

Title: God is Love
Text: 1 John 4: 7-8
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1 John 4: 7: Beloved, let us love one another:

Back in 2007, as I was moving here, I stopped off at Fairmont, WV, where Brother Henry was preaching. I went to his hotel room to visit. As I was leaving, Brother Henry said, “Brother Clay, *love them to Christ.*”

I did not understand the importance of what he meant by that statement. I was a newly called pastor: full of starch—ready to set the woods on fire—ignorant of the magnitude of the work and not fully aware of my own insufficiency. A lot of what I thought was boldness for the truth and zeal for God was pride, arrogance and just plain ole sinful flesh. But thankfully, God gave me trials for a good five years or so: opposition from many sides, health problems, financial struggles. God knocked my knees out from under me—humbled me, laid me low and made me value the love of brethren which he gifts his people with. And this many years later, I am beginning to understand what Brother Henry meant when he spoke of the importance of serving the Lord’s people in love. I hope this many years from now, I will know a little better than I do now.

1 John 4: 7: Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God;

Is love essential? Well, is faith essential?—absolutely! Scripture declares that “*without faith it is impossible to please God.*” Is perseverance in faith essential?—Absolutely—“*he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*” Just like faith, love is essential--

John 13: 35: [Our Master said] By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples,

Is it that I can speak so well men think I have the tongue of an angel? Or that I understand all the deep doctrine of God? Or that I have faith to remove mountains? Or that I am willing to be burned at the stake for the gospel? No!

John 13: 35: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

1 Corinthians 13: 1: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2: And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not [love], I am nothing. 3: And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing.

If I unequally yoke myself with the message which worldly men promote—that is not love the love of God. If I turn God’s people from Christ with untrue doctrine or irrelevant doctrine—that is not the love of God. If I divide brethren—that is not the love of God. If I bring reproach on the gospel—that is not the love of God. If I shut out those who do not agree with me—that is not the love God puts in the heart. **THOSE ARE ALL THINGS GOD HATES!**

Remember the woman who stole the other woman’s baby and said it was her own. Solomon said, “Cut the baby in half so they can each share a piece of the baby.” The true mother said, “No she can have it.” Why? She loved the child. Well, the love that God puts in the heart is stronger than that. If I have the love of God in me, I will “*endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*”

1 John 4: 7...and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

We do not have or produce love in our sinful flesh just like we do not have or produce faith by nature. Love, like faith, is a gift of God! Love is not a virtue that only a few of God's people have. Love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost in every person whom God saves.

Gal 5:22...the fruit of the Spirit is love,

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. 13: Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

1 John 4: 7...for God is love

God's very being IS LOVE; God's very nature IS LOVE—"GOD IS LOVE!" Therefore, if God abides in me, the Love abides in me and I will love my brethren. And God grows us in love by making us know him more in the face of Christ Jesus.

So if you and I who are born of God, would grow in love then it will be by God growing us in the knowledge of him who is Love!—because *everyone that loveth does so because he is born of God and knoweth God: because God is love.*

Turn to 1 Cor 13: As we see here what love is let's consider love as a person—God our Savior, Christ Jesus because "God is love!"

1 Corinthians 13: 4: [Love] suffereth long,...

Our Lord is longsuffering: patient not rash.

In Noah's day, the world was full of wicked sinners who hated God—'*every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*'. But God was longsuffering—for whose sake? For Noah's sake!

1 Peter 3:20: Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

Saul of Tarsus went years in his vain religion, hating God and putting his people to death. Paul said,

1 Timothy 1: 16: Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

And Christ has not yet returned to earth for the same reason—his longsuffering shall save all his redeemed.

"The Lord ... is *longsuffering* toward us [his elect], not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. ...so account that *the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation*" (2 Peter 3:9, 15).

Brethren, let us not be quick to write men off. With brethren who offend, suffer long! Rebuke if necessary! Withdraw if necessary. But suffer long! Never close the door.

1 Corinthians 13: 4: [Love] is kind;

God our Savior is kind! God saved us by his kindness.

Titus 3: 3: For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

When men judge others and put them away from them, God says to such legalists—

Romans 2: 3: And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 4: Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness [*same word for kind*] and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

So God says to every believer, “*be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you*” (Ephesians 4:32).

1 Corinthians 13: 4: [Love/God] envieth not;

God does not covet what others have, we can give him nothing; nor is God jealous so as to withhold from us what we need—that is what envy does—envy is covetous. Using others and withholding from others.

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. 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.

Christ is God in the flesh, Christ envied not. He gave us free righteousness, free acceptance by shedding his precious blood in behalf of his people.

Romans 8: 32: He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

Where the love of God dwells, there will not be envy over what others have nor jealousy so as not to give them what they need—especially this gospel in truth.

1 Corinthians 13: 4: [Love] vaunteth not itself

God does not put on a show or parade himself. He came in human flesh without a show.

Philippians 2: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Will his preacher try to show off his gifts which Christ alone gave him? Shall I make myself a reputation when Christ my Redeemer made himself of no reputation? Love makes Christ's servant try to be as unnoticed as possible while he preaches and serves God's people.

1 Corinthians 13: 4...[Love] is not puffed up

Christ's appeal to needy *sinners* whose hearts made low, broken and contrite, is the fact he is not puffed up or arrogant or haughty.

Matthew 11:29: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

With God top shelf blessings are on the very bottom shelf! If we want choice riches of Christ we have to come all the way down. And if we would sow those riches to others in the love of God then we cannot be puffed up in pride—*knowledge puffeth up—love edifieth. “the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”* (Ja 3: 18)

1 Corinthians 13: 5: [Love] Doth not behave itself unseemly,

God does nothing rudely! He never speaks or treats us inappropriately, indecent, or immoral, He does not embarrass us or shame his people—*those who believe on Christ shall never be ashamed!*

If the love of God abides in us we will not treat our fellow man rudely but mannerly—because it is becoming to Christ and adorns our gospel. Wherever we are or with whomever we are with, remember, we represent Christ to this world! No sinner will give us a hearing if we are rude! The love of God does not behave unseemly.

1 Corinthians 13: 5 [Love] seeketh not her own,

Is there anything self-seeking about Christ laying down his life for God and his people? It is the most selfless thing man has ever done! It was not self-seeking to bear the sin of his people to save us from ourselves? It was not self-seeking to bear justice to honor God's law and manifest God's righteousness?

Everything Love did and does for his people and for God his Father, is not for selfish, vain reasons—but for those Christ loves! So Paul says to us, *1 Cor 10: 24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's [well-being]*

1 Corinthians 13: 5 [Love] is not easily provoked,

Scripture says God is slow to anger.

Nahum 1: 2...the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. 3: The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked

Since Christ entered covenant in eternity and in time quenched the fire of God's wrath for all for whom he died, God's people never arouse His anger and wrath. He may chasten us in love but never in wrath.

Brethren, God's love will make us not easily provoked. The more we grow in the love of God the more we will not be easily provoked.

1 Corinthians 13: 5: [Love] thinketh no evil.

It means “*to take account of as in a ledger; to account, impute*”. God keeps no record of evil done by his Redeemed and will not impute our sins to us for the sake of Christ because in Christ all his elect are Righteous and have no sin!

Isaiah 43:25: I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Romans 8: 1: There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus...

God's love make a believer hold no grudges or bring up past sins. If God remembers our sins no more, how can I remember the sins of my brethren or my neighbor?

1 Corinthians 13: 6: [Love] Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

God is Holy; he does not rejoice in unrighteousness, only in truth! It is our flesh that rejoices in unrighteousness: to hear some wrong or tell it. But in the new man where God dwells in love, we hate unrighteousness and rejoice in truth—and that Truth is Christ Jesus!

May God's love make us hate what God hates and love what God loves.

1 Corinthians 13: 7: [Love] Beareth all things,

God who is love has covered the sins of His people with the blood of Jesus Christ who is Love and for Christ sake he beareth all things

1 Corinthians 13: 7: [Love] believeth all things,

Love puts the best light on all things. With Christ as our Advocate, God our Father believes all things concerning his people.

1 Corinthians 13: 7: [Love] hopeth all things,

Love sees the bright side to come. In Christ the Light, God beholds his people and he looks to that expected end he has purposed for his people.

1 Corinthians 13: 7: [Love] endureth all things.

Peter denied the Lord three times—ask him if Love does all these things. David committed adultery and murder—ask him if Love does all things.

So when it comes to our brethren's' shortcomings let us bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things. *“Above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins.” (1 Pet 4: 8)*

1 Corinthians 13: 8: [Love] never faileth:

God says of Christ who is Love—*“He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”* God the Father's love never fails to save all who he chose by grace—he said *“I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”* Therefore, *“Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ.”* Love/God never fails.

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. 8: He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Amen!

