

BACK TO BASICS

14. THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

Reading: 1 John 4:7-16

In what some scholars call “ *The Eleventh Commandment*,” our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples in the Upper Room, “ *A new commandment I gave unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” (Jn 13:34-35) For the third time we are considering the subject of love. This does not mean that John has run out of ideas and has to repeat himself, it means that the Holy Spirit, who inspired John, presents the subject once more, from a deeper point of view. 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) But here we discover why love is such an important part of our lives. John says its because “ *God is love.*” Love is part of the very being and nature of God and if we are united to God through faith in Christ we share His nature.

Now remember that Christian love means that we treat each other the way God treats us. Most of us interpret love as a feeling. I think of the young man that said to his father at breakfast one morning. “ *Dad, I’m going to get married.*” “ *How do you know you’re ready to get married ?*” asked the father. “ *Are you in love ?*” “ *I sure am,*” said the son. “ *How do you know you’re in love asked the father ?*” Well, said the son, “ *Last night as I was kissing my girlfriend good-night, her dog bit me and I didn’t feel the pain until I got home.*” You see, we think of love as an emotional thing. My its an act of the will. I choose to treat you the way God treats me. Tragically and sadly this kind of love is often missing among believers. Dr. Francis Schaeffer stated, “ *I have observed one thing among true Christians in their differences in many countries. What divided and severs true Christian groups and Christians, what leaves a bitterness that can last for 20, 30 or 40 years, is not the issue of doctrine or belief that caused the difference in the first place.*

Invariably it is lack of love, and the bitter things that are said by true Christians in the midst of differences.” He says, “ ***the world looks, shrugs its shoulders and turns away.***” My do you realise that a lack of love has done more harm to the cause of Christ and hindered the mission of the church more than anything else ? The problem is we are often wrapped in ourselves, we have our own ideas about things, we become immersed in what we are involved that we cannot see any further than our nose. We get so uptight about a wide range of trivial pursuits that

love flies out the open window of our hearts. It is quite often the last thing on our minds and yet on three occasions in this passage John declares emphatically “*love one another.*” (4:7, 11-12) John first of all talks about,

(1) THE PROCLAMATION OF LOVE

He gives us a clear statement here about the love of God. He says, “*love is of God,*” and “*God is love.*” This is the third of three expressions in John’s writings that help us understand the nature of God. In his gospel John says, “*God is Spirit,*” (4:24) that is, as to His essence, He is not flesh and blood. “*God is light,*” (1:5) this refers to His holy nature. In the Bible, light is a symbol of holiness and darkness is a symbol of sin. (Jn 3:18-21 1:5-10) God cannot sin because He is holy. “*God is love.*” It has been accurately said, “*that loves does not define God, but God defines love.*” God is love and God is light, therefore His love is a holy love, and His holiness is expressed in love. All that God does expresses all that God is. Even His judgements are measured out in love and mercy. (Lam 3:22-23) Now John is setting forth here,

(a) THE NATURE OF OUR FATHER:

“*God is love,*” the truth has been there all the time woven into the tapestry of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Now John writes it down without quibble or qualification, “*God is love.*” I heard about a seminary professor who was quite strong on the theme of love. One day he had the front of his house cemented. The cement was still wet, when a little boy from next door was playing around and did not realise that the cement was still wet. He ran right through the concrete and messed up all the work that had been done. That teacher really shouted at him. The next day his class were ready for him, “*you have been telling us to love one another yet look hard you were on that kid.*” The professor said its like this, “*I love him in the abstract, but I do not love him in the concrete.*” My the Bible is not talking about love in the abstract. Our God is a God of love. When John wrote these words the concept was something new in the ancient world.

Never would the people of pagan religions have declared that their god was a god of love. They would have declared that their god was a god to be feared, a god who was angry with them. It was a new thought to declare that “*God is love.*” Study comparative religions and see what the religions of the world have to say. Some time ago there was a protest in London, do what was on their placards “*Europe is the cancer, Islam is the answer,*” “*Behead those who insult Islam,*” and so on. You see, its only the Christian gospel that affirms this wonderful truth, “*God is love.*” Bishop Taylor Smith used to say that the heart of the gospel lies in three short sentences. 1. God is: (Ps 46:1) 2. God is love: (4:8) 3. God loves you. (Jn 3:16) Are you in the quagmire of sin this ? God’s love goes deeper than that ? Are you in the clutches of drink, drugs, immorality ? I tell, God’s love goes deeper than that. Several years ago in the U.S.A. a great theologian was giving a series of lectures in the Chicago area. There were discussion periods after he had spoken. These were times for questions and comments. At one session a

man asked this question to the theologian. He said, “ *Sir, what is the greatest thought that has ever coursed through your mind ?* ” The great preacher paused for a moment and then he said with child like simplicity, “ *Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.* ” My do you know that you are loved ? Your sin God hates, your soul God loves. (a)

(b) *THE NATURE OF OUR FAMILY:*

Look if you will at (4:7) You see, those who are children of God will be characterised by love. People born physically take on the nature of their father and mother. We say, “ *Why, he is just like his Dad. He is the spitting image of his father.* ” My when we were born the first time we were born in the flesh, and our spiritual father was none other than Adam. (Rom 5:12) But when we were born again we were born from above and our spiritual father is none other than God. (2 Pet 1:4) Since God is love and we have claimed a personal relationship with God, we must of necessity reveal His love in how we live. Since “ *God is love,* ” Christians ought to love one another. The logic is unanswerable. Now in all honesty, there are some of our fellow-believers that are hard to love. There are some folk we would rather mug than hug.

***“ To live above with saints we love
Well, that will be glory,
To live below with saints we know
Well, that’s another story.”***

When someone does us wrong its not in our human nature to love in return. Our human nature is to retaliate. I heard about a lady who was sick and she went to the Doctor. The Doctor examined her and after some tests he said to her, “ *I’m sorry to tell you, but you have rabies.* ” The lady picked up a notepad and she began writing. The Doctor asked, “ *are you writing out your will ?* ” She replied, “ *No, I’m making a list of all the people I am going to bite.* ” My do you claim to be part of the family of God this ? Well, His love flowing through you to others ? Is there this irrefutable evidence in your life that you belong to Christ ? Are you wearing the badge of love on the label of your life ? John says if we do not show love one toward then we do not love. Its as simple and straightforward as that ! (1)

(2) THE DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE

A Sunday School teacher was reviewing a lesson his class was supposed to know. He asked, “ *what made Jesus come into the world ?* ” No one answered. The teacher became irritated and repeated the question, “ *what made Jesus come into the world ?* ” Still no answer. He exploded, “ *love, love, love.* He marched the around the room hitting each child on the head with a ruler shouting “ *love, love, love.* ” John does not beat us over the head with a ruler shouting, “ *love,* ” rather he sets before us an example and a reason for loving one another. He sets forth the love of God and the sending of the Lord Jesus as the greatest demonstration of love. The word “ *manifested,* ” means “ *made visible,* ” “ *to come out in the*

open, to be made public.” God wanted to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that He loves us. You see, this love was revealed,

(a) IN A PERSON:

“His only begotten Son,” (4:9) The word for *“only begotten,”* means *“unique, one of a kind, the only one of its kind.”* Four times in the writings of John, the Lord Jesus is described as the only begotten Son. (Jn 1:14, 18 3:16, 18) Now there are many sons of God, but there is only Son of God. God did not send just A son of God. He sent THE Son of God, His beloved Son. It was amazing that God should send a Son, but to send His only Son is a measure of the magnitude of His love. The same word is used of Isaac in (Heb 11:17) where we read, *“by faith Abraham, when he was tried offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.”* Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his one and only son, the son who had been promised to him and Sarah for many long years, he was willing to go a long with it if that was what the Lord commanded. The picture we have emerging is of a Son who is extremely precious and greatly loved because he is the only one. That makes him supremely special. God had only one Son and he was sent into a rebel world on a rescue mission to redeem us to God. ***Do you see the Deity of the Lord Jesus here ?*** You see, babies are not sent into the world from some other place, they are born into the world. As the perfect man Jesus Christ was born into the world but as the eternal Son, He was sent into the world !

He lived on this planet for thirty-three and a half years, living a life free from any taint of sin. At the age of thirty He began to preach to a chosen people, in a chosen place for a chosen period. He went about doing good, performing all manner of miracles, and proclaiming truth in a penetrating form. Above all, He was love itself, He loved everybody, even those who hated Him. He could say, *“if you want to know what God is like, just like at Me.”* *“What He is, I am, what He does, I do, what He says, I say.”* (Jn 14:8-10) Well, might we sing,

***“ Oh, the love that drew salvation’s plan
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary.”***

Now we are speaking about *“loving one another,”* tell me how like the Lord Jesus are you ?

(b) FOR A PURPOSE:

“that we might live through Him,” (4:9) The Lord Jesus died that we might live *“through Him,”* *“for Him,”* (2 Cor 5:15) and *“with Him.”* (1 Thes 5:9-10). My do you know why you have no appetite for the Word of God or spiritual things ? Its because you’re dead spiritually and what does a dead man need ? He needs life. You see, you don’t need religion, reformation, or respectability, you

need life ! And life is exactly what the Lord Jesus gives when you turn to Him by faith ! (Jn 5:24) Love has always an objective and when the Bible tells us to “ *love one another,*” the idea is to reach out to others in ways that blesses them. Do we reach out to others in a time of need ? Are we there for them and with them when they need us most ? (a) (b)

(c) AT A PRICE:

For John says, “ *herein is love for our sins,*” (4:10) Now John has used this word “ *propitiation,*” before in (Ch 2:2) And what is propitiation ? *It's the work of Jesus Christ on the cross by which He satisfied God's holiness so God could extend mercy to lost sinners !* You see, God is light (1:5) and therefore He cannot close His eyes to sin, but God is also love (4:8) and therefore He wants to save sinners ! How, then can a holy God uphold His justice and still forgive sinners ? *The answer is in the cross !* For Christ died on the cross, and satisfied the law of God and the justice of God, and now God is free to extend pardon and mercy ! Do you see that His love was a sacrificial love ? William Gladstone, in announcing the death of Princess Alice to the House of Commons, told a touching story. The little daughter of the Princess was seriously ill with diphtheria. The doctors told the Princess not to kiss her little daughter and endanger her life by breathing the child's breath.

Once when the child was struggling to breathe, the mother forgetting herself entirely, took the little one into her arms to keep her from choking to death. Rasping and struggling for her life, the child said, “ *Momma, kiss me.*” Without thinking of herself the mother tenderly kissed her daughter. She got diphtheria and some days later died. Do you know something ? Real love forgets itself, it does not count the cost, its ready to sacrifice time and comfort, to meet the need of others. My do you see what John says, “ *not that we loved God, but that He loved us.*” God took the first step ! Are you prepared to do that in relation to “ *loving one another,*”?

Many Christians are sitting around complaining that no-one shows them love. Tell me, when you will be like your Lord and take the first step, and you show love ? My if God had placed conditions on His love, where we would be this ? How thankful we should that “ *He loved us sins.*” (4:10) (1) (2)

(3) THE OPERATION OF LOVE

Do you see John's application in (4:11) ? Now this love operating in us is,

(a) EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE:

For John says, “ *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.*” (4:12) One of the key words in the book of Genesis is **walked**. God walked with men, and men walked with God. Enoch (Gen 5:22) Noah (Gen 6:9) and Abraham walked with God. (Gen 17:1) But by the time of the events recorded in Exodus, a change had taken place. God did not

simply walk with men, He *lived or dwelt with them*. God's commandment to Israel was, "*and let them make Me a sanctuary that I might dwell among them.*" (Ex 25:8) The first of these sanctuaries was the Tabernacle (Ex 40:33-35) the second was the Temple and when the temple was dedicated the glory of God came to dwell in the land. (1 Kings 8:1) But Israel disobeyed God and was taken into captivity. One of the prophets of the captivity, Ezekiel, saw the glory of God depart from the nation. (Ezek 8:4 9:3 10:4 11:22) Did the glory of God ever return ? Yes, in the person of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Do you recall what John says, "*And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory.*" (Jn 1:14) The glory of God dwelt on earth in the body of Jesus Christ (Jn 2:18) But wicked men nailed His body to a cross. They crucified "*the Lord of glory.*" (1 Cor 2:8) All this was part of God's thrilling plan, and Christ arose from the dead, returned to heaven, and sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in men. John says "*Hereby we know His Spirit,*" (4:13) Paul says, "*What ? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own.*" (1 Cor 6:19) He is the One who equips for every role we are asked to fulfil, He is the One who enables us to live for the Lord, He is the One who energises us and empowers us for the task at hand. (a)

(b) EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT'S POWER:

God's love operating in us is not only proof of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, but of the Holy Spirit working through us ! Look at what John says in (4:12) The word "*perfected,*" speaks of that which is brought to completion. Let me give you this message in a nutshell.

God's love is ***Proclaimed*** in the Word, ***Proved*** at the Cross, ***Perfected*** in the Believer. He reveals His love through us ! Three different witnesses are suggested in these verses. 1. *The Witness of the believer that Jesus Christ is God's Son:* (4:15) 2. *The Witness in the believer by the Holy Spirit:* (4:13) 3. *The Witness through the believer that God is love and that He sent His Son to die for the world.* (4:14) Do you know why we should love one another ? Because love is the heart of the Christian witness ! John says, "*no man hath seen God at any time,*" (4:12) The Lord Jesus is no longer in the world to reveal the love of God, but you and I are, and when the world sees us loving one another, they get a glimpse of what God is like ! How challenging ! *That the world will not believe that God loves sinners until they see His love at work in our lives.* Do you know what that means ? It means that you and I are either a stumbling block or a stepping stone for sinners ?

The moving story is told of the Salvation Army worker who found a derelict woman squatting alone on the street. She invited her to come into the church for help but the woman refused to move. The worker assured her, "*we love you and want to help you. God loves you. Jesus died for you.*" But the woman did not budge she stayed where she was. As if on divine impulse the Salvationist leaned over and kissed the bedraggled woman on the cheek, taking her into her arms. The woman began to sob, and like a little child, was led into the

church where she eventually trusted the Saviour. Later on she confided in the lady officer, “ *You told me that God loved me, but it wasn’t until you **showed** me that God loved me that I wanted to be saved.*” I think of the poem that says,

*“ Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way*

*He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how He died
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side*

*We are the only Bible
The careless world will read
We are the sinners gospel
We are the scoffers creed*

*What if our tongues are speaking
Of things His lips would spurn
How can we hope to help them
And others to Him turn.”*

My the challenge this *is this, take a long look at Calvary, and do to others, what the Lord has done to you !*