

Series: 1 John

Title: This is the Love of God

Text: 1 John 4:21-5: 3

Date: February 21, 2019

Place: SGBC, NJ

1 John 4: 21: And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. 5: 1: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. 2: By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3: For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

Subject: This is the Love of God

When you read *“the love OF God”* it does not mean our love toward God but God’s love toward his people. We saw in chapter 3 that God’s love makes believers love one another. And God’s love casts out fear, giving us boldness for the day of judgment. Here we are told:

Proposition: God’s love never fails to make his people obey his commandments.

HIS COMMANDMENT

1 John 4: 21: And this commandment have we from him,...

The commandment that comes in power making us obedient is from God our Father through Christ his Son. This is God the Father’s command commanded by Christ Jesus his Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is that Prophet that God promised to raise up from among his brethren? God said,

Deuteronomy 18: 15: The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; 16: According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17: And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. 18: I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

God said, *“I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”* Therefore, when Christ walked this earth, he said,

John 12: 49: For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50: And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

So the commandment John speaks of is not the commandments given at Mt Sinai. Christ said that the Father gave him A COMMANDMENT. This is the commandment that Christ Jesus our Prophet speaks effectually in the hearts of those he calls.

THE COMMANDMENT

1 John 4: 21:...That he who loveth God love his brother also.

This is God the Father's commandment given to his elect through Christ Jesus our Prophet. It is the law that the Spirit writes on the hearts of his saints in the new birth. John declared it in chapter 3,

1 John 3:23: And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as [Christ] gave us commandment.

"Faith which worketh by love" is the believer's rule of life, not the law given at Mt Sinai.

Galatians 3:12: the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Galatians 5:6: in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Christ said, *"his commandment is life everlasting."* The law of Sinai is the *"ministration of death, written and engraven in stones"*; *"the ministration of condemnation"* (2 Cor 3: 7, 9). It was a covenant of works which declared all men guilty. Christ's command is *the covenant of grace*. God the Father chose his people freely by his grace in eternity and trusted the work to his Son. Christ Jesus established the law for his people and put away our sins forever, making us the righteousness of God in him. He brings his redeemed under the gospel and the Spirit of God gives us life. Christ commands us effectually,

Matthew 11: 28: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30: For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

With the command comes the power and we believe on him unto life everlasting.

1 John 5: 11: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12: He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

Oh, that Christ would command one of his lost sheep this hour. Salvation is not by our works. Salvation is by Christ's works. I can tell you to believe on him and you shall be saved! But if his command comes it will come in power and none can resist his call.

Once, the Spirit has revealed the great love wherewith God first loved us, Christ constrains our hearts, making our hearts overflow in love and gratitude to him. His great love for us, in laying down his life under the wrath of God in our place, makes his child want to obey him! But Christ does not bring us under the rigor of the law of Sinai. He gives his saints his light and easy yoke,

John 13: 34: A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35: By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

What a light and easy yoke! Believe on Christ and by Christ's obedience unto the death of the cross, every believer has established the law in perfect righteousness. And constrained by his great love for us, Christ simply commands us to love our brethren who are begotten of him. How great it is to be under grace and not under the law!

BORN OF GOD

1 John 5: 1: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him

Our believing on Christ and our loving God and our brethren is not of our flesh. We must be born of God. We have no more to do with the new birth than we did with our first birth. Life, as well as faith and love, are not of us but they are the gifts of God given us when we are born of God.

John 1: 12: But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Ephesians 2: 8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

John is declaring that God is sovereign in salvation. That means God never fails to make each and every one of his elect believe on Christ and love Christ and love our brethren. There are no exceptions. He said, “whosoever *believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*” That means each and every sinner who believes that Jesus is the Christ, that is, every sinner that believes that the Lord Jesus is God’s anointed who shall save his people from our sins, is born of God.

Now, we do not go around speaking about our love for Christ. We certainly do not look to our love for assurance. It is because due to our sinful flesh we do not see ourselves loving him as we ought nor as we want. But what God produces in our new man is unfeigned, without sin, because God produced it. Therefore, Christ Jesus the Truth said that when we are born of God there is no doubt that we will love him. He said to the Pharisees, “*If God were your Father...ye would love me*” (Jn 8:42). Love for Christ is produced in us by God. It is produced in our new man; our flesh never loves God and only hinders our love for Christ.

Still, love for Christ is produced in our new man by Christ effectually declaring to us the name of God through the preaching of the gospel. This is amazing but this is what Christ said in his high priestly prayer! He said that our love for him, which God produces in us, is the love wherewith God loves Christ. This love is produced in our new spirit by Christ taking up abode in us. We see this when Christ prayed to the Father concerning his disciples, “*And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*” (Jn 17: 26)

In addition to God giving us love for Christ, God produces in us love for our brethren who are begotten of God. Our text says, “*And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*” Try to get hold of what John is saying. That brother and that sister who is born of God’s incorruptible seed is a child of God our Father. By the Holy Spirit, all who love God also love his children who are born of God. And “*charity*”—the spiritual love that is produced of God in his child—“*never faileth*” (1 Cor 13:8). God does not fail to produce love in the heart of his child and the love God produces in his child for Christ and for our brethren will never cease for all eternity.

In the context of this first epistle and the next, the Spirit of God used John to declare that God makes those born of him believe on Christ and abide in the doctrine of Christ, in contrast to those who are antichrist who apostatize from Christ and go out from us. The manifest difference between a child of God and a child of the devil is of God. It is that every child born of God cannot commit sin. A child born of God cannot break God’s commandment to believe on Christ and apostatize from Christ—“*for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*” Due to what Christ did for us and in us we have a new man that cannot sin. And our love for our brethren is by our continuing in the unity of the faith that is in Christ Jesus

our Lord. Since God has chosen to save his people through the means of the gospel, he has united us together in Christ's body, the church, so that "*Speaking THE TRUTH IN LOVE, [we] may grow up INTO HIM in all things, which is the HEAD, EVEN CHRIST: FROM WHOM the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to [CHRIST'S] EFFECTUAL WORKING in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself IN LOVE*" (Eph 4:16). For this reason, concerning those he calls antichrist, God declares dogmatically through John,

1 John 2: 19: They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

WE LOVE GOD'S CHILDREN THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

1 John 5: 2: By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

How do we know that we love the children of God?

Some might put on a show of love who do not have the love of God in their heart. Natural love is for personal gain or other vain reasons. Usually, it eventually ceases because it cannot keep up the charade.

But in those God has first loved, he makes us love him and keep his commandments. All God's commandments are to this one end: to hear and believe on Christ his Son. He constrains us by his love so that we truly desire to please our Father by "*keeping his commandments*"—that is, by persevering in faith in Christ his Son. The way we know we love our brethren is when we love God and keep his commandment to believe on his Son.

His commandments are not the law at Sinai. The commandment of God is that we believe on Christ. And it is by believing on Christ that we truly love those born of him. When you read the word "commandments" here understand that our motivation in doing whatever we do for Christ is not to obtain a righteousness by our works. It is that Christ has already made us righteous. Our motive is entirely new when God has made us his new creation. It is the love of Christ for us that now constrains us. We love God and we love those born of God by continuing in the unity of the faith that is in Christ Jesus our Savior. Christ said,

John 14: 21: He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him....23:...If a man love me, he will keep my words:...24: He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings:

John simply repeated what our Savior said, "*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*" Our God and Savior said,

John 15: 12: This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Greater love hath no man than Christ's love for his people which was manifest by him laying down his life for us. Through faith in Christ we have loved our brethren perfectly when he loved our brethren perfectly. And it is his great love for us that constrains us do whatsoever he commands us for the unity of the faith and this is true love for our brethren. We love our brethren in the context of believing on Christ and supporting his gospel so that our brethren can have the gospel as well as we. So "*By this we know that we love the*

children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” In other words, love is only true when it is of God so that the motivation of the heart is Christ’s love for us.

OBEDIENCE SURELY ACCOMPLISHED

1 John 5: 3: For this is the love OF God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

The love of God, spoken of here, is God’s love for his people. This verse declares that the love of God always accomplishes bringing his child to believe on Christ and love our brethren. His love for us makes Christ’s yoke all the more light and easy. His commandments are not grievous because of his love for us.

“We love him because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4: 19). God’s love is perfected, or accomplished in us, and thereby we love him and believe on Christ and thereby we love our brethren. God puts his love for Christ and his love for his people in us. So love for Christ and for brethren is, not of us, but is the fruit of the Spirit of God.

We do not look to our love for salvation or for assurance. Faith in Christ is how we know we have been born of God. It is not faith in our faith. It is the object of our faith that is our assurance. And we believe on him by Christ first loving us and abiding in us. Again, look at what Christ said,

John 14: 21: He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him

By Christ loving us we first began believing on him and loving those born of him. Then Christ said as we keep his commandments—believing on him—he and the Father will abide in us and manifest himself to us, thereby we continue believing on him and loving one another. So in all this, his love for us makes his commandments not grievous to us.

There was a time when we were dead in sins that the command to believe on Christ *was* grievous to us. We did not want to give up our so-called goodness, our so-called free will, our so-called good works. But when the commandment came, sin revived, and we died. Then when Christ revealed his great love for us and commanded us to believe on him, with the command came the power to reach forth our withered hand of faith and we believed on him and it was not grievous.

What is included in Christ’s commandment to love our brethren? Every command in these epistles, the apostles got directly from Christ. Believers love one another in the context of our union together as the church of God, by believing on Christ, by partaking of the gospel of Christ, by supporting the preaching of the gospel so that all our brethren might have the word of Christ together. It is impossible to love our brethren in any way but by believing on Christ and resting entirely in him together with one another.

John spoke of some forsaking assembling with brethren. He said, *“They went out from us.”* They did not move to another church where the gospel is preached in truth. They went out to either join in will-worship or nothing at all. Some in our day live close enough to where God has planted his church, but they do not identify with God’s people. We understand that some of God’s saints have infirmities that prevent them from doing so as often as they would like. But John speaks of those who could have continued but went out from us, instead. God makes his child obey his commandment to believe on Christ by giving us a hunger and thirst after Christ our righteousness. We desire to hear Christ preached. This is our food. This is the means God ordained to save his people. God makes us keep his commandments to seek Christ preeminently so that we make certain Christ is the focus of all we say and do when we gather together. We love our brethren born of Christ by loving God and believing on Christ as he commanded. That includes doing

whatever God enables us to do to relieve one another's burdens so that Christ remains the focus as they hear the gospel rather than the cares of this world and rather than turning their attention to us. It takes God giving us a heart to keep his command to believe on Christ for us to keep God's commandment not to forsake assembling together. And by our very presence we love our brethren and exhort one another to love and good works.

John is saying we know we love the brethren when we love God and keep his commandments to seek Christ preeminently in faith and love. We love our brethren by believing on Christ and trusting him to make them stand. This is God's commandment. It takes faith in Christ to commit our brethren to Christ's care as we bear their burdens. This is God's commandment. God-given faith and love for Christ makes a child of God willing to do whatever is necessary to help our brethren continue in faith, stayed on Christ, rather than the cares of this world. After praying that God would root and ground them in love so that they might know the love of Christ and be filled with the fulness of God, Paul said,

Ephesians 4: 1: I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2: With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another IN LOVE

All these things are God's commandment and all are involved in loving our brethren who are born of God. These things are not of our flesh. They are produced in the new spirit by God. This is the heart of love which is of God when we are made partakers of the divine nature. We see all of the following preeminently in Christ. But the scriptures do say that if we have not charity we are nothing. Charity is God-produced love which we are given when Christ is formed in our new man and we are made partakers of the divine nature.

1 Corinthians 13: 4: Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5: Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6: Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7: Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8: Charity never faileth:

The disciples knew so little about what Christ was about to do on the cross. But Christ was so forbearing and longsuffering toward them. He did not say, "If you don't believe this fact then you are lost!" He said, "*I have yet many things to say unto you but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: ...He shall glorify me*" (Jn 16: 12-14).

Faith and love are intertwined. They are like faith and repentance. Two sides of the same coin. Loving our brethren requires faith in Christ. And it is by faith in Christ that we love our brethren. True love for brethren believes Christ and trusts Christ to teach and uphold our brethren, the same as we trust him to teach and uphold us.

Ephesians 4: 3: Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Why? Because we are inseparably one.

Ephesians 4: 4: There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6: One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

My brethren and I are members of the same body of Christ! Paul said, "*the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary* (1 Cor 12: 21-22). As we endeavor to keep unity,

we do so by believing on Christ, by trusting Christ to give grace to our brethren. And we cannot find fault with our brethren because Christ gives grace as he will.

Ephesians 4: 7: But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ

Notice, how this is all in the context of our assembling together as the body of Christ, the church of our Lord Jesus, under the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

Ephesians 4: 11: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12: For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Christ will continue to provide pastors and assemble his people together until Christ's body is complete. The Psalmist said, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*" (Ps 133:1)! Here is love: we dwell together in "*the unity of THE FAITH.*" God in wisdom chose this means for the safety of his people.

Ephesians 4: 14: That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15: But SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

Truth and faith and love in Christ are all united. Next is what John is talking about in our text. Watch this sovereign work that Christ accomplishes in each member that he assembles in his body, the church.

Ephesians 4: 16: FROM WHOM the whole body fitly joined together and compacted...

God promised, "*I will plant [my people] that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more.*" "*Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God*" (2 Sam 7:10; Ps 92:13). We flourish by Christ,

Ephesians 4: 16: FROM WHOM the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to [CHRIST'S] EFFECTUAL WORKING in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself IN LOVE."

Christ commands us not to forsake assembling together. The preeminent way we love one another is by providing the gospel of Christ for one another which is the thing we all need most. In this, faith and love are connected and both are of God. Notice this in Hebrews 10,

Hebrews 10: 21: Having an high priest over the house of God; 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH...23: Let us hold fast the profession of OUR FAITH without wavering; (for HE IS FAITHFUL THAT PROMISED)

Again, we see love and faith are vitally connected. We love one another by depending entirely upon God through Christ Jesus our great High Priest.

Hebrews 10: 24: And let us CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS:

How do we do this?

Hebrews 10: 25: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves TOGETHER, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26: For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27: But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

It is impossible for us to hold fast our profession, to consider one another, to provoke to love and good works and to exhort one another if we apostatize from Christ—if we go out as the antichrist that John spoke of. If we sin willfully by forsaking Christ and his assembly then we forsake where Christ promises to meet with his people. We forsake the ministry of the gospel from Christ our Head, our Prophet, Priest and King, himself! How can we love those born of God if we forsake those born of God? Impossible!

John's point in all his epistles is that those born of Christ's incorruptible seed abide in the doctrine of Christ by faith. John said in the first chapter of his epistle that God gives us fellowship with his saints, with the Father and his Son, and we walk in the light. Walking in Light is continuing believing on Christ. John calls it "doing righteousness." It is the same as Christ said when he said, "*He that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds might be manifest that they are wrought in God.*" John said if we do not continue believing on Christ then we walk in darkness and the truth is not in us—we have not been born of the incorruptible seed.

In the second chapter of 1 John, Christ commands us through John *not to love this world*. Do not forsake Christ and his gospel and our brethren for the world. Let us never arrange the gospel around a worldly life but arrange our life around the gospel. For instance, never seek a job somewhere then look for a church. We find a church then seek a job in that area. And this commandment—to believe on Christ—we will obey, if we are born of God—"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." (1 Jn 5:4)

Next time, we will see it is through God-given faith in Christ that we overcome. Not faith in our faith. But we overcome by trusting the object of our faith, Jesus Christ our Lord who overcame the world and we in him.

In 1 Thessalonians, we see another list of things involved in loving our brethren. Notice, that where we find the mention of love for brethren we always find faith in Christ and love for Christ. And we find this by being together with God's saints.

1 Thessalonians 5: 8: But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of FAITH AND LOVE; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9: For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, 10: WHO DIED FOR US, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11: Wherefore comfort yourselves TOGETHER, and edify ONE ANOTHER, even as also ye do. 12: And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour AMONG YOU, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13: And to esteem them very highly IN LOVE for their work's sake. And be at peace AMONG YOURSELVES. 14: Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. 15: See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both AMONG YOURSELVES, and to all men. 16: Rejoice evermore. 17: Pray without ceasing. 18: In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 19: Quench not the Spirit. 20: Despise not prophesyings. 21: Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 22: Abstain from all appearance of evil. 23: And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24: FAITHFUL IS HE THAT CALLETH YOU, WHO ALSO WILL DO IT.

Amen!