



Perfected Love That Gives Assurance pt. 2

Do you have confidence for the Day of Judgement?

For some of us, that question, may be a bit unsettling. But God doesn't want us to be uncertain about our Salvation. He wants us to have confidence and set our hope fully on His return to bring us home to Heaven with Him.

This month we've been focusing on 1 John 4:13-21

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his 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 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for 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. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he 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: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

1 John 4:13-21 (ESV)

Last time we noticed how John says, "If God's love abides in us, we can have confidence in the Day of Judgement."

In other words, as we practice love towards others, the way God has loved us – we have fellowship with God. And fellowship with God should give us confidence for the Day of Judgement.

One of the ways we can apply this love in our lives is by reaching out in love to those in need. And most of us probably do a pretty good job reaching out with love when we see someone in need. But as we ended the last article, we said there is another aspect of God's love we need to imitate, but it can prove to be a bit more challenging for us.

Love your enemies

Part of loving like God, is loving your enemies, and that just isn't a natural response for us. But look how Jesus tells us to love our enemy.

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ To one who strikes you on the cheek,

offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

³² "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. ³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." *Luke 6:27-36 (ESV)*

How are you doing with "loving your enemies"?

It's almost natural for us to respond in love when someone:

- Compliments us on being a good parent
- Pays for our lunch
- Tells us they missed us when we were gone
- Gives us a hug and says how much they appreciate us

But it's not as easy when they:

- Don't agree with your parenting
- Stop talking and walk away when you enter the room
- Gossip about you
- Mistreat or disrespect you

When we have enemies our natural response isn't to love them. But Jesus tells us we need to love our enemies and to be merciful, like our heavenly Father is merciful.

So how do we respond with love towards our enemies?

Self-examination.

Without a doubt there will always be people who don't like you because you stand for Christ. There are people who won't like you because of your political views, people who won't like you because you home-school your kids, or because you don't home-school your kids.

But what about the people who are your enemies because of something you've done to them?

We need to be willing to see that we may have done something wrong to stir up a hate response in the person who is our enemy. Instead of just seeing their fault in being our enemy, we need to make sure we haven't done something to arouse a hate response from them.

Remember how Jesus said, ***"Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"*** ***Matthew 7:3***

Focus on what's good

It's easy to focus on the negative, especially when it's your enemy. But Paul tells to focus on what's good.

“⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Philippians 4:8-9

Everyone has good qualities, sometimes you just have to look past the negative to see the positive.

My dad told me a story one time about an elderly lady who would attend the funerals of everyone who passed away in the town where she lived. At every funeral when the services were over she would walk up to the casket and then say something nice about the person who had died.

The day came where the funeral she attended was of the man who was the town drunk. He managed to offend and upset everyone in town – even his own family.

At the funeral there were only a couple people who actually attended. After the service was over, the elderly lady walked up to the casket, stared for a few seconds and then said, “He had lovely teeth.”

Hopefully we can do a little better than that, but I think you get the point. Think about it. If you begin to focus on the things which are good about someone instead of the negative, don't you think that will help you to love that person?

God loved us when we were His enemies

Ultimately, the way we learn to love our enemies is by focusing on how God loved us when we were His enemies.

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—“
Ephesians 2:1-5 (ESV)

We've all committed sins against God that make us cringe when we think about them. The Almighty God of heaven, you and I have - rebelled and trespassed and sinned against. He gave us life and every blessing we enjoy. But despite all that He did for us, we sinned against Him. We deserved death, both at the moment we sinned against Him, and eternal death thereafter.

... But God... But God being rich in mercy, because of the *GREAT* love with which He loved us!

This is how we learn to love our enemy. We focus and meditate on the love which God showed us when we were His enemy. Then we strive a little more each day to imitate that love in our

lives towards our enemies.

Loving our enemies can be difficult and challenging, but that's exactly what God did for you and me. This is the love (sacrificial love) that we are supposed to imitate. And this love includes our enemies.

Love the poor, cripple, lame, and blind

Mike Puterbaugh made a suggestion in our Small Group of one way we could move towards this type of love. He reminded us of what Jesus said in Luke 14.

“¹² He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Luke 14:12-14 (ESV)

Most likely there are members in our congregation who could, in a loose sense, fit into one of these categories. Now we're not saying that this puts them into the "enemy" category. But it might put them into a category where showing them love, is a challenge for you. Because this kind of love demands you sacrifice your comfort-zone. And isn't that part of the reason loving our enemies is difficult... we have to leave our comfort-zone?

So consider those members in our congregation who might not be getting the encouragement and attention they need. And then challenge yourself to move out of your comfort-zone and allow God's love to abide in you.

Our ultimate goal is to be transforming our life a little more each day into the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let's strive to be growing in our love for one another, building our confidence for the Day of Judgement.

By Roger Eccles