Love for your Neighbor

(Selected Scriptures from I John)
4/17/05

Introduction: Love: the greatest of all commands - *Matthew 22:37-40*

I. Loving others is evidence that you have come to the light of salvation (I John 2:9-11)

II. Loving others is evidence that you love God (I John 5:1)

To love other believers should be as natural as loving your own family, because we are family, real family.

We know the same God.
We are partakers of the same Spirit.
We are joint heirs with the same Son (Jesus Christ).
We share the same faith.
We eat the same food (God's Word).
We have the same name ("Christian").
We will inherit the same future (eternal life).
We face the same battles.

III. Loving others is the distinctive virtue for the child of God (I John 3:10-18)

**** Do you really love your brother?***

A. Love is a distinguishing trait that separates a believer from a non-believer (v.10)

B. Love is a message believers should know about right from the start of their conversion (v.11)

C. Love is not envious or jealous of the spiritual success or prosperity of another (v.12-13)

D. Love offers the assurance that one has been transferred from the realm of death to the realm of eternal life (v.14-15)

E. Love is not mere talk, but sacrificial action toward others in need (v.16-18)

Practical ways to express Love for others:

- Love "washes feet" (John 13:13-17)
- Love shares possessions (Acts 4:32)
- Love Gives & Forgives

Conclusion: I Cor. 13

Love for your Neighbor

(Selected Scriptures from I John)
4/17/05

Introduction:

Introduction: John the "beloved" apostle, continually strums the same tune, in both His Gospel and this Epistle. That oft replayed note is LOVE.

The word "love" is used over and over again in John and I John (51 times as a noun or verb in this epistle alone!).

One characteristic of the Last Days is lovelessness. "The love of many shall wax cold."

"Isn't it amazing that as recently as 200 years ago, a popular edition of the encyclopedia devoted only four lines to the word "atom" and some five pages to "love." Now, 200 years later, the same encyclopedia gives five pages to "atom," while "love" is omitted entirely!" (Hocking, p. 61).

- Love: the greatest of all commands
  Matthew 22:37-40
  Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. [38] This is the first and great commandment. [39] And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. [40] On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

  Matthew 22:39

  Note: Jesus does not command us to "love ourselves"; we automatically do already (Eph. 5:29 - *"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church")*

  It is natural to love yourself; it is supernatural to love others int he same way as you love yourself.

  How do you know when you are loving others the same way as you love yourself? Ask yourself: What do you do to help or benefit yourself? Do the same for others.

  You are concerned about:
  --Your relationship with God . . . then concern yourself with others'
  --Your health, wealth, prosperity. . . then concern yourself with others'
  --Your protection. . . then concern yourself with others'
  --Your pleasure . . . then concern yourself with others'
  --Your success . . . then concern yourself with others'

  If you love God, totally, you will love others mutually.

A true love for God will manifest itself in a love for others who were made in God's image. No one can love God without loving our brother (I Jn. 4:20, 21).

Christ's combines Lev. 19:18 with Deut. 6:5 to summarize the whole Law.

V. 40

All of the Old Testament Law and prophets could be hung on these two commands. The pole that supports the hanger holding all of God's commands is love.

Rom. 13:9-10 - *"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."*
Gal. 5:14 - *"For all the law if fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*

I. Loving others is evidence that you have come to the light of salvation (I John 2:9-11)

1 John 2:9-11
He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. [10] He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. [11] But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

v. 7

"Brethren" - beloved (NASV) one who is specially loved by God ought to be able to love others.

The command to **"love"** (loving <u>God</u> - Deut. 6:5; and loving <u>others</u> - Lev. 19:18) is <u>not</u> a new command.

(It was known for a millennium and a half - since the Law of Moses was given. And it had been reiterated by Jesus in the Gospels - Jn. 13:35, 15:12).

v. 8

The command to love is not new in its proclamation, but is new in its <u>power</u>. We have an ability to love because of the fullness of the <u>light</u> of the New Testament gospel. The ability or power to love is found only "in Him"; it is only truly realized "in Him."

This command is <u>not</u> chronologically new, but is "<u>qualitatively</u> new as experienced in Christ." (Hiebert, p. 86).

John states it is a new reality to you (**"in you"**) because now **"in Him"** you are able to fulfill it!

The old command to love gave us an "ought"; the new command to love spells for us the word "can".

When there is light there is love!

Christ's light must glow before Christ's love can flow" (VS)

You can't love biblically until you have entered his light.

v. 9
Another way to describe a believer is that he is one who has entered the light (you are either "in darkness" or "in light"; there are no grays; no in-between).

v. 10
"Loveth" - present (continual) tense.

Love continues as you continually remain in the light.

If you abide in the light (via a continual reading of God's Word and close intimacy with Christ), you will continue to love others.

"None occasion of stumbling" - You don't trip, stumble, and fall when you can clearly see where you are going.

If you find yourself tripping into sin, it is because you are not abiding in the light.

v. 11
To hate is not merely an attitude of animosity toward someone; it is an action of neglect toward that person (I Jn. 4:17-18).

Love for God and for others is the single most obvious evidence of one who has been born of God.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if you have love one for another."

To harbor bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness and animosity toward a child of God should cause such a one to question his relationship with God.

II. Loving others is evidence that you love God (I John 5:1)

1 John 5:1
Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

v. 1

"Jesus is the Christ" - This is a loaded statement; it's not as simple as it appears.

To believe Jesus is the Christ is to believe He is the Messiah.

The definite article indicates Him to be "the" One and only Christ (He is exclusively the Messiah).

To believe that Jesus is the Messiah is to believe that Jesus is:

1) The Eternal One - because the Messiah is prophesied as being eternal (Mica 5:2 - But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.)

2) The Sacrifice for sin - because the Messiah is prophesied as being "cut off" from the land of the living on behalf of others (Dan. 9:26a - And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: Is. 53:8 - He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.)*

3) The future world Ruler - because the Messiah is prophesied as ruling the entire earth (Ps. 2:12a - Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.)

4) The One to be trusted - (Ps. 2:12b - Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.)

"Is born of God" - (*gegennetai)*

1. The New Birth is God's work (not man's) (note: the passive verb) (Jn. 1:12-13 - But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:
13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.)

2) The New Birth occurs at a point in time and has abiding continual results (note: the perfect tense)

Here, the New Birth is connected to faith in Christ. There is no regeneration apart from faith in Christ. Regeneration does not precede faith in Christ (as Calvinism teaches). The New Birth begins the moment one believes and apart from such belief, no birth exists!

"Belief" - means more than a head knowledge of Jesus as the Christ, but a personal trust or reliance upon Him as the Christ.

"Believeth. . . loveth Him" - love for God is always the result of faith in God. Faith is the foundation for the Christian life. All other Christian virtues flow out of faith (II Pet. 1:5).

Faith is the victory over the world (I Jn. 5:4).

How do I know I love God?

Answer:

* *You know you love God when you…* LOVE HIS CHILDREN (v.1)

Our response to God's giving us the New Birth into His family is gratitude. We now love Him, because He has first loved us (4:19).

"Loveth him that is begotten" - "Saint Augustine held that this phrase referred to Christ, 'the only begotten of the Father'." (Guy H. King, p. 100).

It is true that if you love the Father you will love His Son (Jn. 8:42 - Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.)

However, as Westcott saw, the whole context and book of I John would support the view that He is speaking of loving not only His Son, but His sons - "the children of God" (v. 2).

"Loveth him" (singular) - John's use of the singular throughout this verse indicates that this God-prompted love operates on an individual basis.

It's not merely that we love Christians (as a whole) (though we do). It's that we love the one sitting next to us.

"This love does not spring from something loveable in the person himself, but from his paternity" (Hodge, cited by Hiebert, p. 225).

"Everyone that loveth" - No exceptions; all who love God love His kids.

If you find that you have no common bond with Christians, that you'd rather avoid them, that their company is undesirable – then you had better doubt your relationship to God.

If you love the "Begetter," you will love the "begotten."

If you love the "Adopter," you will love His adopted.

If you love the Regenerator, you will love the regenerated.

If you love the Father, you will love the son.

You can't truly love someone and hate his kids (they are his family, his offspring, the object of is affection).

If you love God, you will love that which he loves/treasures.

The world may have a philanthropic, humanistic "love." A love for man motivated by a love for man (or by a love for self-recognition, etc.).

However, we have a greater motivated; we have a love for man because man is "created in the image and likeness of God." Hence, we love man because his life has a dignity that originated in the Almighty.

How can the Holy Spirit who lives in you do anything other than love others through you who share that same Spirit?

If Jesus live in you and if He lives in your fellow believer, don't you think that there will be a common bond between you?

If you are in the family of God, won't there be a desire to be with your family members?

--Ladies should want to come to the ladies fellowships;

--Men should want to be at the men's breakfasts;

--Christians should love to get together with other Christians.

To defect is to give indication that something is wrong (I Jn. 2:19 - They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.)

To love other believers should be as natural as loving your own family, because we <u>are</u> family, real family.

We know the same <u>God</u>.
We are partakers of the same <u>Spirit</u>.
We are joint heirs with the same <u>Son</u> (Jesus Christ).
We share the same <u>faith</u>.
We eat the same <u>food</u> (God's Word).
We have the same <u>name</u> ("Christian").
We will inherit the same <u>future</u> (eternal life).
We face the same <u>battles</u>.

III. Loving others is the distinctive virtue for the child of God
(I John 3:10-18)

**** Do you really love your brother?***

A. Love is a distinguishing trait that separates a believer from a non-believer (v.10)

There are two ways of testing the genuineness of your faith and the reality of your salvation.

1) The moral test – Do you practice righteousness? (v. 4-10a)

2) The social test – Do you love others? (v. 10b-18)

The virtue of doing "righteousness" was described in vv. 4-9, and the virtue of loving others is described in vv. 11-18.

Two distinguishing features separate a true child of God from a child of the devil:

*Obedience to God's Word
*Love for God's children

If anyone who claims to be a Christian is missing these fruits (and both must be present in one's life), he is not a child of God (has never been born again).

B. Love is a message believers should know about right from the start of their conversion (v.11)

"From the beginning" - from the beginning of what? Certainly not from the beginning of their life, for many (if not most) of the people John writes to were pagans prior to conversion to Christ. Agape love was not even part of the secular Greek vocabulary among the lost world.

John is speaking about the beginning of their new life in Christ; from the beginning of their salvation experience, "love" was a fundamental truth they came to know intuitively (upon realizing the love of God for their lost souls) and verbally from the one(s) who discipled them.

Every new convert needs to learn about his responsibility to others in God's family.

"Love" always followed on the heels of "faith" in the life of a believer.

Col. 1:3-4 - We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints,

Eph. 1:15-16 - ¶ Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Heb. 10:23-24 - Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Cp. I Cor. 13:13 - "Faith, hope, love"

Gal. 5:6 - "Faith which worketh by love."

"We should love" (Jn. 13:34-35 - A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.)

How does a new believer learn to love others?

- He has a capacity to love even the unlovely because he has experienced God's unconditional love for him ("while we were yet sinners" - Rom. 5:8) (Love is learned through experience).
- He has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (who enables and empowers us to bear this fruit - Gal. 5:22) (Love is learned through internal prodding).

- He learns of his obligation to love from Scripture (Love is learned by precept).

C. Love is not envious or jealous of the spiritual success or prosperity of another (v.12-13)

v. 12

"Cain, who was of that wicked one" - Cain belonged to Satan; he was, in his spiritual life, a child of the devil. He was a non-believer, as evident by his inferior offering, attitude of hatred, and his murder of his brother.

"Slew"- a violent murder (the word was used for butchering animals).

John describes the underlying motive behind Cain's murder of Abel as being bitter envy. He was jealous over the fact that God had accepted Abel and his offering but rejected Cain and his. Rather than doing right so that his offering would be accepted, he let bitterness brew in his heart, which led to cold-blooded murder.

Cain resented Abel's righteousness.

v. 13

"Cain was the prototype of the world, which manifests today the ugly qualities he first displayed. The "world" is Cain's posterity." (John Stott, p. 140).

No believer should be shocked or amazed when the lost (motivated by envy and jealousy) express hatred toward him. Jesus said, "If they hated me, they will hate you."

There is not that "family bond" between believer and non-believer. Therefore, there is not that "family dedication."

Many new believers entertain the mistaken notion: "Now that I am saved, a new man, no longer a drunkard, drug addict, prostitute, thief, etc., everybody should like me." Not true! They probably liked you better the old way. Back then you were not an irritating source of conviction to them. Your life did not pose a threat to their ungodliness. You had no light to rebuke their darkness.

D. Love offers the assurance that one has been transferred from the realm of death to the realm of eternal life

(v.14-15)

v. 14

It is fact that a believer crosses over from death to life the moment he believes the Gospel.

John 5:24 - Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

"Passed from" - to transfer; to migrate or move from one place to another. The perfect tense indicates that this cross over to life is permanent.

Loving others does not produce your transfer from death to life, but it shows (manifests) that you have already transferred over (by God's grace).

How does one know if he loves the brethren?

When you love someone . . .

--You spend time with them (you attend church, you get involved in the lives of believers)
--You pray for them
--You are kind to them
--You will meet their need
--You are concerned about their well- being
--You have their best interest in mind (love may confront, and love may rebuke, but love never neglects. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend…")

v. 15

Hatred is the equivalent of murder, just as unrighteous anger is. (Mt. 5:21 - ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment)

E. Love is not mere talk, but sacrificial action toward others in need (v.16-18)

v. 16
There is no greater demonstration of love than to sacrifice your life for another (Jn. 15:13 - Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.)

Those who are convinced of God's sacrifice for them, are properly motivated to reciprocate that same love toward others.

People tend to treat others the same way they perceive they have been treated. For example, one who has been forgiven ought to have the capacity to forgive (Eph. 4:32 - "And be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.")

What have you sacrificed for the sake of another believer lately? (How can you say you love when you don't sacrifice time, energy, money, resources, etc., to meet a brother's need? How could you say you would be willing to give your life for someone, when you can't even give of your abundant resources to help him/her?)

v. 17
To be aware of someone's need, and to do nothing about it, when you have the means of life to do something, is to reflect a hard, cold heart (void of God's love).

Love does <u>not</u> dwell in the miser (Stott, p. 144).

v. 18
John is <u>not</u> saying: You shouldn't tell others you love them (God has told us that He loves us). Rather, he is saying, your love should <u>not</u> be mere talk. Rom. 5:8 - "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.").

It's easier to say, "I love you" than to <u>show</u> it. It's easier to talk about your love for others than to demonstrate it. Mere talk is cheap. We should love in our words, but real love does not stop there. Talk alone is cheap (ILLUS: the "Pineapple Story" in Papua, New Guinea).

"Deed" - work (a beneficial action)

Practical ways to express Love for others:

- Love “washes feet” (John 13:13-17)

- Love shares possessions (Acts 4:32)
  Acts 4:32 ***And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.***

- Love Gives & Forgives

  What actions can you extend?

  --a hug --a helping hand --a phone call or card --a loving rebuke -- prayer on their behalf --meeting a need or extending a favor --babysitting their children so they can go out --helping them move --a ride to and from church etc.

  “Truth” - genuine, real (not hypocritical love) from pure motives (out of love for God).

  To do an act of kindness but to do it for self-recognition or reward is faulty motivation and will not be rewarded by God.

  Why do you do what you do?

  --Love is from God (v. 17 “love of God” It is not self-originated)
  --Love is positive (it’s not merely “I don’t do anyone harm”; it’s “I do others good”)
  --Love is volitional (a choice)
  --Love is visual (can be seen by what it does)
  --Love is practical (produces good)
  --Love is sacrificial (it gives of itself to benefit one in need)
  --Love is personal (“it is easier to be enthusiastic about humanity with a capital “H” than it is to love individual men and women, especially …the unattractive” Stott, p. 143).

Conclusion: I Cor. 13