

Place: Lurgan Baptist  
6:8:2006

Reading: 1 John 3:1-18

## BACK TO BASICS

### 11. THE TIMELESS MESSAGE OF LOVE

I heard about a business man in the U.S.A. who loved to be on time for work. One day, however he got stuck in a long line of traffic. The whole road for miles was just like a car park. He was getting more and more frustrated as the seconds, minutes, and hours passed and behind him was someone who was starting to irritate him. The man behind him had tooted his horn. Well, he let the first one pass. Then he hooted again, this time it was hard to take. On the third occasion he had enough. He jumped out of his car and was ready to punch the man on the nose. “*How dare you,*” he said “*Do you not see I have no where to go.*” The man looked at him and said, “*I was just obeying your bumper sticker which says, honk if you love Jesus.*”

We certainly can let ourselves down and sometimes its not too evident that we really love the Saviour. Love is one of John’s favourite themes, it is a theme which is very close to the heart of the old apostle, in fact it is a word which he uses nearly fifty times in the compass of five chapters. John’s letter has been compared to a spiral staircase because he keeps returning to the same three topics, *love* ( 2:7 ) *obedience* ( 2:3 ) and *truth* ( 2:21 ) time and again. Now though these themes recur, it is not true that they are merely repetitious for each time we return to a topic, we look at it from a different point of view and are taken more deeply into it. We have already learned about our love for other believers “*the brethren,*” in ( Ch 2 ) but the emphasis in ( Ch 2 ) was on **fellowship**. A Christian who is “*walking in the light,*” will evidence that fact by loving the brethren. In this section, however, the emphasis is on his **relationship** with other believers. You see, Christians love one another because they have all been born of God, which makes them all brothers and sisters in Christ. In ( Ch 2 ) we are told that loving the brethren is a matter of *light and darkness*, for if we do not love one another we cannot walk in the light, no matter how loud our profession. But in ( Ch 3 ) we are told that loving the brethren is a matter of *life and death*, for John says “*he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*” ( 3:14 )

John’s concern is that Christians should love one another. *And Christian love means that we treat each other the way God treats us.* **Love !** The Greeks had four words to express love. There is the word “*eros,*” which refers to sexual love from this word we get our English word “*erotic.*” There is the word “*storge,*” which refers to family love. There is the word “*philia,*” from which we get our English words “*philanthropy, philharmonic, Philadelphia.*” It’s a word that speaks of a strong brotherly affection. The fourth word, and the word used by John is the word “*agape.*” This is the word that is used to speak of God’s love. It’s the kind of

love that Christ showed to us, it's the kind of love we are to show to others ! Indeed John says in ( 3:11 ) Loving one another is a command that has existed from the beginning. It's a command that is affirmed in the Old Testament ( Lev 19:18 ) and confirmed in the New Testament ( Jn 13:34 ) It is a timeless message ! And its to this “ **Timeless message of Love,**” that I want to direct your mind this .... !

## **(1) LOVE PASSIONATELY DECLARED**

The message is an old one, it is timeless, it is changeless, we have it many times, it has been around from day one and we have it right here in ( 3:11 ) where John says,

“ *For this is the message .....*,” Now John declares this message of loving one another with passion. Indeed tradition tells us that when he could not enter the assembly at Ephesus, they would carry him in and he would stand before the people and say, “ *little children love one another.* ” Now why did John declare this message of loving one another with such passion. I think for at least three reasons. Without this Biblical love we,

### **(a) ARE SPIRITUALLY DOMINATED:**

John says “ *love one another,* ” and then he says “ *Not as Cain.* ” You see, if there is love there is the desire to do good, if there is murder, hatred, there is the desire to do evil. Now I want to ask three simple questions about Cain.

### **1. WHERE ?**

Where did Cain come from ? Well, look if you will at ( 3:12 ) When we read ( Gen Ch 4 ) we discover that Cain was born to Adam and Eve, the first man and woman who ever lived. Also, in that home was born another son, Abel. Those two boys, Cain and Abel had the same mother and father, yet they were very different in their attitude and action. Why was Cain different from his brother ? Well, he was of the “ *wicked one.* ” Talk about roots. The roots of a murderer go back to the devil himself. *Physically* we all have one root we can all trace our physical lineage back to Adam, but *spiritually* you can have one of two roots, you can trace yourself spiritually back to Satan, or you can trace yourself spiritually back to God. Do you realise that this explodes one of the popular theories of our day ? That theory that we are all one big happy family, and God is the Father of us all. Rubbish ! For John tells us in ( 3:10 ) that all people fall into two categories. My .... you are either in the family of God and are a child of God, or you are in the family of the devil and are a child of the devil. Do you recall what the Lord Jesus said, “ *Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do, he was a murderer from the beginning.* ” ( Jn 8:44 ) Cain originated from the devil. 1.

### **2. WHAT ?**

What did Cain do ? Cain killed his brother ! The Biblical word “ *slew,* ” means to

put to death by violence. Its means to butcher, to kill a person by cutting his throat.

And Cain spilled the blood of his own brother on the ground. ( Gen 4:8 ) With that first murder Cain began something that has multiplied through the centuries. My .... we are living in world in which murder is rampant.

### **3. WHY ?**

Why did Cain do it ? John gives the answer in ( 3:12 ) ! God evidently had told Adam and Eve how to approach Him in worship, when He killed the animals and clothed the two of them with animal skins ( Gen 3:21 ) They saw that the only approach to God was by the shedding of blood, but Cain did not want to go God's way. He wanted to make up his own religion, so he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. He brought of the work of his own hands and God rejected it. My .... do you think that you will get to heaven by what you do ? You don't believe that Jesus Christ is the only way. You reject the cross, you curse the Christ, you despise the blood, you say "*I will come to God my own way. I will come through church membership, I will come through baptism, I will come through honesty, decency, morality but I will not come though Jesus Christ.*" Is this you this .... ? Bishop G. Oxnam former president of the World Council of Churches said, "*I would rather go to hell than go to heaven on the back of another man.*" Well, I've got news for him and you. You will either go to heaven on the back of Jesus Christ or you will not go at all. Now what did Cain with his heart of hate and murder show ? That he was dominated by the devil. Mow many of you are relieved because you have never murdered anyone and so you think you have escaped thus far, but John goes further. Without this Biblical love we are (a) but we,

#### **(b) ARE SPIRITUALLY DEAD:**

Look if you will at ( 3:14 ) Now it should not surprise you if you are a Christian if the world hates you. ( Jn 15:18 ) *But what should surprise you is that supposedly Christian people could hate each other.* My .... do you want to know whether or not you are saved? Well, can you honestly say that you love your brothers and sisters in Christ ? You see, love is a mark of spiritual life. If you want to know whether or not you are really "*born again,*" just ask yourself a simple question. "*Do I love the brethren ?*" Now I'm not asking do you love the brethren generally, I am asking do you love every brother specifically, for did you notice the change in subject from the "*brethren,*" plural in ( 3:14 ) to a "*brother,*" singular in ( 3:15 ) You see, if there are a 100 Christians you know, and you love 99, but hate one you are in deep spiritual trouble. The apostle Paul had more trouble with the Corinthians perhaps than any other church. It was in Corinth that his authority was challenged, it was here that his integrity was questioned, it was here that he revealed his thorn in the flesh. Yet one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible is found in ( 1 Cor 16:24 ) where Paul closes his letter by saying, "*My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.*" John has told us that where there is no love there is no light.

( 2:11) Now he tells us that where is no love there is no life. ( 3:14 ) For a man

who does not love his brother is spiritually dead. My .... you may not have used a dagger, but have you used your tongue to destroy some other believer ? Have you ever scandalised ? Passed on rumour ? John says “ *you call yourself a Christian, but do you have a continual, habitual heart of bitterness against some other believer ?* ” (a) (b)

### **(c) ARE SPIRITUALLY DOOMED:**

John does not mince his words. There are no shades of grey as far as the apostle is concerned, it is black and white, it is cut and dried. “ *Whosoever hateth ....* ” ( 3:15 ) Now hatred is not as bad as murder. I mean if you fall out with me I would much rather you hate me than murder me. “ *Sticks and stones may break my bones but a gun can blow my head off.* ” But you see, to God hatred is murder, for the Lord does not look just on the outward appearance, but on the inward attitude. When God sees hate He writes down murder, when He sees lust, He writes down adultery, when He sees covetousness He writes down stealing. As far as God is concerned hatred is the moral equivalent of murder. Now John is not talking here about a Christian who occasionally gets angry with another Christian. No ! The verb “ *hate,* ” in ( 3:15 ) is in the present tense and it denotes continuous action. A Christian may occasionally get angry with his brother, but he cannot habitually hate his brother. Indeed an unforgiving spirit is evidence of an unforgiven spirit. ( Matt 18:35 ) Tell me, are you harbouring hatred, bitterness in your heart ? I heard of a deacon who had a grudge against another deacon. The deacon who was holding the grudge got sick and was on his deathbed and was about to die.

Some of the brethren called to see him and said to him, “ *Brother, you are about to die, don't go out into eternity with this grudge in your heart. Surely you don't want to meet God like that. Why don't you let us go and tell this other deacon that from your deathbed you said you had forgiven him.* ” He said, “ *Did the Doctor really say that I am going to die ?* ” They said, “ *Yes.* ” He said “ *Well, alright, you go and tell him that I said I had forgiven him, but remember if I get well the deal is off.* ” Do you know something ? That man is a spiritually doomed man. For “ *no murderer .... in him,* ” ( 3:15 ) (1)

### **(2) LOVE POWERFULLY DISPLAYED**

If you want to know the true meaning of love you'll not find it in the dictionary, you will not find it in a romantic novel, you will not find it in a soap opera, you will only find it at the cross of Jesus Christ ! John says, “ *Hereby perceive we the love of God ....* ” ( 3:16 ) Cain was an example of hate, but Jesus Christ is the supreme example of love. For love was seen,

### **(a) SACRIFICIALLY IN THE SAVIOUR:**

Christ laid down His life in order to save us ! Now John tells us three important things about the death of our Lord Jesus.

### 1. His death was VOLUNTARY:

His life was not taken, it was given. His death was not forced but allowed. He laid down His life. Do you recall what the Saviour Himself said ? “ *I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* ” ( Jn 10:11 ) Again, speaking of His life the Saviour said, “ *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.* ” ( 10:18 ) 1.

### 2. His death was VICARIOUS:

It was a death on behalf of others. John says, “ *He laid down his life for us.* ” And the preposition “ *for,* ” is important. It means “ *in the place of,* ” “ *instead of,* ” and the implication is clear. The death of Jesus Christ was substitutionary. Now a substitute is someone who goes on to a football field for someone else. John says, “ *we perceive the love of God in that he laid down his life for us, in place of, in our stead, as our substitute.* ” My .... what can we say of Calvary love, which will not us go ? What can we say of the love that drew salvation’s plan and of the grace that brought it down to man ? What can we say of that love, which, before time ever began, reached out lost sinners in all the ages of time ? When we think of who He is and what we are, surely we are overwhelmed !

### 3. His death was VICTORIOUS:

The tense of the verb here “ *laid down,* ” means a once for all action. When Christ died on the cross, he exclaimed in triumph, “ *it is finished.* ” His death was that of a champion having pulled off a massive coup against the old enemy. His death was victorious ! So when we talk about love, the pre-eminent example is that of Jesus Christ. He is the prototype ! For love was seen (a) and then love is seen,

#### **(b) SELFLESSLY IN THE SAINTS:**

For John says “ *And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* ” ( 3:16 ) Now when John refers to Christ he uses the past tense, but when he refers to us he uses the present tense. And he is saying we ought to continually lay down our lives for each other. Now we cannot continually die for one another for once you die that’s it, but we can continually live for one another. We may not be called upon to gave our lives in sacrifice, but we are certainly called upon to gave our lives in service.

John is saying, “ *If Christ loved you enough to die for you, you ought to love your brother enough to live for him.* ” Self-preservation is the first law of physical life, but self-sacrifice is the first law of spiritual life.

**“ Lord let me live from day to day  
In such a self forgetful way  
That when I kneel to pray  
My prayer shall be for others  
Others, Lord, yes, others,  
Let this my motto be**

*Let me live for others  
That I may live like Thee.”*

### **(3) LOVE PRACTICALLY DEMONSTRATED**

You see, Christian love is personal, active, and practical.

Two friends were attending a conference on evangelism. During one of the sessions Larry missed Pete. At lunch that day, he said to Pete, “ *I missed you at the 10 o’clock session. It was really terrific ! Where were you ?* ” “ *I was in the lobby talking to a bellboy about Christ. I led him to the Lord.* ” Now there is nothing wrong with attending conferences, but its easy to forget the individual and his needs while discussing generalities. The test of Christian love is not in loud professions about loving the whole church, but in quietly helping the brother who is in need. You see, love is practically demonstrated,

#### ***(a) NOT IN THE TALK OF THE COUNTERFEIT:***

Look at ( 3:17 ) Here is a brother who does not have clothes, or does not have shelter, or he does not have a job, or he does not have food. My .... if we close our hand, and close our home, and close our heart, how can we say that the love of God abides in us ? Now if we are going to help our brothers in need we must meet three conditions. (1) We must have *the Resources* to meet those needs: (2) We must have *the Realisation* that there is a need: (3) We must have *the Resolve* to meet that need. James said there are those who will say to people who are hungry and naked, “ *be fed, be clothed.* ” ( James 2:16 ) But what good does it do to say things and not do things. We talk about soul-winning, and bringing people to hear the gospel, and we talk, and talk, and talk about it. My .... what good does it do if we never do anything about it ? We talk about helping that sister in need, and we talk and talk but what good does it do, if we never do anything about it ? Paul says, “ *let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* ” ( Gal 6:10 ) For love is practically demonstrated (a)

#### ***(b) BUT IN THE WALK OF THE COMMITTED:***

For John says, “ *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* ” Is this not what they practised in the early church ? The early church was renowned not only for its doctrinal purity, but also for its down to earth expressions of love. Hadrian the Emperor of the Roman Empire in the early part of the second century called a Christian by the name of Aristides to the palace to have him describe what Christians were really like. This is what he said, “ *They love one another. They never fail to help widows. They save orphans from those who would hurt them. If they have something they gave freely to the man who has nothing. If they see a stranger they take home and are happy as though he were a real brother. They don’t consider themselves brothers in the usual sense but brothers instead through the Holy Spirit in God.* ” If the church were like that today you could end welfare and social security tomorrow. Yet how far removed are we from these early believers of whom it was said, “ *Behold how they love one another.* ”

***The Timeless Message of Love !*** (1) (2) (3) Does this kind of love reside in your

heart ? A certain sermon taster had heard that a celebrated preacher was in the area. He wanted to hear him but could not find what church he was in. Eventually he reached the church, but the service was closing. He said to the deacon at the door, “ *is the sermon done ?* ” “ *No,* ” said the deacon, “ *but its got to be done.* ” My .... don’t talk, and talk and talk, just do it. Just do it !