

1 Yochanan ~ Part 4

In a world defined by superficial connections, the profound truth found in 1 Yochanan 3:16 becomes essential. Knowing that **Yeshua** laid down His life for us compels us to show love - not just in words, but in action. Just as a parent sacrifices for their child, we must be willing to sacrifice for others, embodying the love Yeshua exemplified. This principle challenges us to examine our hearts: are we mirroring His love in our daily lives?

Love in Action

3¹⁶ The way that we have come to know love is through His having laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers! ¹⁷ If someone has worldly possessions and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against Him, how can he be loving God? ¹⁸ Children, let us love not with words and talk, but with actions and in reality!

Yochanan, like all the **Brit Hadashah** writers, retains the customary **Jewish** emphasis on deeds. While **Ya'akov** speaks of deeds as necessary expressions of faith, **Yochanan** stresses deeds as necessary expressions of love. Similarly, **Sha'ul** at Galatians 5:6

¹⁹ Here is how we will know that we are from the truth and will set our hearts at rest in His presence: ²⁰ if our hearts know something against us, God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts know nothing against us, we have confidence in approaching God;

Our consciences can be misguided (1 Corinthians 8:7–13), but if we are loving our brothers with deeds of kindness, not merely with our feelings, then we can quiet our consciences. With these verses, compare Psalm 139:23–24: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way!"*

²² then, whatever we ask for, we receive from Him; because we are obeying His commands and doing the things that please Him. ²³ This is His command: that we are to trust in the person and power of His Son Yeshua the Messiah and to keep loving one another, just as he commanded us. ²⁴ Those who obey his commands remain united with him and he with them. Here is how we know that he remains united with us: by the Spirit whom he gave us.

The role of the **Ruach** has been assumed throughout this epistle, but He is mentioned outright here for the first time.

The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error

4¹ Dear friends, don't trust every spirit. On the contrary, test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Don't trust every spirit. On the contrary, test the spirits to see whether they are from God (compare 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22). This is an important principle for our age. After years of losing touch with the spiritual realm altogether, many people are rediscovering it but lack the discernment to know which spirits *"are from God."* Not every inner voice or feeling is from **God**. Some are merely from us, either from being overtired or overwrought, or from our own wishes and fears. Others are truly from the spiritual realm, but, unfortunately, from **HaSatan** and his demons, not from **God** and His angels. By the same token, not every prophet or religious teacher is from **God**; yet some are. Verses 2–3 give one criterion for testing the spirits. Another is that *"spirits from God"* should give wholehearted support to everything the **Bible** says.

² Here is how you recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges that Yeshua the Messiah came as a human being is from God, ³ and every spirit which does not acknowledge

Yeshua is not from God - in fact, this is the spirit of the Anti-Messiah. You have heard that he is coming. Well, he's here now, in the world already!

God's Spirit does not condone false doctrine. By the end of the first century, a view of **Yeshua** arose that denied His true humanity. In this view, the **Son of God** assumed human form for a time, but the divine **Yeshua** departed from the earthly **Yeshua** before the crucifixion. **Yochanan** insisted that **Yeshua** had come in the flesh. **God** was truly and fully incarnate in **Yeshua** of **Nazareth**. The words "*spirit who does not confess Yeshua*" show that **Yochanan** knew people were speaking by the power of spirits other than the **Ruach HaKodesh**.

⁴ You, children, are from God and have overcome the false prophets, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore, they speak from the world's viewpoint; and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God doesn't listen to us. This is how we distinguish the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error. ¹

Yeshua promised false prophets (Matityahu 7:15, 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26); see also 2 Kings 2:1. The world listens to them. True then, and true now. Any number of false prophets, basing their pronouncements on their own imaginations (since they are from the world), on demonic influences (Acts 13:6–12, 16:16–18) and on what people want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3–4) are available to distract and miseducate the public. You can find them in the media, on the streets, in the schools and universities, in many homes, and, yes, in the pulpits.

Among the false prophets whom the world will listen to will be some who have "*gone out from us*", (2:19), who have at one time or another claimed to be **Messianic** but have renounced their faith. It helps to see that **Yochanan** recognized this category of people. His advice is to beware of their errors, but not to become preoccupied with trying to win them back (compare 1 Timothy 1:20). Rather, we should take as our guideline that whoever knows **God** listens to us; whoever is not from **God** doesn't listen to us; like **Yochanan**, we can be satisfied with that.

If you are experiencing conflict with a spouse or partner, consider how 1 Yochanan 3:16 challenges you to lay down your life for your loved ones. Schedule a 'talking time' where you both can express your feelings honestly and listen to each other without interruptions. This practice of vulnerability and love can help mend bridges and promote reconciliation in your relationship.

¹ 1 Yochanan 3:16 – 4:1-6