

Loving One Another

We are in I John again. As usual we are going step by step through a lot of verses. This is a message though and not just a Bible study. What we are trying to do in going inch by inch along is to catch the very burden from that spot. So in a sense, we are trying to catch the message from the book and enter into that aspect of it. This time we are moving into a new section on “Love One Another,” a new section of fellowship in I John. To begin with I want to read a main key verse that I absolutely love. I think someone prayed this verse this morning when we were breaking bread. If you can remember a verse from this area that we will be in, this is a good one to remember.

I John 4:19—“We love because he has first loved us.”

It is pretty simple to memorize; “We love because He has first loved us.” If we can keep this and hold it in our hearts, we will just course through these verses together.

Let’s pray:

Lord, we trust in You, and we trust this time into Your hands. We thank You for surrounding us with Your love this morning as we broke bread, as we remember You, Lord. We see Your love in the saints, and we see how You have loved us. We worship You. Thank You for drawing us near to You. We are just so touched in our hearts by this deep, deep love of Jesus. Lord, we pray that You would enlighten us in Your Word, that You would speak as we read the text from the pages that it would be that living Word that comes through as a loving sword to divide in our hearts and separate our souls from our spirits. Lord, reveal the intentions of our hearts and draw us to have the same intentions as You. Lord, fill us with Your love right now. In Jesus name. Amen.

The section that we will be in starts in chapter 4:7, and I will go through to chapter 5:3. We have mentioned these big sections in I John many times. I will say one more time that this burden of the book is fellowship, and it is based on how we receive eternal life. We have talked about fellowship in light and in righteousness. This time we are looking at how fellowship works in this area of love and specifically the experience of loving one another. That is the area where we are. **There** is this experience where because eternal life is what we share, it has to be that love comes from God and then we actually do this. Every one of these sections is a new section because it will tell us that God is something. God is light, He is righteous, and now God is love.

God is Love

So it starts, “Beloved, let us love one another.” That is the call for fellowship. And then when you get to the end of verse 8 in I John 4, he says, “For God is love.” I just want to use that phrase really quick because we will get to those verses later, so I skipped some words here. But I just wanted us to see this. There is a relationship between the fact of God being love and then our call to love one another. What we are not hearing in I John is a charge to love one another that is disconnected from being filled with the love of God. I do not know if any parts of the Bible really want us to do that, but sometimes it feels that way. But this does not even have that sensing that we ought to do the right thing. You ought to do good. Instead, it is more of the discovery of how to do this.

All of us know the commands that we have had from the very beginning. The ultimate command is to love God and also to love one another. This has been since the beginning of time in our hearts, since the first massive sin of hating one's brother with Cain and Abel. We have seen the opposite of this, the breaking of the command. Before that we saw the breaking of the command to love God with their parents. So to love God and to love one another were those major commandments that were broken at the very beginning in the book of Genesis. So we know this command, and we are going to look at how this works. We will see how to do it, how to enjoy loving one another, even the unlovely one another, how to love the unlovely, how to love one another because God is love, not because you ought to but because God is love. So that is kind of our basis for this.

We Also Ought to Love One Another

I John 4:11—"Beloved, if God has so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

There is a reaction right here. God has so loved us that it is almost like it stirs inside of us and fills us. "Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus" and you are surrounded with it. But you actually realize that I am surrounded with it by the other believers too, as we sing this together, and then we ought to love one another. Why ought we to love one another? God has so loved us. We are filled with the love of God; we are in fellowship with Him, and of course He has also loved these others. So we join Him in fellowship, and we love one another.

Finally, this verse that I mentioned in I John 4:19. I just want again to point out the correlation here between God's love and us loving one another which I think we may be familiar with. But it is massively emphasized here in I John, and it is the point. If you catch this point you will understand how this works. We love because He loved us first. Every bit of trying to love has to be a receiving of love first. This type of love is not the feeling of love all the time, though you may feel that some people are very lovely, and you may feel filled with love sometimes. I feel filled with love. But you might feel it and be like this: "I got this. I love these people." And that is a blessing from God when it really is that you are filled with His love.

But the love of chocolate is different. I love chocolate because it tastes good. The love where someone is lovely is not necessary because God loved us before we were so lovely, while we were sinners, while we were enemies, and He also has loved the unlovely people in the earth. Whoever you think is unlovely, He loves them and died for them. So this is the love of God, and we love that style because He has first loved us. It has to be that way. One of the few Greek words that all Christians know is the word 'agape' when we say love because we have to use a new word to say it because it is not the love as we think. It is the love that only belongs to God, and it has to flow from us. We have to love because He first loved us.

Now that you have the main point, the rest is just coasting around and digesting this, and seeing how it actually works. So right now we are almost at the end of I John. There is just one little section on victory at the closing. It starts off by sharing with us that God is love which is the end of verse 8. When it starts off, there is a burst of a call to fellowship. This is not a command of something that you ought to do merely, "But let us love one another; because love is of God, and everyone that loves has been begotten of God, and knows God" (v. 7).

Everyone Who Loves Has Been Begotten of God

Last time when we were sharing about how God is righteous and we practice righteousness, in I John 2:29 at the very end of that chapter, it says, “If you know that He is righteous, you also know that everyone begotten of Him practices righteousness.” Here where it is talking about loving one another, it has to do with God is love, and everyone who loves has been begotten of God. A proof of your begottenness is that you love one another or maybe another way of saying it is that an experience of our being begotten, being born again is to love one another. We are born again who have believed in the Lord Jesus. By being born again our spirits have received eternal life. To experience that life is to love one another. So everyone that loves one another has been begotten of God and knows God. The apostle John is not teaching us about salvation, and he is not teaching us with such a balanced approach that we will never get confused. I think this is one of the most confusing letters in the New Testament. It is very confusing because he talks to believers and gets swept up into fellowship. Everything is fellowship, and it is that you are either in it or you are out of it. So his stark contrast is are you distant from God right now, or are you close to God right now? Now He is not saying, “If you have a moment when you do not love the brethren, you are no longer born again.” There is no way he is saying that. You can even have a moment of sinning according to John in chapter 1: “If you sin”—but then you confess your sins, you get cleansed, and come back to the Lord. There is no issue with being born again as far as eternity is concerned, but there is an issue with being in the good of your born-againness, (I know this is a Geoffrey word, but I think we need this word). There is an issue of knowing God; it is not have I known Him, have I met Him, do I have a testimony of salvation, but do I know Him right now? When I love the brethren, I know Him right now. When I love the brethren, I am tapped into that which I have been born-again with, eternal life. That is his point right here. It is not a proof to show that you are saved. You may be saved and really have a problem with loving the brethren, but it becomes a problem of fellowship as well. It is hurting your fellowship with God whether it is just one person you do not like or you just do not like anybody. Whatever it is, you are having a problem of fellowship with God. It is stunted if there is an issue, but it is not a pathway to hell. We have been brought out of that if we have been born again.

Knowing the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus

Verse 8—“He that loves not has not known God; for God is love.” Again, this is that way of talking with the apostle John. If you have a moment right now, “I do not love this person. I just cannot do it,” does that mean you have not known God? No, it means you do not know God right now. It does mean that. It does not mean technically that I have never known God or that I do not know God as far as I am going to be in the new Jerusalem. But it does mean, in this moment, He could say to me, “I do not know you. This is not Me; this is something else. That is your carnality; that is what you have inherited from the sinful nature; that is not right.”

The opposite of that, of course, is as we are loving one another we know God. I think we understand that part. We know Him now; right now I know Him. This has nothing to do with my past. It is like when the apostle Paul said, “I want to know Him.” And of course it is not that he does not know Him, but he wants to know Him more. So this is not just the pursuit of knowing Him; this is the moment of knowing Him right now. If we do not love, we do not know God because God Himself is love. So if you think: “Here is God, and I can know Him right now.” So

because God is love, if I have something in front of me that is an issue of loving the brethren, somebody who is going on, whether I need to forgive them or I am just bothered with them, or I need to help them. Whatever it is, but I am not willing to do it. As I turn my face to God to enjoy some fellowship and sing a song, all that is between me and God is an issue that I am not like God. It is an issue of love; I am not loving my brethren. I cannot even see Him face to face; I cannot really know Him right now. Something is blocking the way, and it is similar to how a sin would block the way. When we sin, our conscience is speaking loudly to us that we do not see the face of God. We just see the sin blocking us like a wall and we are convicted by it. So it is that same experience.

After we catch this concept then we have to just be swept up into the love of God. It is not enough for us to stand here today together and say, “Yes, we should love one another.” To be brought into this experience we need to be brought into the deep, deep love of Jesus. We must be surrounded by that; it is our only way. Otherwise, everything is too hard; it is way too difficult. We have to draw our source from the love of God. Then he points us to the very love of God that we have received, not just to remind us, but to bring us back into the fellowship of the love of God.

God’s Love Constrains Us

Verse 9—“ Herein as to us has been manifested the love of God.” Here is how the love of God showed up. God sends His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. “That God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might have eternal life and live forever?” Yes, that sweeps us up into it. “And that we might live through Him also.” That is another layer of this. This is like when the apostle Paul in II Corinthians talks about the love of the Christ constraining us, and having judged this that One died for all, then all have died; and he died for all, that we should no longer live to ourselves (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). It is more than just the reaction of I am saved and I praise Him. Now there is the love that fills me and now I must do, I must do love, I must do this thing. “That we might live through Him.” This is the love of God that has come to us. As soon as you behold Him in His love, you realize, “I must live this way by His love.”

Propitiation

Verse 10—“Herein is love, not that we loved God ...” He is not saying that we do not love Him right now. It is not that we loved God first or were lovely, “but that he loved us, and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins (atoning sacrifice).”

A propitiation is something that appeases the issue, that settles the issue of our sins and our shame. It is not a common word that we use but it is a good Bible word. But here is the love that when Jesus came, He died for us and provided for us, and it was not while we loved God—big point to remember.

I want actually to pull out a few big words in here or concepts that we can have in our mind to remember His major points or thoughts. So these are three helps that we have to see as we are reading these verses. It is not such an outline in I John always that you can say it is this section or that section. It is just like when you talk to somebody and you have on your heart maybe ten

things all mixed up together. That is kind of how it works when you fellowship. So it is sort of like that, but they go in a progressive path and they keep showing up.

Here are a few helps and one of them is propitiation. We want to remember this word and let it kind of be stuck in our memory. This means that if I am going to love one another, first I have to get that propitiation moment. I have to stare at how He died for me. I have got to fix my eyes on Jesus who is full of love and actually died for me while I did not love God. If we will remember as we do when we break bread that He loved us before we did anything. That is a good memory when it comes to loving one another. I am struggling to love you, but then the first step, the first helpful thing is to remember that the Lord loved me, and then there is something for us to begin with. If you are stuck and you are stumbled, you just cannot do it, we fix our eyes on Jesus who loved us first. Before we loved Him, He died for us and loved us. So we are kind of back to this, “herein is love.” This is love that we are going to experience as we love one another. It is not that we loved God, it is not that that person is loving us or that they are lovely, but He did this. God loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins.

The Way of Laying Down My Life

Verse 11—“Beloved, If God has so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” This is our call. Notice that it is the reaction of this: if He did this, I fix my eyes and I see His propitiation for my sins, and it was before I loved Him. If He did it this way, okay I am going to do it. So every time this first help comes to us, it is like a reminder of not a method, but it is a way, it is a path of love, the path is selfless, and it is God’s path. We have got to draw from that eternal life that He has placed within us, and as we approach loving somebody, especially when it is difficult, if God has so loved us, it kind of makes some noise in our hearts. If God has so loved us, I have to love them.

We actually need some of this reasoning because as we struggle to love one another we become unreasonable. We actually reason out the need to love them. We find unreasonable reasons to not love people. We turn them into monsters in our own hearts, and some people might seem like monsters, but these are the people who God died for. These are the people that the Lord Jesus died for, and so then it is almost like we need to renew our minds, and that one thing can kind of calm all of our thoughts, all of our monstrosities that we know in a person. It is not that we loved God, it is that God sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins. If God has so loved us we also ought to love this person. If God has loved us that way, this is reasonable. He has loved us and filled us with His love, and we have eternal life. Now it is time to fellowship with eternal life, to fellowship with love and experience it with this person. This might actually be a better experience of fellowship because you do not naturally enjoy being around that person. You can actually join in with “I am going to lay down my life for a moment.” You can join in the way of the cross, a self-sacrificing love, a selfless love that is not looking to get anything back but is dying for that person. That is real fellowship; that is a fellowship of the cross, a fellowship in His sufferings. It is not that we can atone for anybody, but we can join in His way of the cross as we follow Him and take up our cross in that way.

God's Love Perfected in Us

Verse 12—"No one has seen God at any time: if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us."

"No one has seen God at any time." However, if we do this, God's love is perfected in us. We are going to get to this in a little bit where it is explained how "no one has seen God." But basically God is going to show up through us when we do this. This is how God is seen on earth right now. If we love one another then God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. Here is another little thing to remember, and it is something called perfect love which we will see in all of these next verses. We will see words like 'perfection 'or 'made perfect 'or 'perfect love. 'So this is a key phrase to remember in how this works

If God abides in us and His love is working through us, then actually His love is perfected in us. And in all the explanations of it, what we are going to see is how perfect love or God's love being perfected in us is when love is completed. It is not just how mature I am as a Christian, which is how the word 'perfect 'is used sometimes like "among the perfect" in Philippians 3. But it is more like when it is complete, and love finds its completion when it is moving through us. So one way of love being perfected is that God loves us and we love Him back. Then another way of God's love being completed, or the cycle of love being completed is that God loves us, and we love someone else with God's love. And it is like there is something complete about it. If God loves us and it sits there, and he does not abide in us then His love is not perfected in us. We may have received it but just barely enough for ourselves, but that is not the intention of God. The love of the Christ so constrains us that it would be completed and actually go forth from us. The very love of God gets perfected in us when God abides in us and we love one another.

Verse 13—"We know that we abide in Him and He in us because He has given to us of His Spirit." In this experience you are not alone. You are not called to love somebody by yourself. He is abiding in you. Just grab hold of His love and go for it. There is the Holy Spirit. I have the sensing that as I open my mouth or as I go do my deed or whatever it is, as I forgive the person, the love of God will expand in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We realize that we are not in this by ourselves but the Holy Spirit is there; He has given to us of His Spirit. This is that perfection. In a way you do not get the sense of His Holy Spirit abiding inside of you if you are not in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. When we are not doing this, we might know in our minds that I have the Holy Spirit because God saved me, and He has sealed me with the Holy Spirit. However, you do not know that you have the reality of the Holy Spirit in you right now and He is doing this, but once you abide in Him and He in you, the love is perfected and flows through you.

God's Son sent as Savior of the World

Verse 14—"And we have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world."

What are we back to? We are back to the propitiation, we are back to, "I see His love." The Father sent His Son as Savior of the world. We are all surrounded by this. He is abiding in me, and I am abiding in Him. As I love somebody and the Holy Spirit rises up and does this again, I am brought to see that God has sent His Son to this world. I am brought again to the very love of

God. You do not walk away from loving the brethren with the sense of, “Well, I am really good at loving people.” There are some people who are good at loving people to a certain degree. There are not many of us but there are some people that seem very loving, and they love people. But they have their limits. When the love of God flows through them, you walk away thinking, “I just saw that God sent His Son and loved the world. I just saw it in my moment. I just saw that God sent His Son to this world because He also just sent me the Spirit of His Son crying, ‘Abba, Father’.” I just experienced the love of God where He dies for the sinners, doing that thing where He loves the world. I just experienced that.”

We have seen it and we can testify of this. We not only saw it as we received it ourselves, but now we see it because we see it for each other. This might be like when someone passes the plate to you at the breaking of bread. Sometimes I have sat next to a person that I have struggled to love, and that is the person who passed the plate or cup. In that moment it is almost like you have to see that God loves that person. You have to see that they are taking the same cup and the blood has forgiven them of their sins. You just have to drop your problems with them because you know that He loves them. But you also see it when He loves them through you. He has done this by the Holy Spirit, and you get to experience the love of God through them.

Abiding in God

Verse 15—“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love which God has to us. God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God and God in him.”

This is very beautiful, and this is also very much like an experience of being surrounded with love. We confess with our mouth that Jesus is the Son of God, and in doing that God abides in us, and we also abide in Him. As we know this and we know that God is love, then we actually find ourselves abiding in love, and we find that His love is actually abiding in us. All of us believers have confessed, probably made the good confession, that Jesus is the Son of God. All of us do this, but specifically when we kind of take this stance to confess that Jesus is the Son of God, in this experience of fellowship it is similar to how 1 John 3 brings up this exclamation of a burst of amazement of the love of God. “Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God.” In all of our beholding Him, we are also discovering His life is in us. So as I am confessing Jesus as the Son of God, I am also realizing He has called us into sonship.

What manner of love is this that the Father has given to us that we are also the children of God. As this is going on and I am back to my propitiation vision of God and I see the love that He has for me right now, I find myself surrounded with the love of God because God Himself is love; He has given to us love. That was a love experience and now I know that His life of love is inside of us.

Basically, with all of the talk about propitiation you need to make your home right there. Just squat right there in that house that God is the One who has loved, and if you stay right there it is more like a swimming pool of love like that deep, deep ocean. You just realize that as you are in the home of God’s love that His love just fills your tummy. The food that you eat is the love of

God, and you are full of it. So as you make your home there and stay right there, you can go forth and discover the perfecting of love, the completing of love. We have to abide in His love like that.

So the reaction should be that when we run into a problem, “Lord, show me Your love.” It has to be our first reaction. If we are bothered by somebody, “Lord, show me Your love.” And as you are in that moment, you find next to you in that house someone else who has confessed that Jesus is the Son of God. It is that very person whom you do not love right now. The place where you are abiding is the place where God has loved that soul. And you say, “Lord, show me Your love.” You look next to you and you say, “Oh, He loves this person. He loves them before they are loveable. He loves them before they loved Him. Oh, how He loves them.” But notice that I am in the house of love right now, and God is love and I am abiding in Him, and His love is right there. And on the couch next to me is this person that God has placed in my life on purpose so that I can experience how He loves this person right now. This is why we abide in His love. This is why that first kind of help is the essential. Even if we do not understand how it works or what we are going to do or say, once we catch that, we can smile a little bit. We can realize they are loved; these souls are loved. God is love and I am there. He that abides in love abides in God and God in him. Now it is time for God to actually work in us.

The Completion of Love

In verse 17 we find how love is completed. It is time to do this. We have been in the house, we love that person, not us but God loves them. We sense it. Now it is time.

“Herein has love been perfected with us that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that even as he is, we also are in this world.”

There is a call to boldness in the day of judgment. We were talking about righteousness by purifying ourselves, and we are with Him. Then we experience Him in this world by practicing righteousness. So then the day of judgment is not a scary thing because we know when we see Him we will be like Him, and what we are experiencing now will be like that. And here is a similar kind of concept. As I am in this and in the good of this, the judgment for the future, even the judgment seat of Christ, which is for believers, fades away into the background. There are times when we need to be exhorted to run our race because there is a judgment coming. You need to get right with the Lord, but that has already been shared in I John.

He has brought us to this point now, and as I am in this moment of fellowship now, that judgment fades into the background because we are experiencing the love of God right now on this earth. As He is we also are in this world. You do not have that concern for the judgment seat of Christ; instead you have the yearning for the Lord’s return as you are in fellowship with Him. That is the change. When you hear about the Lord’s return, you might get a little afraid, and there is a reason for that. Therefore, we get ourselves right with the Lord and consecrated. But when you are in fellowship with Him, you can find that prayer by the Holy Spirit, “Come, Lord Jesus.” It is there; it is deep down once you are in fellowship with Him. That is what is happening right here.

No Fear in Love

Verse 18—“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has torment, and he that fears has not been made perfect in love.”

When we have that sense of fear, something of the cycle of love is not actually happening with us. Something is missing because fear has to do with the judgment that you are going to get, but when you are experiencing the love flowing through you, you are not concerned about that. Instead you are experiencing Christ on this earth right now, and the cry in your heart is, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Do what I am doing, but do it better and fill the whole earth with Your righteousness.

Jesus said, “Judge not or else you will be judged.” The same judgment that you measure out to others is going to be measured out to you (Matthew 7:2). If we are judging others, yes we should be afraid of judgment. This is for believers, and we should have the fear of the judgment seat of Christ, but when you love others, not judging others, that kind of fades away. As you get filled with mercy and forgiveness and the more you see God’s people, even the ones who are real problems or causing issues or are doing the same thing over and over, whatever it is, as you have mercy on them and the love of God abides in you and you love them, then that whole sense of “judge not or else you will be judged” fades away to the background. That is a real principle that is always there, and you feel it when you judge people. When you get mad at somebody, when you do not love somebody, when you are not forgiving, you begin to have a sense in your heart that I am going to be judged too. You feel like something is wrong, and you are not ready to meet the Lord face to face. You have that sense, but there is no fear in love. Perfect love casts it out. When the cycle of love gets perfected in us and we love somebody by the love of God loving through us, that is perfect love. That perfect love removes the fear of the day of judgment. Instead, it brings a longing to see His face and hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful.” Basically you are with Him face to face now in a spiritual way; you are experiencing His presence. So this is just an added encouragement or an added test.

Is something wrong that I would be judged by God? Do I have a sense of fear of the day that is coming, the judgment seat of Christ when we will all be judged for what we are doing? Or has that love, that perfect love cast out that concern? Is that fear put aside for now? Is that set aside because the love of God is loving other people through me? Because I am being merciful, I will be shown mercy. Because of this experience of perfect love we actually walk in a way higher than the judgment seat of Christ.

At the end times there are the overcomers in Revelation 12. This manchild goes beyond the clouds all the way to the throne. If I could borrow that picture, “They have overcome him by the blood, and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even to death.” Those ones pierce through all the clouds and arrive at the throne, but what they are doing on earth is this: perfect love has cast out that fear of the judgment.

There is the judgment seat of Christ coming in the clouds. We will all meet Him in the clouds and will all be judged there. But the people who went beyond those clouds to the throne have already passed out of judgment. They have already gained that higher spot. Now they need to come down to the clouds and hear, “Well done.” But I am just saying that they get lifted above

the judgment seat of Christ and into the enjoyment of God's love, and He wants to love these people on the earth right now. The main thing we are trying to catch here is that perfect love is a cycle. Perfect love casts out fear. If you fear you have not been made perfect in love. It does not mean that I am made perfect like a sinless person. It is that I am made complete by love. The love has worked in me and worked with me, and now I am complete because the cycle is not stunted by me stopping it. God loves me and now I love one another. That is the 'made perfect' right here.

He First Loved Us

Verse 19—"We love because he first loved us."

So this is the cycle. Because He first loved us, we love. We actually experience that He loved them. We continue to experience His love. This is how we stay in first love as believers. Because He first loved us, we keep loving Him back. But how do we love Him back? We love Him back by loving the believers which kind of brings us to our next spot.

Our next kind of help is that the place to love God is not in the third heaven in a way. It is difficult to love God, He is so lovable. What can we do? How can someone experience His selfless dying before they love Him? If we are just loving God back, if we are just going to love God, but He has already loved us so we cannot do the same thing that He did for us. However, He has given us some humans to do it with. He has given us some people to show our love for God because now the love of God can flow through us to other people. Someone can say, "I love God," and they genuinely mean it, they are not being fake and saying that they walk in light but they are secretly walking in the darkness. They really love God, and they say they love God, but they hate their brother. Probably we have all actually done this. You have a moment where you do not like your brother or sister, but you would still say that you love God. You still sing the worship songs, you would still read your Bible, but something feels wrong.

If you say you love God and hate your brother, you are a liar. "For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" That is why we have this commandment from Him that he that loves God would also love his brother. That point being that to experience the love of God you actually have people to prove it with. If you see people, and you have something to do with them, but you do not see God, you are a liar because he who loves not his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

The Proof of Love

There is a proof of love. Another thing to remember is that the proof of love is with the believers. Show me that you love God by loving one of His people, by loving the ones that you spend time with, by loving the ones that you try to hide from. This is the way that you actually prove the love of God. The proof is not in how you feel towards those people. You do not have to love them with feeling. You just have to love them with the love of God. This is really helpful to know. Your proof that you love God is not by having warm fuzzy feelings with these people. Occasionally, that might happen, but it is mainly by dying for them. You have something to do that He gives you to do to prove your love. So that is why He gave us that commandment to love your brother. Now He is continuing to explain how this works, but the proof of love is that you

have to love these people. So he is reasoning this out because we have to understand this in our minds, we have to get a renewed mind with this. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God, born of God, and that is all those people who you are struggling with loving. Have they believed that Jesus is the Christ? They are born of God, super important, they are the ones on the couch in the house of God with you as you abide in His love.

We Love the Begotten of Him

I John 5:1b—"Everyone that loves him that has begotten loves also him that is begotten of him."

Him that has begotten is God; He is the begetter. So if you love Him who has begotten, you also love the one that was begotten. You love the person who has been born again. If you love the One who does the born againing, then you love those who get born again. If you love Him who makes you children of God, the Father, then you love the children also. It just has to be. Because that life that He gave to them is His life. You can actually find God in every believer. You can find some presence of God even if it is covered up with a lot of dirt, but there is gold underneath. There is the life of God within, and He begot them. They are born again, and you love God. There is a portion of Him right there in that person, and He wants you to discover His portion in them. Yes, you love Me, but I am very far away from You it seems. I have put the gold portion of my life right here next to you, and I want you to find it. If you love me, search for it just like I searched for you. I dug in this earth deep down even to the grave, and I found you and I pulled out eternal life for you. That is what we have to do with each other. As we love one another find the gold that is there in them. If you love Him that birthed you and gave you eternal life, love those whom He has put that same life inside of.

We Love God and Keep His Commandments

I John 5:2—"Hereby know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments."

Okay, I know I need to find gold there. Lord, I love You, so command me, show me the way. Now, of course, we know His big commandment is to love the brethren, so this is that cycle, but in that He is going to give us little commands, little things to do. Maybe you can begin to say "Hi" to them or start to pray for them; begin to do something. This is something of God's commands. So come back to Him and get His commands. You cannot just pretend to love somebody nor can you just decide to love them. We have to love God, get His commands, and He will direct us.

Keeping God's Commands

Verse 3—"For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."

He goes on to say that we have got some victorious life inside of us. We can actually do this. Now these are commands; it is not just one commandment that you love one another. He has broken down the 'love one another' into lots of little detailed commands that He nudges us with by the Holy Spirit and leads us along this path. So we get these commands from the Lord, and that is how we do it. We love because He first loved us. Even though now I see I must love this

person because there is gold in there. There is God in there. The love of God means love God back. He has placed Himself in the body of Christ really close to me, but now to actually do it I come back to Him and the Lord commands me. That is how His love is going to flow through. We keep His commandments that way.

I want to give some examples of loving one another from I John just to pull out from other sections. Love is one of those topics in I John that is everywhere even though this is the big section on how to fellowship in love. One of the examples is love when you are bitter. When you are unforgiving. I have bitterness in my heart. I John 2: "He that loves his brother abides in light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in that person. But he that hates his brother is in darkness." Now in its context there is a reason why I associate this a little bit with somebody sinning and me being unforgiving. I just need to borrow this verse to say that one of the reasons that we hate our brethren sometimes is that they have sinned, that they are walking in darkness, and I actually get bitter toward them. I remember that sin especially if it is done to me. Peter asked the Lord how many times do I need to forgive; I have done it seven times, and the Lord tells him seventy times seven. Peter said, "If they sin against me." So this is a case of one that is not a sinner; those are a little bit more lovable. But when they sin against you, and it really affects you, or they are people that you like, you get bitter towards that person. You remember them and their sin as one thing, and you really struggle. There is the case when the Lord helped to renew the mind of his servant in Matthew 18. He even shared the story of someone who got forgiven much by the king, but someone who owed him a small amount, he needed to forgive that person. It is in that interaction.

How to Love One Who Sins Against Us

I am going to apply this really quick. Someone sinned against me, and I want to do this 'love one another' thing. I have to love because He first loved me. How has He first loved me? He has forgiven me. I see that He forgave me. Probably, I see that He forgave me recently. When was the last time you confessed your sins? If you are walking with the Lord it is probably pretty often. He forgave me recently, and I remember that it is the renewed mindset that Jesus gives us in Matthew 18: "Renew your mind, you are thinking wrong. I have forgiven you so much. Now you turn to your brother and forgive." We love because He first loved us. How can I do this? I have to see that He has forgiven me even recently. So right now I forgive this person. I turn to them in my heart and I forgive them. I let it go. It is like in the Lord's prayer where it says, "Forgive us of our trespasses as we forgive others." Then the Lord goes on to say, "If you do not forgive others, how can God forgive you?" You are stuck because you are not letting the love flow.

I think we know about this more commonly, but the important thing is it has to happen before they repent. It has to happen before they apologize. It has to happen before they are loveable. It is very easy to forgive somebody when they repent, when they apologize, especially if they do it with tears. It is very loveable. But when they are still bad, this is when God loved them and died for them. So if you have been forgiven of your sins, then you behold the propitiation and let Him perfect His love through you. Then you go and do this. Prove your love by forgiving them before they apologize. Some people may never even know that they have sinned against you. And of course some of it may have been an accident.

When you are bothered by someone inwardly, such as in the case in chapter 3 where Cain and Abel are brought up. We should love one another not as Cain. Cain was of the wicked one, and he killed his brother. Now we probably know from the story that it seems like Cain is jealous of his brother Abel whose worship worked, but I would like to broaden this a little. Sometimes jealousy actually happens in the church. Somebody is walking well with the Lord, and for whatever reason you are acting Cain-like. You may be bothered because you just do not like that person; they just bother you. It is not that they have sinned against you; it is just that you do not like them.

This is like a lady who is very pretty, and sometimes the ladies do not like her. Do they really not like her? That is just a worldly mindset. But when somebody is walking with the Lord well or doing something that you have not thought of before, and it is the Lord, are you bothered by it inwardly? That is like a Cain-type of jealousy. It does happen sometimes. So if that happens then we have to see from the Lord, "Is He bothered?" Now if Cain went to God and said, "What about Abel?" And he knows about Abel that God was pleased and accepted his worship. Instead, Cain could have gone to God and said, "God if You are pleased with Abel, why?" And Cain could learn and grow from it: "Okay, I need the blood. That makes sense; I am going to do that same type of sacrifice. Abel, I will trade you some vegetables for one of your sheep." It is possible to grow from those people whom you are bothered with, whether it is jealousy or personality. Of course, sometimes you are bothered by something else.

When I was younger I attended a mega church that had a great preacher. He was an older brother who not only loved the Lord but he loved everybody, and his sermons were nice to listen to. Everybody loved this guy. But then a young guy came in right off the mission field, and he was preaching okay sermons, but he had all of his verses memorized. That was something the older preacher had never really done. He would say, "Let's turn here," and he would read it. He knew it, but he had not memorized it. The young guy would quote a whole chapter and then preach from it. Now the whole congregation was impressed. They were saying, "This is great." They were not just puffing him up, but it was so nice how the word just flowed out of him. What I noticed was that that old preacher did not get bothered by it nor did he get jealous. Instead, we saw the love of God through this old preacher. It was amazing. He came up to his sermon the next time he was preaching, and he stood there quoting his Scriptures from memory. You could see him struggling, looking all awkward because it was not so natural to him. He said, "My younger brother is quoting the Word from his heart. I saw it and I said, 'That is of God, and I am going to learn from him.'" And he did it! And you know the love of God touched all the saints. There was no jealousy. He could have set him aside because he was in charge of the speaking schedule. He could have said, "You are not speaking anymore because you make me look bad." But instead he loved by the love of God. He learned from God: "God, what about this?" I thought it was beautiful.

Another reason we are bothered is by temperaments, different cultures, different age groups, different backgrounds. Sometimes you are just bothered by that person. If that is the case, ask the Lord, "Are you bothered by them?" Then we kind of get into the experience of Romans 14 in a different way where we receive whoever the Lord has received, not questioning their culture or their age or whatever. Is the Lord okay with them? Okay, then I am okay. When you are bothered inwardly, ask the Lord, "Are You bothered, Lord?" And if He is not, then love

them and let go of your botheredness, whether it is jealousy or just difference. You are bothered by some people because they say things differently, but let it go if the Lord is okay with it and if it is not a real problem.

Another one is when you are bothered outwardly. Someone is going to bother you for your stuff. I John 3:18: "Whoever has the world's substance and sees his brother having need and shuts up his bowels from him, how does the love of God abide in them." Here is someone who needs something. Sometimes they need something physical like a coat or a meal. These things bother you because they take up your finances sometimes or your stuff or they take up your time which I think is a bigger issue with a lot of us.

I remember being in high school, and I needed a ride all the time. I needed a ride to everything that I did for a while, and I bothered a lot of people. But during that time I said, "When I grow up, I want to be able to give rides to people. So as soon as I could drive, instead of getting a cool car I got a minivan. We have a young brother here who drives the minivan, and picks up a lot of the teenagers. Last night the love of God just touched my heart as I saw it. There was a need for some to be picked up and he is so willing: "I will pick them up." Not a big deal, but this is time, gas money. The main thing is you might be bothered outwardly by needing to pick somebody up. "I can do it if you are around the corner but not if you are twenty minutes away. I do not want to do that. I lose my time." But when it is from God, then the love of God will fill your heart and you abide in Him, and everyone is touched by the love of God. This is a time when it actually is a blessing to the Lord's people. We have to be wise in it because sometimes you do not give somebody a dollar; you give them a burger because if they have a dollar they will use it wrongly. And sometimes there is another instruction that they need. They do not need your help; they need some other help.

We have this mindset locally which I think is a beautiful thing during a time maybe when we have a conference to take up. Everybody is bothered outwardly, and there is almost no flinching. It is almost like "I am ready to die. This is just the week where I die; I am used to this." That is where the love of God has created a character inside of you. Probably, at the beginning you had to get the love from the Lord when you were bothered and had to do all these things. So you will find moments in your life when a certain measure of character has developed, and you actually naturally respond with the love of God. That is a good thing, but there is always a limit to that, where the Lord pushes us a little beyond our limit and squeezes out something more for you to do or to host or to call somebody. Whatever it is that you have to do, and this time you go to the Lord and say, "Lord, do you want to give them something? Lord, do you want to give them my time?" And then the love of God comes to you and you do it. So do not just do it because you know you ought to, but go to the Lord and then He will remind you: "I gave my life for you. What are you going to do for Me right now?" If you have that sensing that you should do this then you can lay down your life, not love your life even unto death, and you will have some joy with it. It is actually pleasing to the Lord and a wonderful experience.

We love because He first loved us. This is not a challenge to really start doing something. This is more of a discovery. I know that everyone of us in here have some people in our lives that the Lord is going to call us to love probably this week in major and minor ways. So the reason we are going through this is to show us how we are going to do it. So if we can remember that first

we are going to gain our love from the Lord, we are going to behold Him and the propitiation that is there, that provision of all His love. Then we can let it work in us and let it go forth from us and be perfected. Abide in His love and notice the people next to you. That is how it can flow forth from us, and He is going to give us some tangible proofs of His love that we can actually do this. Let's fellowship in this way. It is so good to be in the church where we have people to experience this with. You can honestly say when you break bread and you look around in the room, it is such a joy when you can say the Lord loves all of these people, every one of them. So by His grace we learn this lesson, and by God's grace we love them all; we love one another.

Let's pray together,

Lord, we worship You. We love that You have called us to do this because we can experience Your love. We can know Your love and we can actually do this. Your commands to us are not grievous. You have given us the victory, You have filled us with Your love. We thank You and ask You to command us this week. Give us some specifics to be able to prove our love to You. As we cast our lives before You, we give ourselves to you. Show us what You would have us to do. Lord, put the people in our hearts to pray for and to care for. Give us Your commands that we can show You how we love You because You first loved us. In Jesus name. Amen.