

## 1 John 4:17-21

“Love Isn’t What I Say; It’s What I Show”

Love; we’ve been learning a lot about it lately. Be it the *nature* of love, the various *nuances* of love, the fact that *God* is love and that as the result of His love, as a demonstration of His love He sent His only begotten Son to be both the propitiation for our sins and the Savior of the world. It’s God’s love *toward* you, His great love *for* you that caused Him to send His only Son to be the satisfactory payment for the penalty of sin so that He could then be the Savior of the sinner.

*From* that, as we think *about* that it doesn’t take long to draw the conclusion that love cannot and will not sit idly by when it sees a need but will readily avail itself to meet the need. Love does something in us; even on a human level. A lot of people think of love as simply another emotion, it’s some kind of feeling that happens between 2 people, I love them, they love me, it feels real good inside to give and receive love and isn’t that great...that’s love. Now don’t get me wrong it is good to *be* loved, it feels good to love someone else; that’s all good and well. But love moves beyond the way I feel; it’s active in you, it shows itself through you.

Think about it; here’s a single man, and as a single man he’s probably, most generally a slob. His house is a mess, his car is a mess, he takes a shower on occasion...then he meets her. Suddenly he’s cleaning up his house, getting all the fast food debris out of his car, he showers all the time and gets things in order, he’s in love! Listen, if love on a *human* level invokes a response *in* me and will readily be on display in an active way *through* me, how much more on a *Divine* level, when *God’s* love is a reality to me? God’s love will do something in me *presently*, and it will do something in me in the face of *eternity*; with that let’s look shall we?

Vs17-18

It’s interesting to me to think of love as something that develops and grows, there’s a maturing process concerning love. There is such a thing as “imperfect” love; it’s love, but it’s not perfect love, it’s not fully matured love. There’s also an eternal aspect of love, the bible declares that when it comes the gifts of the Spirit, be it prophecy, word of knowledge, healings or whatever, the gifts of God will pass away, there is coming a day (when we see Him face to face) that those things will no longer be necessary. However as it pertains to love, love will never pass away, it will carry on into eternity; that’s why Paul said in 1 Cor 13:13, “*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*” Because the day is coming when faith and hope will no longer be necessary, we’ll be in the tangible, touchable presence of the Living God. But love is eternal; it’ll carry right on into eternity and never fade away.

Here in Vs 17 John takes us right up to the very cusp, the cutting edge of eternity and gives to us the comforting quality of love. and If there's ever a time we need the comforting quality of love it's as we consider, or contemplate, or are confronted with eternity.

As we think about standing *before* God, being judged *by* God, it can be a fearful thing and in certain cases rightfully so. The bible declares in no uncertain terms "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" Heb 10:31 But the perfection, the completion, the full fruition of the love of God in the child of God will do something in you as you stand *before* God and that is this: it will give you *boldness* in the day of judgment.

It's a topic that's not too popular with people, but it's unavoidable, inevitable, and inescapable nonetheless; the day of judgment *will happen*. You can try and put it out of your mind, avoid the thought, hope it won't happen or that you'll somehow slip through the cracks... it's coming. The bible warns us and exhorts us over and over again to be ready *for* it and not to be caught off guard *by* it. The psalmist wrote, "*For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth.*" Ps 96:13 Jesus spoke readily of a day in which the earth would stand before God in judgment. He said, "*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.*" Matt 12:36 There is coming a day in which every soul, both small and great will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and those who surrendered *to* Him, led their lives *for* Him will be blessed eternally *by* Him. But those who stood *against* Him, refused to bow their hearts *before* Him will be *cursed* eternally by Him. Leave 1<sup>st</sup> John and turn quickly to Matt 25, fix your attention beginning on Vs 31 (Vs31-46)

John tells us in Rev 20:11-15, "*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*"

The day of judgment; you see as you study the scriptures you come to discover that we serve a sovereign God who operates throughout the ages of man on a “Divine timetable” of sorts. He doesn’t do things randomly, but He has timing very specifically that facilitates His will. Christ didn’t just break into history at a random time, but at the perfect point to fulfill the perfect will of His Father. Jesus didn’t get taken and crucified when things culminated to the point that they were out of His control. He was always in control, no one took His life, but He willingly laid it down. Over and over again throughout the gospel of John Jesus speaks of His hour, we read that nothing happened to Him, they had no power over Him because His “hour” had not yet come. At the same time when the cross was overshadowing Him we read in John 13 that He knew that His *hour* had come, it was time to fulfill the purpose for which He’d come in the shedding of His blood, the sacrifice of Himself for the sin of the world. Even so God has appointed a day and an hour in which He will judge the earth.

But here’s the good news, if you’re a child *of* God, if you belong *to* God you need not fear. As a matter of fact we read here that we can have *boldness* in the day of judgment.

Now there are those who think that when they stand before God they’re basically going to judge Him! They’ve got a question or 2 that they want answered and God’s got some explaining to do; that’s not going to happen...

Imagine having *boldness before* God when you’re standing in essence face to face *with* God. How many of you have stood before an earthly judge? Perhaps for a traffic violation or something; and there he is staring *at* you and you know he’s got the authority of the law at his disposal to impose *on* you. It can be intimidating if not down right scary! Yet the day is coming when we’ll stand before the judge of all the universe who holds our eternal fate in His hands yet we’ll be able to (in Christ) stand before Him in *boldness*, that is with *confidence*. How is that possible?

It’s possible for a # of reasons. #1 Because for the believer Jesus already bore our judgment. For the child of God our judgment isn’t in the future it’s in the past. The day that Jesus took your sin, the day that Jesus became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, the judgment that was due us was imputed to Him. Now that doesn’t mean the believer won’t be judged, we will. But not as it pertains to salvation, but rather we’ll stand before Christ and be judged on the basis of our works, whether our motives were pure and holy or self seeking and egocentric.

We'll be rewarded accordingly; some will be saved as by fire, just barely making it in, others will receive incredible eternal rewards. But for the believer we can stand before God with confidence knowing that Christ has absorbed our penalty and as the result we stand in His righteousness. Jesus said it like this, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."* John 5:24

#2 Because as He is (Vs17), so are we in this world. This that which we've been highlighting over the last few weeks, the confidence of seeing Him purifies us even as He is pure (3:2-3). He laid down His life, we present ourselves as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God, we lay down our lives for the brethren, God is love, we love; again we've spoken of the submission, servanthood, and sacrifice found in the life of Christ that if Christ be *in* us those things should be real *to* us. Now obviously none of us are yet perfect in love, we realize that this speaks more to our position than to a continual never ending practice. Nonetheless here's the point; Christ is in you, therefore as He is so are you in this world, that's your position by faith before the Father, that's how He sees you in Christ, covered in His righteousness, living in and living out His love. Therefore we need not fear because for God to condemn those of us who are accredited the righteousness of His Son, who are in the likeness of His Son would be to condemn His own Son. It's no wonder then that the bible says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,"* Rom 8:1 If the Father were to judge our sins again after judging them in Christ He would be declaring the sacrifice of Christ as insufficient and that will never happen we need not fear. #1 Christ bore our sin, He paid our penalty, #2 As He is, so are we in this world

(Or again as Paul told the Corinthians) *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* 2 Cor 5:21 The bible teaches that we've been predestined as the family of God to be conformed into the image of the Son of God (Rom 8:29).

3<sup>rdly</sup>, finally (as it pertains to our text presently), how is it that we need not fear the judgment of God but can stand with confidence *before* God? Love.

Vs18

God doesn't want you living in fear, dreading the day of judgment. As a child of God you should hasten the day, we look forward to soon coming of Jesus Christ You don't need to be tormented by the time of judgment to come, you should be excited at the idea of Christ coming back. Now if you're not a believer that's a different story, in that context it's completely appropriate that you should be terrified and mortified. You should be quickened into thinking about the eternal perspective and doing what you need to do in order to make sure that you're washed clean *before* God having been made right *with* God through faith in Christ. But as a believer there's no reason to fear God's judgment, I'm not saying you shouldn't fear God (in the sense of reverential submission *to* God). Hebrews 12:28 "*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*" There is an appropriate, holy (that is godly) fear, a reverential awe of God that keeps us in check *before* God.

But the word for fear here is the word from which we get our word "Phobia." It's not speaking of being kept in check out of reverence and love, it's a fear that a slave would have of his/her master, or a criminal before a judge knowing that they might be punished, penalized or in some way tormented. But as for you the bible says, "*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'*" Romans 8:15 and Again, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*" 2 Timothy 1:7 You see God's heart toward you as His child is not one of fear and torment, but of confidence and love.

Vs19

with all this talk about the love of God *in* us John wants to make it clear that it's only possible by the love that God has had *for* us. It's the principle that I refer to as, "Divine initiative and human responsibility." God always initiates, it's left up to man to respond. Remember Jesus made it clear that we don't choose Him, He chose us; here we're reading that God didn't respond to us, we responded to God. The bible is clear that there are none who seek God, there are none who are good, there are none that are righteous no not one. So many people think that they need to do things in order to get God to respond to them. If I pray so much, or fast so often, or read my bible for this amount of time surely God will respond to me; that's legalism. That makes you the initiator and God the respondent, which is exactly the opposite of what the bible teaches. The bible teaches that everything we do *for* God, or for the glory *of* God is out of the overflow of the *love and grace* of God that He's already poured out upon us. He's initiated this whole thing, we're just responding to His goodness and His mercy.

Even as it pertains to our love for God, it can only happen because He 1<sup>st</sup> loved us. The bible teaches us that God has so loved us before the worlds were ever created, that even while we were yet sinners, in rebellion against God wanting nothing to do with God, that God loved us. We don't love Him therefore He loves us back; it's just the opposite, but it's subtle isn't it.

Perhaps you came here today and during our time of worship you were thinking, "I don't know what's going on here, it's evidently doing something for some people, but it's just not hitting me. I don't know maybe I just don't love God very much." Or you look around and everyone is serving and getting tied into the body, forming relationships with the body, but you don't really interact with the body at all and you leave here thinking, "I guess I just don't love God very much because I just won't commit, I just don't want to serve there." Then the devil comes along and whispers in your ear, "That's right, you *don't* love God very much and that's exactly why He doesn't love *you* very much. You see all these people, how much they love God, and how much God loves them; too bad so sad for you because you're just not in that category." But do you see what just happened there? You made God's love for you dependent upon your love for God when in reality just the opposite is true. But anything the devil can do to make you think that God loves *you* less will result in you loving *Him* less. But the more you *know* of God's love for you, the more you *receive* of God's love for you, and the more you *walk* in God's love for you the more His love *in* you will be reciprocated back to Him. We love Him because He 1<sup>st</sup> loved us, and if God so loved you when you were against Him, when you were enemies *with* Him how much more is He in love with you now that you belong *to* Him and are His child?

Vs20-21

Last week as we were studying Vs 12 we were reminded that the validation of our relationship *with* God isn't our love *for* God, but for one another; there's no way that I can tangibly verify your love for God, what I can verify is your love for the body of Christ. Here John is amplifying that point; you can *say* that you love God all you want. But if you hate a brother in the Lord than your profession of love for God is just a lie. Now this isn't talking about an occasional scuffle, or that you always have to see eye to eye with one another, it's that unrelenting animosity, a seething that doesn't cease. The idea here is that, it's impossible to love God whom you've never seen while hating someone in the body of Christ whom you can see. In Christ you can't say, "I just can't love that person." Because if you can't love that person, you don't love God, that's what this is saying. It goes back to love not being a feeling (though it's wonderful when love is accompanied *by* joyous and comforting/peaceful feelings) but love isn't predicated upon those things.

Love isn't something I say, or even always *feel* it's something I *do*. There are things that we might have a propensity to *say*: John has said that a man might say that he abides in God, he might say that he's in the light, he might say that he knows the Lord, or loves the Lord. But that admission needs to be backed up by certain actions, these aren't things that a man can just say, they need to be *shown*.

But to say them with out showing them is simply lying *about* them, that's what the bible declares.

Vs21

You see it's a command, a non option, if you love God you've *got* to love your brothers and sisters in Christ in a practical tangible way.

One day Jesus was teaching the people (as was His custom) and a young man came to Him and said, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Jesus said, "...if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*'" The young man says to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" (There's something still missing) Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But we read that when he heard that he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions, he was incredibly rich.

You see Jesus was saying, "Love God, and love others." He said, "I have done that" that's what he *said*, but when Jesus said, "Sell what you have and give it to the poor." Jesus was giving him the opportunity to do more than *say* it, but to *show* it; that's where he failed. In reality he wasn't loving his neighbor as himself, he wasn't willing to meet needs and/or to so love others in a practical tangible way.

We read from Matt 25 earlier, what was it that separated the sheep from the goats? The tangible practical, care and compassion for others as the result of the love of God in their lives, when they saw a need they sought to meet it. God help us to make the transition from learning it, to *living* it; receive God's love, walk *in* God's love, that you might *demonstrate* your love for God by meeting the needs *of* and being a blessing *to* the people of God *around* you that one day it might be said *to* you, "...*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*" Matt 25:34

#### Prayer Points:

God we want to hear those words and be in that number; and we thank You for the assurance we've received from You in these practical life lessons of love. What love looks like, and acts like; it looks like and acts like Jesus and so Lord help us to decrease, that You might increase in our lives. Help us make the transition from the principle into the practical and we'll give You praise...

Love isn't something that God just said *to* you, it's something that He did *for* you. Jesus said that no greater love had anyone than this than to lay down his life for his friends. Jesus laid down His life for you, He demonstrated His great love for you. If you've never received His love you can do that right here, and right now. You don't have to be found on His left hand hearing those horrifying words of departure, you can be blessed to inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. But it's only in Christ, forgiveness, wholeness of heart and newness of life is yours in Jesus Christ Is He calling out to you today? If so why not respond to Him, give your heart to Him surrender your life to Him even now.