

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to 1 John 4

We are continuing our verse by verse study through this short but very powerful, practical and personal letter that the Apostle John wrote to the church in general (including you and me)

About the reality of who God is

The reality of who Jesus is

And the reality of what it means to be a genuine believer in Jesus Christ.

And the reason that he wrote this letter is because there are false teachers out there that teach heresies about who God is or who Jesus is or what it means to be a genuine believer –

And if we are not sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is telling us – we may become discouraged by the heresies that they teach and may begin to question whether we are truly saved or not.

And so - John has given us these series of tests to bring us assurance of who are in Jesus Christ.

Tests that reveal whether we truly have true fellowship with God and what genuine fellowship with God looks like.

A Moral tests – do we walk in obedience to what He has called us to do

A doctrinal test – do we walk in the truth – do we truly believe everything that God has said about His Son. Who He is, Why He came, What His death on the cross accomplished, His resurrection and His Second Coming and so on.

A Relationship test – do we love God and do we love each other.

In our text this morning – John is going to summarize what real love is.

Real love for God and real love for one another

And John is going to demonstrate how our love for God and our obedience to God are tied to one another.

Let's pray...

Read text –

Question for us all –

We don't have to answer or raise our hands.

As I read the text this morning and you were following along –

Didn't it seem – like we were just punched in the gut. (sigh)

There is a sense of conviction.

Not only in our text this morning but really over the last few weeks on what John has written to us about how we are to love God and love one another.

And how our love for one another in the manifestation of how we love God.

But here is the thing church -

If loving God and loving one another came perfectly natural to us -

The Apostle John would not be exhorting us about it over and over and over again.

Love God, love your brother

Love God, love your brother

Love God, love your brother

If it was just a forgone conclusion for all believers to “love God and love your brother” without any hesitation – or without any hiccup, John would not have to say it again and again.

But the reason that John is saying it again and again is that John knows that it comes with hiccups – he knows that it comes with challenges.

In the Body of Christ – there will be times when we step on each other’s toes.

We are human

We will have disagreements.

There will be times when we might not like each other or try to avoid one another.

And then we read the text - If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar.

And we become convicted –

We have to grasp that John is not describing here the perfect life of Christians – that we never struggle in the areas of loving God and loving one another.

We do.

But we are convicted by the Holy Spirit – who lives inside us when things are not the way they ought to be.

And we ought to respond in obedience to the conviction of the Holy Spirit as it relates to getting those things in order.

So that means – taking the initiative to go to those individuals and say, “we need to get this thing right”

Even if they are not ready to reconcile.

We take the initiative.

Remember, God set the example for us – He reached out to us first.

He showered love on us when we didn't deserve it.

And therefore, we don't have the right to withhold love and affection to our brothers and sisters.

Now – I want to start in verse 19 –

[1Jo 4:19 NKJV] 19 We love Him because He first loved us.

I didn't mention this last time in our study – but if you look closely – depending upon your translation, the word, "Him" might not even be there or you may have a footnote next to the word Him – stating that "Him" is not found in many of the original manuscripts – and it was added by the translators.

So – you may have a translation that states, We love because He first loved us

Either way – the point that John is making is the same.

God is the source of what He has called us to do

So if He commands us to love one another – He has given us the ability to do exactly what we need to do.

Because He is the source

He is the initiator of love

So John invites us to allow the love of God to fill us and then overflow us.

So we can go directly to God and pray that we might have the same love for our brothers and sisters that He has for them – and He will provide us with that love.

[1Jo 4:20-21 NKJV] 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

I had you make a note of the phrase – “if someone says”

By my count, this is the 7th time in the letter that John has used this phrase or a phrase similar to it.

“He who says”

“If we say”

In context – John is pointing out the individuals who say one thing and do another.

The Gnostics teachers were going around in the early church saying, “I love God” but refused to have friendship and fellowship among the brethren.

They refused to show mercy and have compassion toward the brethren

And in their mind, they had conceived an imaginary God who would allow them to love him while at the same time hate their fellow man.

John is saying – that is not the God of the bible

That is not the God of love

And John calls these individuals – liars.

By the way – this is something that John has done throughout his letter – exposed those individuals who say one thing and do another -

[1Jo 1:8 NKJV] 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

[1Jo 2:4 NKJV] 4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

[1Jo 2:22 NKJV] 22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

So for the person that says, I can have a right relationship with God and it doesn't matter how I treat other people-

John says, that is a lie.

We can't say we love God when we hate our brother.

I was reading a story of a bible professor

And this bible professor –

He brought in a dart board and he put a sheet of white paper over it and told his class, that if they wanted to – they could bring a picture or a drawing of someone who they disliked or someone who made them angry and he was going to allow them to throw darts at their image.

So one of the students brought a picture of another student who he accused of stealing his girlfriend and he proceeded to throw darts at it.

Another student brought a picture of a younger brother – did the same thing

Another student brought a picture of the professor – did the same thing

Some of the students threw with such force that they destroyed their targets.

And at the end of the exercise the professor removed the images, removed the white paper and there was a picture of Jesus behind it.

A hush fell over the room as each student viewed the mangled image of their Savior—holes and jagged marks covered His face.

And the professor quoted Matthew 25:40

[Mat 25:40 NKJV] 40 "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did [it] to one of the least of these My brethren, you did [it] to Me.'

Here, the issue, is it possible to really love God when we hate other people?

John says no.

John says that we are fooling yourself if we think we can love an invisible God, while hating a visible person.

Our love is simply a convenient love, not a real love.

It's convenient because we say we love God, when we obviously don't know who God is.

If we knew who God is, and we have experienced His love then we would love others.

21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God [must] love his brother also.

John is not telling us that we need to love God and love one another because he says so –

He is telling us that we need to love God and love one another because that is exactly what Jesus has asked us to do this.

Because when God's love fills our hearts – everything changes.

Is it going to be a perfect life – no

Is it going to be easy – no

Is it going to come with challenges – yes

Are we going to stumble and fall – count on it

And that is what forgives is all about.

God loved us while we were still sinners and alienated from Him!

God loved us in the midst of our sin and brokenness; in the middle of our frailty and weakness.

It was that love that changed us and empowered us to change and grow into the image of Christ.

That is the love you and I are to show to one another.

We are to love one another in the midst of our failure and weakness.

As we do, as we remain committed to one another even in the midst of disappointment and hurt, then we find the strength to grow and rise out of all those things that are weak and failing.

[1Jo 5:1-5 NKJV] 1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

Remember that one of the reasons that John wrote this letter was to reassure us of who we are in Christ – what is a real Christian.

A real Christian is one who has been “born again”, who has had a spiritual birth from God Himself. Jesus said, (speaking to Nicodemus)

[Jhn 3:3 NKJV] 3 Jesus answered and said to him, **"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

How does one become born again?

By believing in their heart everything that Word of God reveals about who Jesus is.

Again, not just an intellectual belief

But a belief that is experienced

And it is that belief that results in the believer having a relationship with God

We become His children -

[Jhn 1:12-13 NKJV] 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

So what John is saying here is –

Those that God has been made born again (believers)

Because they are begotten of Him – we then love them because they are His children.

We love each other because we are one spiritual family.

God Himself has given us this new life

God Himself has given us this new nature

We are made righteous by God

[Rom 10:9-10 NKJV] 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Therefore – because we are born again, and given a new life and a new nature, we begin to conduct ourselves differently – by the power of the holy Spirit who is working in us and through us.

We begin to love each other and begin to walk in obedience

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

This is something that John has repeated throughout his letter.

That people who love God, obey God

This is actually the opposite of first verse we looked at this morning – 4:20

We can't say we love God and hate our brothers

Here John says -

We can't say we really love others if we don't love God and show it by doing what He says.

And by His commandments – John is referring to loving God and loving one another.

So – how do we know that we love one another?

When we look at another person and we begin to pray for them and we care about what happens to them and we are willing to do what is right towards them – that is a summary of what Paul tells us that love is in 1 Cor 13.

That is a biblical love

And so - Our obedience to God proves that we love God – that is John's argument.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

God's desire is that our obedience is motivated out of love, not out of fear.

If we truly love God, if we truly have experienced His love in our lives, then we are glad to do what He asks us to do.

Jesus - [Jhn 14:15 NKJV] 15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

What is the motivation to keep His commandments – love.

And I had you make a note of the word burdensome

Because the Greek word refers to the idea of carrying a weight that sometimes seems like it is impossible to bear.

Some of us may currently be dealing with an issue that is burdensome.

Could be health, finances, relationship.

But John tells us that His commandments are not burdensome

They were never meant to weigh us down

They were never meant to bring us to a place where we felt we couldn't go forward

They're not burdensome because EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM IS GIVEN TO PROTECT AND BLESS US!

You see church, by loving others as Jesus commands, it frees us from the prison of self-preoccupation!

Nothing is more miserable than a person consumed with themselves.

The person who doesn't love – is preoccupied with themselves.

What about me, what about my feelings

And no one is more free and blessed than the one who has forgotten self and lives to be a blessing to others.

This is the abundant life that God has for you and me

This is the abundant life that lives in real fellowship with God

Why is His burden "light"?

Because of love.

Because of His love for us demonstrated when He died to pay for our sins.

And when we turn to love Him back, we find that it's quite easy to do what He asks.

Turn to Genesis 29

I am going to show you an example of this –

Here in Gen 29 – we find Jacob looking for a bride – and uncle Laban plays the old switch a roo trick and gives Leah to Jacob instead of Rachel.

[Gen 29:18-20 NKJV] 18 Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, “I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.” 19 And Laban said, “[It is] better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.” 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed [only] a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

Jacob had to work for seven years in order to win the woman he loved: but we see that those 7 years were not burdensome because of the love that he had for Rachel.

When we grow in our love for God, we find that we grow in our “delight to do His will”.

So His commandments are not burdensome.

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.

This is one of the characteristics of those who have been “born again”, those who claim to have had a spiritual birth from God.

The characteristic of someone who is born again is that they have experienced a victory over the “world”.

This is how we can tell a believer from a make believer

[Rom 12:2 NKJV] 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what [is] that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Remember, the world here is in reference to the world system that stands in opposition to things of God and the person of God and the salvation of God – that is what John is talking about

The born again Christian –

Believes the truth

Obeys God’s word

Demonstrates love

They are given power by the Holy Spirit

For what purpose? To secure victory – by faith.

Overcomers are characterized by their “faith”, by their trusting in something they don’t see, by counting on something in the future that hasn’t yet happened.

I may not understand the circumstances around me, but I can still count on God.

5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

The faith of the believer – it is not some sort of vague faith or some kind of wishful thinking that gives us victory.

It is faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

Ultimate victory comes from trusting Jesus

John told us earlier,

(1 Jn 4:4 NKJV) You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Who is in us?

God is in us. And He has overcome the world.

(Jn 16:33 NKJV) These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

It starts with our salvation, learning to trust that Jesus will pay for our sins.

But trusting in Jesus is also about growing in faith.

God wants our faith to grow from there.

Overcoming the world is a lifelong process.

It's conquering one challenge after another.

Jesus lived a perfect life and died a sacrificial death, and all who trust in Him are identified with HIM and His victory.

We are identified with His life.

We are identified with His death and we are identified with His victory over sin, death, and the world. Because the Lord Jesus has overcome the world, all who trust in His name have also overcome the world... by association with HIM.

Victory is a sign that we have the Lord himself within us. Our efforts are but a sign of the presence of the life of God, the Lord Jesus himself.

Without that, everything else would be futile. It is not we who overcome the world, but it is he in us. All that we contribute is simply the fact that we believe in his life at work in us. Thus, our faith in him overcomes the world.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

The life of abiding faith and trust in Jesus Christ is the life that overcomes the pressures and temptations of the world.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

