This Church?

G. Let's consider Jesus' ways, both to mankind as a whole and to you personally: Did He ever preach without practicing what He preached? Has He been generous with you or stingy? Did He or does He promote frugality as a virtue over generosity? Did He tell His disciples to find their security in comfort zones or in His presence? Did He ever hail the prosperous as being superior to the poor and needy? Did He say to lay up treasure in both earth and heaven or just heaven? Has He chosen a *Bride* to be the opposite of who He is or one like who He is? Did He propose peace at all costs or establish peace at the cost of His own blood? Finally, has the *Prince of Peace*, who brings peace on earth and goodwill to men, made peace between you and God in your heart of hearts and if so, has it made you and instrument of that peace, a vessel of love, who walks by genuine faith?

H. Obviously our text wasn't written to be implemented only during Christmas. But it's a good time to prime the pump and provoke each other to love and good deeds. Festive get-togethers are aplenty. Needs are magnified. Opportunities abound. At Barb Clark's funeral this past Wednesday, we recognized her as a selfless giver. Barb never

elevated herself in order to meet someone's need nor did she ever diminish the people she was helping. That's a lesson for all of us to embrace...

I. Some of you are already good at this but I hope we all get better and better. My encouragement is to keep your eyes and ears open and act accordingly. I'm not trying to conjure up actions that aren't present in your hearts. Don't act out of "ought." Act out of love or not at all. I want the Holy Spirit to so move in our hearts that all this happens naturally, not only during this season, but ongoing. Don't you want that for us?! **1** Thessalonians 4:9-10 (AMP) says: **9** Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write you, for you have been [personally] taught by God to love one another [that is, to have an unselfish concern for others and to do things for their benefit]. **10** For indeed you already do practice it toward all the believers throughout Macedonia [by actively displaying your love and concern for them]. But we urge you, brothers and sisters, that you excel [in this matter] more and more...

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

1 John 3:16-24 (ESV)

16 By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. **19** By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before Him; **20** for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and He knows everything. **21** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; **22** and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him. **23** And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us. **24** Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB)

9 The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV)

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

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you I hope you'll keep warm and find enough to eat", and yet give them nothing to meet their physical needs, what on earth is the good of that? Yet that is exactly what a bare faith without a corresponding life is like--useless and dead.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 (AMP)

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Quote by C.S. Lewis

"There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket--safe, dark, motionless, airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside of heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is hell."

- C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, Fontana Books: London, 1960, p.p. 111-112.

Video Clips & Important Articles

Blessed Are The Merciful - John Piper

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0t00QEx424>

What Does It Mean to Be Ready to Meet the Lord? - Randy Alcorn

<https://www.epm.org/blog/2019/Nov/11/be-ready-meet-lord>

Bonus Stuff

1 John 4:7-21 (NASB)

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. **8** The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. **9** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. **13** By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. **14** We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. **15** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in

him, and he in God. **16** We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. **17** By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. **18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. **19** We love, because He first loved us. **20** If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. **21** And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Love Gives

By John Oxenham

Love ever gives.
Forgives, outlives,
And ever stands
With open hands.
And while it lives,
It gives,
For this is love's prerogative—
To give, and give, and give.

- William Arthur Dunkerley, English journalist, novelist, and poet authored his poetry under the name, John Oxenham

First John - Literary Features

From the ESV Study Bible

First John is ostensibly an epistle, but its content is more fluid than what is found in most NT epistles. There is no epistolary salutation, nor is there a conventional epistolary conclusion. A more accurate designation is to call this book a treatise or pamphlet. Alternately, it can be read as an address or loosely structured sermon. The topic changes with virtually every paragraph, so the best advice for reading the book is to "think paragraphs."

Nonetheless, even though the structure of 1 John is not strictly linear, the author keeps coming back to topics that have been introduced earlier, so that readers can profitably think of the book as being arranged like a musical symphony. The main theme is *tests by which we can know if we are in Christ*-beliefs and attitudes that authenticate one's claims to be a Christian. Under that umbrella, subordinate themes appear: Christology (doctrine about the person and work of Christ); walking in the light; love; and the need to reject fallen, worldly culture. These topics weave in and out of the book. The book is structured on an implied dialectical principle in which John continuously seeks to oppose viewpoints that are contrary to his assertions. For example, John's assertions that Christ has come in the flesh (1:1-3 and 4:2) are an implied refutation of those who

deny the incarnation. Finally, there is an incipient poetry and mysticism about John's writing, so that, for example, a lot of what John asserts about the Christian life is embodied in great symbols like light and darkness, or walking and abiding in Christ.

- *ESV Study Bible*, Introduction to 1 John, Literary Features, p. 2428.

The Walk We Talk

By Steven A. Bush

So let us walk the walk the walk we talk,
Proclaim the Rock and grow the flock,
Sure some will squawk and mock and balk,
But some will seek and ask and knock.

There is no time to sit and gawk,
For time is ticking off the clock,
And soon their ships will leave the dock
With blinded souls hell bound for shock.

We have keys for hearts still locked,
With truth and love we come well stocked.
The road is narrow but is not blocked,
Our Message is no poppycock.

Let us paint with paint and not with chalk,
Risk stones and jeers as laughingstocks.
Let us walk the walk the walk we talk,
Proclaim the Rock and grow the flock.

- PSB <>, Friday, March 7, 2014

What is Easy Believism?

By S. Michael Houdmann

<https://www.gotquestions.org/easy-believism.html>

Question: *"What is easy believism?"*

Answer: Easy believism is a somewhat derogatory term used by opponents of the view that one needs only to believe in Jesus in order to be saved. From this they conclude that those who hold to [sola fide](#) ("faith alone") teach that no corresponding need exists for a committed life of Christian discipleship as proof of salvation; however, that is not what sola fide means. True faith in Christ will always lead to a changed life. Another common usage of the term easy believism is in regards to those who believe they're saved because they prayed a prayer—with no real conviction of sin and no real faith in Christ. Praying a prayer is easy—thus the term easy believism—but there is more to salvation than mouthing words.

Much of the debate over easy believism is unnecessary and is based on a misunderstanding of the Scriptures. The Bible is clear that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The essence of this doctrine is found in [Ephesians 2:8–9](#): *“For by grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”* So we see that faith, given as a gift by God, is what saves us. But the next verse tells of the results of that salvation: *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* Rather than being saved by some easy act of our own wills, we are saved by the hand of God Almighty, by His will and for His use. We are His servants, and from the moment of salvation by faith, we embark on a journey of pre-ordained good works that are the evidence of that salvation. If there is no evidence of growth and good works, we have reason to doubt that salvation ever truly took place. *“Faith without works is dead”* ([James 2:20](#)), and a dead faith is not a saving faith.

“Faith alone” does not mean that some believers follow Christ in a life of discipleship, while others do not. The concept of the “carnal Christian,” as a separate category of non-spiritual believer, is completely unscriptural. The idea of the carnal Christian says that a person may receive Christ as Savior during a religious experience but never manifest evidence of a changed life. This is a false and dangerous teaching in that it excuses various ungodly lifestyles: a man may be an unrepentant adulterer, liar, or thief, but he’s “saved” because he prayed a prayer as a child; he’s just a “carnal Christian.” The Bible nowhere supports the idea that a true Christian can remain carnal for an entire lifetime. Rather, God’s Word presents only two categories of people: Christians and non-Christians, believers and unbelievers, those who have bowed to the Lordship of Christ and those who have not (see [John 3:36](#); [Romans 6:17–18](#); [2 Corinthians 5:17](#); [Galatians 5:18–24](#); [Ephesians 2:1–5](#); [1 John 1:5–7](#); [2:3–4](#)).

While the security of salvation is a biblical fact based upon the finished work of salvation by Christ, it is certainly true that some of those who seemed to have “made a decision” or “accepted Christ” may not genuinely be saved. As noted before, true salvation is not so much our accepting Christ as it is His accepting us. We are saved by the power of God for the purpose of God, and that purpose includes the works that give evidence of our conversion. Those who continue to walk according to the flesh are not believers ([Romans 8:5–8](#)). This is why Paul exhorts us to *“examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith”* ([2 Corinthians 13:5](#)). The “carnal” Christian who examines himself will soon see that he/she is not in the faith.

[James 2:19](#) says, *“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”* The type of “belief” demons have can be compared to the intellectual assent made by those who “believe” in Jesus in the fact that He exists or that He was a good person. Many unbelievers say, “I believe in God” or “I believe in Jesus”; others say, “I prayed a prayer, and the preacher said I was saved.” But such prayers and such belief do not necessarily signal a change of heart. The problem is a misunderstanding of the word [believe](#). With true salvation comes genuine repentance and real life change. [Second Corinthians 5:17](#) says that those who are in Christ are a

“new creation.” Is it possible that the new person Christ creates is one who continues to walk in the carnality of the flesh? No.

Salvation is certainly free, but, at the same time, it costs us everything. We are to die to ourselves as we change into the likeness of Christ. Where easy believism fails is its lack of recognition that a person with faith in Jesus will lead a progressively changed life. Salvation is a free gift from God to those who believe, but discipleship and obedience are the response that will no doubt occur when one truly comes to Christ in faith.

Recommended Resource: [So Great Salvation by Charles Ryrie](#)

- While he is not the author of every article on GotQuestions.org, for citation purposes, you may reference our CEO, S. Michael Houdmann.