

1 John 4 19- 5 1 Sept 6

1 John 4:19-21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us.

²⁰ 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?

²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

1 John 5:1 (NKJV)

¹ Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

Which is easier? To love **God** or to love **people**?

This morning we are going to examine that question, as well as a few other gems that John gives us this morning.

This text is a summary of what John has been saying about **loving one another**. In this text he lays out **4 principles** that underly the statement that Christians love each other. They come at us fast and simple. And we are going to look at them this morning. Fortunately they are easy to spot. Each verse contains one.

Why is it logically necessary that believers love one another?

- 1- Believers are loved by God when they deserved to be hated by God.
- 2- It is easier to love a brother than to love God, and we must love God
- 3- We are commanded to love believers
- 4- It is natural to love family

We have talked about love for brothers over and over in 1 John. It may seem that we have spoken about it **too much**. But this is only because John will not let this go. It is vital to what he is saying. So we must assume that it is a **vital** point.

Let's look at the first point-

- 1- Believers are loved by God when they deserved to be hated by God.

¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us.

Brad and Diane and Ruth and Mary and Carla and I were around from early on in Mike's ministry. Some of our kids were old enough to remember when we transitioned from Armenian thinking to Reformed theology. We looked very seriously at the depravity of man. I had just started to work on this sermon when our brother Steve visited us and preached from Romans 3. He pretty much nailed the depravity of man.

Armenian thinking believes that man has the innate capacity within himself to decide for God. It thinks that it requires no miracle to be performed. It just requires that the truth is proclaimed. And when the truth is proclaimed, those who are honest in heart will say, "You know what? That is true. I will decide to follow Christ because I have decided that this is true."

But that is not what reformed theology says. Because I do not believe that is what **scripture** says. Scripture paints us in a very unfortunate condition prior to our salvation. It describes us as being **dead**. It describes us as being **blind**. Like Steve said, the lights are out. No matter what we intend, we cannot make ourselves live, we cannot see the truth. And the real truth is we don't even want it. We are jumping off the wrong side of the island. We do not have a proclivity toward God. We don't like Him, at least not the way He really is. Scripture describes us as needing a gift that we do not possess to respond to the call of God. That is total depravity.

Some of us here have had conversations about any appeal we might have to God, even in our fallen state.

It is true that we are created in the image of God. So there is a likeness with Him. We have a capacity for God that the animals around us do not have. But I am not at all convinced that this creates some kind of draw on God, that it makes us appealing to Him. I believe that our appeal is lost because of our state, our status, our desires. Our appeal to God is only generated by something internal to God, not something inherently in us. We love Him because He loved us first. It was **His** love, not our inherent attractiveness that drew us to Him. That is what I believe this is saying.

So how does that turn around? I can tell you how. It is a miracle. God loves us first. ¹⁹ **We love Him because He first loved us.**

Reformed theology says that regeneration precedes faith. What that means is that God changes us before we respond to Him. God moves on us before we decide for Him. He has to initiate any change in us to move toward Him. We do not have that innate capacity to choose for God. It takes a miracle. It takes His movement.

I used to think that I was smarter than those who surrounded me who heard the same message but who would not respond to Christ. I no longer believe that. I have seen my capacity for wickedness. I was no better than any of those who surrounded me. But I was chosen for no reason that I can think of. God chose to make me fear Him. He called me to Himself as a miracle.

So why is it logically necessary that believers love one another?

1- Believers are loved by God when they deserved to be hated by God.

Next

2- It is easier to love a brother than to love God, and we must love God
²⁰ **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?**

Have you ever thought that it is easier to love God than to love people? After all, people screw up all the time. They are sinful. They hurt us. But God is perfect. His motives are always good.

But notice here in this passage. The advantage goes to that which is seen. We tend to think that it is easier to love God who we have not seen. But Jesus spoke about the difficulties for those who have not seen Christ. And no one has seen God the Father.

John 20:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ **Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed."**

Here we see that it is clearly harder to believe what we have not seen. Not seeing is a disadvantage. It makes things harder.

Here is another passage making the same point.

1 Peter 1:6-9 (NKJV)

⁶ **In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,**

⁷ **that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,**

⁸ **whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,**

⁹ **receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of *your* souls.**

And one more:

Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV)

¹ **Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**

Here we see that faith must happen when we do not see. We must take someone's word for it. And that is harder than seeing.

Essentially the argument in our text is that if we do not do the **easier** thing, the more present thing, the thing requiring less belief, why would we assume to do the **harder** thing? The thing that requires greater faith?

Now it is far easier to have sentiments toward a God that we do not see. It is far easier for us to imagine our great devotion toward such a God. But let's remember, that is not what God defines as love for Him. He wants obedience. So now which is harder? Is it harder to completely submit all of our decisions

and everything in our power to a God who we cannot see who **demand**s every bit of it because He **deserve**s every bit of it? Is it harder to love this God that we **cannot see** and we have only **heard about**? Or is it harder to reach out to meet the need of a human being just like ourselves who has a need that we can relate to?

That is the argument. And the assumption is that it is easier to love our brothers than to love God. It is less taxing to meet a need of our brother than to totally surrender our lives to our God. So then, if we will not do the easy thing, we are certainly not doing the harder thing either.

That seems to be the reasoning. So it is logical to conclude that if we will not love each other, those who we can see, those that we can empathize with, then it is clear that we do not love the one that we cannot see and that is thence, harder to love.

Now in our verse we need to look at something else. We will take a little side road here. Look how John calls people liars. We might think that identifying a person as a liar is not a Christian thing to do, but it clearly is. In this case it is a loving clarification. We do not like to see our faults. So sometimes we will respond to a hint. But sometimes we need a verbal slap in the face to get the point.

This is interesting. John uses the word Liar a lot.

John says in 1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we are basically calling God a liar.

1 John 2:4 says that he who says, "I know Him" and does not keep His commandments is a liar.

1 John 2:22 says who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ

1 John 4:20 says that if we say we love God but hate our brother we are liars.

1 John 5:10 says that he who does not believe God has made Him a liar.

This is all strong language. It is designed to shock us. Sometimes that is what it takes to get our attention.

And notice how often something like in our text takes place in real, day to day, life. First a person says something. But the thing they posture is not true.

They may **think** they are telling the truth. They might boldly and confidently **assert** that they are telling the truth. But that does not change the fact that the person is lying.

Do we have that capacity? We certainly do. The fleshly heart will lie all day long. And it takes a continual watchfulness, a constant soberness, to tell the truth.

Look at Adam and Eve. What is the first thing they did when confronted with their sin? They tried to dodge blame.

Adam said “it was that woman that you gave me, God”. Eve said “it was that snake that you put in the garden God”. None of them would say, God please forgive me. It was I who did it. No one needed to teach them how to lie. It came out of them naturally, by reflex.

How many human relationships are distanced because people will not own up to their sin? How much harm is done because we do not want to take the blame for our decisions? It is amazing how quickly this defense kicks in. If I **felt** offended, I must have **been** offended. Because, we reason, I would not normally respond sinfully.

If I am angry, I must have a legitimate reason to feel angry, because, we reason, I would not normally respond in a way that is fleshly.

If I did something wrong, I must not have **known** it was wrong, because, we reason, I would not normally knowingly choose to do something wrong.

Sometimes we think that if we admit blame we are displaying a weakness that someone will exploit. And when you are among enemies that is probably true. But when we are among believers, that should never be true.

If we are **wise**, the first response we should have when accused of a sin or it looks like we did something wrong is to ask, what is the truth? I do not want to be a liar. And we need to realize that my first **fleshly reaction** will be to **avoid** blame. My first fleshly reaction will be to **deflect** blame. My first fleshly reaction will be to defend my precious flesh. This is true. How often have we seen it in ourselves? How often have we seen it in those we love? We cannot trust our feelings when we are accused of a sin or when it appears we did wrong. Flesh will lie. Flesh will dodge blame. Flesh will place the weight of our sin on others. Flesh will tell us that we would never knowingly do such a wrong thing. Flesh will make someone else bear the blame, even when they are innocent. That is what flesh does.

We must look at facts. Our **confession of sin** will only go as deep as our willingness to **accept blame**. We must play the objective detective. Many times we are innocent. Many times we are falsely blamed. But we must play the prosecuting attorney and follow the facts where they go. Truth is a heartless companion. She will sometimes cut us to the core. But walking in the light of truth is always better than defending ourselves. Walking in the truth is what allows the deepest fellowship. Truth is what matters. Truth is what sets us free. Truth is the liberator when we are in Christ.

Lies never really get us off the hook. They just make us unapproachable. If I lie to you about why I did something, you cannot get closure. It will always be something that lives in the background. It will always be a detriment to fellowship. But if I refuse to lie, if I tell the truth even when it makes me look

very bad, it allows you to trust me. You might know not to trust me in some areas because I have told you what I am like. But you will know I am genuine. I am a true person.

But if you cannot admit your guilt, if you cannot tell the truth about why you do what you do, if you are afraid to really look at the truth of why you do what you do or why you did what you did, you will never receive the benefit of confession in this life. You will never be free of what you did in this life. You will only run from it, deny it, avoid it. But you will not experience true forgiveness for what you truly did. Oh, if you are a believer you are forgiven of it in the sense that it will not damn you. But you cannot live with it in a way that it has no power over you.

Your fellowship with others will also be disturbed. You may want to think that people should not assume that anything is true except that which **you say**. But people know themselves enough to know that **we do not always tell the truth** about ourselves. People will figure based both on what you say and what you do. We tend to eventually know when people are telling the truth about themselves. And we tend to know when they are lying. Not always. We cannot trust our seemers in that either. We cannot assume other's motives. But often we know that something is not adding up.

Think about Adam and Eve here. It is obvious to any reader of Genesis that Adam and Eve did not give a satisfying confession. What **humility** would have said, what **truth** would have said is, Lord please forgive me because I wanted something that was forbidden, I knew it was forbidden, but I took it anyway. We all know that is what they did. But they could not bring themselves to take the blame. So they blamed something outside of them.

Wouldn't it be so much better to say, "Yes, I did that. Yes I had a sense that it was wrong, but I wanted what I wanted so I did what I did. I have denied my part in it. But I know that I am just fooling myself. Lord, here I am. I know that I sinned against you. It was not an accident. I intended it. Please forgive me."

That is so much better. The truth truly does set us free. **True** confession that takes **full** blame is a wonderful thing. First it relieves us of guilt. We tend to know when we are hiding our guilt, even when we are hiding it from ourselves. We get very defensive. We put up walls. We hide. We refuse to discuss it. We refuse to examine it deeply. But when we truly confess we no longer feel driven to hide.

Second true confession allows us to know that we are loved for **exactly** who we are, warts and all. It is the sweetest and deepest communion to have fellowship with our God with people who know us and still love us.

We are free to lie to ourselves. Usually no one will be able to prove it. But one day we will face Christ and He knows what was running through our minds. He knows what we really wanted. He knows what we really thought. Why not come clean now?

Scripture calls us over and over again to accept true blame when we have sinned, to tell the truth about our hearts, to examine ourselves in light of the facts about ourselves, to **humble** ourselves. To confess our sins to each other. Why, because that is a huge step in fighting sin in our lives. And it is the path to the deepest fellowship. It is the path to getting what God wants for us. So why is it logically necessary that believers love one another?

1- Believers are loved by God when they deserved to be hated by God.

2- It is easier to love a brother than to love God, and we must love God

And now

3- We are commanded to love believers

²¹ **And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.**

God **commands** us to love one another. Now there are some who present salvation in a way that obedience is optional. But that is not a scriptural teaching. If we will not obey, we prove ourselves to be outside the family of God. We have talked about this often enough that I don't think we need to spend much time proving it.

If you are a believer, it is not an **option** that you can choose whether you want to love a fellow believer or **not** love them. That is not a choice held out to you. That is not **option A** and **option B** that you can choose based on how they might make you feel. No. It is fairly simple. We must. Just like when our moms told us we had to make our beds and take out the trash or whatever thing you were made to do. It is required. There are no options. Love is commanded of you. If you see a need and you determine that it is truly a need it is now your obligation to meet it. You cannot fall back on a committee mentality. You are not free to throw it onto the laps of others when it is something that you can meet. It is our obligation. That is one of the reasons that God put us on the planet.

And how does a believer show that he loves God? He obeys commandments. So if we love God, we will obey the commandment to love other believers.

Look around this morning. What have you done to meet the needs of everyone here this morning? We should all have a history of doing things that cost us something to meet the needs of everyone here. Can you come up with something for everyone here? Have you gone out of your way and paid a personal cost to meet the needs of everyone here? If you have not, today is a

good day to start. Pay attention. Listen. Involve yourself in conversation. Discover needs. And then meet them.

One of the most dangerous attitudes I have ever seen is when we start evaluating others based on how well **they reach out to us**. In my mind, that is taking my thoughts in the wrong direction. That is not my business. That is God's business. My job is to reach out to meet the needs of others. I do not recall a scripture that tells me that I should evaluate others for how well they reach out to meet my needs.

We should love others because we are commanded to love others. God does not request it. He commands it. We need to get that right in our heads.

Now there is one more reason that Christians love other believers.

4- It is natural to love family

¹ Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

At work I am surrounded by people who do not love God. Our work culture tells me that I must not make those people who are choosing lifestyles that are damned by God uncomfortable for their life choices. That may one day get me fired. I believe that Romans 1 is true and if push comes to shove I will not deny that.

But you people are different. You are the ones who have been born of God. You people are my brothers and sisters in Christ. Our God looked at each one of you and said- I want that person as my child. I want to spend eternity with that person. I sent Christ to die for that person. At some point in time I reached out to that person and called them to myself by sending them my Word.

That is what we are. We are exceptions to the rule. We are the chosen and elect. We cannot take any credit for it. But we are family. I think about this sometimes in marriage. I am to love my wife like Christ loves the church. And that seems to be a very tall order. I am not always up to that challenge. But then I think about it. Christ died for my wife, just like He died for me. Oh there is stuff wrong with her. But there is more stuff wrong with me. And if she is good enough for Christ, what in the world do I have to stand on to have her not be good enough for me. If Christ chose to love her and die for her, how can I refuse to love her until she reaches a certain standard.

And that is true in our church as well. I believe most of you have made a profession of faith. And I have seen reason to believe that all of those professions are true. So if Christ has loved you, if Christ has singled you out, if Christ has died for you, if Christ has chosen you to save, who am I to not love His family?

We are, in the truest sense, all in this together. We are eternal family. We will share eternity together. So if I love **your Father**, how can I **not** love you. If I love your husband Christ, how can I **not** love you His bride?

Do you see the reasoning. People love family. That is generally true in a storge kind of love, a family kind of bond. But it is even more true that **believers** love **believers**. We love fellow pilgrims. We love those who are outsiders, just like we are. We love those who are our fellow travelers. We love those who are beloved of God.

To put it more simply, if we love our eternal DAD, we love our Dad's kids. That is really the point of it. We are family in a way more important way than genetics. We are in a spiritual kingdom that lasts forever. And we will be with each other forever and ever.