

THE LIFE OF LOVE

1 John 4:7-11

Intro: The Apostle John in his writings, covers all of the truth related to the Gospel and to the life the people of God are to live after they believe the Gospel. It is interesting to think about this because he wrote later that all of the other writers of Scripture toward the end of the first century. In the Gospel of John we have the Gospel of our salvation presented over and over again, but woven into that Book, the Gospel of John, we have much to help us in knowing how to live lives that are pleasing to God. The Gospel of John is a good book to give to a person who does not know the Lord, but it is also a book of the Bible that we as Christians need to read over and over again. It will strengthen our knowledge of the Gospel and increase our assurance of salvation. It gives us the foundational teaching on the ministry of the Holy Spirit which is so very important for all of us to know.

But then when we move on to 1 John, we find the Apostle John stating and repeating, and repeating again, the basic truths that not only have to do with our salvation, but those very same truths which give us guidance as to how we are to live for the Lord.

One thing that we all need to have written on our hearts after we receive the Lord Jesus as our Savior, is that salvation is a personal relationship with God as our heavenly Father, and with the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and with the Holy Spirit as our Teacher and as the One Who empowers us to live to please God. God speaks to us through His Word, and we speak to Him in prayer. We learn to go to Him for strength and guidance throughout our lives here on earth. The word for all of this is fellowship. We are saved to be kept from going to hell (and that is very important), but we are saved to know God, to walk in fellowship with Him, and to trust Him to guide us and to bless us as we walk with Him.

The Apostle John covers a lot of ground in five, reasonably short chapters, and yet those chapters are filled with truth that we need to know. The Holy Spirit led the Apostle John to deal with several subjects three times to impress their importance upon our minds and hearts. They were needed in those first century Christians living under Roman rule, and they have been needed by every generation of Christians from that day to this, and including our own generation! The Bible is never out-of-date. And that is a fact that we must not forget. People may laugh at us following

the teaching of “that old Book,” but let them laugh. Only feel sorry for them because if they don’t change their minds and start reading the Bible, you can be sure that some day they would give anything if they had only listened to what the Bible has to say to us.

Now in one way, when we come to this part of the epistle where we are this morning, we have reached the point with the Apostle John where he was approaching his summarization of all that he has been saying about the Christian life. I came across a statement of one who has written on this book of the Bible, and he said that beginning with 1 John 4:7 “St. John (as he called him) lays open the fulness of the Christian life” (Westcott, p. 146). In reading and re-reading from this point on to the end of the epistle, I am inclined to agree with him. Of course, there is much more to be said about the Christian life than we find here, but he shows that it is a life of love, a life of obedience, a life of overcoming the world, an eternal life, a life of holiness, a life of prayer, and so on and on.

Now we must not forget what the Apostle John has already said. We are still sinners even though we are saved. We live in a world that is opposed to the Gospel and to godly living. False teachers and false teaching are abounding everywhere and they create a lot of problems for us. But we are on God’s side. And God’s side is the side of truth. Whatever does not agree with God and His word is false. The reality of a person’s profession of faith is not to be judged on the basis of just what people say, but their words have to be backed up with a life that is in agreement with the Word of God.

But, as we come to the seventh verse of 1 John 4, and going all the way to the end of the fourth chapter the Apostle John emphasizes in a very convincing way that *the Christian life is a life of love* – not of love for the world, and certainly not a love for sin, but a love that you will always find in the heart of a person who really knows the Lord. It is a love that you will always find in the hearts of Christians for each other.

Now we might be inclined to say, Why didn’t the Apostle John speak here about our love for God? Well, our love for the Lord is the foundation upon all that the Apostle John has already said. But it is in our relationships with each other that we have the most trouble. And that was evidently the case in those early days. We love the Lord, and we love most of the people of God, but there are some Christians that we have trouble loving, is what we would have to say if we are being perfectly

honest. All of us are going to be perfect some day, but none of us are perfect *today!*

For those of us who are memorizing the epistle of James, we come to a very important passage this week. It has to do with our tongues. James said in the second verse of the third chapter,

For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

This is where a lot of our trouble comes from. In verse 5 of that same chapter, the Apostle James went on to say about the tongue, “Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth.”

How different things would be if what we are offended by in others, would cause us to ask ourselves, “I wonder what there is about me that is offensive to others. Or to take an offense as an occasion to pray for that other person, realizing that the Lord is not finished with them yet.

One of the men who spoke in a chapel service at Multnomah when I was on the faculty there, told about a sign he read in front of a building that was just being built. The sign read,

Under construction,
Open for observation,
But don't pass judgment until the job is finished.

That's a good thing for all of us to remember about each other. God is working on us. We are still under construction. But His job is not finished like it will be.

Now let us look at our text.

In reading this epistle don't you get the impression that the Apostle John was a dear old man? He really loved the Lord's people. He called them, “Beloved” not only because God loved them, but because he loved them too. And he just wasn't talking about them, but he included himself in what he was saying, “Beloved, let us love one another.” It was like he was saying, “You love me, and I will love you.”

Now that is a perfectly reasonable thing to ask of any child of God. Why? “Because love is of God.” Do you remember what the Apostle John wrote back in 3:1? Turn there and see. He said, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God.” It would be just as accurate to translate, and possibly even

better, to translate 3:1 as, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath given to us . . .” Paul said that “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). When you and I remember that God loves us, and that we have that love as a gift in us, then we have no excuses for not loving each other. In fact, our love for each other is proof that we are born of God, that we have His life in us, and that we know God.” It is no wonder that the Lord told His disciples in John 13:34 and 35, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have love you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know . . .”

And verse 8 tells us that the reverse is true. (Read verse 8.) The Apostle John began his epistle by telling us that “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Now he tells us that “God is love,” and he repeated it in verse 16. You will remember that the love of God for His children is likened to the love that a human father has for His children, caring for them, protecting them, available to them. The love of human fathers is necessarily limited because they are human, but the love of God is unlimited and inexhaustible, faithful to the unfaithful as well as to the faithful, because He is God. Even in trials that the Lord brings our way, we can count them as motivated by His love for us. “God is love.” All of creation was motivated by His love for His creatures, and especially His people. And the same is true in regeneration. For God to be love is to declare that He is a Person.

Verse 9 tells us that God’s love was expressed in the incarnation of His Son. His love for His own had to be revealed, “manifested.” It had to be expressed. And the depth of His love for us who were “dead in trespasses and in sins,” was that He gave “His only begotten Son,” the Son in Whom God had all His delight, to rescue us from spiritual death “that we might live through Him.” And it is this life that the Apostle John was let to reveal in terms of the Cross.

Regardless of how much we love the Lord, love cannot be adequately defined in terms of our love for Him. It is only by looking at and experiencing His love for us that we are in any position at all to understand the unique character of the love of God. As we will learn from verse 19, if we have not realized this before, “We love Him, because He first loved us.” The original says simply, “we love, because He first loved us.” Knowing the Lord we are all amazed that the whole world does not love Him, and yet in our sin we were like everyone else who is still in their sin,

we would not seek the Lord, we were content to live without Him. Even the people to whom the Lord came, received Him not. Jews and Gentiles united in His death by crucifixion, the most humiliating death that He could die, and yet by that death the love and grace and mercy of God in bringing about through that death “the propitiation of our sins.” By the death of God’s beloved Son, God was satisfied that the debt of our sins was paid, and were declared righteous before Him through Christ. Oh, what love!!! What description of ours could ever be sufficient for such love.

Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to write in Romans 5:7-10:

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

But none said it more clearly than our Lord Himself in words which He spoke to Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and a ruler of the Jews, and which are recorded permanently in John 3:16-17:

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

The last verse of our text is not the whole of what the Apostle John said in this chapter about how we should love each other, but what he said here ought to convince all of us that we have no excuse for not loving each other.

Again we come to that good word for the people of God, “Beloved.” They were not only “beloved” to the Apostle John, but they were the “beloved” of God! He loved us while we were in our sins; we are to love each other now that we are forgiven, cleansed, and declared to be righteous before God. God loved us as sinners; we are to love each other as saints. We may not always be as saintly as we should, but by the grace of

God we are as ready for heaven as the people are who are already there!

When the Apostle John said, “we ought to love one another,” he was saying we have a debt to love one another. A debt to whom? It is the only debt you have for your salvation, a debt of love to God to pay by loving your brother or your sister in Christ. But it is not a debt that you and I can pay by a single act, but by lives in which we thankfully show our gratitude to God by loving one another.

May the Lord enable each one of us to do what we are exhorted to do over and over again in Scripture – to love one another! Obedience to this command of our Lord is one way to enjoy a foretaste of heaven on earth.