

1st John 3:16-17 Love Through Meeting Needs

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us;

The ultimate expression of God's Love is the Cross of Christ. In our excitement over the resurrection at Easter time, we often forget what Jesus went through for us. Peter 2:24 puts it **24 and He Himself brought our sins in His body up on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by His wounds you were healed.** The worst part for Jesus was something that we humans tolerate all too well—separation from God. Jesus took upon Himself our sin, He experienced the full weight of sin's consequences including separation from His Heavenly Father. We know what that's like, but He never did before then. He cried out with a loud voice, **"My God, My God, why As have You forsaken Me?"** (Matt. 27:46). **Soon thereafter "He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last"** (Luke 23:46). And, why was Jesus willing to endure such suffering and to give His life upon the Cross? Why was God, our Heavenly Father willing to send Jesus to pay such a price? They got something for their sacrifice. They purchased the legal right to forgive our sins, without compromising one bit of their Righteousness. They purchased forgiveness of sins **Matt 26:28 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.** Heb 9:22-23 **22 And almost all things are cleansed with blood, according to the Law, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. 23 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in heaven.** There was nothing we could do to erase the debt, and redeem ourselves. No amount of gold or silver would have sufficed. But as 1 Pet. 1:18-19 tells us **18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.;** And that means that they could justify us **9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.** So, we who are saved no longer have to fear God as judge, but can freely worship Him as Creator, Redeemer, Lord, and Savior. It was love, and desire for relationship with us that motivated God to create the world in the first place, knowing that we would mess it up, and that the sacrifice of Jesus His Son, would be needed to save us. And it is that great love that John is describing here. **But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners [at enmity with God], Christ died for us....For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life. (Romans 5:8, 10).** **and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters.**

Sinful people had been separated from their holy God since Adam and Eve tasted the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But Jesus' death and resurrection made reconciliation possible. Jesus satisfied God's requirements for reconciliation, but each person must receive the terms of reconciliation: **"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"** (Romans 10:9). And so, since our relationship with God has been restored, we are called into his service: **"[God] reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation....We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us"** (2 Corinthians 5:18, 20). God has commissioned each of us to share with others his message of love and peace. We must open our hearts wide, allowing God's compelling love to flow through us to others. **14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf.** We must allow God to speak through us in everything that we do, so that more people can be reconciled to God before their time on earth is up. God called Jesus to lay down His life from the day that He was born. And He did, living the 33 years or so of His life always doing the will of the Father, and only doing God's Will. And it is the continuation of THIS ministry that God calls us to. With Paul in Gal 2:20 we say **"...I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"** (Gal. 2:20). This is what laying down our lives for our brothers and sisters means.

God demonstrated His love in action: **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).** And, so He calls us to action. We are commissioned to make disciples: **Matthew 28:19-20 9 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** And you don’t make disciples by leading people to the cross, and then saying “grow up as a Christian on Your Own”. We are left here on earth when we are saved **to lay down our lives for brothers and sisters.**

17 But whoever has worldly goods and sees his brother or sister in need, and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God remain in him?

We see a contrast here between Christ’s self-sacrificial love which was demonstrated to us at the cross, and continues to be demonstrated to us, and our sometimes lack of love toward other believers. John now calls us to evaluate our love “where the rubber meets the road.” It’s not just giving to those in need because we’re commanded to, it’s ministering to people’s needs in the way that God wants us to, because we love God, and He loves them, so We love them! The things that we have are given to us so that we can use them to demonstrate the love that Jesus has for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and for all those in the World. The only question is, do we love the world and it’s resources, or do we love people, who are created by God, and loved by Him, and will live eternally, either in fellowship with God in heaven, or separated from God forever in hell? There are a lot of needs in the world, how do we know when God is calling us to meet a need? Well, the idea is that we see the need in front of us. This “seeing” a need is not a casual recognition or a passing notice--a sustained attentive observation. We “see with our own eyes” this need, and understand that God has brought it before us for the purpose of US fulfilling it! We meet the needs that God puts on our hearts to meet! John’s point is that God will make us “very much” aware of the needs that He wants us to meet. And then WE must act to meet the need. We must show love and compassion to meet the need. We must not shut the doors of our heart. We must not close the door of our compassions from that person in need that God has brought before us, because God does not do this.

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So, John asks of such a person, “how does the love of God abide in him?” If God is truly in your life, HE is going to influence your life. By obeying the Spirit, through the Word of God, we demonstrate and emulate the love that Jesus has shown us, the unconditional, sacrificial, forgiving love because He first loved us, by opening our heart to others. And, we will find that as we walk by the Spirit, the flesh has less opportunity to influence us to shut up our heart and emotions to the needs of others that God wants us to address. As Gal 5:16 tells us **16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.**

18 Little children, let’s not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

So John is saying that we should meet each other’s needs; that we should not close our hearts toward one another, but should demonstrate our love through action. John is saying that a true faith in Jesus will not only inspire us to do works to help our brothers and sisters in Christ, but will cause us to have genuine love toward all of our fellow believers in Christ. That’s the ministry of reconciliation; not just to introduce someone to Christ, but to encourage them, and care for them as they grow deeper in their relationship with Christ. That’s discipling, and that’s what we are called to, as ambassadors of Christ. We will take action to meet the needs of others, and deal with people in love.