

Lesson for November 13, 2005

The Book of I John

Chapter 4:7-13

Verse 7

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”

God’s love is always based on His integrity. All of God’s attributes work together as one cohesive system designed to empower the believer in the execution of His plan, purpose and will. Therefore, divine love cannot operate independently of His integrity. Many believers today have “created” God in their personal image. They often ascribe to God their own superficial, emotional love and call it “the love of God.” God is not sentimental about us. He does not love us because we are “lovable.” God loves the believer because he possesses the righteousness of God.

Only inside of God’s power system can the believer exhibit impersonal love for others. Our strength to love another person comes from the integrity we develop from the study and application of God’s Word. This is how human integrity is able to fulfill divine integrity.

God is the source of love and we take our precedence for loving others from Jesus Christ. *Everyone* in this verse refers to the “beloved”, which means believers. Remember John is teaching Christian love, therefore, only Christians can exhibit God’s love (born of God). And only by knowing the doctrine of impersonal love can the believer apply the doctrine. Impersonal love is how we regard others and often involves being tolerant of others despite their behavior, their personality or their beliefs, with our attitude being the same that Christ exhibited toward others. The ultimate demonstration of impersonal love was Christ’s attitude on the Cross when He said, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:24)

Verse 8

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”

The unbeliever does not have the ability to exhibit God’s love. It is the power of God the Holy Spirit that enables believers to exhibit this kind of love. However, God invented all categories of love, even human love. Capacity for human love involves thought and emotion. For the believer, his human love should be on a higher

plane than the unbeliever, since he has the potential for increased capacity through the utilization of Bible doctrine. God's love is the pattern for human love.

Verse 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.”

God has not only provided eternal salvation for the believer, He has also given him a system in which to live his life. John 3:16 tells us about this love that God has for the entire human race that caused Him to send His uniquely born (only begotten) Son to provide eternal life for those who believe in Christ. John 10:10 tells us about the life that God wants the believer to live after salvation. Only within God's power system can the believer enjoy the abundant life spoken of by Jesus in this verse.

Verse 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.”

The Greek word for propitiation is “hilasmos” and means to appease the wrath of an offended party or to satisfy the just demands of someone that has been offended. The Greeks used the word for appeasing their pagan gods. A Greek person thought that he had to do this by some “righteous” act, which would demonstrate his true “good” character.

The perfect substitutionary payment for sin that propitiated the righteousness of God was accomplished by a Person of perfect character. This Person, of course, is Jesus Christ. As deity, Christ was not able to sin and as human, He was able not to sin. Therefore, He went to the Cross in a state of sinless perfection. We must remember that Christ in His humanity could have sinned and was tempted to do so on many occasions. In His humanity, He endured much greater temptations and testing than we will ever face, and yet He was able to refrain from any form of sin (even mental attitude sin).

God is justified in imputing (crediting) His righteousness to sinful man because of *propitiation*. Only by possessing the righteousness of God can a person spend eternity with a holy God. Man's righteousness falls well short of the perfection needed to enter Heaven. However, God is free to give His righteousness to all who

believe in Christ because His righteousness and justice have been satisfied by Christ's death. (Romans 10:4; II Corinthians 5:21)

Verse 11

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

Divine agape expresses the deep, constant love and interest of a perfect God towards imperfect, and therefore unworthy, objects (unbelieving mankind). Upon faith in Christ, this love and interest has the potential of producing in these now perfect and worthy (positional sanctification) objects (believers) a love towards God. In turn, God's love is able to produce in the life of the believer virtue-love towards others. Virtue-love is a synonym for *divine agape love*. Virtue-love is love based on the virtue of the one doing the loving. This virtue-love desires to see others come to know the source of this love. (I John 4:18-21)

Under the control of the Holy Spirit, this *divine agape love* can be reproduced in the life of the believer. This is impersonal love (unconditional love), whether exercised towards believer or unbeliever and is NOT emotional, it is a matter of the right mental attitude. It does not depend on the “love-ability” or compatibility of the object. This love seeks the welfare of others. (Romans 13:8-10, 15:1-3; Galatians 6:10; Colossians 3:12-13)

Verse 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.”

The World System implies that “love” means that we enjoy someone, admire them, that they make us happy, that they treat us nicely, etc. It is easy to love someone like this.

The challenging kind of love is impersonal love (unconditional love). Impersonal love is “loving” someone that we don't enjoy, that we don't admire, that does not make us happy, that does not treat us nicely, etc. Developing and learning to utilize unconditional love as a “tool” in our daily experience is of utmost importance for a victorious Christian life. This requires setting aside our emotions and instead, thinking and applying Biblical principles in order to produce right attitudes. Right attitudes will produce right behavior. Loving others unconditionally often requires adjusting and adapting to others instead of expecting others to adjust and adapt to us. This does not mean that we condone wrong behavior, rather it means that we love others in

spite of their behavior. Impersonal love means that we are NOT being resentful, condemning, judgmental, etc. of others in our attitude. Unconditional love is selfless love; loving without asking “what’s in it for me.” (I Thessalonians 4:9-12; I Peter 3:8-16; James 2:1-9)

Verse 13

“Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”

The sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit is our assurance from God of a secure future. The word in Greek for sealing is “sphragizo” and means to secure, to signify ownership, or to authenticate. We must always interpret Scripture in the time in which it was written. In Biblical times a seal or signet was used to authenticate a transaction or to show ownership of property.

God seals the believer at salvation with His seal. God’s seal is not a ring, but rather the Holy Spirit Himself. “The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” What exactly does the Holy Spirit seal for the believer? We are told in Ephesians 1, where Paul enumerates certain spiritual blessings that belong to all believers. In verse four he states that we are the elect (chosen for privilege) of God and that we are made holy (set apart) and blameless before Him (a reference to our position in Christ). In verse five we are told that we have been predestined (a predetermined plan for each of us) and that we have been adopted into the family of God. Verse six tells us that we have been accepted in the beloved. In verse seven we learn that we have been forgiven and redeemed and in verse eight and nine we are told that God’s will has been revealed to us. In verses ten and eleven we find out that we have an eternal inheritance as a result of being in union with Christ. And finally in verses twelve and thirteen we are told that God places His seal on these blessings by sending His Holy Spirit to indwell us because of our faith in Christ.

Every believer is sealed at the moment of faith in Christ (salvation). We know this from an examination of Scripture in the original language. The correct translation, for example, of Ephesians 1:13 is “In whom ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also *having believed* (not ‘after you believed’) ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” The sealing work of the Holy Spirit is immediate and simultaneous with our faith in Christ.