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NOTHING CAN EQUAL THE LOVE OF GOD

A STUDY OF 1 JOHN
NUMBER 30
1 JOHN 4:4-12

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1 JOHN 4:4-12 "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

In our last study we stopped in the middle of verse 7 and that's where we will begin this time.

1 JOHN 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." The whole meaning of this fourth chapter is summed up in verse 19--"We love him, because he first loved us." The word used here is agapao and this refers to the great perfect mental attitude love of God. In order for God to be able to love us, God had to have character. The capacity to love and character are very closely related. Since God has perfect character, he also has perfect capacity to love.

HOW GOD EXPRESSES HIS LOVE

The perfect character of God, resulting in his perfect love plan, can be expressed in the great word GRACE. Grace means that we neither earn or deserve his love. His love is based on his perfect character. His character is perfect and therefore, his love is perfect. We can never deserve his love and our old sin nature is 100 percent objectionable to him. There is no way we can get his love by deserving it, earning it, or working for it. God's capacity is expressed in grace. This passage is going to present to us again the same theme as John 3:16. Mental attitude love depends on the character of the individual. In the case of God, both the character is perfect and the capacity is perfect. And the fact that we are unlovely does not change his character and capacity for loving us.

GOD HAS DEMONSTRATED HIS LOVE PERFECTLY

When Christ came into the world, he demonstrated this perfect love for all people. Some responded to this love and some did not. Some people responded with positive volition and believed everything God said to them. The religious crowd discounted the integrity of God and would not respond. This did not alter the perfect plan and perfect love of God. When Christ went to the cross, he included every man in the world in his salvation plan. Therefore, the plan of God was based on the character of God and not on the character of man.

THE FIGHT BETWEEN GOD AND SATAN

The Angelic Conflict demands that Christ's kind of love will be perpetuated in the Devil's world. This plan can only be understood by those who are willing to go on positive volition and believe in Christ. Every man enters the plan of God by way of the cross. Once we are in the plan of God, we realize that we are a part of this Angelic Conflict. Christ is no longer on the earth, therefore, we must represent him and we must love one another like he loved us. In order to put guards around that love so it will be genuine and free from mental attitude errors, God has given us Bible Doctrine which defines the limits of our love. LOVE DOES NOT BRING UNITY TO A CHURCH. The thing that brings unity to a church is Bible Doctrine. This is the only thing that will produce a relaxed mental attitude in members of a church. This really shakes up the Devil and he hates Bible Doctrine more than anything else.

CRUEL CHRISTIANS

One of the things that we need to learn in life is that many Christians can be cruel. There are those who hide behind a facade of superficiality. Then there are those bold straightforward types. Cruel Christians aim their cruelty toward specific targets. Just like we all did when we were children. If we caught butterflies and pulled off their wings, we didn't want them to be some unattractive moth, but we wanted them to be the most beautiful ones we could catch. Therefore, you are going to be the target of some cruelty yourself, and quite often it will come from some other believer. All people, at some time, sooner or later, try to arouse the jealousy of another believer. They will say something like this--Did you see my new car? Have you seen my new office? Have you seen my new husband? Everyone is always trying to make somebody else jealous. Now this is a carry over of the old sin nature. So remember this--You will be the target of some expert jealousy. Quite often a believer can do a better job at being jealous than an unbeliever can, because the believer has to go through many more psychological barriers in order to arrive at cruelty, but once he arrives, he is really something.

SINS OF THE TONGUE

We really can't eliminate gossip right at this point, because sooner or later you are going to be the recipient of some very cruel gossip. People have old sin natures and they won't like you, and out of this atmosphere, they can say some cruel things about you. Now it doesn't matter whether those things are true or not. That really doesn't have too much to do with the situation. They are cruel and their cruelty comes out in their vicious tongue. Their tongues can rival any real rattlesnake that ever existed. It is a case of "Don't bother me with the facts, I have already made up my mind. When you are the target of some other vicious believer like this, usually you are right and they are wrong. But the very fact that you are right, opens up the door for pride to slip into you. Therefore, you need to be on guard, or the pride will grow into resentment and hate and the attitude you have allowed to grow now becomes a far greater sin than their cruelty ever was. Remember this--two wrongs never make a right. Indeed they were wrong in being cruel, but you were wrong in responding to their cruelty with pride and a haughty spirit. You were just so sweet and innocent and unassuming, but the tragedy was you let their cruelty shoot you full of holes. So this great book of 1st John is saying, "Love, love, love and then keep on loving in spite of jealousy, cruelty, misunderstanding, sins of the tongue or anything else."

RELAXED MENTAL ATTITUDE IS AN AMAZING FORTIFICATION

This is your guarantee that you can stand amid any kind of pressure or opposition. Agape love guarantees to keep you relaxed. This is the pattern by which our Lord lived. This is the pattern of all these Old Testament heroes in Hebrews 11. This is the only way to conquer the Devil and fallen angels in the Angelic Conflict. This is the way to duplicate the grace of God. We are to love all believers with an agapao love and then this sets us free to love some believers with phileo love.

So this latter part of 1 John 4:7 says, "Everyone that loveth." This is a present, active, participle of agapao and it means the believer keeps on doing this all his life. This is just the natural pattern of his life. "Is born" is a perfect, passive, indicative of gennao. This means you receive this new birth from The Lord and on the basis of this you will keep on loving for the rest of your life. This means you are now operating on grace. Next we have the words "From the source of God." This is something you can't do yourself, but from the source of God you can. The perfect tense of this word for new birth means that this is a permanent thing, and once you have been born again, you can't lose it.

The last words in verse 7 are "And knoweth God" and it means "and understands God."

Illustration

Suppose that we let A, B, and C represent three people. A is very cruel. B is jealous. C is a gossip. Just suppose that all three attack you at once. But you have agape love within your mind, so you don't get mad, you don't become bitter or mean or jealous and you don't even get proud. You are free from mental attitude sins toward other believers, and it is at this point where you begin to understand God. As a result, you are able to go to A and B and C with a relaxed mental attitude. Now you don't have to play the "wounded dog" tactics and proudly say, "Hit me again, brother, I can take it." The thing you do is just keep your mouth shut, continue to love them, make allowances for their immaturity, and in living this way, you come to understand God. That is why those words are there in 1 John 4:7. You have actually come to understand God.

1 JOHN 4:8 "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." It is possible for a person to be saved and never come to God's level of love and never come to an understanding of God. "He that loveth not" is the believer who never gets out of the mental attitude sinning stage. He is perpetually out of fellowship. He has pride, jealousy, bitterness and vindictiveness. If he keeps going down this road long enough, he will develop a guilt complex and this will lead to fear and worry and hatred. These are the subtle sins that describe this believer in 1 John 4:8, "He knoweth not God." This "knoweth not God" is the aorist, active, indicative of ginosko. He can talk about the love of God, but he has never experienced it in his mind. You see, this is working up to that 19th verse when John will say, "We love him because he first loved us." This says, "Knoweth not the God" and do you know what that means? It means there are believers who will never respond to grace, therefore, they will never really know God. Then it says, "For the God is love." This refers to one of the great characteristics in the essence of God. This means that God The Father, God The Son, and God the Holy Spirit all love us. Through grace he found a way to express that love.

Now in verses 9 and 10 we have the illustration of the principle we have just studied.

1 JOHN 4:9 "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." This passage is like another John 3:16. "Was manifested" is the aorist, passive, indicative of phoneroo and this means something that is clearly revealed. The love of God was and is clearly revealed toward us, even though we could never deserve it. This is the great agape mental attitude love of God, which is a picture of his perfect grace. In this next phrase we have almost a repetition of John 3:16. It says, "God, the Father sent" and this is a perfect, active, indicative of apostello. The perfect tense refers to the first advent of Jesus Christ, starting with the Virgin Birth and going all the way to the cross and resurrection and ascension. The active voice means that God did this himself. The indicative mood means the reality of God's perfect plan. Grace found a way for God to manifest this perfect love toward us. "His only begotten Son" is from monogenes and it means "only one born that way." Next we have a purpose clause introduced by "that." And the purpose is that we might have life through him. This is from the aorist, active, subjunctive of zao and it is referring to eternal life. If you are going to be in the plan of God, you must have the life of God in you. The life of God is eternal life and this goes on forever, once you believe in Christ and receive this life.

1 JOHN 4:10 "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." How is this love brought into our lives? Verse 10 answers this question. "Herein" really means "In this." Next we have "is the love" and this is the present, active indicative of eimi plus he agape. This is as strong language as God can use. It means this love is permanent, everlasting, and perfect and we have it as a grace gift from God. "Not that we loved God" is a perfect, active, indicative of agapao and it means we never have been capable of loving God and never will be capable of loving him. But in eternity past in the great divine decrees of God, he determined to love us with a perfect love and that is what we call grace.

"And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The word "propitiation" means God did it all. In his great perfect righteousness, he met our sins head on and became the perfect judgment of those sins and that set him free to love us and still maintain his perfect righteousness. God's perfect righteousness was propitiated at the cross. His justice was propitiated (satisfied). This untied the hands of God and set him free to give us a perfect salvation.

1 JOHN 4:11 "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." In this verse we have the production of love. We begin a new paragraph with the word "beloved" from agapethos. It means to be in union with Christ. Christ is called "the beloved" and when we believe in him, we are in union with him so we are called "the beloved."
Next we have an "if" and this is a first class condition, meaning the statement is true. So this "if God so loved us" means he did love us.

It also means that he initiated this love, he is the source of this action. This is an aorist, active, indicative of agapao and it means he did it in eternity past and it holds good today and will hold good forever. He will never change his mind and regret that he did it or withdraw this love from us. Next we have "We ought" and this is a present, active, indicative of opheilo and it means every minute of our lives we ought to keep on loving God. "To love" is a present, active, infinitive and the infinitive means that it is God's purpose for us to love him every moment of our existence. "To love one another" is from allos and it means one another of the same kind. It means other fellow believers. The basis of this love is the grace of God.

1 JOHN 4:12 "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." This verse gives us a manifestation of this principle. "No man" is from oudeis and it means no member of the whole human race. "Hath seen God" is a perfect, middle, indicative of theaomai and it means to observe closely, to perceive. This is referring to God the Father and it means that no man can discern God by himself. This is where Christ comes in and Christ has always been the manifestation of God.

JOHN 1:18 "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

JOHN 6:46 "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father."

This means that a man cannot start off on his own and actually know God, discern God, know God. Christ is the go-between. Christ is the mediator. Christ is the one who manifests God to us. Christ uncovers God so we can see him, understand him and come to know him.

Now we have another "if" but this is a third class condition and it means "maybe we will and maybe we won't." Loving God depends on the filling of the Holy Spirit and the erection of an edification complex in the soul. Also loving other believers depends on this structure in the soul. We can't just strike out on our own and accomplish this but the love and grace of God makes it possible as the Holy Spirit fills and controls our living.

The result of all this is that God abides in us. The word is "meno" and this actually means that God abides in us in his reflected glory. His love being perfected in us is from teleioo and it means completed. The perfect, passive, indicative of teleioo means that we receive this wonderful grace work from God and this is the way we become like Christ. Don't you want this great grace work to be accomplished in your life? I am sure you do. It is the only relaxed mental attitude way to live.