

July 13/14, 2019 – Part 13 – 1 John: Living as God’s Beloved

Pastor Ashwin Ramani

SERMON SUMMARY

1 John 4:16-21

God is love. Love is at the very core of His being. Most of us believe in God’s love, but we can have a gap between head knowledge and heart knowledge. We can have distorted concepts of God such as God as a wrathful judge, a nitpicking accountant, or an avenger. Yet when we understand God’s love more deeply, we see ourselves as God’s beloved child, and we will know and rely on the love God has for us (1 John 4:16-21).

In Ephesians 3:17b:18, the Apostle Paul prays that the *mature* Christians of Ephesus will grasp how extensive Christ’s love is:

- It’s wide – it covers the breadth of all our experiences.
- It’s long – it lasts all our days on earth and in eternity.
- It’s high – when life is smooth.
- It’s deep – when we hit rock bottom.

John says that if we are grasping such vastness of His love, we will exhibit two things:

We will be Free from Fear (4:17-18). One of the marks of mature love is confidence before God. Christians have nothing to fear on the day of judgment. Jesus has already taken our punishment and we are made complete (4:17). Jesus called God, “Abba, Father”, an endearing term meaning “Daddy.” All of us who love Jesus can now call God, “Abba”.

Perfect love of God casts out all our fears. If we still fear God’s punishment, we have not grasped His love! (4:18). But aren’t we supposed to “fear God”? Yes, but this fear is a reverential awe of God that brings us close to God in admiration and worship. In contrast, the fear John describes in 1 John 4 is destructive. It’s fear of punishment and judgment, a fear that causes us to hide from God.

As a young man, Martin Luther was terror-stricken and guilty, and he became depressed because he could not meet God’s righteous demands. “How perfect do you have to be to go to heaven?” he asked. In reading the Bible, he realized that he was saved by Christ’s grace, teachings the church of his time had distorted. His discovery freed him from fear of judgment. As he started preaching these truths, he faced brutal opposition from both religious and political leaders. He was under severe pressure to recant. But Luther defended this message, becoming the most important person of the Protestant Reformation. Are you afraid of life’s circumstances? Don’t merely ask for courage. Ask God’s love to unleash you from your fears.

We are Free to Love Others. To claim to know God who is love and not love our brothers and sisters would make us liars (4:20). Christians should be known for our love for one another (John 13:15). Which is easier, to love God or to love people? Most people would say that it is easier to love God and harder to love people. Why? God is perfect, and he loves us; in contrast, people are imperfect and sometimes difficult or mean. John says it’s actually harder to love God because people are visible, but God is not. When you love God the most, you will love people the best!

In conclusion, in all other worldviews and religions, love is a mental concept. But in the Christian faith, God’s love is love in action. He came to earth and gave his life as a sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, let us come before God’s throne with confidence (Hebrews 4:16) and pray that God would give us the power to grasp the extent of Christ’s love! Let us claim freedom from fear and love for everyone.

July 13/14 2019 – Part 13 – Discussion Questions

Edi Dygert, Sandi Somers

IN

1. How did you picture God when you were younger? How did the relationship with your own father colour your interaction with God?
2. Describe how God's love helped you overcome something you were afraid of?

UP

3. According to John, what is the test of our love for God?
4. Pastor Ashwin says that the Apostle Paul prays for the mature Christians of Ephesus (3:17b-18). Why do you think that the prayer was for 'mature Christians'?
5. Fear and love are incompatible. How does the story of Martin Luther illustrate how we can also be delivered from fear? How did his freedom from fear of judgement help to mobilize vast changes in the church? *(possibly use for Personal Reflection, instead of here)*

OUT

6. What results of experiencing God's love do you see in your life? How do you hope to gain confidence because of God's love for you?
7. How will you put love for others into action this week?

1 John 4:16-21 - And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

John 13:15 – I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Ephesians 3:14-19 - For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family^[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Hebrews 4:16 - Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.