



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Second Test of One's Claims (1 John 2:7-11)

FEBRUARY 26, 2013

Paul Meinsen / PO Box 891, Jefferson City, MO 65102 / paul.meinsen@capitolcom.org

Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, February 26, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, February 26, 8:30 PM in Office #301**
(Speaker Pro-Tem's office)

Just a few memories from some of the great philosophers of our past to set the mood as we discuss today this thing called "love".

"Love is a many splendored thing."

"Ever since time, nothin's ever been found that's stronger than love."

"Wise men say 'only fools rush in,' but I can't help falling in love with you."

"What's love but a second hand emotion?"

"You love her; but she loves him. He loves somebody else; you just can't win. And so it goes until the day you die; this thing called love is gonna make you cry. I've had the blues the reds and the pinks. One thing's for sure is— LOVE STINKS."

Well, that may not be the exact mood we are looking for, but it is still of some benefit for today's study.

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle John has used several phrases thus far in his letter of 1 John which, in essence, have the meaning of "being in a right standing before God":

- "have fellowship with Him" (1:6)
- "walk in the light" (1:7)
- "come to know Him"(2:3,4)
- "we are in Him" (2:5)
- "abides in Him" (2:6)

Each describes, from a slightly different angle, a person's relationship with God. As John applied the second of the tests of one's claims, he used the phrase "he is in the light" (2:9). The one who passes the second test is truly in the light, but he who fails is "in darkness and walks in darkness" and "the darkness has blinded his eyes" (2:11). James Boice calls the second test "The Social Test".¹

The first test (covered in the last study) was a test of righteousness, of morals. A person cannot claim to "know Him" if they continue to live in a pattern of sin (2:3-6). If one truly knows God, he or she will live a life of obedience; carefully guarding and keeping God's principles and precepts as something very precious. The perfect pattern to follow is God's own Son, Jesus Christ (2:6).

But when God's people fall to sin, for no one can be perfect as Jesus was perfect, there is a great promise of God to forgive when they confess (1:9), a powerful advocate and a fulfilling atonement paid for by God's own Son, Jesus Christ (2:1-2).

The second test deals more directly with how one who claims to be in right standing before God relates with one's fellow man.

1 John 2:7-11 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. 8On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. 9The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

John says it is not something new but rather something that has been commanded for a long time. At the same time, though, it is new in a sense. John said that the one who claims to "be in the light" will live a life patterned by love.

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4TH FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

Missouri

The Second Test of One's Claims (1 John 2:7-11)

WHAT IS LOVE?

As the sample of songs in the prologue indicate (and many more could be added), a definition of the term “love” is necessary. What passes off as “love” today could be anything: an emotion, a preference, a passion or even a lust. We love cars, pizza, movies, people, activities, hobbies and some love their jobs.

But what was John talking about? He was not talking about the superficial, emotion-based, feeling that passes off as “love” today. The Greek word here is *agape*. Agape love is a distinct love which is seen in the giver's deliberate choice to care for the welfare of the recipient; regardless of the recipient's worthiness or willingness to receive it.

Agape love can be understood as an attitude. It is the attitude of God the Father toward the Son (John 17:26). It is also God's attitude toward mankind (John 3:16) and the believer's attitude toward Him and other humans (John 13:34; 2 Peter 1:7). *Agape* is also used to describe the attribute of love in God (1 John 4:8).

Agape love is not motivated by feelings, although feelings can be involved. It is evidenced by the giver's action of care to the receiver. “It does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those from whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all.”²

JESUS SAID “GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS, THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS” (JOHN 15:13). IN LESS THAN 24 HOURS, JESUS WAS DOING THIS VERY THING.

John was writing about the type of love that is motivated by a person's will and is seen in his or her action. *Agape* is the love that the Apostle Paul prayed for in his letter of Philippians. He prayed that the believers will grow in their conscious decisions to care for and to look out for the interests of God and of others (Philippians 1:9-11).

As one examines the whole of Scripture, this *agape* love can be seen as the totality of God's commands. “The summation of the moral law of God is to be found in the command to love; and this love is exemplified supremely in

the life and ministry of Jesus, whom believers are called to imitate (v.6).³ This is Paul's point in his letter to the church in Rome:

Romans 13:9-10 For this, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,’ summed up in this saying, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

If one loves, he or she will not break the law and bring harm to one's neighbor. Be sure to note: this passage in Romans does not give us permission to define love as we see fit. God reveals what true love is to us; we do not lay out its terms. It is true that “love is all you need”, but it is an *agape* love; a love defined by God and modeled by Jesus Christ.

THE OLD COMMANDMENT OF LOVE

While John's reference to love is only stated once in this passage (2:10), the context informs the reader that this is the command being discussed. John said this command to love is nothing new. It has been taught and declared from the beginning. The importance of love in one's life was established by God in the Old Testament 1500 years before John's letter. The Jewish *Shema* prayer, recited every morning and every evening by devout Jews in Jesus' day, states *Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

Also found in the Mosaic Law is the command “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). These were later quoted by Jesus as the two greatest commandments (Mark 12:28-31).

THE NEW COMMANDMENT OF LOVE

And while this command is not anything new and unheard of, John informed his readers that it is new. It is new in its essence and quality, not new as in a chronological sense. This newness is not so much explained by John, but rather, it is illustrated. He wrote that this “new commandment” is “true in Him and in you” (2:8). “In Him” is none other than Jesus Christ.

Missouri

The Second Test of One's Claims (1 John 2:7-11)

As was noted earlier, Jesus came and perfectly lived out a life of this type of love. Just like John lifted up Christ as a pattern for righteousness that His followers are to model (2:6), John also shows the true (or “genuine”) example of this love from the life of Jesus. The love of Christ can be seen in his interactions with people: his touch of the leper, his words to women in public, his tears after the death of Lazarus, his compassion for the sheep without a shepherd. It is seen in His humility which ultimately lead to the sacrifice of His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45; cf. Philippians 2:5-8).

During the last supper, Jesus said “Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). In less than 24 hours, Jesus was doing this very thing.

Ephesians 5:2 ...and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

And this love is also true (or “genuine”) in those who walk in the light. Not to the perfection modeled by Christ, for that is unattainable to people in this life; but it is a love which resembles the perfect pattern.

The Apostle Paul echoed these thoughts in his letter called First Corinthians. He wrote in chapter 13 that even if he could speak in mighty ways or have great knowledge or even give up his life for his faith, it would all be useless—if he did not love (13:1-3). He further described this love:

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails...

Paul also concluded the chapter by stating that love is the greatest of all things (13:13).⁴

THE TEST OF LOVE

The *agape* love which has been defined and modeled by Jesus is the second test of a person's claims. Words, as we have seen in John, can be cheap; they

can also be false. And while there is a time and place to confess the name of Christ (Romans 10:9) and to make a defense for one's faith (1 Peter 3:15), John wants to see that a person's actions, speech and attitudes prove a claim.

John's “social test” is living a life of love. The person who claims to live in the light will be one who lives this life of love for his or her brother. In other words, a person cannot claim to live in the light, if he or she cannot even love those people who are also in the light.⁵

A person who loves his brother is also one who does not cause his brother to stumble (2:10). This person cares enough that he will set aside his own freedom for the sake of another (1 Corinthians 8:7-13; 10:23-30). Paul also taught the same thing as John by writing, “But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow becomes a stumbling block to the weak...” (1 Corinthians 8:9). The one who loves their brother will seek the brother's good, not their own (1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:3-4). Thus, there is no cause of stumbling for the one who truly is in the light.

John simply stated that the person who makes this claim, but does not love, is still in darkness. And in this darkness, this person cannot see where he is going for he is blinded by the darkness (2:11). This loveless person gropes around in the dark trying to find where he is located and one thing is sure, he is not located in the kingdom of light.

CONCLUSION

The test of *agape* love that John set before his readers (including us who read today) is a teaching that he heard from Jesus.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

This sounds just like John's old commandment/new commandment wording. Jesus also pointed out, just like John, that His love is the pattern for the love they are to show to one another. Then Jesus continued:

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

Missouri

The Second Test of One's Claims (1 John 2:7-11)

This phrase by Jesus is what John is saying in this letter. If one walks in the light, he or she will have an *agape* love for others. In fact, this is what defines the disciple of Jesus. It is not “keeping the rules” and making sure everyone else does that defines a disciple. It is not solely having the right doctrine and knowledge (even though this is important for it is the third test—1 John 2:21-24). *Agape* love is what sets true believers apart from the world and apart from those who make a claim, but in reality, still live in darkness.

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1979), 51.

² W.E. Vines, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), 693.

³ Daniel Akin, *1,2,3 John* The New American Commentary Vol. 38 (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing Group, 2001), 96.

⁴ In most weddings that I perform, we will walk through this passage of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. In doing so, I make the comment that it is easy to place of the name of Jesus in the place of love: “Jesus is patient. Jesus is kind and is not jealous. Jesus does not brag...” I then challenge the bride and groom to make it a goal in their lives to be able to insert their names in the place of

God desires that people come out the darkness and be a part of His kingdom of light. Through Christ, God can truly forgive all your sins--are you interested?

“love” in this passage. “Carissa is patient. Carissa is kind...” and “Scott is patient. Scott is kind...” This should be the goal of every believer, not just husbands and wives. This is the essence of what Paul is describing and what John is stating as he “tests” the claims of those who say they are in the light.

⁵ The Greek word translated “brother” can also be in reference to one’s “neighbor”. In the context here, it seems best to understand that John is talking about fellow believers. In the broader sense, though, “brother” is in reference to “neighbor.” And who is my neighbor? An expert in the law asked Jesus that question, and Jesus answered with the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), basically teaching that anyone in need is one’s neighbor.