

Adult Bible Class

Large-Print Edition

March, April, May 2017

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SPRING QUARTER

For Adults Ages 26 & Up



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EDITORIAL

God's Love for All

STEVEN D. PYLE

Love is a topic that comes up frequently. For instance, one can love certain foods or certain sports teams. Then there is lust for another person that disguises itself as love. These uses of the word “love” make it difficult to understand the love of God.

Humans can understand affection (like) or even love for a spouse, parents, children, other family members, or a pet. However, to truly understand love, it is necessary to understand love as God defines it.

The biblical record makes it plain that humanity has a certain direction for love—toward self. The worship of false gods was to appease them in order to obtain something. This could be rain so that crops would grow and there would be food on the table. Success in war was another area of concern that called for appeasing false gods.

We ignored God. The Bible tells us that even though we did not first love God, He showed His love to us. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). God reached out to us, not the other way around.

The only way we can love others the way God loves is by Him living in us. It is by God’s Spirit living in us that we can truly love one another.

God calls us to love others even when they are not lovable. That is not easy. God gave us His example. He loved us when we were sinners. We deserved God’s wrath. But God gave His Son for us. Jesus was raised from the dead, and the Father seated Him in heaven. God thus demonstrated His kindness. When

we trust Jesus as Saviour, we place our faith not in what we did. For there is nothing we can do to put ourselves into a right relationship with God. Our salvation is a gift from God.

God wants to see the fruit of love in our lives. However, that fruit will only be seen as we abide in Christ. “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:4).

God is often portrayed as a shepherd. In fact, Jesus is called the Good Shepherd. Jesus laid down His life for His sheep. His sheep are those who have placed their trust in Jesus as Saviour. Believers are incapable of leading themselves. All those who come to God through Jesus will be saved. “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (John 10:9).

If we have truly trusted Jesus as Saviour, we will listen to His voice. This is not to say that believers will never stray—after all, sheep stray. Their shepherd has to keep them in the flock. God will find it necessary to bring His followers in line. But Jesus loves His followers, for He gave His life for them.

As believers live out their faith, unbelievers see the love God gives and respond. As God’s people reflect the love God has shown them, there will be a response. Sometimes it is a response of acceptance, and sometimes it is a violent reaction to God’s love.

The early Christians were a persecuted minority. Eusebius Hieronymous Sophronius (Jerome) wrote, “The Church of Christ has been founded by shedding its own blood, not that of



others; by enduring outrage, not by inflicting it.” The pagans said, “See how these Christians love one another” (Tertullian, *Apologeticus*).

We have seen believers come to the aid of refugees and those affected by natural disasters. People have trusted Jesus as Saviour not because of financial incentives but because of love. There have been movements toward Christ in Haiti, Nepal, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. This is only a trace of what God is doing in the world through the love of His people.

Our first inclination would be to pray to be spared from persecution. Note the guidelines The Voice of the Martyrs organization gives to people praying for persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. The suggested prayers are as follows.

“That God would give them the right words and that they would fearlessly make Christ known” (Eph. 6:19-20; Col. 4:2-4). “That they will see God’s grace as sufficient and God’s power perfected in their weakness” (II Cor. 12:9-10). “That they would love Christ’s appearing all the more” (II Tim. 4:5-8; Heb. 11:35). “That they will rejoice in sharing the sufferings of Jesus so that they will rejoice even more when Christ is revealed” (Heb. 10:34; Matt. 5:12; I Pet. 4:13).

“That they will endure” (Heb. 10:36; 5:8).

“That they will love Christ far more than life itself” (Rev. 12:10-11; Phil. 1:21; Acts 20:24). “That they will love their enemies” (Luke 6:27-31). “That they not enter into temptation” (22:39-45). “That they will rejoice that they are considered worthy to suffer for His name” (Acts 5:41). “That they will remember they were made for such persecution” (Acts 14:22; Phil. 1:29). “That they will live the joy of the Lord before their persecutors” (Acts 16:25; Phil. 1:28).

“That they will remember their unbelievable future glory” (Rom. 8:18). “That they would learn to more completely trust in God” (II Cor. 1:8-9). “That they would rejoice that they bear in their bodies the ‘brand marks of Christ’” (Gal. 6:17). “That they would rejoice in filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s sufferings” (Col. 1:24). “For their physical protection and deliverance” (Matt. 26:39; Acts 12:5; Philemon 1:22; Rom. 15:30-31).

The love of God is there for His children and for those who do not know Him. Pray for His love to be realized by believers more and more. Pray that believers would show God’s love to unbelievers.

Scripture Lesson Text

I JOHN 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spir'it.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Je'sus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

NOTES

The Source of All Love

Lesson: I John 4:7-19

Read: I John 4:7-19

TIME: about A.D. 90-95

PLACE: probably from Ephesus

GOLDEN TEXT—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (I John 4:11).

Lesson Exposition

THE PAST: LOVE'S ORIGIN— I John 4:7-11

Love originated with God (I John 4:7-8). This was the third time John wrote about the subject of love in this letter. In 2:7-11 he stated that a person who hates proves that he is still living in darkness rather than spiritual light. One who loves, however, shows that he is living in that light. In 3:10-14 he stated that love of fellow believers reflects genuine salvation, revealing a person to be a child of God rather than a child of the devil. The one without love is spiritually dead.

Why is such love so important? Our passage for this week begins with John's statement that love comes directly from God and that God is, in fact, the essence of love. Love is a significant aspect of His very nature, so those who are His children share in that nature and therefore manifest love toward others. In fact, since this love is part and parcel of our being in Him, a person who loves is born again while the one who does not love does not even know God. It is impossible for an unregenerate person to love purely.

Because of such an intimate rela-

tionship between God and His children, does it not seem strange that John would feel compelled to command us to love one another? The fact is that there are many who are truly believers but do not as yet know God well. The more we come to know and understand Him, the more we recognize how great His love is for us and how we can manifest that love to others. With that understanding comes an accompanying desire to be like Him and do what He wants us to do for others.

We must realize that having only a head knowledge about God will not translate into living a life of love. An experiential, intimate knowledge of Him is necessary for us to fulfill the command to love one another in the way He wants. This comes only through spending much time in His Word and in intimate, personal communication with Him.

Love was shown to us (I John 4:9-11). It is impossible to question the truth that God loves us. It was revealed by the Father in sending His only Son to die for us so that we can have eternal life.

God's sacrifice was totally for our