

The Importance of Love

(1 John 4:7-21)

INTRODUCTION:

1. There is much in the book of 1 John concerning the things we are to...
 - A. Do/not do (1 Jn. 3:4-7 – “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”).
 - B. Believe/not believe (1 Jn. 4:1, 6 – “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world... ⁶ We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”).
 - C. Love/not love (1 Jn. 2:15-17 – “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”).
2. Brethren, we talk a lot about what we are to do/not do, and what we are to believe/not believe. So, today I want to focus instead on the importance of love in the life of the Christian.
 - A. For, without love, just like without faith, we cannot please God or be one of His children.
 - B. And, God’s very essence is love, which John says requires great many things in the lives of those who claim to believe in Him and know Him.
3. So, today I want to look at how John explains that our love 1) proves who we are, 2) shows God to the world, 3) brings confidence in our salvation, 4) must be real and expressed to our brethren.

BODY:

I. Love proves who we are (4:7-11).

- A. We are to love one another because love comes from God (4:7-8).
 1. John begins his *exhortation* to love by expressing the love (Beloved) he seeks from them
 - a. So, if we want to be loved, we must show love first (Matt. 7:12 – “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”).
 - b. As we shall see, this type of love is proven in God’s love for us!
 2. We must love because true love *comes from* God and proves we are His (4:7-8).
 - a. The simple but sublime foundation of this exhortation is that *love comes from God* (4:7)!
 - i. Those born of God and who truly know God live their lives in love that mimics the divine love shed upon us.
 - ii. True love is always expressed in action (1 Jn. 3:18 – “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”).
 - iii. True love is expressed in obedience to God’s will (1 Jn. 5:2 – “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.”).
 - iv. Thus, the mantra “love is love” so popular today is false, seeing it supports love that lacks the godliness and beneficial nature of biblical “agape” love.
 - b. If we claim to know God, we must live in God, because His nature/essence is *love* (4:8).
 - i. This means that everything God does is focused in love—even His judgement!
 - ii. Claiming to know God without loving is like claiming to have a close relationship with one whose language we can’t speak and whose culture/nature we do not know.
 - iii. Without love have no point of connection with God or His nature!
- B. Divine love is expressed in selfless, sacrificial action (4:9-11).

1. God *manifested*, made known, His love by *sending His Son* into the world for the benevolent purpose of bringing life to the dying sinner (4:9-10).
 - a. God sent His “only begotten Son,” His unique, one of a kind Son into hostile territory to save those who created the hostility (4:9).
 - i. Same word used of Abraham’s son in Heb. 11:7 and shows God’s great love for sinners, seeing God did what He drew back from demanding of Abraham!
 - ii. It is God’s free, spontaneous, agape love expressed in self-sacrifice for our good that is the focus. And, our love must be a response to it and a reflection of it.
 - b. True love is not judged by how we love, but by how God loved in sending Christ to be the propitiation for our sins (4:10).
 - i. True love shed upon us doesn’t refuse to act based on the faults of the recipient, but acts so that forgiveness may be offered and reconciliation achieved.
 - ii. We act, or sacrifice, in love in hope of the greater good for those who receive it.
2. Since we are the recipients of such love, we ought to love one another (4:11).
 - a. Note that the obligation from God’s love is *not to love God, but one another* (Eph. 5:1-2 – “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma”).
 - b. Those who have been to the cross and seen God’s immeasurable, unmerited, sacrificial love can’t rightfully live a selfish, self-centered, easily offended, type of life.

II. Love shows God to the world (4:12-16).

- A. Though we can’t see God, God is seen indirectly through our love for one another (4:12).
 1. Our love is the strongest attestation God has in this world (Jn. 13:35 – “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”).
 2. Only through expressing godly love toward others is God’s love made perfect, or reaches its goal, in us.
 - a. What an amazing thought that is—that God loves us so that we will love, just as he has loved.
 - b. I think I am right in saying that God’s love not being perfected, or reaching its goal, in a Christian’s life of the main reasons Christians are...
 - i. Suspicious of one another and are so easily offended by one another, being self-centered and absorbed.
 - ii. Disconnected from their brethren, feeling no real obligation to support their brethren’s actions of hospitality and love, actions to further the spiritual growth of the congregation, etc.
 - c. There is a lot of growth in this area that is needed in this congregation! We are comfortable with not opening our lives and homes to one another. We feel no loving obligation to act, to disturb our little comfort box that we build around us!
 - d. But God is not comfortable with it, because it doesn’t show love!
- B. We know we abide in God’s love through the apostles’ testimony (4:13-16).
 1. The apostles revealed God’s love in Christ through the Spirit, being eye-witnesses of Christ and His work of redemption (4:13-14).
 2. Thus, their requirements for abiding in Christ must be obeyed (4:15-16).
 - a. It is those who confess faith in Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, who are brought into mutual habitation with God (4:15; remember 4:1-6)!
 - i. There is a direct connection of this mutual “dwelling” to God’s truth preached (1 Jn. 2:24-25 – “Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.”).

- ii. We need to appreciate God's love expressed in the truth being preached that we might believe and confess Christ as Savior/king and have this mutual habitation with God!
- b. And, since the *apostles knew and believed God's love* for us in *Christ*, we must accept their testimony as true concerning (4:16)...
 - i. God's *nature being love itself* and what that requires of those who would confess belief in and a relationship with God.
 - ii. Only those who *abide in love*, or live their lives in love, will abide in God and God in them!
 - 1) So, if we are going to claim to believe and know God, we must be loving as God has loved us—selfless, self-sacrificing love.
 - 2) Thus, acting on love for one another is vital to our spiritual life in Christ, for showing Christ to one another and the world.

III. Perfected love gives confidence in our salvation (4:17-18).

- A. Perfected love in our lives brings boldness, seeing it is our assurance that we are like God, that we will be on His side in the judgment (4:17).
 - 1. This is because those who live in love live like Christ lived.
 - 2. Thus, we can have confidence concerning the judgement day, seeing God sees our lives as they should be, following His example of love shown in Christ!
 - 3. So, we must be committed to love, to giving our lives to one another, or we are going to struggle to ever know the peace and confidence which God desires for our lives!
- B. Abiding in love casts out fear from our lives (4:18).
 - 1. We can't live in a **fear mentality** and claim to abide in love!
 - a. As we have seen, love produces confidence while fear produces torment, or a fearful expectation of punishment at the judgment.
 - i. These two, love/torment cannot abide together in the life of a Christian.
 - ii. For, although we fear God and keep His commandments, which involves loving one another, this is to produce in us a lack of fear, or torment, concerning the judgment.
 - b. Brethren, we are to be those who are looking for Christ to return, for that Day, that we might be with Him, that our love might have its end, the salvation of our souls!
 - 2. We can't live with a **fear mentality**:
 - a. Is concerned about how my action of love toward another will affect my life, how much I will be inconvenienced, whether the other deserves my actions, whether I will get hurt!
 - b. It is all about self and results in me pulling my life in, not interacting, and in only doing what is comfortable, what does not require great commitment!
 - c. A relationship with God built mainly on fear will never produce the growth and security God wants for us, lacking the motivation to grow, and only doing what one perceives he/she "must" do!
 - 3. We must live with a **love mentality**:
 - a. Is concerned about what I can do for others, what others need, what can be done to mend a broken relationship.
 - b. Is selfless, self-sacrificing, others oriented, and therefore *bold*!
 - c. Is what causes our relationship with God to grow, what causes God's love to reach its goal in us, what casts out fear and brings about confidence!

IV. Love must be real and actively expressed (4:19-21).

- A. Proven in how we love God *because He first loved us* (4:19).
 - 1. God didn't wait around for us to love Him before He acted on our behalf.
 - 2. God's love, agape love, acted for our good with great *sacrifice* despite our undeserving ways!
- B. We are living a lie if we claim to love God while hating our brother in Christ (4:20-21).

1. Let us not make the mistake in assuming that we don't "hate" anyone, so we aren't addressed in this passage. Hate can simply mean to love less, or to not love as we should (Lk. 14:26).
2. So, since it is far more difficult to truly love God who we haven't seen than it is to love our brethren that we see each day, our love for one another says whether we love God!
 - a. We can see our brethren's needs, their condition, and can ask of them and know what we need to do and do it.
 - b. If we struggle to show God's love to those around us, why would we think that we appreciate and know God's love for us and that we have love for God!
3. Loving God begins with loving our brethren.
 - a. Loving our brethren opens us up to loving God more, making us more like Him and more appreciative of Him.
 - b. Could it be that if we do not appreciate God's love the way we should, that we do not truly understand and appreciate what we have in Christ, that it is because we have never truly committed ourselves to show that kind of love to one another? Yes!
 - c. Loving one another with selfless, self-sacrificing love changes us, it makes us more and more like God, which brings about a greater and closer fellowship with God!

CONCLUSION:

1. I hope that I have given you cause to consider your love and commitment to your brethren and that it will result in you...
 - A. **Prove you are truly a child of God** by your commitment to love your brethren here by giving your life to their betterment, to their encouragement, to their salvation.
 - B. Committing yourself to **show God to the world by your love** for your brethren and those in the world.
 - C. Being **confident in your salvation at the Judgment**, knowing that God's love is truly perfected in you.
 - D. Whole-heartedly to **commit yourself to loving your brethren who you have seen**, seeing that without doing so, you can't love **God**, who has commanded this love, **who you haven't seen!**
2. Will you start your journey toward loving like Christ by responding to the gospel in F-R-C-B-LF?