

## **UNDERSTANDING THE LOVE OF GOD SERIES**

### **THE FIRST COMMANDMENT**

*I John 4: 20-21 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him; that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

We talked about this passage on love. This morning we are going to look more into this area but as we touched on this series we mentioned that our vertical relationship is measured by and is proportional to our horizontal relationship with one another. It may leave you the impression that we develop our horizontal relationship first, and then we develop our vertical relationship with God. But that is not what the bible says, although the vertical relationship with God is proportional to our horizontal relationship. Yet the horizontal relationship comes forth from our vertical relationship. What this verse is saying is not that the horizontal relationship that is our love for one another comes first but this verse is saying that the truth or the reality of our love for God is expressed in our horizontal relationship.

In the words, if we really have love for God then that love will show out in our love for each other. That's all that it is saying. It's not saying that by loving one another we will develop our love for God. In verse 21 clarifies that. It says, *And this commandment we have from Him that he who loves God must love his brother also.* Notice that the emphasis is on loving God first because if you don't love God, it's very hard to love your brethren. On the other hand if you love God you will love your brethren. But if your love for God is a religious fear that has nothing to do with true love, then it will come out in self-righteousness and it will not come out in love

for brethren. That is the meaning of this verse. So we do not want to leave the impression that developing the love of God comes from developing our love with each other. We must love God first. Every time you have a revelation of God, that revelation of God will produce a revelation of man. You began to see other people around you in a different light because you have seen God in a greater light.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 22, in answering the question of the Pharisees. Verse 34 *“But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, (this was a religious lawyer, one who is expert in the law. When you see the word lawyer in the New Testament, it does not talk about today’s type of lawyer. It speaks about those experts’ scribes in religious laws. So one of the lawyers) asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? He was asking for one commandment. Jesus answered in verse 37, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Notice what He says next, “This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* Jesus puts the word first and second in priority. That means to develop love for the brethren you need to develop a tremendous love for God. That is the first commandment. Loving God with all your being. Have you noticed that is like sometime when you have spent some time with God, when you have God’s presence it makes you more loving. Makes you more patient, makes you more longsuffering, makes you more meek and humble. Are not all these the attributes of love? The bible tells us love suffers long, seek not its own. I Cor.13 all the attributes of love come forth from a relationship with God.

In I John 4: 20-21 What John was dealing with was a group of people who don’t really love God, who has become religious, who don’t spend time in the presence of the Almighty, in the one who is their Savior who died for their sins, who don’t spend time at His throne to know Him and to love Him. And He is saying, how can you say you love God when you don’t show in your relationship? The positive part about it is, when we do spend time loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, strength and body, that the love of God consumes us and we come out of the presence of God with a greater love for the world and a greater compassion, a greater meekness, a greater patience.

If you have not notice it, that if you do not have enough time spend with God and you rush about throughout the day, you tend to be more irritable, you tend to react to the circumstances of life and react to people. When you missed your devotional time with God, when you do not meditate on the Word of God, when you did not spend some time worshipping God, you become bad-tempered, irritable because you have missed your time with God. On the other hand, if you have spent sufficient time with God everyday, notice the difference your day made. Your family will know. Do you know that your family members will know whether you have spent time with God? If you come with a long face we know you couldn't have come with the presence of God because in the presence of God there is fullness of joy. And when we see your long face is very hard to live with people who don't love God. But it's very easy to live with people who love God. The reason is when we love God; we are transformed into His same glory. The bible says in I John 4: 16 "*God is Love.*" Now if God is love and you spend some time in the presence of God who is love, who is the personification of love, who is the substance of love, who energizes love, who radiates love, surely when you come out of His presence you become a loving person. You come out of His presence as a person filled with His love.

The first commandment is to love God. We are not talking about religious activities. Do you know religious activities can be out of duty than out of love? There is a difference between the two. There is a difference between an obedient son and a dutiful son. I Cor. 13: 3 tell us something about that. "*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,*" now that is the horizontal relationship. That is a concern for the poor. To the poor who are receiving, they say you really like us. You really care for us. You really love us. Paul says though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor. He is not saying about giving a little bit. Notice he says all. He is not even saying about giving from the surplus and if that doesn't satisfy and though I gave my body to be burned, but have not love. It was mentioned by the love of God. It profits me nothing. You can give without loving. It is a religious act. It was an establishment of a horizontal relationship for other purposes except love. And Paul said it profits me nothing. He did not say it profit nothing. If you give away one hundred dollars the person profit but Paul said it profits me nothing. Did you know that every time you do a good work, every time you give something out of the love of God, there is some sort of profit to you? In the world we know that the receiving end profits. But in the spiritual realm, your act of giving causes you to profit in some manner. You receive a spiritual inclination.

Your nature becomes more like the nature of God because God is the giver. Take this example; if you live a selfish life and all your concern is yourself, something in your nature began to be twisted to that form until that kind of selfishness becomes a part of your nature. On the other hand, if you are a generous person and are a giver, every act you do builds something into you. You do profit. When you it out of the love of God, there is something that is built into you until you are formed, molded and baked into the nature of God. Every act you do after sometime doing regularly becomes a part of your character. And your character when it is synchronized with God will allow God's presence to flow through your life. So Paul did not say it profit nothing, he just say it profits me nothing. Every act of giving draws something from God.

Remember how Jesus spoke to the rich man who came to Him? Jesus said, give all you have to the poor and come and follow Me. But He did not put a full stop there. And you shall have reward in heaven. We must understand this life that God has created. These are the ABC of life. Not the worldly ABC. The worldly ABC teaches you grab the best, get all you can. But the principle of the ABC of life in this world is that this life is just a temporary life. It's preparing us for eternal life to come. So all that you do in this life, all that you possess in this life, all the talents that have been granted to you are in order to train you and prepare you for heaven. How you use the possession in this life, how you use your time in this life, how you use your talents in this life will prepare you for your work in heaven. It's a basic fact of where we are today. See this life is not a permanent life. All the possessions we have are not ours. They are loaned to us, to use and develop ourselves in God. I like the song that I heard once when I was in the seminary and a seminarian that was a former drug addict sang a song. And that song really touched me and I have never forgotten the wordings. It was that song that reminds me dear Lord. It says the things that I hold dear to my life are not mine; they are just borrowed. So remind me, remind me dear Lord. All the things of this life are not mine. They are only borrowed. It goes, "the things that I love and hold dear to my heart are just borrowed. They are not mine at all. So roll back the curtains of memory now and then. Show me where you bought me from and where I might have been."

Remind me; remind me dear Lord. Everything you have is given to you is under lease. It is not yours. The Almighty God gives you time, talent, and

possessions for you to learn how to be like God in giving them away. And when you are born again, and receive spiritual gifts, it just gives you an opportunity to be like Jesus. Think about it, the power to heal the sick. What is it for? It is not for yourself. It gives you an opportunity to be part of Jesus' love. Think about the teaching and the preaching ministry. What is it? It is nothing but you just to be part of Jesus to people. Romans 8 says until we all be conformed to His image. Every time we have an act of giving born out of love something is received in your spirit man. Something is working in your spirit man. If you have ever learned about giving, you will know it rubs against the human nature to give. We have to train ourselves to be givers. You want to know how original sin works? All you have to do is to look at the kids. If you have two kids and you bring two apples. One is big and the other is small. You know the first thing that they go for is the big one. They will fight over the big one. See original sin is ego nature that places emphasis on the I. It is the selfish nature that has corrupted all of mankind. But selfishness was not in man when God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. That is why when Jesus came what is the thing that strikes us most, selfishness. Paul says in I Cor. 13 love seeks not its own. We have to think in terms of our life as not our own but as a commodity that we have to be faithful to and answerable to Him. We have to account to God for everything in this life. Isn't it wonderful when this life is over and we all sit together on the shore of paradise and recounting all those times on this earth? You say wasn't it nice we if I obeyed God here, we obeyed God there? And you think about all those things you sacrificed for God then you will have all your rewards in heaven.

You can give without loving. That is you can give for other reasons but when you love you can't love without giving. And Jesus said, the first commandment is to love Him first. It's to love Him, pour your heart out to Him. When you love someone, what do you do? You spend time with the person. Not just ordinary time but special time. When you love God, what did you do? You have special time with Him. This is what Jesus spoke to me. Maybe it's of help to you. Jesus said, "If my people will treat Me as if I am physically there with them and walk and talk and live as if I am physically there with them by faith, I will manifest Myself to them and be real to them." See if you treat as if Jesus is real then Jesus becomes real to you. He will respond to you. So you have to treat God as a real person. Spending time with Him. Sit down with Him and say, "Lord here am I. I just want to love You. Tell me what to sing to you. How shall I express my love to You, O Lord?" And if you will love God in that manner, you cannot help

but keep the second commandment after that naturally. You will love others as yourself easily.

Rev.2: 4 was written to Christians. It says, *“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”* Now if you understand the word ‘first love’ by the context of what Jesus said in Matthew 22, then you will understand that Jesus is saying, you may still have love for each other, you may still have love for your neighbor but you have neglected the first love, which is to love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul and with all your strength. God wants us to love Him first. You may be busy serving others but God wants you to serve Him first. My first ministry is not to you but my first ministry is to Him. My priority is always that way. First, to Him in the closet then secondly the ministry to others. There is no way you could minister to others with the love of God unless you get your love in God right. Notice what He says to them in verse 3, *“You have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.”* They have worked hard, stood persecutions, stood hard times but their love have lost its freshness. The first love that they had for God has been lost. One of the most precious and closest things that you must hold to your heart all the time is your love for God. Don’t let times steal it, don’t let another person steal it. Don’t even let another human being steal it. That love for God is a very precious thing to God and God will pass through every high mountain, every large valley, every wide ocean to reach to you when He knows you love Him. Rev. 2 was written to Christians because as Christians we can be involved in activities that are good, proper, beneficial to others but the love of God is missing and it becomes a duty, a task and it doesn’t become a joy anymore.

How many of you have a problem doing what you like? I mean you have to struggle with yourself doing something you like to do. You don’t, whatever it is difficult in the natural to others but when you really love to do it, it is the easiest thing for you in the world if you have a great love for God. There is nothing too difficult for you because you love Him. Do you know why not many people are willing to die for Him, because they don’t love Him. To them it’s difficult. If you love Him you will be able to say, *“Lord I love you so much, I will do anything for you. You want me to live for you, you want me to die for you, whatever you want Lord I will do, I love you so much.”* All these become so easy when you really love Him.

I want you to examine yourself, because Jesus says in Matthew *"My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* Whenever your walk in Christian life becomes hard and difficult, please go back to square one, your first love. There is a song that this denomination people use to sing. I don't like to sing because it is true in the natural but it should not be expressed in that way. It says, "It's a long, long road and hard road." That's a song from the flesh. What the flesh is feeling is not an easy road we are traveling. Maybe when they sing the song half way, they die off. It's a song from the flesh. The flesh is feeling all the difficulties. But let me tell you, that song is not in line with Matthew 11, it says, *My yoke is easy, My burden is light.* They should be singing, your yoke is easy and your burden is light. If your love is right, where it should be at square one, first love. There is nothing in this Christian walk that will be difficult and hard to you. Even if God tells you to go to Timbuktu, even if you don't know where it is, you still go. Whatever God tells you it becomes easy. Please examine yourself if your yoke is hard and your burden is heavy. It may not be the Lord Jesus' yoke. It maybe somebody else's yoke you are carrying. It may be your own yoke. Then you are carrying something that Jesus did not carry. Your zealous bull carrying somebody's yoke that God didn't ask you to carry.

The Bible says, *My yoke is easy and My burden is light.* It depends on your heart. If your heart loves Him and it's fresh, it is easy. So examine first whether it's somebody's yoke or the yoke of your own making. Second, it may be the Lord's yoke for you but you have lost your love for Him. So you feel the way hard and the burden heavy. You may be in the will of God but if you lose the love of God it is difficult and it is heavy. It all depends whether you love Him. Lets close your eyes for a moment and say, "Father God, I love You, teach me to love you with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul and with all my strength. And Holy Spirit I love You. I appreciate You. I love You with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul and with all my strength."

Do you know you need to tell God that. Do you know that God loves to hear you say it with your lips, "I love You." Have you ever told God that? Have you ever written love notes to God? Or has your walk with God grown as stale as your own relationship with your husband or your wife? Do you still tell God you love

Him or do you come to God and say 'yes Sir', or is your relationship with God like a father and a child? Is your yoke difficult? Is your yolk heavy? Examine your heart. Love brings a supernatural strength especially the love of God. The love of God has caused men and women to give their lives to Him. The love of God has brought forth many Christian martyrs. The love of God has brought the gospel to areas of darkness, where no man wants to go but because of God people have gone. The love of God has caused people to make great sacrifices, giving all they have. Why is it that to these people could do it and it is not difficult? Why is it that the yoke is easy and the burden is light? It's because of the love of God. Because of their love for God they could love others greatly. Unless you keep that first commandment, you have not strength to keep the second. If Jesus says something is first then first comes first. The first commandment is to love Him then you will be able to love others.

Lets look at I John 4: 16 *“And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”*

You know what the presence of God is like? Those of you who have been in the overnight prayer, you know His presence is just love. The way I describe His presence is this: You know what is like to have compassion for someone who is sick or who has a need? You know that compassion that dwells up in you? Sometimes you look at those who have needs or those who are sick and they need God's healing power, that's the compassion that comes. You multiply that by a million times then you will know that is the presence of God. That is why many times the presence of God manifest we cannot stand it. We just want to cry. Why, because we have never been loved that much. The world has not been able to give that kind of love nor any human beings. We can't stand that kind of love, so intense and we weep because we are happy that we are loved. We are touched that we are loved and we have been made to be the objects of love. And now we are fulfilling the object by allowing God to love us. The bible says that when you know God loves you and you love God and you will love Him. We will love Him because He first loves us. When you love Him then it comes to you loving others. First thing's first.

