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LEARNING HOW TO LOVE!

A STUDY OF 1 JOHN
NUMBER 31
1 JOHN 4:13-21

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1 JOHN 4:13-21 "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

God the Father wants to make sure that we always function under his plan and this calls for a certain mental attitude. This is why the Scriptures emphasize mental attitude sins. We will discover that mental attitude sins play such a vital role in the passage we have before us. The whole impact of this passage before us is this: You can't have mental attitude sins in your mind and love at the same time. Mental attitude sins black out love and our capacity to love.

People Cannot Love Perfectly

There is no such thing as perfect love, aside from the love of God. When the Bible says, "Perfect love casteth out fear" it is referring to mature love, maximum love, complete love. "We love, because He first loved us" refers to the fact that our capacity to love is based on the perfect love of God and the love of God is minus all mental attitude sins. Let's face up to the fact that there is no such thing as mature love as long as mental attitude sins are present. Jealousy, bitterness, hatred, implacability and envy are always incompatible with love.

This Is Agape Love In This Passage

In this passage before us, the word for "love" is agape and this is perfect mental attitude love. This is the relaxed mental attitude love which God always has for his people. The filling of the Holy Spirit produces this kind of love in us.

ROMANS 5:5 "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

GALATIANS 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,"

When we take in doctrine and erect an edification complex in the soul, this also produces this kind of love.

1 JOHN 2:5 "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

What we are talking about here shows us that mental attitude love minus mental attitude sins must possess us if we are ever going to live up to the potential God has set for us.

Don't confuse Love With Emotionalism

It is so very easy to confuse love and emotion. Anything to which you respond to emotionally is not necessarily love. Quite often we love the things that entertain us, that stimulate us, and quite often these things do not have anything to do with true love. It is very difficult for us to disassociate ourselves from emotion, for we use emotion all the time. Every day we use the appreciator of the soul, which is emotion. But the fact remains, and is illustrated again and again in this passage that emotion and love are not the same thing. Emotion is a very important part of life but it must never be confused with being a standard for Christianity. True Christianity is in the mind and not in the emotions. The filling of the Holy Spirit does not produce emotion, but rather produces a relaxed mental attitude.

The Difference In Phileo and Agape

The Greek word phileo refers to total soul love and that is why you will never find phileo in a passage like this one. Phileo love includes every facet of the soul, but agape love is mental attitude love. Quite often the Devil will take the word love and will distort it into emotionalism and sentimentality. There is a vast difference in true love as the Bible teaches it and emotionalism and entertainment. There is nothing wrong in emotion, but emotion is not the basis for spiritual growth. It is truth from the Word of God that produces true mental attitude love. In this passage, John keeps pounding away at true love and it is always a love that is free from mental attitude sins. The true key to the understanding of Bible doctrine is mental attitude love.

1 JOHN 4:13 "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." The word "hereby" really means "by means of this." Next we have the present active, indicative of ginosko and it means we keep on knowing something on the basis of the facts. We have true information and built on the factual foundation we keep on having absolute confidence and assurance. The word for dwell is meno and it means to abide. In other words this is our home, this is where we live. We live in Christ. He is in us and we are in him and this develops perfect confidence and assurance. Next we have "he hath given" and this is a perfect, active, indicative of didomi. This is referring to something God did for us in eternity past, with the result that it lasts forever. God purposed in eternity past that once we believe in him, he would make a deposit of his Holy Spirit in us. Christ dwells in us and that is for fellowship and companionship and for guidance. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and that is for power and direction. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit develops in us mental attitude love minus mental attitude sins. God the Son makes it possible for us to enter into the plan of God and God the Holy Spirit empowers us once we have entered into the plan.

1 JOHN 4:14 "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." "And we have seen" is a perfect, middle, indicative of theaomai and it means to observe something and discern what we have observed. It means to see and understand what you see. Then we have "do testify" and this is a present, active, indicative of martureo and this means a solemn affirmation of that which we have come to understand and know. What is it that we solemnly affirm here? "That the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

This word sent is apostello in the perfect tense and it means he sent him in eternity past and then it was fulfilled in time. The active voice means that God the Father did the sending himself and the indicative mood means the reality and the perfection of the plan. God sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world and this means unlimited atonement. This is taught in 2 Cor. 5:14 and 15 and 19. (1 Timothy 2:6 and 4:10, Titus 2:11, Hebrews 2:9, 2 Peter 2:1)

1 JOHN 2:2 "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

You did not appropriate salvation by emotion. You appropriated salvation by means of grace.

1 JOHN 4:15 "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." "Whosoever shall confess" and the word for confess is homologeō and it means to name, to recognize, to cite. It is an aorist tense and refers to the moment of time when you acknowledge Christ as your Saviour. The active voice means that you have to believe in Christ for yourself. The subjunctive mood means that it is potential and it depends on the free will of your own decision. Please notice we have the names of Jesus and Christ here. Jesus refers to his humanity and Christ refers to his deity. In order to be saved, you believe in this unique figure of the universe, the one who is both human and deity.

Next we have "And God dwelleth in him." The God who dwells in the believer is Jesus Christ and he moves in the second you believe. So this is the fulfillment of those words Jesus spoke in John 17, "I in you and ye in me." All of this is accomplished in a non-meritorious way.

1 JOHN 4:16 "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." This verse moves us back to the experience we have had. We have "and we have known" and this is a perfect, active, indicative of ginosko and this refers back to the Bible doctrine we have learned and stored in our minds. The active voice means that you have learned this for yourself and the indicative mood refers to the reality of the truth you have learned. This knowledge we have stored up in the human spirit becomes the foundation for the Christian lives we have. Next we have "And have believed" and this is the perfect tense of pisteuo. This means doctrine stored up and the foundation on which we live. "The love that God hath to us" is from echo and it means to have and to hold. In other words he not only gives us this love but he gives us a container to hold it in and that container is the edification complex in the soul. These words should be "in us" and not "to us." John now goes back to the very source when he says, "God is love. This is referring to the essence of God. He is love in his perfect character, and this is perfect mental attitude love. Then we have "dwelleth" used twice and both words are from meno. The first dwelleth is our position and the second dwelleth is our experience. One is based on the other. And you can't have the experience unless you have this position in God. "We dwell in God" is the result of what God has done for us by dwelling in us. God is the reality on which our experience rests.

1 JOHN 4:17 "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

This now moves on up the ladder to stabilized love. We have here a perfect, passive, indicative of teleioo and it means to complete, to come to maturity. This is accomplished when we take in doctrine and erect the edification complex in the soul. The passive voice means we take in this doctrine and as a result, we receive this stability, this maturity.

Next we have "That we may have boldness" and this means confidence, absolute assurance. This is referring to the judgment seat of Christ where every believer is to stand in his resurrection body.

Next we have an amazing equation--"As he is so are we in the world." It means that Christ had perfect stability and confidence, and as a result of Christ and the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we come to have this same confidence. This is God's desire for every believer in the world, that we will become like Christ.

1 JOHN 4:18 "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." There is absolutely no fear in agape love. The word fear is from phobos and this is a mental attitude sin. So this phrase actually says, "There is no mental attitude sin in agape love. The word used for perfect here is teleios and it means maturity, stability. This kind of love always casts out fear. So this says this to you and to me--"If you will build this doctrinal structure in your mind, you will be stabilized for anything that comes along." Then it says that this kind of stabilized love "throws out fear" and the word is ballo and from this we get the word "ball." Doctrine stored in the mind just picks up fear and throws it out.

Next we have "Because fear hath torment" and this means that mental attitude sins always make you miserable. "He that feareth" is a present, middle, participle and this means you keep bringing this condition on yourself. You keep on doing this over and over again because you refuse to turn from mental attitude sins. This will keep you from ever growing up to mature Christian living.

1 JOHN 4:19 "We love him, because he first loved us." This verse should read, "We love because he first loved us." Is there any hope for us? Yes, there is. This "we love" is a present, active, subjunctive of agapao. We keep on loving. The subjunctive is used here to remind us that loving God depends on whether we take in doctrine or not. The word "him" is not found in the Greek, so drop it out. "Because he first loved us" is the aorist, active, indicative of agapao and this refers to that point of time in eternity past when he determined to go to the cross and die for us.

1 JOHN 4:20 "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" You can't have this love if you hate your brother. Here he gives us a measuring stick. Your love is determined by your relaxed mental attitude toward other believers. This is a third class condition and that means maybe you will hate other believers and maybe you won't. It all depends on the doctrine you have stored in your mind.

"He is a liar" means he says he loves you but he doesn't have the capacity in himself to do it. God has to be in him to impart to him this capacity. God and the Holy Spirit dwelling within imparts the power for such love. Your love is no stronger than your soul strength. This verse is saying this, "You have seen your brother, and you hate him (if you do) then how can you love God whom you have not seen? The answer is, "You can't."

1 JOHN 4:21 "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." The word apo means "This commandment we have from the ultimate source of him." This apo means this goes all the way back to eternity past. God has always been the source of love and always will be. You love God and that means you can love others also. So the matter all comes down to one big question--Do you really love God? We will ask you to answer quietly within your own soul.