

Reading: 1 John 4:13-5:1

Theme: Living in God's Love.

This evening we will look at another evidence John presents to his first readers and all readers since. He does so to comfort, encourage and assure them of their salvation, as well as of a whole host of accompanying blessings and benefits we have. We are in the 4th evidence of "Confidence in God's Love" as found in v16-19. We are noting 5 things from these verses:

- A. Experience of God's Love (v16a)
- B. Living in God's Love (v16b)
- C. Confidence in God's Love (v17)
- D. Fearless in God's Love (v18)
- E. Response to God's Love (v19)

Last week we considered **A. Experience of God's Love** - we know and rely, believe in the love God has for us. There is to be a personal recognition, knowledge and experience of the love of God. It is not just an academic thing but involves knowledge and personal experience of such love. That experience is to grow, develop, mature and so be known and delighted in to a varying intensity at various times in our life experience. We are to do all we can to further the knowledge and experience of such love. Yet, John goes on from that wonderful statement and tells us something even more amazing:

B. Living in God's Love.

As I looked at this, I initially thought that I had said enough on living, dwelling, abiding in God and I could mention it again in passing. Yet looking again at it, I realised John does not say living, dwelling, abiding in God but in love and therefore living in God and God in us. There is a further element put into John's

teaching of here. His argument seems the same, another cycle, but this time he has added something extra! When I say extra, I do not mean new, because he has already often touched upon love, love of God, the love of Christ we are to have for one another. He has presented the facts of the demonstration of the love of God - God sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world, to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

We have been challenged as to whether we know the love of God for us personally in trusting the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and not only trusted Him, but confessed Him, acknowledged Him as such. I don't mean we have to stand up in church and say so but we could do that! Perhaps we can let our friends know that we have trusted Him as our Saviour. If we have experienced the love of God - knowledge and faith, it is to grow and develop.

Do we recognise as John has reasoned, argued and will continue to do so, that the love of God **KNOWN must** result in the love of God **SHOWN!** We read in the NT of a teacher of the law, a learned man and he asked Jesus the question *“Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”* In reply Jesus said Mark 12:29-30 *“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’”* Then He added straightaway *“The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”* We must never introduce a division between them for it is a false division. God has joined them together and we must not separate them, especially to justify our actions or words or attitudes to another person.

John is moving us on in our thinking and expectations. Yes, it is great to have an experience of the love of God that is real and true! We can be assured it is by living the life of love - God's love showing in our relationship with other people. John faces us all with a thorough examination – yes, we may be able to identify with the things I mentioned last week about going on and growing in our knowledge and experience of God's love, but do we see we are living in God's love. If God is love, which He is, do we live in God's love? We are looking at living in God's love and I've 2 subheadings to open this up - they are both the same although the emphasis is different:

- a. Living in GOD'S LOVE.
- b. LIVING IN God's love.

a. Living in GOD'S LOVE: Christians are those who know by personal experience the love of God. As such this is to be the arena our lives are lived in. At one time Siân and I lived in South Wales, lived in Swindon, then back to Wales, then Pontefract, then Barton and now in Doncaster – its area, culture, town and life. Before any of us were Christians we lived under the control of the devil, under his rule and jurisdiction, living according to the ways of the world and indifferent to God. Now we are Christians and we are to live in accordance with God, His character and ways. Here John focuses on God's essential nature as love and we have to live in the love of God.

The love of God is to be the controlling, dominating principle in our life. We have already seen of this back in 3:11-15 where Cain was seen as typifying the world under the control of the devil, with no true love even to a near relation. It does not mean every non-Christian is a murderer but that the world's attitude

is that of self-centredness and wanting one's own way. The NT presents a very bleak picture of mankind. While we know there are kind and loving people but often they are the exceptions and show us God's common grace is still present in this world. Many show Paul's description of those outside of Christ to be true in Titus 3:3 *"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another."*

As Christians, we are a new creation, a change happened from the inside out by a work of God's Spirit and is to affect our motives, attitudes, words, desires and actions. There is, in our conversion, becoming a Christian, a radical change as God's love is experienced by us and it not only transforms us, make us right with God and new creatures, but is an enabling love that will enable us to show such love in and through our lives and we are able to love other people with the love of God. We will find the greatest, most important commandment true and we will love God and yet at same the time we find the 2nd commandment active and developing too. I know we will have various problems, hang-ups, difficulties from within and outside of us, that love for others will be present and developing - regretting our lack of love for our brothers and sisters, for other people and not simply excusing it.

We are to be as God, as Christ here on earth. In fact, John says in v17 *"because in this world we are like Him"* or AV *"as He is, so also are we in this world"*. This links to our confidence through God's love, but it is also saying that as God is, in and of Himself, so are we in the world; for as He is love, so are we to live in that love and be like Him. Here on earth, with all our

ups and downs we are to be like Him - conformed to the image of His Son and to be like the Lord Jesus who revealed the Father. We are to be living, walking, talking, interactive clear representatives of God and His love. It is not optional, for it is what we should be and long to be.

Surely, we cannot be like God in His love? Can we!? One part of the fruit of the Spirit is love - as He is love, so we are to be in this world. The love of God is shown at different levels - He is good to the just and the unjust, the righteous and the righteous. This is termed His benevolence to the world at large. Do we have that? So often we can react to people in various ways depending on their attitude, actions and dealings with us; or our perception of them. God does not do that - His love makes Him deal with us not on our worth or deserving, but because He loves. We should so love people as to deal with them in the same way - whether they are well-spoken, well dressed, educated and friendly; or crude, uncultured and abusive - that same love should be in place and yet we find that is difficult for us to do.

We need to seek the good, the well-being even of those who could be reactionary against us or cause us to naturally react against them! God's love is self-generated and independent of our worth or deserving. As Christians we are to try to show that same love. It involves letting go of self - self rights, self-reputation, self needs, self-wants, selfish desires; self-pity, self-attention and self-seeking and will concentrate on the other person and their needs, especially their need as a person with an eternal soul, who if they're not a Christian we will recognise they are blinded, fooled by the devil and sin.

God's love in us should alter our view of people and we show His love and are ready to forgive and forget in an active way, not remembering or recalling their offences against us and certainly not hanging onto hurts and grudges as that is not God's forgiveness or love (Psalm 103:12 *"as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."*) Our great God actively and deliberately chooses not to remember our sins anymore and we need to be aiming to do that.

We need to be active in our dealings with people for God's love is active in doing good. God did something - His love resulted in a positive action for the good of the ones He loved. We are not to leave love as a mere absence of hostility; love for brothers and sisters in Christ has to be active and positive. The mind that was in Christ Jesus is to be in us (Philippians 2) and it leads to humility in doing good - *"because as He is, so are we in this world."* (AV v17). We are to be as the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:43-48 where He instructs His people to love their enemies and to do them good.

b. LIVING IN God's love: we are to live, dwell, abide in love - God's love. The word 'live, dwell, abide' is a very dramatic use of the word - it is present tense, active and so we are to keep living in God's love, but it is also a participle – a verbal noun and has the force of both and so is not some abstract "live" but "ones who are continually living" in God's love.

This is not a thing we are to do when we feel like it, a part-time thing, but it is to be our habitual way of life 24/7. It needs the word "always" to be added in our application of it - always live in the love of God. The only time we can say we do not need to habitually and always live in love is when God ceases to love!

God's love does not vary with our faults, our ups and downs, or ungrateful responses. If He did we'd be in a right old mess!

This is to be worked out in our lives and it is not an impossible dream or standard. We are to realise it is hard and difficult but it is to be worked at. We need to be constantly aware of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus and the love we ourselves have known and received. This should amaze and thrill us, even keep us in wonder that God should love us as an individual in such a way - all we ever deserved was hell and His eternal wrath. We are to think on and focus on Christ and the love of God revealed in, by and through Him - in His birth, life and especially His agonising death, in His resurrection, His glory now, all He is doing for us and will do for us, as well as all He has done.

By consciously thinking on Him and His love for us, we are to deliberately put another person and their offences, quirks, annoyances in the context of the cross and we will see that if God treats us as we would treat these ones, then we would have had no hope. We need to let Calvary's wonder, glory, awesomeness shine on the situation and person we are facing as it puts them into context, the context of the undeserved love of God to you and me.

The love of God is in us already and we are to consciously and actively live in it and relate every area of our lives, especially our interaction with others, to this amazing love displayed, demonstrated at the cross where our own infinite offences were dealt with. In doing this we will see peoples' offences to us as so little and be enabled to not only forgive them, but to desire

their active good and do good to them if it is in our power to do so.

We have to recognise this is not easy and it will involve self-discipline - of emotions, heart, mind and will. If we find any wrong thought or desire or reaction, we are to deal with it - confession to God, seeking His help to positively live it out. This is a 24/7 work, but we are not on our own, for we have the help and enabling of the Holy Spirit, the instructions, teaching and encouragements of the word of God.

Ultimately if we can disregard the love of God for us in Christ, we need to consider appearing before the judgement throne of God to give account why we ignored what such love demanded and yet we are to live in the love of God as that will give us confidence for that day but that is another message...

I pray that God would help us not only to experience more fully but also to more fully live in the love of God so that it may be known and shown actively and positively in our lives.