

Place: Lurgan Baptist:
13:8:2006

Reading: 1 John 3:11-24

BACK TO BASICS

12. THE BENEFITS OF BIBLICAL LOVE

Robert Louis Stevenson, author of “*Treasure Island*,” in 1888 due to his health went to live in Samoa of the South Pacific. Stevenson once moving there, involved himself in the lives of the Samoan people. He took great interest in the people and in their community. On one occasion, several tribal chiefs were imprisoned over some political problems. Stevenson visited them on a regular basis, bringing gifts and encouragement. When the chiefs were free, they felt such gratitude for all Stevenson had done for them, they determined to find some way to express their appreciation. When it was suggested that they could cut a road through the dense brush to Stevenson’s house, they immediately went to work building the road. Finally after much labour and sacrifice, the road to Stevenson’s house was completed. The natives called it, “*The Road of the Loving Heart.*” In this section of (1 Jn Ch 3) John has been speaking of the road of the loving hearts of Christians. In (Ch 2) he has told us 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 here in (Ch 3) he tells us 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) One of the marks of the early church was the love that was seen and shared among believers. Tertullian, one of the early church fathers and leaders wrote, “*The heathen are wont to exclaim with wonder, see how these Christians love one another ! They are more ready to die for one another, and the heathen are more ready to kill for one another.*” The Lord Jesus often spoke of the love that is to be seen and shared among believers. He said in His upper room ministry, “*this is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.*” (Jn 15:12) Again He said, “*by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” (Jn 13:35)

Paul speaking to the Roman Christians stressed the same truth, he said, “*Owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*” (13:8) And again to the believers in Thessalonica he said, “*But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*” (4:9) Now John’s concern is that Christians should love one another. ***And Christian love means that we treat each other the way God treats us.***

“*But does it not cost a great deal for the believer to exercise this kind of love ?*” Yes, it does. But the wonderful benefits that come to you as by products of this love more than compensate for any sacrifice you make. To be sure, you do not love others, because you want to get something in return, but the Biblical principle “*give and it shall be given unto you,*”

(Lk 6:38) applies to love as well as to money. So I want to talk to you this about “**The Benefits of Biblical Love,**” and I want to say that,

(1) LOVE EFFECTS US PERSONALLY

For it brings to our hearts the assurance of salvation. It makes a world of difference in your life and mine if we know with assurance, the one in whom we have believed, the one to whom we have entrusted our future.

Assurance of salvation is a tremendous bonus for the believer, living as we do in the third millennium. Now the corresponding Greek word (*parrhesia*) has its roots in the world of politics. It signified the democratic right of free speech. Slowly but surely it came to mean the kind of candid openness that is not afraid to expose itself to public gaze. it's a word that is used in the book of Acts to describe the fearless way the apostles preached the gospel of Christ ! But when we come across this word in John's epistle it has much more to do with one's personal assurance than with worldwide evangelism. In (3:21) it is used in this way when John says, “ *Beloved if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.* ” (4:17) Do you see how John opens this section ? He says, “ *hereby we know we are of the truth.* ” (3:19) Well, John how do we know ? Well, John has spent the previous verses explaining to us that one of the tests of whether we belong to Christ or not, is the test that ought to gave assurance to our hearts, the test of loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. (1) Now speaks here of,

(a) A CONFIRMING HEART:

Look if you will at (3:19) The Amplified Bible puts it like this, “ *By this we shall come to know perceive and recognise and understand that we are of the Truth, and can reassure our hearts in His presence.* ” The Lord has various means of giving us assurance of salvation. Generally speaking that assurance is founded on the Word of God, the Work of Christ, and the Witness of the Spirit. Here, John adds, the assurance that comes from translating pious affirmations into positive action.

My *good works are not the ground of conversion, but they are the result of it.* And, as such, they help confirm, deep in the heart, that our faith is not in vain. Do you see that word “ *assure,* ”? It means to “ *persuade, soothe, tranquillise.* ” John is describing the condition of heart that God intends every Christian to have. It is not good for believers to go through life never sure of where they really stand with God, never sure about their relationship to Him, and whether or not they are on speaking terms with Him. My do you have an assured heart ? The old Puritan Thomas Brooks called assurance, “ *the suburbs of paradise.* ” Is that were you are living ? Is your heart assured, pacified, tranquil in the presence of the Lord ? Or do you lack assurance ? And is that lack of assurance down to the fact that you don't love your brother or sister in Christ ? Is there antagonism instead of affection ? Is there bitterness instead of love ? Is there hatred instead of harmony ? My John wants us to be sure, he wants to eliminate all nagging and niggling doubts from our hearts and minds ! He wants to remove any trace of uncertainty regarding the reality of our faith in Christ ! *So he shows us that Christian love and Christian assurance are really two sides of the same coin.* For love gives assurance. But John not only talks about, (a) he talks about,

(b) THE CONDEMNING HEART:

For look at (3:20) if you will ! Warren Wiersbe says that another way of describing a condemning heart is an “ *accusing conscience*.” In his book “ *Meet your Conscience*,” he describes how our conscience works. “ In the inner man is a courtroom. A judge sits at the *bench*, and that judge is also the witness and the jury. That whole group in the courtroom is known as conscience. The judge does not make the law, he applies the law. When you and I do something right, then our conscience says ‘ that’s good, that’s good. It does not accuse, it approves. When we do something wrong, that inner judge, that inner witness says to us, ‘ you are wrong, you are wrong and it hurts.’” An American Indian who was a Christian put it this way, “ *In my heart there is an arrowhead with three points to it. If I do wrong, the arrowhead turns and it cuts me.*” You see, when a believer sins, his heart condemns him, he is bothered by what he has done. There is that on the inside that says we have done wrong. The word “ *condemn*,” suggests ideas like if our heart blames us, if our heart finds fault with us, if our heart puts us down. A Christian who is living close to the Lord and walking with the Lord, will have a sensitive heart to sin. A holy conscience is like an alarm clock, that goes off inside you when you are not right with God or not right with your brother.

*“No torture the poet’s name
Can match the fierce unbearable pain
He feels who day and night devoid of rest
Carries his own accuser within his breast.”*

My if you are a true Christian you cannot habitually sin and be happy and content. At this moment you either have a confirming heart or you have a condemning heart. ***The problem is that sometimes we are harder on ourselves than God is.*** I heard the story of three people walking on a wall. Their names were Fact, Faith, and Feeling. They were walking along the wall in that order. ***Fact was first, Faith was walking behind Fact, and finally Feeling came along last.*** Everything went fine until Faith looked to see where Feeling was. Each time Faith did this, he fell off the wall. But as long as Faith kept his eyes on Fact he did fine. My the moral of the story is we need to keep our eyes on Fact and let Feeling take care of itself. You see, feelings are fickle, they are not reliable, they can lead astray. So when our feelings condemn us, then we need to tell them to sit down and shut up. God is not condemning us. Do you know something ? ***Sometimes the most difficult people we find to forgive are ourselves and we just won’t let it go.*** More than one Christian has accused himself falsely, or been harder on himself than necessary, but God will never make a mistake. Do you see how John puts it ?

“God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” **Do you remember Mary ?** When the Lord Jesus visited Bethany, He stayed at the home of Mary and Martha. (Lk 10:38-42) Martha was busy preparing the meal, but Mary “ *sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.*”

Martha criticised both Mary and the Master, but Christ knew Mary’s heart and defended her. **Do you remember Peter ?** How he wept bitterly after he had denied his Lord ! No doubt he was filled with remorse and repentance for his sin. But Christ knew

that Peter had repented and after His resurrection the Lord sent a special message to Peter (Mk 16:7) that must have assured the hot headed fisherman that he was forgiven.

My Peter's heart may have condemned him, for he knew he had denied the Saviour three times, but God was greater than his heart. Christ, knowing all things, gave Peter just the assurance he needed. My do you know something ? Our relationships with each other are so important ! “ *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* ” (Matt 5:23-24) Do you need to do that ? Have you given the devil an opportunity to accuse you ? To rob of your confidence ? Why ? Because you no longer love your brother in Christ ! (1)

(2) LOVE EFFECTS US PRAYERFULLY

Love not only effects our personal life, but it effects our prayer life ! A cartoon showed a picture of a little boy praying. The caption read, “ *Dear God, Aunt Harriet has not got married. Uncle Herbert hasn't any work, and Daddy's hair is still falling out. I'm getting tired of praying without results.* ” Do you feel like that ? A man was interviewing people in the Holy Land about prayer. He came to a Moslem and asked, “ *do you pray ? Five times a day was his answer.* He then asked, “ *Does it work ?* ” The Moslem answered, “ *Every single time.* ” He then came to a Christian and asked if he prayed. “ *Certainly,* ” was the Christians answer “ *I pray every single day.* ” “ *Does it work ?* ” “ *All the time,* ” was the Christians response. He then came to a Jew who was praying at the Western Wall. He asked him if he prayed. “ *What do you think I am doing,* ” said the Jew. “ *Does it work* “? The Jew replied “ *Forty percent of the time.* ” “ *What about the other sixty percent ?* ” The Jew answered, “ *its like talking to a wall.* ” When you pray, do you feel like you are talking to a wall ? Is that because you fail to love biblically ? You see, the second benefit of love is answered prayer ! For prayer is related,

(a) TO LOVING CONTINUALLY:

Love for the brethren produces confidence toward God, and confidence toward God gives you boldness in asking what you need. Now this does not mean that you earn answers to prayer by loving the brethren. Rather, it means that your love for the brethren proves that you are living in the will of God where God can answer prayer.

Do you see how John puts it ? “ *And whatsoever we ask,* ” Love is the fulfilling of God's law (Rom 13:8-10) therefore when you love the brethren, you are obeying His commandments and He is able to answer your prayers. My in light of our forthcoming mission, let me ask, are you on praying ground ? You say, “ ***preacher what do you mean ?*** ” Just this, are you in a right relationship with your brother, sister, wife ? You see, wrong relationships hinder our prayers. Do you recall what Peter says ? “ *Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them, according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.* ” (1 Pet 4:3:7) An evangelist had preached on the

Christian home. After the meeting a father approached him. “ *I’ve been praying for a wayward son for years,* ” said the father “ *and God has not answered my prayers.* ” The evangelist read these words, “ *if I regard iniquity me.* ” (Ps 66:18) Now he said, “ *be honest, is there any between you and another Christian that needs to be settled ?* ” The father hesitated and said “ *Yes, I’m afraid there is. I’ve harboured resentment in my heart against another brother in this church.* ” “ *Then go make it right,* ” said the evangelist, and he prayed with the man. Do you know something ? Before that campaign was over, that father saw that wayward son come back to the Lord ! Are you praying for your son, daughter, wife, husband, relative, with little answer ? Is it down to the fact that something needs to be settled between you and another believer ? Is your rotten pride taking precedence over your son’s salvation ! (a)

(b) TO LONGING EARNESTLY:

Look if you will at (3:22) Why, that is like a blank cheque ! What a definition of prayer. Prayer is going to God and asking for definite things. Do you know the reason why we do not get more answers from God in prayer ? Its because we are not definite enough in our prayers ! James says “ *Ye have not, because ye ask not.* ”

John says, “ *whatsoever receive of Him,* who ? God.

My here is a God who do anything but fail. Here is a God who never disappoints us. Here is a God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. Here is a God whose resources are unfathomable. Here is a God whose reservoir is never in danger of drying up. Here is a God who desperately wants to help us. Here is a God who passionately longs to intervene on our behalf. Here is a God loves to come alongside us and show us the way. Here is a God who finds endless delight in answering the prayers of His children ! “ And whatsoever we ask of Him,”

(c) TO LIVING OBEDIENTLY:

For John adds, “ *because we keep sight,* ” (3:22) Is this not the key to answered prayer ? Obedience and what is the secret of obedience ? Love ! For Christ said, “ *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* ” (Jn 14:15)

My will you listen ? The only way you can have confidence in your prayer, the only way you can go boldly to the throne of grace is to be right your brother in Christ. You see, God has so engineered you, that if you are not right with your brother, you cannot be right with God. If you do not love your brother in Christ, you might as well forget about prayer. For love effects us (1) (2)

(3) LOVE EFFECTS US POWERFULLY

This is the third benefit of Biblical love. The abiding presence and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. Power ! We hardly know what it these days ! Leonard Ravenhill says, “ *the tragedy of this late hour is that we have too many dead men in the pulpit giving out too many dead sermons to too many dead people.* ” Oh, the horror of it. So little unction in the pulpit and so little action in the pew. Yet John tells us that one of the blessings of love is power and productivity ! Power, if we,

(a) ADHERE TO THE LORD’S PRECEPT:

Look at (3:23) ! You see, faith and love are like Siamese twins. The Greek verb for “*believe*,” is in the aorist tense indicating a definite action at a specific point in time. It is something which has already happened. it’s a one off experience, when it is done, it is done. It cannot be repeated. Incidentally, have you believed on the name of God’s son, Jesus Christ ? There’s salvation in that name for Peter says, “ *Neither there is salvation must be saved.* ” (Acts 4:12) The word “*love*,” appears in the present continuous tense, and it conveys the idea of something which is ongoing. It just keeps on flowing from us to others around us. We become conduits for blessing others ! Is this you ? Is your life a channel of blessing ? You say, “ *I need power in my life*,” well, (a) and then,

(b) ABIDE IN THE LORD’S PRESENCE:

John says we abide in Him (2 Cor 5:17) and He abides in us. (Col 1:27) He comes to live within us. The Lord says Jesus , “ *Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him and he with me.* ” (Rev 3:20) Do you recall those two despondent disciples on the road to Emmaus ? The Bible says that “ *Jesus Himself near and went with them.* ” (Lk 24:15). When it was about the time for the sun to go down, they came to their home and they said to the Risen Lord, “ *Abide with us.* ” Do you know what the Bible says ? “ *And He went in.* ” (Lk 24:29) Something wonderful happened. ***The one who was invited to be their guest became their host.*** He took the bread, broke it and served it to them. You see, when you invite Christ into your life, He takes over and becomes the host. He meets the problems of your heart. How can we know the Lord is in our heart ? How do you know Christ is there ? “ *And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.* ” (3:24)

You see, when you receive Christ as your Saviour, the Spirit comes to dwell in your heart, and from time to time the Holy Spirit supernaturally, makes himself known in your heart, lets you know that you are His. Do you have that assurance that the Spirit of God is dwelling within you ? Does Christ feel at home in your heart ? (Rom 8:16) ***Is your communion with the Lord fruitful or fractured ?*** My do you realise that you can grieve the Holy Spirit of God ? How ? Well, Paul says “ *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.* ” (Eph 4:31-32) So we are back where we started at the “*love life*,” of the Christian. For love effects us (1) (2) (3)

Have you noticed that as we come to the end of this chapter that each member of the Triune Godhead is involved in your “*love life*.” You see, God the Father commands us to love one another, God the Son gave His life on the cross, the supreme example of love, and God the Holy Spirit lives within us to provide the love we need. (Rom 5:5) My to abide (Jn 15:3, 10) in love is to abide in God, and to abide in God is to abide in love. ***This is the secret of victorious Christian living !***
But is it the secret of your life ?