

Your Salvation and Loving Your Spouse

Write out 1 John 4:20-21, but substitute your spouse's name for "his brother".

Does this sound extreme? Do you see that the love you have for your spouse functions as proof of your salvation (or lack thereof)? In fact, the entire first epistle of John is dedicated to answering the question, "How can I know that I am saved – what evidence should I be able to see as proof of my salvation?" (cf. 1 John 5:13) In a broader sense, a claim to love God is a delusion if not accompanied by unselfish love for other Christians.

Since we are to understand every verse of Scripture in the context of the whole Bible, let's take a look at other passages to get a full and accurate impact of what this passage means.

After each passage, summarize what it says about *true* Christian love and service.

Jn. 14:23-24 _____

Mt. 22:37-39 _____

2 Cor. 5:14-15 _____

Josh. 22:5 _____

1 Jn. 4:9-11 _____

1 Pet. 4:8-10

1 Cor. 13:4-7

Ro. 12:9-10

Jn. 13:14-15

Phil. 2:3-5

Gal. 6:10

1 Jn. 3:16-18

Jas. 4:17

These are characteristics of love and service that are found in every growing Believer! How do you stack up? Are you showing evidence of genuine saving faith in how you love your spouse? How would your spouse answer this question?

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

2 Cor. 13:5

In closing, note what John MacArthur has to say about this very important concept:

Self-examination is especially important in an age like ours. When statistics tell us that more than a billion people in the world are Christians, one must wonder who established the criteria. Such figures certainly do not square with what Jesus said about many on the broad road and few on the narrow. Checking a box on a survey to indicate that you are a born-again Christian does not guarantee your eternal destiny. Even those who belong to the right church can be deceived and utterly devoid of the righteousness of God through Christ.

There are several categories of deceived people in the church. Obviously there are hypocrites, those who merely try to appear religious. Others are nominal, superficial people who call themselves Christians because they have gone to Sunday school since childhood or “made a decision” for Christ but have no ongoing interest in living out the implications of faith. Still others are heavily involved in church or religious activities; they know the facts of the gospel but are not obedient to the Word of God. Perhaps they go to church because they are looking for good feelings, blessings, experiences, healings, miracles, or ecstatic gifts. Maybe they are committed to the denomination, the church, the organization, but not the Word of God. They may love theology purely as an academic interest. Whatever the reasons, many (Matt. 7:22) who have identified themselves with Christ and Christianity will be turned away at the Judgment ...

Pursuing the standard of perfection does not mean we can never fail. It means that when we fail we deal with it. Those with true faith will fail—and in some cases, fail pathetically and frequently—but a genuine believer will, as a pattern of life, be confessing sin and coming to the Father for forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Perfection is the standard; direction is the test. If your life does not reveal growth in grace and righteousness and holiness, you need to examine the reality of your faith—even if you believe you have done great things in the name of Christ.¹

¹ MacArthur, J., F. (1997, c1988). *The Gospel according to Jesus : What does Jesus mean when he says "follow me"*. Includes index. (Electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Academic and Professional Books, Zondervan Pub. House.