

## **FIRST JOHN PART 9 "We Ought to Love One Another"**

### **1 John 4:7 thru 21**

We've been studying the letter of First John in here since November. It is the first time I've ever done a study in First John. One thing I noticed about this letter are the many parallels between what John writes in this letter and what Jesus had taught him and the other disciples some 60 years before. So clearly John's theology came from Jesus.

We finished chapter 3 last time I taught and today we are picking it up in verse 7 of chapter 4. What you may be asking happened to verses 1-6? Well, we covered those verses already earlier in our study. I did a lesson on false teachers in Ch 2 (crayons) and in that lesson I identified v 1-6 as the tests by which we can determine if what is being taught is truth or error. I called it the "Is it a sheep or a wolf test." So just by way of review verse 1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God... " Is what you are hearing taught truth or a false teaching?

Q1 is the first test and it comes from verses 2-3, what I call the Christology Test. READ 1 John 4:2-3. Who is Jesus? A true prophet will confess Jesus Christ as God who came in human flesh. A false teacher denies that. So the answer to Q1 is one of the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, that Jesus was both fully GOD and fully HUMAN.

Q2 is the second test and it comes from verse 4, what I call the Regeneration Test. READ 1 John 4:4. So who is in you? Who indwells you, believer? READ 1 John 3:24. God the Holy Spirit lives in you. A true Christian is one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. An unbeliever is not. Your salvation and my salvation are the work of God the Holy Spirit in us.

Q3 is the third test and it comes from verses 5-6, what I call the Scripture Test. READ 1 John 4:5-6. When John says "we are from God" and the one who knows God "listens to us," who is the WE and US he is

referring to? It's the apostles and the N.T. writers – John, Paul, Peter, James, Jude, the writer of Hebrews and the writers of the gospels.

Beginning in v 7 John shifts gears. He circles back to his teaching about love that he talked about before in this letter. Specifically he talks about our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. That's where we will pick up our study.

Last week's lesson transported us back in time to the Upper Room where Jesus and His disciples observed their 4th Passover feast together in Jerusalem. It has become known as the Last Supper because it was the last time Jesus and the Twelve enjoyed a meal together prior to Him going to the cross. It's Thursday evening. Jesus will be crucified the next day. Five chapters of John's Gospel (13-17) record the words of Jesus this one evening as He instructs, encourages, warns, and even rebukes His disciples. Jesus knows that He doesn't have much longer with His disciples. He knows what's about to happen. Jesus ends the evening by praying for His followers. Not only are the events of this one evening well-documented by John but they are also mentioned in the other Gospels – in Matt 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22. It was all covered last week.

Looking back at that particular evening it's really difficult to pinpoint THE single most important thing Jesus said. After all, so much important truth was taught. But I want to draw your attention to Jesus' words in John Ch 13 because they are at the heart of our lesson this morning. READ John 13:34-35. Pretty simple, right? Pretty clear. Well, keep these words in mind as we read now beginning in 1 John ch 4 and v 7... Notice how I have divided the chapter into three parts. That's how we will cover them.

READ 1 John 4:7-10

Q4 asks "Loving one another is proof of what?" From the verses we just read and from what Jesus said in John 13:34-35... All of the above! Clearly John is making a connection between loving God, being Jesus' disciples and loving our brothers, our fellow Christians.

## READ 1 John 4:7-8

"Beloved," John is addressing Christians. Love is who God is. It is His character to love. It is His nature. Therefore if we are truly His children, if we are really saved, "been born of God and knows God," then we will be like Him. We will characterize love in our lives. Paul tells the Ephesians, "Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love – [like Jesus]" (5:1-2). Clement of Rome, 1<sup>st</sup> Century theologian and second generation disciple said, "A Christian practices being God." In other words, we reflect the nature of God by how we live.

## READ 1 John 4:9-10

V 8 ended with the words, "God is love." And then in V 9-10 God showed us His love by what? Q5 on your sheet asks "how did God "manifest" (display) His love?"

By sending His only Son into the world. Who was that? Jesus! When Jesus came into the world the love of God was "made manifest among us." We could see the love of God visibly, expressed in human form. Not just a spirit or a fire or an earthquake. We saw God's love in human form. We could see Him! In Jesus we see perfect love. He modeled love for us. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." Don't miss the last part of verse 9 – it tells why God sent Jesus. Not just to be an example and model for us to live our life by. It was more than that. It was so "that we might LIVE thru Him." God did not leave us in our sinful state, but He provided a Savior. Thru Jesus we can have life.

It says that God "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Our salvation is not about us. It isn't because we loved God. It is that He loved us! "... that whosoever believes in Him (by faith) shall not perish but have everlasting life." Isa 53 says that we all went astray. We were like sheep without a shepherd. We all went our own way, did our own thing. And God laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all. He bore our griefs. He carried our sorrows. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our

iniquities. By His wounds we are healed. "In this is love" John says... "not that we have loved God but that He loved us and – the answer to Q5: He sent His Son to be the propitiation, the atonement, the sacrifice for our sins – to be our Savior!

READ 1 John 4:11-16

Q6 asks, "Because of what God did for us, what should we do?" V 11 tells us – "we also ought to love one another." There's the answer. Love one another. Love isn't just a commandment or an obligation. Because of what Jesus did for you and for me, we are compelled to love – to love Him yes, but to also love our brothers & sisters.

V 12 says that no one has ever seen God. Why not? Because God is a Spirit. But they can see us! Right? It is thru us that people see God's love. God puts Himself on display to the world by how we, His people love each other. "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The question we need to ask is "how are we doing?"

V 13 repeats the last sentence of Ch 3 (3:24): "And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us." We know that we are saved because the Holy Spirit lives in us. This is one assurance that we are saved.

V 14, John and the other apostles saw Jesus with their own eyes. They witnessed His signs and miracles. They heard Jesus preach. They were well aware of His claims to be from God and to be, in fact God Himself. John had been there when the people of the Samaritan village of Sychar said of Jesus, "we know that this [man] is indeed the Savior of the world." John had been present at the transfiguration and heard the Father proclaim with a voice from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him" (Matt 17:5). John had been present in the temple at the start of Passion Week when he heard the Father's voice from heaven confirm that what Jesus was about to do would glorify Him (John 12:28).

Here in Chapter 4 John testifies to the truth he knows: (1) The Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world (4:9, 14); (2) The Son, Jesus, came in the flesh from God (4:2), died for our sins in obedience to the Father's plan and perfect will (4:10); (3) The Holy Spirit reveals this truth to us (4:2, 6, 13) and shows us how much God loves us (4:9, 10, 16).

V 15-16, John tells us that if we believe in Jesus and confess Him as the Son of God, then we will be saved – "God abides in him and he is God." This indicates that there is a relationship that begins between us and God.

Which leads to Q7 – READ it.

V 16 repeats the same idea of abiding in God and God in them.

But then he adds this great truth: "So we have come to know and believe the love that God has for us." A lot of people struggle with the idea that God could love them. After all they say "just look at how terrible I am!" A true believer has the assurance, they KNOW that God loves them in spite of their past sins however awful they might have been. God loves us even though we are completely unworthy of that love. None of us deserves God's love and His mercy and His grace! If somehow we could earn God's favor, it would cease to be grace. He pours it out on us anyway.

READ 1 John 4:17-21

Because of God's love being perfected in us – we'll talk about that in a minute – we have confidence even though Judgment Day is coming. As Christians, saved by grace we have nothing to fear. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" No punishment awaiting us. Why not? Because of the redemptive work that Jesus did for us on the cross. Jesus already paid for our sins and now we are justified by faith in Him. Q8 on your handout asks, "Why is it that we Christians do not need to fear God's judgment?" Answer: **Because Jesus already dealt with our sin issue.** We stand before God clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Not our own righteousness, but His righteousness! Because of His love displayed for us on the cross our worries, fears & doubts about the

future, about the coming judgment, about eternity have been replaced with assurance, confidence and hope!

V 18 talks about the "perfect love" we have casting out fear. It is one of the contrasts on that sheet I handed out. John said earlier that "His love is perfected in us" (4:12). He said "by this is love perfected with us..." (4:17) What does John mean by perfect love? What does it mean for His love to be "perfected in us or with us"? Simply this: Our love becomes a mature love over time. We will not achieve sinless perfection this side of heaven. Not in this life. But we can become more like Christ. How? By growing, maturing in our faith. It's an ongoing, lifelong process. We may not be there yet. I'll go out on a limb and say we are NOT there yet! But we should be progressing in that direction.

In v 19-21 John summarizes his overall thought in this section. We have the capacity and ability to love only because God loved us first. A claim to love God is a lie if it is not accompanied by an unselfish love for other Christians. Love is not optional. How do we show our love for each other? Galatians 6:2 says by "bearing one another's burdens." God never intended for us to live the Christian life as isolated little islands. The truth is we need each other! Love is not an emotion or a feeling. It's compassion, mercy and grace that we should be displaying to others every day, especially to those in the household of faith.

Any questions about any of this??