

# KNOWING AND BELIEVING THE LOVE THAT GOD HAS TO US

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Going to start out this morning a little bit different than normal. Instead of just reading 1 passage of Scripture, we are going to look at 5 different verses—all from the book of John. As we look at each verse, there is a common phrase that shows up in all 5 of them. (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20)

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| --What phrase was common to the verses we looked at?                                   | “whom Jesus loved”              |
| --Who wrote the book of John? (not a trick question)                                   | John                            |
| --From the verses we read, what did <b>Jesus</b> call John (this IS a trick question)? | Don’t know                      |
| --From the verses we read, what did John call <b>himself</b> ?                         | “The disciple whom Jesus loved” |

Why did John call himself that? Did Jesus love only John—or all the disciples? In John 15:9 and 12 we see that Jesus expressed His love to all of them.

Do we know of an instance when Jesus pulled John aside to let him know that he was Jesus’ favorite disciple and that He loved John more than the others? Imagine the jealousy that that would have caused. We don’t have to go too far in the Bible to learn of the problems that **favoritism** can cause. In Genesis 27, we read of trouble that comes when parents have a favorite child. Isaac’s favorite was Esau; while Rebekah’s favorite was Jacob. Rebekah talked her son Jacob into deceiving her husband—his father—by pretending to be his brother. Isaac unknowingly bestowed the blessing of the first-born upon Jacob instead of Esau and when Esau found out, he was so angry he wanted to kill his brother Jacob. What happened? Rebekah sent her son to go live with her brother Laban until Esau “cooled off,” but Jacob was gone for over 20 years and Rebekah died before he came back.

Sadly, Jacob didn’t learn the lesson very well because he, too, had a favorite son—Joseph—and made him a coat of many colors which created jealousy amongst his brothers. History indeed repeated itself. It’s obviously okay to have a favorite child when you only have **one**, but if you have more than one, I don’t believe it is wise to have a “known” favorite.

I remember reading a rather sad article in Reader’s Digest quite some time ago about a mother with 3 sons who was dying of cancer. One by one she privately met with each of her boys and assured each one of them that **they** were her favorite. I don’t remember how long it was before the boys realized they had each been told the same thing, but that is probably one of the rare instances that it did not cause a problem in the family. Instead, it helped each of those boys cope with the loss of their mother.

Although Jesus did not have a favorite **one**; there was the inner circle of 3—John, his brother James, and Peter—that witnessed some events that the other 9 didn’t. So, again I ask, why did John call himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved?” Can’t say for sure because the Bible does not tell us why. I have guess, however, and I believe it is found in another verse John wrote.

Please turn now to I John 4, verse 16. “And we have **known, and believed** the love that God hath to us.” Here is the key, I believe, as to why John called himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” It wasn’t that John **was loved more** than the others; it was that John **latched onto**—he believed and enjoyed and experienced and meditated upon—being loved by God. He took it personal, so to speak.

Believing God's love and experiencing it first-hand was not reserved for just John, however. God wants each of His children to know and believe the love that He has for them as individuals. Do you know and believe the love that God has to **you**? That's what I want us to focus on this morning.

### **1. John knew and believed the love that God had to him**

If we were to take the time to count the word "love" or "loved" in this chapter, we would find it 27 times! If we were to do the same thing with the entire book of 1 John, we would discover that out of the 105 verses, 26 different verses have the word "love" or "loved" in it—some, of course, more than once—1 of every 4. No wonder John is called the "Apostle of Love."

#### A. The reality of the love of God

##### **i. Seen in sonship**

--1 John 3:1 "Behold, what **manner of love** the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be **called the sons of God...**"

##### **ii. Seen in salvation**

--1 John 3:16 "Hereby perceive [understand/know] we the **love of God**, because He **laid down His life for us**; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

--1 John 4:9 "In this was manifest [revealed] the **love of God toward us**, because that God **sent His only begotten Son into the world**, that we might live through Him."

--1 John 4:10 "Herein is love, not that we loved God, **but that He loved us**, and **sent His Son to the be propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins.**"

We are sinful; God is holy—and God's justice demands that sin be punished. It is not a matter of good works outweighing the bad and us **maybe**—and **barely**—"sneaking into" heaven. **One sin** disqualifies us from heaven (James 2:10) and **all** have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). God's standard to get into heaven is **perfection** and none of us is qualified.

God's answer to our predicament of being sinful and having the wrath of God hanging over us was to come to earth in the person of His Son and die in our place. God loves you—and came to earth as Jesus Christ the God-man—to live a sinless life, then die to pay the punishment of our sin so that we could be forgiven. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

#### B. The results of believing the love of God

So, what are the results of believing the love of God?

##### **i. Boldness in the day of judgment**

Verse 17—"Herein is our love made perfect..." Need to pause here for a moment. What does that mean?

--Does it mean our love for God is made—becomes—perfect? Can we do anything perfectly—other than maybe balance a checkbook or bowl a 300 or ace a test?

--Does it mean God's love for us is made perfect—meaning it wasn't before? That's not right either, is it? God's love is perfect from the beginning and cannot be improved upon.

--What John is saying here is this—your comprehension of the love of God—your grasping of it—is perfect—meaning "complete"—when you realize that you can have boldness in the day of judgment! How can that be? How can sinful man have boldness in the day of judgment by the all-seeing eye, all-hearing ear, and all-knowing mind of God who is called Holy, Holy, Holy by the angels that bow before His throne?

Notice the last part of the verse: "...because as He is, so are we in this world." Who is the "He"?

The "He" is Christ. Think about that for a minute....

--It does NOT say, as Jesus **was**, so we **should be**. In other words, boldness doesn't come because you are doing a good job of imitating the life of Jesus when He was here on earth.

--It also does NOT say, as Jesus **is** now, some day we **will be**. In other words, boldness in the day of judgment doesn't come just because you will be like Jesus when you meet Him in heaven.

--What it **does** say is this—as Jesus is **now**, so are we **now**—"in this world!" What is Jesus like right now? --Jesus is perfect, He is sinless, He is righteous—and God considers us the same way! When we stop trying to attain our own righteousness—rightness with God—and accept Jesus as the payment for our sins, God counts us as being IN CHRIST!

And being IN CHRIST means that when God looks on us, He doesn't see us—He sees Christ! And we can have boldness because we are in Christ and God will not condemn His own Son who was already made a curse for us when He died on the cross for us.

What is the result of comprehending, of really latching onto and believing the love that God hath to us? First, we will have boldness in the day of judgement. Second, we will have...

## ii. No fear down here

Verse 18a "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment."

What is fear? The word "fear" in the Bible generally means one of two things:

- A reverential awe or respect—which is a good thing; or
- Alarm, dread, or fright—which is a bad thing

What **kind** of fear is used here? The "alarm, dread, and fright" kind of fear. We know that for a couple of reasons: 1) Because it is incompatible with love. Awe and reverence for God leads to love for God and when we understand and appreciate the love of God, we will grow in our awe and reverence for God. This fear and love do not co-exist—"perfect love **casteth out** fear..."

2) We also know it is a "dread" kind of fear because of the phrase "fear hath torment." The word "torment" here is interesting because it is used in only one other place in the Bible and is translated "punishment" in Mt 25:46 "And these shall go away into everlasting **punishment**..."

What **causes** this kind of fear; this alarm, dread, and fright? *Guilt caused by sin*. Think of the thief or murderer who is still "free." Every siren—or flashing of red and blue lights—get their hearts beating faster and the dread thoughts of "what if they are coming for me?"

Can a child of God have this kind of fear? Yes, we can have a sense of guilt and fear by...

- doing things we shouldn't do
- or saying things we shouldn't say
- or thinking thoughts we shouldn't think
- or watching things we shouldn't watch

But what does John say? He says "perfect love casteth out fear..." Once again, I believe the idea is not that we love God perfectly; rather, it is that our comprehension of God's love to us is such that we do not fear. Paul reminds us that we do not need to remain in the spirit of bondage of fear:

**Romans 8:15** "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

John goes on to say "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." If you are fearful—if you are plagued with guilt because of your sin—it is because you have not fully apprehended—you have not fully comprehended—the love that God has for you. Paul says it like this:

**Romans 8:34** "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." If God isn't condemning you because Jesus died for you, why do you continue to **condemn** yourself?

## **2. How John knew the love of God**

How did John know the love of God? Look at I John 1:1-2. John said we heard...and saw with our eyes...and our hands have handled, of the Word of life—who was with the Father. Pretty obvious that the “Word of life” John is referring to is God’s Son, Jesus. Here are just a few demonstrations of Jesus’ love in action.

### A. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:32-36)

--v 33 “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping....” What did He do? Was He insensitive? Was He indifferent to their loss? He wasn’t, was He? Jesus “groaned;” His heart was touched.

--v 35 “Jesus wept.”

--v 36 “Behold how He loved him!” Jesus’ weeping at the grave of Lazarus demonstrated to all those who were watching that He loved Lazarus. John saw the love of Jesus in action.

### B. Jesus washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:1-5; 13-17)

Why did Jesus wash the disciples’ feet?

--To give them an example of humility and service (vss 14-15)

--To guard against the tendency to think certain tasks were “beneath” their “dignity” (v 16)

--To show them happiness comes in serving others (v 17)

But underlying it all was His love for them as stated in the last part of verse 1: “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

### C. Jesus wanted His mother cared for after He died (John 19:25-27)

--v 25 Jesus’ mother was at the cross

--v 26 “Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved...”

--John does not call himself by name in verses 26-27, but refers to himself 3 different times: “the disciple whom He loved;” “the disciple;” and “that disciple.”

--Jesus loved His mother and was concerned for her care after He died. Why did Jesus pick John? Not told exactly, but it is noteworthy that John lived longer than all the other disciples!

### D. Jesus went after Peter after He arose from the dead (John 21:14-17)

--vs 14 “This is now the third time that Jesus shewed Himself to His disciples”

--The first time He spoke to the group of 10 (Judas had killed himself and Thomas was not there)

--The second time He spoke specifically to doubting Thomas

Think of all that had transpired in the life of Peter over the course of the last couple of weeks.

--Jesus said the disciples would be scattered; Peter boasted that although the others would forsake Him, he would not.

--Jesus said that this very night, before the rooster crows in the morning, you will deny me thrice—and Peter did. Matthew 26:74-75 says “Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew [crowed]. And Peter remembered the words of Jesu, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”

--v 15-17 “Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?”

--It was a reminder of Peter’s arrogance and dependence

--It was a reminder of Peter’s failure

But in spite of that failure, it was a reminder of Christ’s love and forgiveness. ‘I’m not done with you, Peter. I’m not giving up on you. I have a job for you—stop sulking and start serving!’ Peter did that, didn’t he?

John knew and believed God’s love; God wants us to know and believe His love, too! To summarize

- 1) From Jesus’ weeping at the grave of Lazarus, we know Jesus sees and feels our grief and is there with us
- 2) From Jesus’ washing feet we are told that He did that because He loved them unto the end—and will love us unto the end
- 3) From Jesus’ caring for His mother at the cross we know that He cares for our emotional and physical needs

4) From Jesus' seeking out of Peter, we know He loves and forgives and wants to use us regardless of our past failures.

What a forgiving, gracious, loving God we have! Do you know His love—and believe it? He has revealed it to us because He loves us—and wants us to experience that love for ourselves.

***CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:***

1. First and foremost, do you know and believe—have you experienced—the love of God in regards to salvation? ***Knowing*** about God's love is not enough—you need to experience it. And the only way to really experience God's love is to receive forgiveness by accepting His love-gift to you—Jesus Christ—who died in your place.

2. If you are saved, have you latched onto and fully embraced the thought that God loves you? Do you live in fear—or do you rejoice with joy unspeakable? How can we be rejoicing Christians? Basking in, focusing on, meditating on—whatever term you want to use—the fact that we are counted as being IN CHRIST because as He is, so are we in this world.