

Lord, Teach Me To Love

#11

1 John 4:7-12

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The Christian Faith has always emphasized two very important things – truth and love. These two elements are to be perfectly balanced if true Christianity is to be effective.
- B. Last week we saw how the Apostle John stressed the necessity of truth or right doctrine. A person must believe that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, who is both Savior and Lord, if he is to be a true Christian.
- C. The Devil, who is called the great deceiver, commonly employs tactics to overemphasize a doctrine or make it a half doctrine or distort a doctrine. All Satan needs to do is to distort Christianity so as to produce truth without love or love without truth.
- D. To emphasize love at the expense of truth is to produce what is usually called liberalism, with blindness to the hard realities of sin and to the unchangeable truths of the Bible. On the other hand to emphasize truth at the expense of love produces a cold, hard, legalistic fundamentalism which, though it holds to the right creed, is just as empty of genuine Christian life as is the liberal.
- E. The Apostle John addresses the loveless fundamentalist in this section and shows that love towards one's Christian brother is the mark of a true child of God. A failure to have love flowing from the life is a serious basis upon which to question the genuineness of one's faith.
- F. Some may be saying, "Another sermon on love? When will he get off the subject?" John repeats it over and over and so we should preach on it repeatedly. Most commentators feel this is the apex, summit of John's first epistle.

II. CHRISTIANS SHOULD LOVE BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE 4:7-8

- A. ***"Dear friends, let us love one another,"*** – These Christians are addressed as "dear friends" because they are objects of God's love and are loved by the Apostle John himself. The Christian is commanded to love his brothers in Christ. Three times in this section he says to love one another (4:7, 11, 12). This love involves an act of our will, a submission of our lives to God so He can produce this kind of love in us. This is agape love – a love that loves the unlovely. It not only loves those that do us good but it loves those who do us evil and who would be considered our enemies. God is asking us to love people not as "things" but as persons, for all men are God's creation by natural birth and Christians are God's

new creation by the spiritual birth. True love is an interest in and a concern for, another person just because he is a person, and for no other reason. It does not matter whether he is rich or poor, black or white, old or young, male or female, Republican or Democrat. The important thing is that he is a person. Love is not looking over one's faults but looking beyond the faults to the real person. Every person has longings, heartaches, dreams, and frustrations of life just like me. He is another person, struggling as I am to face the problems of life. What can I do to help? Love him or her as a person and seek to lead that one to Jesus Christ who alone can meet the deepest needs of the human heart, for man's deepest needs are spiritual.

- B. ***“For love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”*** – This supernatural, self-sacrificing agape love has its very source in God, not man, and only God can produce this love in a Christian. Every true child of God will produce this love to some degree, for it is a proof, evidence or demonstration of the new birth. It also indicates that one truly knows God in his daily experience. It is no use for men to claim to know Christ if the love of God is not present in the life. If people irritate us and constantly fight back with rejection and instant antagonism, it is useless to speak of the love of God. It is only when we learn to love the unlovely that folks will sit up and take notice.
- C. ***“Whoever does not love does not know God,”*** -- Again John emphasizes that if a person professes faith in Christ and does not show love, he never came to know God when he made his profession.
- D. ***“Because God is love.”*** – Here is the basis for all John is saying on love. God in his very nature, substance or essence is love. God is love in his inmost being. However this statement must be coupled with three others in the Bible concerning God: 1) God is spirit (Jn. 4:24), 2) God is light (1 Jn. 1:5) and 3) God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29, Duet. 4:24). God is a God of wrath as well as a God of love. No matter how difficult it may appear to us, the fountain from which all God's activity stems is this kind of love. Even His judgments, His condemnations, arise from love. Judgment is not something separate from love. If it can be shown that a holy, loving God cannot judge an evil being, then it can also be shown that He cannot love him. If god judges, He judges in love. Yet, if His judging is in love, His loving is also in justice.

There are so many folk who want the God of love spoken of in the Scriptures but refuse to believe that He is also a God of wrath. Both come from the same Bible.

Dr. H. A. Ironside used to tell of a woman who came to him and said, “I don't have any use for the Bible and for this Christian superstition. It's enough for me to know that God is love.” He said to her, “Well, do you know that?” She said, “Of course I know that, “I've known it all my life.” “Well,” he said, “do you think that everyone knows that?” “Oh, yes,” she said, “everyone

knows God is love.” “Well,” he said, “do you think that woman over in India, who is persuaded by her religion to take her little child and throw it into the river as an offering to the crocodiles, has any concept or idea that God is love?” She said, “Well, no, but that’s mere superstition.” “Do you think that the savage in Africa, bowing down to his idols of wood and stone, trembling with fear lest they should strike back at him and destroy his crops and take away his children and even injure his own person, do you think he has any idea that God is love?” he asked. She said, “No, but in every civilized country we know that God is love?” Well, Dr. Ironside said, “how do we know that? How do we know that God is love? Do the ancients teach that God is love? Do the other religions of earth teach that God is love, and show this? Let me tell you something. Do you know that the only reason we know that God is love is because he sent his Son and manifested himself as love? The book that tells about the Lord Jesus Christ is the only book in the world that contains the idea that the God behind all created matter is a God of love? Creation reveals his power, his greatness, and his might, but there is nothing in nature that says ‘God is love’. The only way we know it is that God manifested his love in the giving of his Son.”

The same Bible that tells us that God is love (which people are willing to accept) tells us that God is wrath. You cannot have one without the other

III. CHRISTIANS SHOULD LOVE BECAUSE GOD HAS LOVED THEM IN CHRIST 4:9-10

- A. **“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world”** – God made a public declaration of his love for men when He sent His Son into the world to die for sinful men. The God, who is love, is the source of all love, proved and demonstrated His love at the Cross. The Cross is a revelation of God’s love. You could search in nature for a billion years and never know that God is love. But the Cross tells us that God loves men and invites them to trust Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior into their lives. God said he loved and proved it by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to save all in the world who will receive Jesus Christ as a personal Savior from sin.
- B. **“That we might live through him.”** – The “we” refers to Christians. Christians can live through Christ. He died that we might live, have eternal life and enjoy an abundant life in Jesus Christ.
- C. **“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us”** – The “us” in context refers to Christians before they came to Christ and who were deep in sin. God took the initiative to love sinful men because sinful men have no natural love for God. It was God’s free, uncaused and spontaneous love that reached down to depraved, debased and wicked sinners, who loved Him not, cared for Him not and were haters and enemies of God, and He made a provision to bring them to

Himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God loved the Christian when he was unlovely. Surely we can love another when they are unlovely.

- D. ***“And sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”*** – Christ died to satisfy the holy, righteous demands of God against sin. He died in the place of the Christian so as to appease God’s wrath that burned hot against each one when in their sinful states. What love was manifested there at the Cross for sinful men! Stamped forever in human history, the greatest sign of love is the bloody Cross. If you have ever been to that Cross and seen the love of God manifested there, you can never go back to a life of selfish indulgence and quarrelling behavior.

IV. CHRISTIANS SHOULD LOVE BECAUSE GOD CONTINUES TO LOVE IN AND THROUGH TRUE CHRISTIANS 4:11-12

- A. ***“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*** – Since God loved the Christian so much when he was in his sinful condition, the Christian, therefore, has the moral responsibility to love his brothers and sisters in Christ. If you have been to Christ and felt the overwhelming cleansing of God’s love for you, despite the antagonism and hatefulness you have shown Him, if you have felt the cleansing grace of God, forgiving and forgetting all, then, you know you can and must love others.
- B. ***“No one has ever seen God;”*** – God is a spirit and no human being has ever seen Him. Even in the Old Testament the appearances of God were theophanies – revelations of God in human disguise. God is an invisible spirit, yet a real personality.
- C. ***“But if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”*** – Since God is Spirit and invisible, His love cannot be demonstrated in nature. Well, where is it made visible? It was made visible in the person of Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection. But the historical Jesus is now ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father. Where is the love of the invisible God known now? The love of the invisible God becomes visible only when we Christians manifest love one to another. God’s love is seen when we have a supernatural, self-sacrificing love that loves the unlovable. When this love is shown, people get the idea that God is somewhere around, close at hand, for they see that character of God manifested in the Christian. Men today are not acquainted very much with the Gospel according to Matthew or Luke or John, but men are reading the Gospel according to you. God has chosen to reveal his love to men through Christians in this age.

V. CONCLUSION

- A. During the early church, the one thing that saved and unsaved alike could not get over was the love Christians displayed for one another. Minutius Felix: “They love one another before they know each other.” Lucian (the infidel): “Their

Master makes them believe that they are all brothers.” Tertullian “They love and are ready to die for one another.” Do we manifest this kind of love as Christians?

- B. It seems as though “love” is the subject of the day among much of the non-Christian masses. Men are talking about it because they long within them to know the deepest meaning of real love. Men are searching for the security of love; yet they are not finding it in this world – not in education, politics, science, in social relations, social structures, and not in religion either! Man needs to know the security of God’s love which is found only in Christ. It will become a reality to all who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

*I remember the story that took place many years ago of a clipper ship that had been out to sea for months and had run out of fresh water to drink. One foggy day the captain stood on the deck and cried out, “Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink.” Just then a boat was seen coming out of the fog and the captain told them their need for water. The captain of the other ship hollered back, “Drop your buckets into the ocean and draw up fresh water to drink, for you are in the mouth of the Amazon River. Is it not true that men are crying, “Love, love is spoken everywhere but none or little is seen or experienced.” The love of Christ is all about men, but they don’t know it. They are so close and yet so far. Yet Christ is preached everywhere and He alone can take a man or a woman to the love of God which will fill the innermost longings of the life for security. Jesus said, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”***