

Loving One Another 1 John 4:7-12

Introduction

This is the third time John commands us to love one another in this letter. The first time in **2:7-11**, John says that we love one another because it is an old commandment made new through Christ Jesus. Through Jesus we can love one another. The second command was in **3:11-18** where he states that we have passed from death to life. We are a new creation; therefore we are to love one another. In **4:7-12**, John focuses on our loving one another by stating that our love comes from God.

It is here that John takes a very high and exalted look at God and His love. He states that God is love, and our love is of God. John further explains that God shows His love to us by sending us His Son Jesus to die on the cross. John says that this is the love that we are to love one another. John, in this passage alone, tells us to love one another 3 times. This is an urgent concern where he wants us to understand that love is not an optional blessing or fruit of the believer but it is the most fundamental mark of a Christian. He gives us the fact of love, the command to love, and the perfection of love.

I. Fact of Love (let us love one another)

- Source of love
 - Love is of God
 - God is love

Note: As we studied last week, it is in God's nature to love. In fact, every activity is tempered in love—justice, creation, salvation.

- Love of unbelievers
 - They do not know God
 - They are not born of God

Note: He uses the word “agape” to describe the love. In Christian thought, this is the love that comes from God. It is the love that considers the others before themselves. Unbelievers do not have this type of love. Their love is not the sacrificial love for others or that seeks the benefit of another. In other words, their love is the self-serving love. Jesus remarks about their love in **Matthew 5:46-47**:

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (47) And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

Note: What Jesus says here is that they only love someone like them—liking only those who like them or easy to get along. This love only serves to feed the ego and pride. Furthermore, when they do good for others, they do it with attention and fanfare.

Matthew 6:1-2 *"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. (2) Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."*

Note: The unbelievers love, but it is only a friend(ly) love and not enemy love.

- Love of believers
 - Born of God
 - Knows God

Note: When we are born of God, we inherit His nature—His loving nature. Love is the consequence of being born of God. We as God's children reflect that love.

2 Peter 1:4 *by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*
John 13:34 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*

Note: Jesus loved us; therefore, we love one another. Yet we sometimes feebly love one another.

Transition: John understood that as Christians, we have His nature to love, yet we often do not love enough. John, then, commands us to love one another.

II. Command to Love (we ought to love one another)

- If God so loved us
 - Consider His example
 - Giving up His Son
 - Son's forgiveness on the cross

Romans 5:6-8, 10 *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. (8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (10) For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

Ephesians 2:1-4 *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, (2) in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, (3) among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*

Note: Paul says here that God loved us when we were sinners...His enemies. He showed His love for us by sending His One and Only Son to death for our sake. Not only does the Father show His love for us, but Jesus cried on the cross to forgive all those who conspired and consented to His death.

Transition: Our love and attitude must be like Christ Jesus as stated by Paul in **Philippians 2:5**, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

- We ought to love one another
 - What is in the command?

Note: Implicit to this command that John writes is that we love our enemies just as God loved us when we were enemies with God (Rom 5:8-10).

Matthew 5:43-45 *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. (44) But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, (45) that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

- The challenge to love one another

Note: Loving one another is to love those who irritate you. The whole test of a true Christian is to love that difficult person and to manifest 1 Corinthians 13 love with the trying person (Lloyd-Jones). Why? Because there are things about us that irritate others, and God forgives us for it.

Note: We ought to love one another. This is John's plea and command. We have to stop and look at ourselves. We often feel that we have been wronged and hurt by whoever hurt us. We feel that we are in the right to feel betrayed, so we react strongly against those who hurt us. We are to consider what God did with us. He saw us a victim and slave to sin. He forgave us and loved us and clothed us with righteousness. When we examine ourselves and our motives and the reasons for our anger, then we can understand how low we have sunk and then look up at the person who has hurt us. Then we can show compassion and show them to Christ. We have to realize that our brothers and sisters in Christ that hurt us are also equal heirs of grace.

Matthew 18:23-35 *Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. (24) And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him*

ten thousand talents. (25) But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. (26) The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' (27) Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. (28) But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' (29) So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' (30) And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. (31) So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. (32) Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. (33) Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' (34) And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. (35) So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Transition: When we realize how much we do not love, and we obey the command to love, then the His love is perfected in us.

III. Perfection of Love (if we love one another)

- No one has seen God at any time
John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.
1 Timothy 6:16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.
- The perfected love

Note: What does John mean here that no one has seen God when he was talking about love? What is the connection? The connection, I believe, is that John is referring to the stages of Christian growth as he previously did in

1 John 2:12-14 when gives us the commandments to love one another. First he gives it as an encouragement "let us love one another." Then he gives it as a duty for us, "we ought to love one another." And finally, he gives this as a potential for us to fulfill, "if we love one another." This is similar to what Paul says....

1 Corinthians 13:10-11 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. (11) When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Note: When John talks about no one has seen God, then talks about us loving one another, he is talking about how as mature believers, the world will see God abiding in us because of our love for one another. His love has been perfected in us...made complete in us. His love is made perfect in us when we love our fellow Christians. This is a staggering statement! The unseen God, who once revealed in His Son, now reveals Himself in His people if and when they love one another (Stott). What's more, our love for one another fulfills the law in every sense!

Romans 13:8-10 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. (9) For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (10) Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Conclusion

What more can we say? There is a quote from one of the early Church fathers that said, that when John was evidently an old man in Ephesus, he had to be carried to the church in the arms of his disciples. At these meetings, he was accustomed to say no more than, "Little children, love one another!" After a time, the disciples wearied at always hearing the same words, asked, "Master, why do you always say this?" "It is the Lord's command," was his reply. "And if this alone be done, it is enough!"