

Belief and Love

#12

1 John 4:13-21

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. 1 John chapter four has many wonderful truths for the Christian. But the two thoughts that are prominent in this chapter are belief and love.
- B. The Apostle John began this chapter with a warning against wrong belief, for Christians are to “test the spirits.” The Christian is not to believe every person, even a pastor or seminary professor, but is to test the teaching as to whether it is of God. The supreme doctrinal test is over the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that God’s Son is co-eternal with the Father, that He came into this world in the incarnation through the supernatural virgin birth, that He is truly God and truly man and, as the God-Man, He made a perfect sacrifice for the sins of men, was resurrected from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father. A person must believe these things if he is a true Christian. A man must have right belief before he can have right practice.
- C. Beginning at verse seven, the Apostle gave his great treatise on agape love, commanding and exhorting all Christians to love one another. Agape love is from God and can only be produced by God in the Christian. It is a love that loves the unlovely. Agape love is the acceptance of another person because he is a person, quite regardless of whether he is dressed the right way, has the right status in society, belongs to the same class that we do, has the same color of skin, or whatever. It is accepting the non-Christian because he or she is a member of the human race and accepting the Christian because he or she is a member of the spiritual race through the new birth.
- D. Now John, in 4:13-21, brings belief and love together. It is right belief that produces right action; it is faith in truth that results in love. There must be right doctrine before there can be right practice. Liberal theology today, which speaks so eloquently about love, also denies the deity of Christ. Therefore, they cannot produce agape love. They can talk about it but cannot practice it because they don’t believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. *To weaken faith is to deaden love.*

II. LOVE’S INSPIRATION 4:13-16

- A. ***“We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”*** – The true Christian can experientially know that he is in union with God through Christ because of the love that comes from the Holy Spirit. Love is a fruit of the Spirit. **Gal. 5:22: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love....***” And it is the Spirit of God who makes it possible to love others **Rom. 5:5: *And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*** This is a supernatural love, God’s love, the kind that accepts people for what they are regardless of

what they are like. When this kind of love shows up in the life of a professing Christian, he knows, through experience, that something has happened in his life.

- B. ***“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.”*** – The “we” refers to the Apostles who through their eyewitness and teaching declared that God sent His Son into the world for the purpose of dying for the sins of men. This statement “Savior of the world,” which is also used in John 4:42, could be misleading. It is obvious, as we compare scriptures that Christ is not going to save the whole world, for millions have died and will die who have never become Christians. The Jews felt they only had the way and the Gnostics, a heresy, said that only those that belonged to their group had salvation. These groups were exclusive but the Christian message is for the whole world. Christ is a Savior for the whole world and the offer of salvation is for anyone who desires it. Christ is potentially the Savior for the world but actually saves only those who place their faith and trust in Him. Man must exercise faith in Christ if he is ever to be saved. **Jn. 5:40: “Yet you refuse to come to be to have life.” Jn. 8:24: “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”** The Roman emperor was also called the “savior of the world” and this put the Christians in direct competition with the Roman emperors.
- C. ***“If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.”*** – “Son of God” – a title for Christ’s deity. This is a public confession that one believes that Jesus Christ is truly God. This confession is not standing before a group but a constant witness to the world that Jesus Christ is one’s God and Lord. It is acknowledging to the world that Jesus Christ is Lord of your life. **Rom. 10:9 “That if; you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”** How greatly this needs to be understood today when there is so much talk about love and so little evidence of it. Love comes from a relationship from the Son of God, and if there is not this relationship of faith, there cannot be the life of God or the love of God.
- D. ***“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”*** -- The one producing love is the one who really knows God. Since God is love, and we have been born of God spiritually, and this very God lives in us as Christians, it is inconceivable that this love would not be manifested to some degree in every child of God. The true Christian will manifest the nature of his heavenly Father. Just as our physical children manifest the natures of their own parents.

III. LOVE’S ACCOMPLISHMENTS 4:17-18

- A. ***“In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment,”*** -- There is a judgment coming for all men. All men, one day, will stand before the Lord their Maker. It does not make any difference whether we are Christians or non-Christians. A Christian’s relationship with God may be different but all men must come face-to-face with the Lord Himself. There is a reckoning and this is what the Apostle Paul told the Athenian intellectuals on Mars Hill **Acts 17: 31 “For he has**

set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” In context, John is talking about the Judgment Seat of Christ, which is for Christians only. The non-Christian will appear before the Great White Throne Judgment Seat and be cast into the Lake of Fire. The question that will be asked the unsaved is, “What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ?” However the Judgment Seat of Christ is for true Christians and the question that will be asked them will be “What have you done for my Son and how faithful have you been to Him?” NOTE: John’s point is that the degree of boldness we will have when we, as Christians, appear before our Lord for examination will be in direct proportion to the amount of agape love we demonstrated while on this earth. If you want to have boldness, confidence, in the Day of Judgment, then let love express itself, let it be brought to maturity in you now.

- B. **“Because in this world we are like Him”** – This is one of the most profound statements in the whole Bible. It is not just our faith or obedience but it is actually Christ’s life flowing through the Christian that produces this agape love. Christ reproducing Himself in the true believer.
- C. **“There is no fear in love.”** – Fear and love are incompatible. Christians need not fear their coming judgment if they have been exercising agape love on this earth. Love not only accomplishes something for the future but for now. It casts out fear now!
- D. **“But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.”** – Fear not only brings future loss of rewards for the Christian but it brings present limitations. The word “punishment” comes from the root word which means to limit or restrain. Fear limits us and imprisons us. Anxieties, tensions, worries, apathy – all these things are forms of fear, and they literally imprison us. They limit us. Fear of all types is insecurity and only love can bring a person a sense of security. A sense of loving and being loved brings one great assurance.

There are many people, even some professing Christians, who live in constant fear. They have such anxiety that they do not want to go outside the door of their house, or drive a car, or be alone, or be in a dark room, or be a failure in life. People are afraid because fear has limitations and this emotion can imprison us. Fear binds us and pushes us into a corner so that we cannot live the kind of life that God intended for us to live. Only love can bring security to life.

This “perfect” love does not mean that a Christian can love perfectly, for he still has sin in him. But it means that love brought to completion or maturity in one’s experience can cast out every kind of fear.

I have a fear that is very real, even to this day. I fear the idea of death. Sometimes I will be awakened at night thinking about it. I wonder what it will be like to be in a cold, damp tomb and real fear invades my existence. Then I begin to contemplate Christ’s death for my sins, His promise of victory over death for all who love Him and His unique resurrection from the dead. The fear subsides and life takes on real

meaning, for I know that I am surrounded by God's love in Christ and that God's purpose for me is to manifest love to others.

It is possible for a Christian to have the capacity to love but because of pride and self-pity to fail to produce love to the potential that God has planned. Some folks are afraid to love because it may open them up to be hurt, or think that it will give someone an advantage over them, and so they bottle up their capacity for love, keep it in, and then wonder why they are oppressed by anxieties, tensions, problems or nervousness. But love brought maturity will cast out fear. Fear of the future and fear of today will be cast away. *If we are not showing love, we are not laying hold of the possibilities that God has given us as Christians.*

- E. ***“The one who fears is not made perfect (mature) in love.”*** -- Love is learned and it is progressive. It's a life-time process and no one, except Jesus Christ, ever achieved the ultimate in love. But all are to be maturing in love for this will cast out fears.

IV. LOVE'S POSSIBILITIES 4:19-21

- A. ***“We love because he first loved us.”*** – Agape, godlike love, does not reside in our sin natures; our very capacity to love, whether the object of our love be God, our neighbor, or our brother in Christ is due entirely to His prior love for us and in us. All that we have is because of God's grace and love. If you know the love of God, if you know how fully He accepts you, even when you are as stinky, nasty, and as miserable as you are, yet He takes you, forgives you, and deals with you; then you know what love is. You can love because you have been loved by God in Christ.
- B. ***“If anyone says ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.*** – The Apostle John is blunt, straightforward and lays the facts on the line. If one professes faith in Christ but can't love his brother, then he really doesn't love God either. He is a liar! It is obviously easier to love and serve a visible man than an invisible God, and if we fail in the easier task, it is absurd to claim success in the harder. If you can look at a brother or sister in Christ with all his or her needs, problems and circumstances and cannot love, then you are only kidding yourself about loving God.
- C. ***“And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”*** -- We are commanded to love God and our brothers in Christ. Not only our brothers but also the world. This is a command from God! God has told us that every true Christian has the capacity to love. It is not that we cannot love but we will not. John deals bluntly and honestly with us. If we really cannot love, then we are not Christians at all and are liars. But if we really love God through Christ, then we are real Christians with the capacity to love. As true Christians we can and must love others. *If you are a Christian, there is no person in this world that you cannot love.*

V. CONCLUSION

- A. For you that are without Christ in your lives, would you like to know God's love that brings unexplainable security to the life? Would you like to have the capacity to love others? This is love not just for those who do you good but those who do you evil.
- B. This love is a possibility only in Jesus Christ. You must first come to Christ, admitting your own lovelessness and sinfulness, before you can be a recipient of God's sovereign love.
- C. What must you do to become a Christian? Believe (trust in, commit to) on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be forgiven your sins, given eternal life, and created within you will be a new capacity to produce agape love.