

ONE SPECIAL FRUIT OF LOVING ONE ANOTHER

1 John 4:12-16

Intro: I would remind you that from verse 7 of 1 John 4 to the end of that chapter we have a brief statement of the Christian life, especially as it has to do with our relationship with each other. We all know, or should know, that the greatest commandment in the Word of God is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.” And the second is close behind it: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

This second commandment is stated in various ways in the Bible. It goes from loving our neighbor to loving each other in the family of God. The Apostle John in 1 John, is especially concerned about the exhortation that we are to love each other. And that is his emphasis here in the latter part of 1 John 4. And you will notice by looking through these verses that he mentioned it in verses 7, 11, 12, and finally in verse 21. It is stated negatively in verse 20.

It is a fact of Scripture that, if we love God, we are going to love each other in the family of God. And in verse 20 John said that the man who claims to love God, but does not love his brother, is a liar.

And so it is a statement of divine truth that if we love God, we are going to love each other in the family of God. And there are no exceptions to that truth.

The text, beginning with: “No man hath seen God at any time” (1 John 4:12a).

Those who are familiar with the NT will immediately recognize that these very words are used in the Gospel of John, chapter 1, and verse 18. This verse says:

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

When Moses was asking for assurance that the Lord God would go with him as he led the people from Egypt to the promised land, one of the things that the Lord told him was, “Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live” (Ex. 33:20). So great and powerful must God be in His glory that it would be impossible for any man in our present state to see Him and live to tell about it.

But what was it that the Apostle John was saying with these words (“no man hath seen God at any time”) when he used them in John 1:18? He was saying that even though no one had ever seen God in His glory, yet God has revealed Himself in the coming to earth of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as a Man. And so we should not be surprised to read later that our Lord said to Philip, and His words are recorded in John 14:9, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” One of the main purposes for the incarnation of the Son of God, was that we might have a revelation of God the Father. That was one of the two main reasons for the first advent of Christ. The second was that He came to be the Savior of sinners by His death and resurrection on the Cross.

So, no one has seen God ever at any time in the fulness of His glory, but God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Some day we will see God, but it will only be after we have been glorified in His likeness.

Now this ought to make us think that when we come to these same words in the first epistle of John *that it must have something to do with the revelation of God* – and it does! I have never seen God, and neither have you. Some may claim that they have seen God, but they are lying. It is still true that “no man hath seen God at any time.” When Jesus Christ came, those who saw Him, saw the greatest revelation of God the Father that has ever been seen. But where are people to look today if they are to see God the Father since the Lord Jesus Christ went back to heaven. I think that we all should be surprised to see the revelation of God since Christ went back to heaven. Look at the remainder of 1 John 4:12. What does it say? It says,

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Already in verse 8 of this chapter the Apostle has told us that “God is love,” and he is going to tell us the same thing again in verse 16, that “God is love.” We see God in the coming of Christ into the world for our redemption; the world is to see God now in the people of God. But in what about the people of God? You and I could never love each other as the people of God can love each other if it were not for the amazing fact that, as this verse tells us, “God dwelleth in us.”

Most people in the world don’t read the Bible where God has revealed Himself in many different ways. I think I am right when I say that most people don’t even have a Bible. Most people have never seen a Bible. But one thing that you will find is that God has His people everywhere. I

doubt if you can find a nation on the earth today which does not have some of God's people in it. And the love that we have in us for each other, is so amazing, so unique, so powerful and so convincing, that when people in the world see how the people of God love each other, they are forced to admit that they have not seen such love among people as they see in the love that Christians have for each other. You and I are far from perfect. We are being perfected. But even with the faults that anyone can see in the people of God, yet when you consider the love that the people of God have for each other, the only possible explanation for such love is that these are people in whom the living, loving God dwells.

Now since we are still being perfected by God, we need the exhortations that we have in Scripture to love one another. Christians often display just the opposite to the world. Some times it is because they are only Christians by profession, but not in reality. You will find hypocrites in every church. But people who really know the Lord cannot go on in a relationship when their lives are not truly a manifestation of the love God which is shed abroad in our hearts.

Sometimes the reason that Christians have trouble with each other is because they are not as familiar with the truth as they need to be.

I feel sure that we all know the difference between a declaration of truth as compared with a commandment. Some truths we know by experience. But there are other truths that we know because it is the teaching of Scripture. This passage before us here in 1 John 4 is full of declarations of truth which we need to know, and then act upon them. Let us look at the latter part of verse 12 as an example of what I mean.

In the last part of verse 12 the Apostle John was not saying that if we love one another, then God will dwell in us. But he was saying that "if we love one another," that is evidence that "God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." So I start with knowing that God has been living in me since I first trust in Christ, and that is the reason from the beginning of my salvation I have felt different about the people of God, and really love them, and want to be with them. We need to know the true cause and effect. God doesn't come to dwell in me because I love you, but I love you because God is dwelling in me. If He didn't dwell in me, I wouldn't love you. Do you see the difference?

Let's look at verse 13.

Here again the Apostle John was talking about what we know, not what we are to do, but what we know. Now is it because we know that we dwell in God, and God dwells in us that the Spirit has come to dwell in us? Or is it that the Spirit has been given to us at salvation, and He has impressed upon our hearts that we dwell in God and He dwells in us? It has to be because God has given us the Holy Spirit that we are deeply convinced that we dwell in God, and He dwells in us.

And running on into verse 14 it is because we have the Holy Spirit that “we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” The fact that “we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world” is because of what the Holy Spirit has taught me. I am sure that none of us knew when we came to Christ the amazing work that the Holy Spirit had done in our hearts preparing us for salvation. We didn’t even know that there was a Holy Spirit. But it is because of His work in our hearts that have such boldness in declaring the Gospel, and in insisting that there is no other Savior in the whole world.

Approach verse 15 in the same way. When anyone truly confesses that Jesus is the Son of God (and remember that to confess means to say the same thing, in this case, that God says), you know that “God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”

You see, we always must begin with God – either God the Father, or God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. And did you notice that all Three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned in verses 13 and 14.

Verse 16 emphasizes the same procedure that we have seen throughout our text. What have we known and believed? It was the love that God hath to us. You see, it all started not with our love for God. That could never be when you consider what we were when we were in sin. No, it was God’s love for us. In fact, it was the basic truth in all of Christian theology, that “God is love”! And so what have we known and believed? “That he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

These are amazing claims that all of us can make as the people of God. We love God because He first loved us. If he had not first loved us, we would never have loved Him. But we are what we are, and we love each other like we do, because God is in us and we are in Him. And so the fact that I love you, and you love me, is proof positive, so to speak, that God is

in me, and I am in Him.

You see, in these verses which we have been considering together this morning, the Apostle John has been giving us doctrine. Don't let anyone ever tell you that we just need the practical teaching of Scripture, but not doctrine. Without true doctrine you and I can never be right in our daily living. We need the practical emphasis, to be sure. We need to be told that we are to love each other. But we know that we can only fulfill the command to love each other, by depending upon the One Who lives in us, and in Whom we live.

Concl: Did you ever ask yourself the question, What does it mean that we as the Lord's people are to love each other as Christ loves us? The Apostle John has given us a strong indication of what it means for us to love one another when he wrote in the fourth verse of 3 John, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." As far as we know, the Apostle John was not married, and so he had no children in the flesh. But I am sure that he had many children in the Lord, many that he had led to the Lord, and many that had been led to the Lord by those whom he had led to the Lord. Living to be as old as he lived, he not only had a lot of spiritual children, but also spiritual grandchildren, and even spiritual great grandchildren. And his greatest joy was to "hear" that they were walking "in truth."

So what did he do? I am sure that he prayed for them, prayed that they would be reading the Word. Prayed that they would obey the Word. Prayed that they would pray. Prayed that they would follow those who were examples of godliness. What an example of godliness was the Apostle John to all who were his children in the faith!

But I am also sure that the Apostle John had times when he shed tears over his children in the faith, when what he heard about them was not good. They were not walking in truth. We are in trouble when we fail to make the Word the pattern of our daily lives.

As we love each other by expressing our love in prayer, we need to remember the Apostle Paul's exhortation to the believer's at Philippi in Philippians 2:12 and 13: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Final page)