

Place: Lurgan Baptist
29:10:2006

Reading: 1 John 4:17-21

BACK TO BASICS

15. CAN'T GET AWAY FROM LOVE

The wife of a hard to please husband was determined to do her best to satisfy him for at least one day. “*Darling,*” she asked, “*what would you like for breakfast this morning ?*” He growled, “*coffee and toast, grits and sausage, and two eggs one scrambled and one fried.*” Soon she had the food on the table and waited for a word of appreciation but none came. She said, “*is your breakfast alright ?*” He grunted, “*its ok but you scrambled the wrong egg.*” There is no doubt that there are some hard people to love. Nothing ever seems to please them. John must have encountered some of them because time and again in this epistle he returns to the theme of love.

Now remember that Christian love means we treat each other the way God treats us. Here in (4:17-21) the word “ love,” appears eleven times. The emphasis is on perfect love, love that has reached maturity, love that is complete. For in (4:17) John says, “*Herein is our love made perfect,*” or “*herein is love with us made perfect.*” Have you noticed in (Ch 4) the interesting progression concerning love. In (4:12) John says, “*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us.*” There we see love’s power in the life. In (4:16) we read, “*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.*” That is love proven in the demonstration of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. But now in (4:17) John says that love is perfected or completed with us. Here love is pictured as a companion walking hand in hand with a child of God as he moves toward the future and the day of judgement when we shall stand before God. Indeed there is brought before us here,

(1) A PROSPECT THAT IS DECLARED

“*Boldness in the day of Judgement,*” (4:17) Regarding the Great White Throne Judgement, the end time, last day judgement of sinners, it can confidently be said that not a single person will be bold there. Shakespeare says “*that conscience doth make cowards of us all.*” The wicked dead will no longer utter their former blasphemies and unbelief. They will tremble and cry to the rocks and hills to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. But at the Judgement Seat of Christ, which is convened to deal with saints, some will have cause for tears, cause enough to tremble, but some will have boldness. The apostle Paul will be one. He on the eve of his execution could say, “*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day.*” (2 Tim 4:6-8) My

what a day this is going to be. The day of our Lord's Return for us and the day of our Lord's Review of us. (1 Cor 4:5) This apostle has already spoken of meeting the Lord ashamed or with confidence. (2:28) Here again John speaks of,

(a) TWO POSSIBLE CONDITIONS:

He speaks of meeting the Lord with,

1. A Confident Heart:

“boldness in the day of judgement,” (4:17) The word *“boldness,”* is the same as *“confidence,”* in (2:28) where John says, *“And now little children abide in Him, that when He shall appear we may have confidence,”* the word denotes being able to look someone straight in the eye. The idea is of being able to stand before the Lord and able to look Him in the eye. There is no cause to make one blush or to look away. My how do you want meet your Lord ? Do you want to meet your Heavenly Bridegroom with confidence, with boldness ?

2. A Condemned Heart:

Instead of standing before the Lord at the Bema Judgement Seat with assurance, one stands before the Lord afraid. In (4:18) John speaks of *“fear.”* The word means *“to be alarmed, terrorised.”* The idea is of one shrinking back. Instead of being able to boldly stand before the Lord, they shrink back, embarrassed and afraid. John uses the word *“ashamed,”* in (Ch 2) that is standing before him disgraced, filled with shame. John does not want us to be overwhelmed with regret, because of the lifestyle we have chosen to live, he does not want us to be red faced with embarrassment because of our neglect to serve Christ this side of heaven. He does not want us to stand there with our head buried in our hands and the words of the gospel song ringing in our ears, ***“I'll wish I had given him more.”*** In 1877 Evangelist A.G. Upham was leading a series of meetings in a Church where C.C. Luther was pastor. One night he preached on the subject of *“Stars for your Crown.”*

In the message he told the true story of a young man who a month after being saved, was fatally injured in an accident. Just before he died one of his friends asked him if he was afraid to die. He replied, *“Friend, no I am not afraid to die for Christ has saved me. But, I have not been able to lead even one soul to Christ in the time that I have not known Him. No, I am not afraid to die, but oh if I go must I go and empty-handed ?”* C. C. Luther was moved by that story and sitting there in the service he jotted down the lines that became the great hymn.

***“Must I go, and empty-handed
Thus my dear Redeemer meet
Not one day of service gave Him
Lay no trophy at His feet.”***

Is this how you'll meet the Lord ? With a condemned heart instead of a confident

heart ? (a) And then he speaks of,

(b) TWO PARTICULAR CAUSES:

His great theme in this Chapter has been loving one another, and the two possible conditions in which we can stand before the Lord are determined by two particular causes, have we loved one another, or have we not loved one another ! You see, John tells us, that

1. A Confident Heart is the Result of a Life of Love:

If love has been perfect in our lives we will be able to stand before the Lord with boldness. Now the word “*perfect*,” means “*to complete, accomplish, bring to its intended fruition.*” My this love that has been experienced (4:7) is to be expanded (4:12) and expressed in our life (4:16) It is not a love of words but of works, it is not what is said, but what is shown. It is not what we declare, but what we do. It is a fleshing out of the love God has put in us, love in shoe leather, a ministry of love expressed in service. Many years ago a shabbily dressed boy trudged several miles through the snowy streets of Chicago determined to attend a Bible Class that was conducted by D.L. Moody. When he arrived, he was asked, “*Why did you come to a Sunday School so far away ? Why didn't you go to one of the churches nearer to your home.*” He answered simply, “*Because you love a fellow over here.*” My does the world see the love of Christ in us ? Will you stand before the Lord with boldness because you have lived a life of love ? 1.

2. A Condemned Heart is the Result of a Lack of Love:

Do you see what John says in (4:18) ? Fear is the result of love not abounding in our hearts. John has told us that the lack of the presence of love in our life reveals we are not saved, (4:7) now he tells us that the lack of the perfecting of love in our life reveals we are not serving.

Archbishop Cranmer was Henry VIII's Archbishop. Cranmer was afraid of Henry, with good reason. Henry is said to have murdered more than 70,000 people in his long and violent reign. Cranmer was even more fearful of Mary, Henry's Roman Catholic heir to the throne, also with good cause. Mary executed nearly 300 Protestants, including Cranmer whom she hated. His last night came. Before him lay the speech he was to give at the stake, in which he confirmed his renunciation of the truth and exalted the pope. Before him was also another speech, in which he renounced the papacy and all it stood for. All that night the battle raged. ***Which would triumph ? His fear of man or his love for the Lord ?*** In the end, perfect love casts out fear. He determined to remain true to the Lord who had bought him. He arrived at the place of execution, still troubled in his soul about the recantations he has signed when fear had ruled his heart. When he given leave to speak, he raised his voice and his words rang out, “*Forasmuch,*” he said “*as my hand offended in writing contrary to my heart, therefore my hand shall first be punished. It shall be the first burned in the fire.*” Perfect love had cast out

fear, and he died with the flames leaping up around him, and his offending right hand held resolutely in the hottest part of the fire. Are you enmeshed in a web of fear ? Is fear driving you on ? John implies when we have God's love in control of our lives we have absolutely nothing to fear, we have nothing to worry about. We face the future with our hand in His, we face tomorrow with our confidence grounded in the character of God. (1)

(2) A PERSON THAT IS DESCRIBED

What an outstanding statement John makes here, “ *as He is so are we in this world.* ” (4:17) Mark the words “ *as,* ” and “ *so.* ” It is an often used formula of the New Testament. “ *As Moses lifted up the serpent so must the Son of Man be lifted up.* ” (Jn 3:14) He reminded His disciples, “ *As the days of Noah were so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.* ” (Matt 24:37) Peter wrote to the church, “ *As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy.* ” (1 Pet 1:15) Now John says, “ *As He is so are we.* ” John describes first,

(a) *THE CHRIST:*

“ *As He is,* ” John does not say “ *as He was, so are we.* ” There's a difference between what He was, even in the days that He lived on earth and what He now is. We read that He “ *learned obedience,* ” (Heb 5:8) going back to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and being “ *subject unto them.* ” (Lk 2:51) He is certainly not subject unto them now, although the Roman Catholic Church would like to think He is. That is what He was, not what He now is. It is recorded of the Lord Jesus that He was

“ *made perfect through sufferings,* ” (Heb 2:10) How He suffered, when He lived down here as a man among men, but He has now become “ *a merciful and faithful High Priest.* ” (Heb 4:17-18) It is recorded of him that He was “ *tempted of Satan,* ” (Mk 1:12) That was then. But never again. Peter said that Jesus was “ *a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs.* ” (Acts 2:22) That is what He was. But John passes over all that although he knew the story so well, because it all related to what Jesus Christ was when He lived down here. “ *As He is,* ” John says !

He is God the Son ! *He is God's Infinite Son,* the One who ever was, ever is, and ever is to be, coequal, coeternal, coexistent with the Father, as God the Son. (Ps 2:12 Is 9:6) *He is God's Incarnate Son,* the One who entered into time “ *born of the Virgin Mary,* ” but “ *conceived by the Holy Ghost.* ” (Lk 1:35) *He is God's Invincible Son,* the One “ *declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.* ” (Rom 1:3) “ ***As He is.*** ” He is “ *crowned with glory and honour,* ” (Heb 2:6) is our “ *advocate with the Father,* ” (2:1) and has “ *sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.* ” (Heb 10:12) He is welcoming into the family, those who respond to the gospel message, “ *calling out a people for His name.* ” (Is 53:11) My John is thrilled to see Him “ ***as He is,*** ” seated on His Father's throne, a man in a glorified human body, God over all, blessed

forever. But John says, “ *as He is so are we,* ” he passes from (a) to,

(b) *THE CHRISTIAN:*

For this is the wondrous goal to which the plan of salvation is moving. We are to be like Jesus ! Now,

1. POSITIONALLY:

We are right now “ *as He is.* ” We are so closely identified with Christ as members of His body, that our position in this world, is like His exalted position in heaven. This means that the Father deals with us as He deals with His beloved Son. How then can we be

afraid ? We do not have to be afraid of *the Future:* because our sins were judged in Christ when He died on the cross. We do have to be afraid of *the Past:* because “ *He first loved us,* ” (4:19) and we do not need to fear *the Present:* because “ *perfect love casteth out fear.* ” My the Lord sees us not just in the “ *then and there,* ” but in the “ *here and now,* ” as well. Sad to say, that,

2. PRACTICALLY:

Our state does not always come to our standing down here. We could translate this phrase, “ *As He is in heaven representing us, so are we in this world representing Him.* ” That is the way, it ought to be. Christ is representing us in heaven as our intercessor, our spokesman at the right hand of God. He represents us up there and we represent Him down here. “ *As He is, so are we in this world.* ” That’s the Christian life summed up in nine words. We are to be like Jesus.

***“ Earthly pleasures vainly call me
I would be like Jesus
Nothing worldly shall enthrall me
I would be like Jesus
Be like Jesus this my song
In the home, and in the throng
Be like Jesus all day long I would be like Jesus ,”***

Some years ago a wealthy Christian woman saw a little ragged, homeless boy gazing into the window of a shoe store. She asked him what he was doing, “ *I was praying, ma’am that God would give me some shoes.* ” The lady took the little boy into the store, summoned a bowl of water, washed the little fellow’s feet. She then bought for him a pair of warm socks and put them on him, and then bought a pair of strong comfortable boots. The boy amazed at what had been done, looked at the kind woman’s face and said, “ *please, ma’am are you Christ’s wife ?* ” How searching are the words of the chorus, “ *can others see Jesus in me ?* ” (1) (2)

(3) A PROFESSION THAT IS DENIED

Here it is for the 7th time, “ *if a man say*,” each time we knew what was coming, a warning against pretending ! John is speaking here of,

(a) A CLAIM THAT IS FALSE:

Look if you will at (4:20) Do you know one of the things I love about John ? He never saw things in grey. As far as John was concerned things were either black or white, no shades in between. Do you recall what the Psalmist says in (Psalm 116:1) ? He says, “ *I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.*” Do you love the Lord this ? That’s fine, but its not enough, for you have to go a step further. Its not enough to say, “ *I love the Lord.*” My you have to be truthful in that statement, and one of the ways to tell if you are truthful is to examine yourself concerning your relationship to your brother ! *Do you love your brother and sister in Christ ?* John says if you claim to love the Lord and yet at the same time detest your brother you are a liar. ***Is that what God is calling you this ? A liar !*** My how in the world can you claim to love the invisible when you don’t love the visible ? How can you claim to love the Lord and not love His people ? Sure, we can talk about love all around the clock, we can sing about it in our times of worship, but how come we don’t show it two minutes after the benediction ? Why are we so destructively critical of others ? Why are we so slow to bear the burdens of those who are facing massive problems and considerable pressure ? For are we not “ *love one another,*” indeed John turns from (a) to,

(b) A COMMAND THAT IS FIRM:

Look at (4:21) Sir Leonard once visited the King of France and the King was so pleased with him that he invited him for dinner the next day. Sir Leonard went to the palace and the King meeting him in one of the halls said, “ *Why, Sir Leonard, I did not expect to see you ? How is that you are here ?* “ *Did not your Majesty invite me to dine with you ?*” said the astonished guest. “ *Yes,*” replied the King, “ *but you did not answer my invitation.*” It was then that Sir Leonard Wood uttered one of the choicest sentences of his life. He replied, “ ***A Kings invitation is never to be answered, but to be obeyed.***” My loving one another, is not a choice. It is a command ! Dr. Stephen Olford told the story of how they prayed through the matter of an open-door policy in their church saying, “ *whosoever will, let him come.*” They prayed about this matter, and allowed the Holy Spirit time to move in people’s hearts and let love grow and mature and perfect itself. You see, you cannot put people in the same building and say, “ *all right, love one another.*” But through much prayer and soul searching, they arrived at an open door policy in their church. Seven men strongly opposed that position and voted against it in the church. *Within a years time all seven of those men had died and six of them had an untimely death.* You see, you do not violate the Word of God and live in open disobedience without incurring the judgement of God on your life and on your church.

My the blessings of God will never fall on a congregation that constantly says,

“ *I love the Lord, but I do not love my brother in Christ.* ” John just “ **Can’t get away from Love.** ” He is looking for reality in our lives and that is best seen when we love one another !