

The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 4:14-15

Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone read 1Jn 4:7-12

Someone else read vv13-16

Last time, in studying this passage, we learned that true love really is Godlike love. It is the acceptance of another person because he is a person, regardless of whether he is dressed the right way, has the right status in society, has the same color of skin. Love is the acceptance of an individual simply because he is an individual. It is a willingness to have fellowship with him, talk to him, share life together to some limited or more extensive degree, only because you are fellow members of a race, fellow human creatures. It means you do so without requiring that he change before you establish the relationship. That is true love.

Also, as John brought out so beautifully in the section we looked at last time I taught, this is the nature of God's love toward the world. The world of human society is not beautiful; it is an ugly thing. Hidden under the surface are all kinds of rancid and bitter emotions. Behind the facades of even the most gentle and gracious persons, are thoughts, desires, and reactions that are ugly and cancerous. But God loves the world; he accepts it, he has contact with it. As John says, he manifested his love in the sending of his Son, at great cost, bearing shame, abuse and heartache. He came into the world, the very world his hands had made, and died here upon a cross. Thus this is the nature of Christ's love for us. He became a propitiation for our sins, taking them all upon himself. In the mystery of those hours when darkness fell, some strange and remarkable thing happened to the lonely sufferer upon the cross. The sins of the world were laid on him and he became then the propitiation for our sins. His total willingness to do that marked the full extent of his love for us.

Now where God's life is, God's love will be. This is the whole argument of this central part of John's letter. As we saw last, he says in Verse 12, "No man has ever seen God; [but] if we love one another, God abides in us [i.e., it is manifest that God abides in us] and his love is perfected in us." It is these two themes -- God's abiding in us and the perfecting of his love -- which form the subject of John's final discussion of this theme of maintaining love. First, there is the relationship of belief to love, described in Verses 13-16:

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. {1 Jn 4:13-16 RSV}

If you will recall, this chapter began with a warning against wrong belief. "Test the spirits," says John, "don't believe every voice that speaks in the name of Jesus these days, but test the spirits, whether they be of God." There is one supreme test, doctrinally. There must be an acknowledgment that Jesus is the Christ, that he has come in the flesh, and is the predicted One, this Jesus of Nazareth. By this you can tell the difference between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

John's emphasizes *belief*.

Then, in Verse 7, he goes on to talk about love with an exhortation to love one another. Now, in Verses 13-16, he brings these two together, belief and love, and shows us the relationship between them. It is belief that produces love! Now, I must confess I have never thought of it this way, and I don't think I'm alone in thinking this; for most of us think of love as produced by happy circumstances, or by nice people, or by spending time together. I suspect that many of us are quite vague as to where it really originates. But John tells us.

"Faith," he says, "produces love," and he proves his point here. In Verses 13 and 14, he is referring to himself and the rest of the apostles by the word *we*. "By this," he says, "we know that we abide in him." That is, we apostles understand that we are of God and "abide in him" (i.e., have a continuous relationship to God). How?

"because he has given us of his Spirit."

Now, it is not "because he has given us his Spirit." It is true that on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God was poured out upon these apostles and the other believers, all their doubts about Jesus Christ were forever settled. When the Spirit of God came to perform his function of taking the things of Christ and making him real to them, they realized that they knew Jesus better on the Day of Pentecost than they ever knew him when he was here in the flesh. They understood his purposes and his program far clearer than they ever did when he walked, lived, talked among them. The Spirit could make Christ more real than he ever was when they knew him in the flesh, and that convinced them that they were "of God." But what he really says here is, literally, "he has given us out of his Spirit," i.e., he has poured out from his Spirit, by means of his Spirit, something. What is it?

Well, the context helps us to know. It is love.

Someone read Rom 5:5

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us," {Rom 5:5 KJV}. Love, God's love, the kind that accepts people for what they are regardless of what they are like, is a product only of the Spirit of God. He has given us out of his own Spirit, and, John says, that is why we know that we are of God, because the kind of love that only God can produce is in our lives and in our hearts. Now he goes on:

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. {1 Jn 4:14 RSV}

“And” – Why is this word there?

2 Confirmations: 1 is the Spirit in us (subjective); 1 is the objective witness and testimony of John. The two become one in John's writing.

Who are “we”?

4 possibilities:

1. The Apostles
2. John and his readers
3. All of the above
4. John himself, using the royal “we”

The word is emphatic in the Greek.

See 4:6 for a clue. Also, 1:1-4, but probably not in 4:13.

I favor view #1. "We have seen," he says, "we beheld him, we touched him, we felt him, we knew that he was alive from the dead, and we now testify that he was sent as the Savior of the world." This kind of witnessing, of course, followed the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, as Jesus had said it would.

See Acts 1:8

They began to testify after they received the Holy Spirit. John reminds us that they had the evidence of his love by the Spirit, and they began to pour out in power the testimony that the Father had sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

“have seen” (GK *theaomai*)

- 1) to behold, look upon, view attentively, contemplate (often used of public shows) --Thayer

“testify” (GK *martureō*)

1) to be a witness, to bear witness, i.e. to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because taught by divine revelation or inspiration

1a) to give (not to keep back) testimony

1b) to utter honourable testimony, give a good report

Comes from a legal term,

See GJohn 4:42 for the only other occurrence of the phrase in the entire Bible (and who says it?)

John says that "the Father sent the Son." What does this imply?

There are some people (including John MacArthur, for over 20 years) who are confused about this, and think that Jesus became the Son of God when he was born as a babe in Bethlehem's manger. But he was the Son before he came. The Father sent the Son. Christ Jesus was the eternal Son of God, and always the Son. This relationship of Father and Son is an eternal relationship (the theological term is "eternal Sonship"). It was as the Son that he came to become the Savior of the world.

Notice that all 3 members of the Trinity are present in these verses. (13-14). The term "Savior" is applied to the Father in 8 verses, and to the Son in 16. It is not directly applied to the HS, but see Gal 4:4-6 and Rom 8:9-11. As the commentator Hiebert writes: "This is why John mentions all 3 members of the Trinity in connection with his portrayal of redeeming love."

Again, notice that it does not say that he came to save the world. He does not save the world. He came as the Savior of the world, i.e., all the world could be saved if they would be. But as the Scriptures make abundantly clear, it is only those who believe that are saved. Jesus said taught this truth clearly in numerous places in Scripture:

GJohn 5:40, 8:21

So, though he came to be the Savior of the world, in the sense of providing a redemption adequate for everyone, everywhere, it is only to those who lay hold of it by faith in his word, and make it personal in their lives, that it becomes experiential and evidential.