

1 John 3 – Part Q

1 John 3:14-15

1Jn 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death. ¹⁵ Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

In order to be successful in various things, it is critical that an individual knows something. I have a man who works on my tractors, and he has been working on all kinds of heavy equipment for probably 40 years or more. He is incredibly knowledgeable of what he is doing and through that knowledge he has developed a very meaningful skill. Things are no different in the spiritual realm. There are certain truths that every believer must “**know**”. Having the right kind of knowledge can deeply impact a person’s life and not having a certain level of knowledge can often actually destroy a person’s life. Just think of all of the young people who have been killed in an automobile at a very early age for driving too fast or for not being careful. Not having the right kind of knowledge can deeply impact a person’s life. In the Garden of Eden, the most important element in the garden was “**the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**”. If you remember the prayer that Solomon prayed in [2 Chronicles 1:10](#), he asked God to give him both wisdom and “**knowledge**” so that he could rightly lead and judge the people that God had placed him over. [Proverbs 1:7](#) says

Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

[Proverbs 10:14](#) declares that “**wise people store up knowledge**”. If you did a careful study of how the word “**knowledge**” is utilized in the book of Proverbs, what you would find is that God is constantly contrasting someone who has godly “**knowledge**” with someone whom he calls a “**fool**”. In [Isaiah 11:2](#), it lists seven spiritual attributes that would rest on Christ, and v2 says the following,

Isa 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

In [Jeremiah 3:15](#), God reveals the kinds of shepherds that he would give to his people,

Jer 3:15 And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

It is said of Daniel that God gave him knowledge and understanding and an excellent spirit. [Hosea 4:6](#) says that God’s “**people are destroyed for lack of knowledge**”. In [Romans 1:28](#), Paul states what God did to those who did not like to retain Him in their knowledge,

Ro 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

When men and women are living in accordance to Christ, notice what [2 Corinthians 2:14](#) says that God does with those people,

2Co 2:14 Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

Paul made this remarkable statement in [Philippians 3:8](#) when he said,

Php 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

It is this kind of yearning for God’s knowledge that makes someone spiritual. Paul prayed in [Colossians 1:10](#) that we would be “**increasing in the knowledge of God**”. Unfortunately, the problem that many people have is described in [2 Timothy 3:7](#) when it says that they are “**always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth**”. [2 Peter 1:2-3](#) says,

2Pe 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

In other words, that which pertains to life and godliness comes through the knowledge of God and Christ. So from a very practical perspective, the less knowledge that someone has of the things of God and of the truth of God, the less they will be able to live a life of godliness. Think of it this way – it is impossible to be godly without God and without a knowledge of God. A person cannot be a good engineer if they do not have a knowledge of engineering. A person cannot be an excellent doctor if they have no knowledge of the body and of medicine. For us, these kind of things are more than obvious. However when it comes to spiritual matters, too often people seem to think that they can be godly without a meaningful, accurate, and working knowledge of God in their life. Certainly, nothing could be any further from the truth. There simply are certain things that we have to know spiritually and then incorporate into our life accordingly, and without that knowledge we cannot and will not lead a meaningful Christian life that honors God. Spiritual knowledge in the things of God is utterly critical to the Christian life.

In [1 John 3:14](#), John says that a believer “**knows**” something vital to their Christian life because of something else that they do. I.e., in this case there is a direct relationship between what someone does and how that relates to what they know. For instance, if a person has an affair outside of their marriage, they know that they are unfaithful. They know that. No one has to tell them that they are unfaithful. What they are doing leads to a certain level of knowledge. In the case of this verse, John says that believers know that they are of God and “**have passed from death to life because they love the brethren.**” Their loving other believers leads to a very strategic knowledge and accompanying assurance of their salvation.

It is also important to appreciate that the primary verbs used in this passage for the word “**know**” and “**have passed**” are in the perfect tense, indicative mood. The indicative mood means is that this knowing and passing from one state to another are actual facts, and the perfect tense means that what has happened to the individual is permanent. So, what John says that they “**know**” is that they have “**passed from death to life**”, but that assurance is a direct by-product of the fact that they genuinely love other Christians. Another way of stating this is that the believer knows that they have eternal life. The actual word for “**have passed**” is the Greek word “*metabaino*”. The prefix “*meta*” means to have a change of position or a change of a person’s state. In this case, it means both. Positionally we are no longer “**in Adam**”, but we are now “**in Christ**”. We are no longer a part of Satan’s kingdom, but we are now a part

of the kingdom of God. Everything has changed for the believer. So the word means to pass over from one place to another place. The verb is in the perfect tense which means that it is something that happened in the past to the believer and now has permanent results. By using the perfect tense, John is simply saying that what happened to the believer when he was saved was permanent.¹ Once again, this is one of those little nuggets in the Scriptures which testify to the reality of eternal security. It is the idea that the believer has passed from spiritual death into spiritual life permanently and eternally. Every person is either living “**in death**” or “**in life**”. In our terminology we say that someone is either lost or saved. John says that they are either “**in death**” or “**in life**”. Think of it this way. A person cannot keep going from life to death to life to death and to life to death. However, that is exactly what a number of denominations teach, and it is a gross theological error. When an individual passes from death into life, it is a permanent work of God in their life.

Listen to the conclusion that John comes to in [1 John 5:13](#) when he provides his closing statement as to why he has even written this particular letter.

1Jn 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe* in the name of the Son of God.

If there is any one thing that God wants a believer to be absolutely sure of, it is knowing that they are saved. So what John does is give to the believer certain attributes that are characteristic of someone who has eternal life, and in these particular verses he says that we can know that we have eternal life because we have a genuine love and affection for other believers. The word “**know**” in v14 and 15 is the Greek word “*oida*”. Now, there are two primary words in the Greek language for “**know**”. One is the word “*oida*” and the other is the Greek word “*ginosko*”. “*Ginosko*” refers to the kind of knowledge that someone gains through personal experience, and when you learn something this way what you learn takes on great value and importance to you.² In my case, for instance, I have gained a kind of personal knowledge about the use of table saws. I have learned something that unfortunately you can only learn one way. We learn to drive by driving, or we learn how to play baseball by actually playing baseball. We learn how to cook by cooking, or how to garden by actually gardening. We learn all of these things by personally doing them. The verb “*oida*”, however, is somewhat different in that it represents what someone learns through perception. I was talking to someone recently who indicated that they had grown up in a family that argued all the time, and the result was that they saw and understood the tragic results of living in that kind of environment. Their perception was accurate and caused them to never want to grow up in an argumentative setting. They had seen all of the negative results of arguing all the time, and had made it a goal of their life to not live that way. What they saw and perceived gave them a certain kind of knowledge that was of great benefit for their life.

“*Oida*” could also correctly be called an intuitive knowledge. It is an absolute knowledge. For instance, we all know certain things absolutely, and the things that we know absolutely have a more governing influence on our life than things of which we are not certain. From a spiritual perspective, there are certain things that people simply cannot know intuitively unless they actually become children of God.³ The lost person has trouble accepting this simply because he believes that he is just as smart as anyone else, and especially another Christian – and he is. However, spiritual perception has nothing whatsoever to do with intelligence. In fact, intelligence is often a hindrance to spiritual knowledge and perception.

Many of the most intelligent people in the world will die in their sins because they refused to truly believe God. Without the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life, it is impossible for them to know God at a personal level. They can see His creation and they can understand some of His particular attributes, but they cannot know Him at a saving level.

Now, what John is saying here is that true believers recognize that one of the attributes of genuine salvation is a love for other believers. They have perceived that, they have watched that, and they have come to the settled conclusion of the second part of v14 which says that **“he who does not love his brother abides in death”**. John is clearly stating that one definitive evidence of someone actually being saved is that they consistently demonstrate their love for other believers. The individual is more than willing to deny himself in order to benefit another believer who has a need. So if someone consistently claims to be a believer, but they do not demonstrate a meaningful love for other Christians, then John says that the individual is abiding **“in death”**. In fact, in v15 John actually calls the person a **“murderer”**, and then makes the statement that the believer knows that that kind of individual does not have **“eternal life abiding in him”**. John cannot make a bolder statement. In our terminology, he simply says that that person is not saved.

Now, all of this has to become practical for the believer. This is an essential proof that believers are in fact believers. What is that proof? It is that they **“love the brethren”**. They love being with other believers. At a personal level, it is nearly impossible to keep me away from church. Obviously, I am the pastor and have an obligation to be at church when certain activities are being performed. I teach, I minister, I counsel, but please be assured that the primary reason that I am at church is because I **“love the brethren”**. You are my family. There is not another place on the planet that I would rather be than in this church. I love each one of you deeply. You are the men and women that God has anchored into my life, and you are the men and women that impact my life the most. You are not just members to me, but you are the best friends that a man could have, and you are the best spiritual family that a man could have. Whenever I look at you I see Christ. I see God at work in your life and in your heart and in your families. I see that you have been given the same life that God gave to me and that you are growing and developing in your Christian life. I see that you have a hunger for God and a hunger for his church. As Paul said it in [Ephesians 2:10](#), it is obvious that you are God's **“workmanship”**. The Interlinear Bible translates that word as **“masterpiece”**. What a great picture, what a great word. I see that you are becoming more Christlike every year, and it is a stunning picture to my heart of what John is saying here in these verses.

My heart is grieved for those people who never experience a deep love for other believers. They are missing out on one of the most important elements of the Christian life. It would do every one of us the most good to simply go up to another believer and simply say to them that “I love you”. This seems so utterly difficult, almost painful for some people. For men, it just does not seem to be manly. From my perspective as a believer, I could care less about being manly. My real interest is to be like Christ, and if there was ever anyone who expressed love for other people, it was Jesus. I am a hugger and it is simply another way of my expressing to someone that I love them. I remember a good number of years ago when a particular individual attended this church for a short period of time. I was at the back of the church after the service saying goodbye to people as they left and as was my habit I would give everyone a hug. This individual knew that and when they approached me, they placed their hand out as a gesture

for me not to hug them as if there was something wrong with that. I honored that and as far as I know I never hugged that individual or even tried to from that point forward. In my mind, there was something strategically missing in that individual's life. What was it? In my mind, and to this day, I do not believe that what was missing was love. What I believe was missing was salvation. Why do I say that? It is because after almost two decades I have never seen genuine love either demonstrated or expressed in that person's life. Honestly, it is quite sad.

The truth is that when God genuinely saves someone, God is the one who actually places His love for other believers into the new believer's heart. When I first got saved you could not keep me away from church. I just loved other Christians and I wanted to be with them all of the time. Please do not miss the point of what John is saying. He is saying that it is our love for other believers that is the evidence that we have "**passed from death to life**". This is what God says is proof that an individual is actually saved. I have heard so many stories in so many churches of arguing, bitterness, strife, and unloving actions that it only leads me to believe that many of the individuals who are involved have never experienced eternal life. John is going to keep saying that believers are to love one another over and over and over. He is going to keep it before our eyes and not let us deviate from this remarkable truth. This thing of genuinely loving our brothers and sisters in Christ is the proof, the final proof, and the glorious proof that we truly are saved. In [Galatians 5:22](#) Paul gives what he calls "**the fruit of the Spirit**", and the first attribute that he provides is the word "**love**".

What stands out in this section of Scripture is that a genuine love for other believers is what actually serves as the evidence that a believer truly has God's life in them. In [1 John 3:16–18](#), what John will say is the evidence of our love for other people, and especially other believers, is that we are willing to personally sacrifice things for their benefit and their blessing. Trust me, this is an easy thing to say, but a very difficult thing often times to do. We become attached to our possessions, to our wealth, to our schedules and priorities, and to the blessings that God has placed in our life. We become more concerned about living for self, whereas God is more concerned about our dying to self. In fact, the next section in this study may challenge us at a personal level more than any other passage in [1 John](#).

ENDNOTES

¹ Wuest, 152.

² Vine, 628.

³ Zodhiates, 509.

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