

THREE GREAT RESULTS OF TRUE BROTHERLY LOVE

1 John 3:19-24

Intro: It was rather late in our Lord's ministry on earth that he was asked a very important question. The question came from a Jewish scribe who seemed to have been impressed by the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a very important question, the answer of which should be of interest to every person on the face of the earth. There is so much to learn from the Old and New Testaments, so much wonderful teaching, and hundreds of commandments, that people who are interested in pleasing God would surely appreciate knowing where to start. Only Matthew and Mark record this incident. The scribe who had a lot of experience with the Scriptures, had probably wondered many times himself about what was the first commandment, or the greatest commandment, in the Law.

The Lord answered immediately by quoting from the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verses 4 and 5. This is what He, our Lord, said,

29 The first of all commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

And then, without any hesitation, our Lord went on to say,

31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

This commandment is found in Leviticus 19:18. But the incident in which the scribe gave his question to the Lord is found in Mark 12:28-34.

In the Lord's mind the scribe's question did not have just one answer. To be sure the commandment that He quoted first, was first, and still is first, but nevertheless it was inseparable from the commandment that our Lord quoted second.

To be sure the ten commandments were very important among all of the commandments of Scripture, especially since they were given to Moses twice on tables of stone, but they were not to be the starting place for the Jewish people. Now the importance of the first two is enhanced when you think of all of the commandments the Lord has given in both the Old and New Testaments. Some only applied before the death of Christ, but

no commandments given by men could begin to have the place that the commands of God are to have. God gave all of his commandment through men, but those men were speaking for God.

Now such commandments can only be obeyed by the grace and power of God. And I should add that no one will even be interested in obeying them unless God has done a work of grace in that person's heart. Then "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given unto us," as the Apostle Paul said in Romans 5:5. And so, since people who have trusted Christ are the only ones in whom the Spirit of God is dwelling, we are faced with the fact that you have to be a child of God before you can love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. But even we must spend our lives learning to love the Lord and each other the way He has commanded us to love. What a wonderful place heaven will be when we all love the Lord and each other in complete fulfillment of these commands.

Now in the epistle of 1 John which we are studying on Sunday morning, and in the Epistle of James which we are studying on Sunday night, both of these epistles place a heavy emphasis on the second of these two commandments. The Apostle John in his epistle says if we don't love the people of God, it is because we are not really saved. In 1 John 3:14 the Apostle John wrote these words:

We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. He was speaking in particular about our brothers (and sisters) in the family of God.

In the epistle of James there must have been a lot of Christians who were respecters of persons. They would treat a wealthy, well-dressed person who would come to church better than they would a poor man who was not well dressed. And James told them if this is the way we treat people, we are sinning. We Christians are to be characterized by love – love for the Persons of the Godhead first, and then love for each other. Even in our contact with our neighbors, love must prevail. The greatest illustration that we have ever been given of love is in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ who died to save us even before we loved him.

The love that we are to have for each other in the family of God was moved a step higher when the Lord with His disciples in the Upper Room just shortly before His arrest that night, and His crucifixion the next day,

said this which is recorded for us in John 13:34-35:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Love is described for us most fully in 1 Corinthians 13. Take some time today, if you can, to read that chapter carefully and prayerfully.

But now let us go to our text in 1 John 3:19 through 24, the end of the chapter.

We learned last week that our love is not to be hypocritical, just acting like we love people when we really don't! God knows the difference, and we know the difference, and other people are going to learn if we are not sincere in our love. And the Apostle John followed verse 18 by giving us *three great results of true brotherly love.*

Beginning with verse 19 the Apostle John adds this as assurance that we really are saved. You know, it's interesting how, when even true believers become lax about sin, that they begin to question their salvation. If we are disobedient toward the Lord because we don't really love certain other believers, our hearts condemn us. We know when we are disobeying God, and as verse 20 tells us, if our hearts tell us that things are not right in our lives, then God surely knows it because He is greater than our hearts. But if our hearts don't condemn us, then according to verse 21 we have confidence toward God. What kind of confidence? Confidence that we really know the Lord because we really do love the people of God – no exceptions!!!

In a few minutes we are going to be observing the Lord's Supper. Perhaps you remember that one thing the Apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers to do was, "let a man examine himself" (1 Cor. 11:28). What are we to be looking for? We are to be looking into our hearts to see if we have come to the Lord's Table with sin in our lives. A part of our memory verses for this week were these words:

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye so well:

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors (James 2:8-9).

Now if you come to the Lord's table, and you know in your heart that

your attitude toward some believer is not one of love. What do you do? Confess your sin to the Lord, and go ahead and partake of the bread and the cup. But purpose in your heart before God that you are going to deal with your attitude toward that person and make it right in your heart. Should you go to that person? Not unless you have told him or her how you feel about him. He never needs to know if he doesn't know. But your attitude needs to be made right with the Lord.

That same passage about the Lord's Supper says, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31). Whatever is not right before God, needs to be treated as sin even if no one knows anything about it.

But here is another result of true brotherly love. It is in 1 John 3:22. (Read.) All sin hinders prayer. To pray with known sin in our lives is what James calls, asking amiss. See James 4:3, "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss . . ." What a blessing it is to go back to the Lord in prayer after we have made something right which has been wrong. It is very significant that the Apostle John inserted 1 John 3:22 in this passage where he was writing about loving some brother or sister which you could not honestly say before that you loved them.

How important it is that we read the verses of the Bible in their context. This is one of the great verses in the Bible about prayer. And it lays a strong emphasis on keeping the Lord's commandments and doing the things that are pleasing in his sight. What things was James talking about? He was talking about how we should love one another, not just pretending that we do, but actually loving all of the Lord's people. Our effectiveness in prayer is directly related to our love for each other as the people of God. To pray according to the will of God (see 5:14-15) we must be living in the will of God.

Now there is a third result of true brotherly love that the Apostle John mentioned in 1 John 3, verses 24 and 25.

Bishop Westcott says that this is the first time in the epistle where reference is made to faith in action. But more will follow.

When we were saved, we believed on the name of God's Son Jesus Christ. But that was not the end of our believing. The Apostle John spoke of faith here as something that is unceasing, continuous, and

growing, or progressive as well as that can be exercised in a particular way in order to meet a special need, or needs. I am indebted to Bishop Westcott also for these insights into the language which the Apostle John used. We don't leave faith behind after we are saved; *we live by faith!*

And the same is true of our love. The more we keep the Lord's commandments, the more complete our obedience will be, and the more we love one another, the more our love grows, is perfected, and continues. This is what the Christian life is. We will never reach perfection either in the way we trust the Lord, or in the way we love each other, but we are moving continually in that direction. In heaven both will be complete.

But how all of this affects us now is a growing relationship with the Lord. We experience more of His indwelling power in our lives and the conviction of His indwelling presence which is made real in our lives by the Holy Spirit "which He hath given us."

The more we trust the Lord day by day, and the more we love each other, the greater will be our knowledge of his abiding in us. All of this means an enriching of our fellowship with God and our Lord Jesus Christ. More daily faith in the Lord, and more love for each other in Christ, has to lead to more fellowship with our Lord.

So let us continue to trust the Lord, and to love each other. There will not be room to receive the blessings which will come upon us.

So what are the three great results of loving each other? They are assurance of our salvation , answered prayer, and increased fellowship with God.