

1st John 4vs 20-21 Love Brothers and Sisters with the Love of Christ

Last week we looked at the fact that the agape, self-sacrificing love for one another that is not of ourselves, but has its origin in God. It is from Him through us, and is the appropriate response to understanding that God loves us! The character of God is love.

By His grace He has poured the love of Christ into our inner being so that we can love with the same supernatural love with which we are loved. As we look to this great demonstration of God's love toward us, we find our reason to love one another.

If anyone says, 'I love God' and hates his brother or sister, he is a liar

Basically, John is saying that "talk is cheap", that anyone can make a claim to love God, but the reality of their love will be proven by the way that they live their lives. The proof of love is in the action! What he means by "hate" has already been described in terms of neglecting to meet a fellow believer's needs when one is able to do so. 1st John 3:16-17 **We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the 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?** Closing our heart toward our brothers and sisters is inconsistent with a true loving relationship with God. 2 John 2:4 **The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;** We cannot really know Jesus without loving Him, and He said in John 14:15 **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."** We must abide in Jesus, remain in Him. He needs to continue to be the center of our lives. And this will be evidenced by our walk, our life centered around Christ. 1 John 2:6 **6 the one who says that he remains in Him ought, himself also, walk just as He walked.** And, if we are His body, with that same Holy Spirit within us, then our walk should be such that it will convince others that Jesus is the Son of God based on what they see in our lives. And that begins with having real self-sacrificing love for our brothers and sisters.

But those who fail to love, close their heart toward believers, or even hate and persecute believers are invalidating their claim to love Jesus in this hatred. False believers walk in this life-style of lying and deceiving and faking their love for other Christians, while closing their heart to them, resenting the believers true relationship with Jesus, hating and persecuting them. The denial or disowning, or failure to abide and remain in Christ conforms to the lifestyle of a false Christian. And the abiding, and remaining, even in trial and persecution is the hallmark of a true Christian. As the verse continues: **for the one who does not love his brother and sister whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.** The contrast here is between who the one sees and who he does not see. This person is a liar, in addition to being self-deceived. John begins by stating the problem differently. Where he said he "hates" his brother earlier, now that hatred is defined as "not loving" in his character. This isn't just a one-time failure to love, but a consistent lack of the Love of God toward our brothers and sisters. This is one who by nature does not love his fellow believers. It's the closing of the heart toward them that's the problem, the unconcern about the well-being of one another. The lack of fellowship and love in our relationships with other believers.

is not able to love God whom he has not seen. This person who does not meet the needs of fellow believers that he or she sees in front of them and is continually aware of cannot possibly really love God either. And this makes perfect sense. Our focus is usually on what's right in front of us. We are usually concentrating on what we see around us. If the need that we see in our brothers and sisters doesn't move us to compassion and empathy, then how can the love of God who was moved to the incredibly loving sacrifice of His son for us be within us? If their need right in front of us, knowing that God loves them and Jesus died for them doesn't cause our heart to go out to them, then how can we possibly love the God who did this for them. The Holy Spirit within us will move us toward empathy and compassion. **21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.** But, in order to do this, we have to step outside of ourselves, and stop letting our egos run our lives. 1 Cor 10:2 **No one is to seek his own advantage, but rather that of his neighbor.** Phil 2:3-4 **3**

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. As we care for one another, we hurt when they hurt, we're sad when they're sad, we're grieving when they're grieving. That's what Romans 12:15 means when it says **15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.** We carry some of their feelings with us. And importantly, we feel compelled to help or take action to help them. This means that we meet whatever the need is. Galatians 6:1-4 also lets us know that sometimes it's the work of restoration that's needed. Gal 6:1-4 **Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.** You say, what's that got to do with empathy and caring? Everything, because sometimes we're not going to want to come alongside them after they've sinned. Sometimes the sin is going to be against us, and we could be feeling angry, hurt or betrayed. And this is why Paul follows it up with the next verse. **But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.** We may be tempted to become judgmental or legalistic, and forget that as we judge, we are judged. Or, we may be tempted to repay evil for evil, or to take our own revenge instead of leaving vengeance up to God. And so, when we read **Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.** It's in the context of remembering that we too sin, and we too need to be forgiven. If we have empathy and understanding for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, then we will continually (present tense) to bear one another's burdens. We are to encourage them to give it up and let God have the sin, so that they can be restored. The believer who truly loves his brother and sincerely wants to restore him to a walk by the Spirit will continue to spend time with him and make himself available for counsel and encouragement. And this is also where prayer comes in. Prayer is the most powerful weapon believers have in conquering sin and opposing Satan, and nothing helps a brother carry his burdens as much as prayer for him and with him. And so, when John says in our verse today: **And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God must also love his brother and sister,** , It points us right back to When believers bear one another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ when he said **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you"** (John 13:34). The law of Christ is the law of love, which fulfills all the rest of God's law. Gal 5:13-14 **13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** Rom. 13:8 **8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for the one who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law.** It's demonstrating love for other believers by coming alongside them and bearing each other's burdens, empathy by action, doing whatever it takes to get someone what they need. If we have a little faith in God, and step out to obey Jesus' command to love one another, then we find that we're moving from the problem to the solution. We find that we develop love for God as we see the wisdom of His Plan, the Joy that He brings as we serve, the peace that surpasses understanding as we abide in Him, doing His will. We agree with God that that **the one who loves God also should love his brother** or sister in Christ. We accept the mutual obligation that receiving God's love brings to love each other with the Love of Christ. This wonderful love of God for those that trust in Him is available to us, and to demonstrate toward one another, allowing us to experience the inner Joy and profound peace that God wants for His children. The holy love of God who "first loved us,"; loving with the Love of Christ is established as the mission of our Christian life, and it is where we are called to grow in our relationship with the Lord, for as Paul reminds us in Corinthians... the greatest of all is love. We are commanded by Jesus to emulate His love, "love as I have loved you," so that we are truly Children of our Loving Father.