

Faith, Hope & Love—Part43

1 John 4:19

We love, because He first loved us.

This has been an interesting week coming off our Rock of Remembrance, which was not only amazing but seems to have shook some things loose. The reality of God's faithfulness and the ways He has shown Himself strong for us should always shake us up and cause us to give ourselves to Him more and more and more. This week I have been observing how everyone has been processing all we have learned about God's divine *agape* love. Sadly, the one thing I keep seeing over and over is not His love but your fear. Even though fear is the antonym of faith, I am actually glad I am seeing it. This means that you are being pressed on by the Spirit and you are no longer able to hide it and keep it only to yourself. That is a good thing and we have to be careful to not over react when we see in others the depth, power, and potency of their fear. It has to rise to the surface if it is ever to be scraped away.

The place I have seen fear GLARING out of you always surrounds your "root" pain, which is responsible for your inherent distrust of people and of God (after all, God caused your pain and He used people to do it). Obviously, you have yet to reconcile your pain to the love of God and have yet to make peace with Him for all your hurts and uncertainties. I know you desire relationship, you desire intimacy, you crave it even; but as soon as anyone touches on one of those areas of unreconciled pain you shut down, self-protect, push them away, and hunker down

ready for a fight. For the most part this response is not even conscience, it just happens. It is the push you pull me that occurs in the internal battle between the *flesh* and the Spirit. However, if you are ever going to learn how, in faith, to move past your pain and no longer let it be an excuse for running down the pathway of fear, you are going to have to confront your distrust of people, your distrust of God, and the pain that has bound you to fear.

To actively address this issue, you **MUST** truly let people in to those places of pain. It is the only way to know true intimacy and experience a mutual exchange of His love. This is also the way He designed the body to function. This means you must be willing to extend to those whom God has given to guide you down this journey of faith the right to press on those places of pain; and you must give them a voice of authority in and over your life. This means you are willing to hear what they say, consider what they say, and then make decisions accordingly.

When I was working through some intense things with my girls and they were extremely mad at me. I had to believe them—in the moment—when they said they loved me and were fighting for the relationship. Honestly, it felt like they just wanted to be mad at me and take things out on me. I had to choose—in the moment—to believe that it was ok for them to be mad, to express their anger and disappointment in me, and that their willingness to do so was proving their desire for me and for relationship. I could have sat there and listened and just dismissed or marginalized what they said because I disagreed or was angry at the way they felt the right to be angry at me (the nerve, right?). But I had to set it all aside and choose relationship and give their words authority in and over my life. As a result, our relationship has grown deeper, more intimate, and best of all it feels safe.

Please understand, true intimacy is not fostered merely by informing people what you are going through, sharing, giving them a detail break down of the drama of the week, or by having conversation after conversation addressing with the same issues over and over again. Rather, intimacy is fueled by trusting that those God has given to you see you and know you better than you know yourself; therefore, you are safe to trust what they have to say, you are safe to trust them, and make decisions accordingly so they have a place of true actual authority in and over your life. You will find that your relationships will grow deeper, more intimate, and you will know you are safe.

I shouldn't have to remind any of you of the deceitfulness of your heart spoken about in ***Jeremiah 17:9***, but since it is hell-bent on always deceiving, I will remind you over and over again. Left to yourself you would find a way to always hide behind your walls of self-protection and add enough God talk to distract, confuse, and ultimately deceive those who want in behind the wall. You may struggle trusting others and their intentions for you, but the one voice you should trust the least is the voice that comes from your own heart.

I honestly believe that there is absolutely no way you will be able to love your brothers and sisters in Christ, AS YOU HAVE BEEN LOVED, if you are afraid of them, are afraid of being exposed, are afraid of laying down your life for them, and are afraid of dealing with the pain which keeps you separated from them. These are killers to intimacy, relationship, and a deep experience of His *agape* love. It is time to lay down your life for your brothers and sisters in Christ. It is time to let go of your fear; it only hurts and separates you. I know that fear is not what you want, but for some sick reason it is still what you choose. Yet, those who have walked this

path before you have addressed their pain and reconciled it to God's love. They can help you deal with your own pain and escape the fortress of fear. But you have to trust them, give them a voice of practical authority in your life, and make your decisions accordingly regardless of what you think and feel. Furthermore, those who are still on the path of dealing with their own pain can encourage you and walk with you. This is a journey you can take together; you don't have to be alone. You can commit to each other to never excuse this behavior and to challenge each other to continually press forward toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus—which is to be like Him. This is to be our priority, this is to be our goal, and it is the only way we will obey Jesus' commandment to love as we have been loved.

Overcoming your fear and reconciling your pain to the love of God is not something you can do yourself. You will fail. Overcoming fear is about learning to live in unity and experience Christ in and through one another. When you are in a situation and you can see and feel your self-protection, your fear, or your distrust of others, stop and tell them your struggle. Let them speak into your life. And when they tell you they love you, they are for you, they want to see you be the man or woman God desires of you, believe it. Bet your life on it. And let them in. Make the choice to not push them away but to trust their words. Even if they are furious with how you have behaved. All of this may seem like Alice's rabbit hole, but anger, confrontation, and correction are not by definition opposites of love. In fact, true love involves all of the above. Remember, the standard is that you learn to love as you have been loved. Overcoming fear and dealing with your pain is very practical and you will need the very practical help of others to succeed.

And when it comes to your pain, if you are not running away in fear, you will

finally be able to confront your pain and deal with it for real. And this is where the Holy Spirit does His most miraculous work. He really helps us make sense of our pain and connect everything that has happened to His amazing love. But you have to first choose to eliminate your escape routes down the various pathways of fear. If you do, you will face the truth of His eternal love for you.

In our study of the building block of love, we have spent most of our time in **1 John** and in the gospel of **John**. Tonight we are going to address one final passage in **1 John** that reiterates that we have learned: love is the proof that we live; have eternal life; know God; and have laid down our lives for one another.

1 John 3:13-24

Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. **We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.** But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need {has} and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. This is His

commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

This passage starts with a command: Don't be surprised. We should always expect the world to hate us; don't ever be caught off guard. The kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God do not mix nor do they overlap. They are completely separate. This is one of those basic truths that our heart and mind fight constantly. For some strange reason, we are always trying to blend the kingdom of God into the kingdom of this world expecting they can co-exist. Perhaps it is because we do not like the pain of being hated. But this is a beautiful kind of pain; it reminds us that we truly belong to God. Therefore, it is not something to avoid but to embrace with joy.

If you are hated by the world because of your "love" for God, you can be confident you know God. The word "hates" is in the *indicative*. This means that if you live for the kingdom of God and not for this world, they will hate you and that is a statement of fact. The world hates God; there is no tolerance for Him. There may be tolerance for religion, but there is no tolerance for God. After all, **1 John 5:19** makes it clear that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one; and the evil one is no friend of God. This is why Jesus said: **Luke 6:26**, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way." If you are embraced by the world, then you know that you are living like those false prophets. You may say "Jesus," "Jesus," or "Lord," "Lord" but you have made

your abode in this world and you live as one who does not truly know God.

This is one of those issues where it is tantamount that we agree with God. We have been pulled out of this world and we are not to make our abode in this world, for we are aliens and strangers. Therefore, we should expect quite a reaction from the world, especially from those who have made their abode in this world but have decorated their house with “God” and with “Jesus.” Their homes may look safe and like a place we can dwell, but they are not. Their homes are bound to this world and our lives **MUST** be bound to the kingdom of God which exists separate and distinct from the system of this world.

Now as we get into the meat of this passage, the tenses are very important. With the exception of the beginning where the *perfect* tense is quite appropriately used, most of this passage is rendered in the *present*. So the strong statements it makes are absolutes in terms of your now, but not necessarily in terms of your tomorrow. It speaks to your ability in your now to know God, to love God, to obey God, and to be in true relationship with your brothers and sisters in Christ. In other words, the tense reveals the true real-time battle between the *flesh* and the Spirit which exists every moment of our now and drives every decision we make. Once again, I want you to keep in mind that there is *flesh* and Spirit, just like there is light and darkness, life and death, and love and hate. There is no in between. In your now, what you do and say either comes from your *flesh* and leads to death and hate, or it comes from your Spirit and leads to life and love.

The Spirit says in **3:14** that “We know we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.” Once again, love is the proof. Since “We know” is in the *perfect active indicative*, if we now love

the brethren as we have been loved, we can be 100% absolutely confident beyond all question or accusation that we have perfectly passed out of death into life. In terms of those who abide in death, **Romans 8:5-8** says, “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” And they can’t please God because He won’t let them, it is rendered in the *present passive indicative*. There is only one way to please God, and that is when we live by faith (**Hebrews 11:6**).

Accordingly, the Spirit says that “He who does not now love and continue to love (*present active participle*) now abides in death, and that is a statement of fact (*present active indicative*).” And since **1 John 4:18** says that the one who **fears** is not perfected in love, you can assess what is true about your life by examining the control fear has over you. When you let the fear of pain direct your life instead of your confidence in the Lord your God Almighty, you cannot please God because He won’t let you, for you still abide in death. The way out of this predicament is to come to **know** and **believe** the love which God has for you. You must agree with God that every moment of your now you have been loved, are loved, and will always be loved regardless of what you think or feel about your circumstances. This is so hard and goes against everything in our body that wants to protect ourselves from pain. The alternative however is the pathway of fear, where we live like walking religious zombies who hate and have no idea how to love.

Yet, **3:15** is clear. Everyone who now and continually hates his brother (*present active participle*) is now a murderer and that is a statement of fact (*present active indicative*); and you know as a statement of fact, that no murderer now has eternal life (*present active indicative*) now abiding and continually abiding in him (*present active participle*). This is another way of saying that if you do not love as you have been loved, you now abide in death. Death is the absence of His life in yours. If you don't love you hate; and if you hate and abide in death, then eternal life is not now abiding in you. In other words, you have quenched the Spirit and you have allowed the *flesh* to rule you. The opposite of the *Design Point* is realized in your life. You might as well profess: I refuse to be crucified Christ, and it is no longer Christ who lives, but I live in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by fear from the Son of God who caused me pain and watched me suffer.

To hate does not require venomous animosity. Biblically, it just means to not love as you have been loved. We have studied this. There is no middle ground. And to hate is to murder; which places you smack dab in the middle of the kingdom of this world where you inevitably resemble the king of this world. Listen to what Jesus said about Satan to the religious leaders of His day—to all those who thought they knew and loved God.

John 8:43-45

Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil (*present active indicative*), and you want to {or literally will} do the desires of your father (*present active indicative*). He was a **murderer** from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because

there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

This is sobering. The father of your *flesh* is the devil. When you abide in death you do what your father the devil wants you to do and that is an unqualified statement of fact. And this makes you a murderer, just like your father. And according to **Matthew 5:21-22**, to be a murderer makes you guilty before the court, which is a reference to the Assembly of the Lord of Hosts where He judges the deeds of men and sends His angels forth, both good and bad, to accomplish His purposes in the lives of His children of both correction and blessing. In fact, Jesus says that whoever is continually angry, exasperated, or enraged with his brother shall be guilty before the court, implying that they will be judged and surrendered over to the requests of the evil one. This is serious; far more serious than anyone of us seems to understand. The Lord expressed all of this to us in order that we might choose faith over fear, in order that we might choose life over death, in order that we might choose love over hate and avoid being ransacked by the enemy.

1 John 3:16 explains to us how we are to live. We know **love** by this, that He laid down His life for us. Laying down one's life is the proof of His love. And since "laid" is in the *aorist active indicative*, it is how the Lord has always lived toward us, and that is a statement of fact. He has always lived sacrificially; He has always given up His life for ours. The Lord's suffering (**Luke 24:24**), His refusal to take matters into His own hands (**Matthew 26:53**) and even His crucifixion (**1 Peter 1:20**) was part of the pre-ordained plan of God established long before the creation of this world. In every way imaginable, Jesus, the Son of God, laid down His life for His friends. And

in so doing proved to us that we can fully trust ourselves to His love.

Likewise, we ought to, in our now, lay down our lives for one another. Being in the *aorist active infinitive*, this is to define how we live. It is not to define great heroic moments of time. But if someone were to make a timeline of our life, from beginning to end, this should absolutely without question define our life. Hence, there is no excuse for living in fear. There is not excuse to hold to your self-protection. There is no excuse to harbor your shame. There is no excuse to indulge in all your dysfunctional coping mechanisms. There is no excuse to continue to worship your “if/then” god. There is no excuse to reject God’s righteousness and continue to choose to live according to the “good child/bad child dynamic.” **There is no excuse!** We have always been loved and everything that has ever happened to us has been an expression of His love for us. It has all been so we can be in a relationship with the Father. Jesus has always lived with this sort of sacrificial attitude towards us. That is why the Spirit said:

Philippians 2:6-8

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

In like fashion we must choose to lay it all down for one another and not consider our lives as something to which we must cling. **1 John 2:5-6** says, “By this we know

that we are in Him (Jesus): the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” This sacrificial attitude is how He always lived and so it is to be how we must always live with regard to our brothers and sisters. This will prove that we have been perfected in His love. Again, love is the proof.

Right now, as I think of the condition of our body, and the fear to which so many have surrendered, it is all because you refuse to agree with God that your pain was necessary and therefore was love. Your parents did not let you play in the middle of a busy street because they were cruelly withholding fun from your life and wanted to see you sad and suffer. That is silly and nonsensical. They said “no” because they loved you and wanted you to live. They didn’t correct you when you threw a fit because it gave them joy. It was necessary for you to learn how to live with others. It is the very same thing with God. But you have been clouded; blinded by the darkness and selfishness of your soul that has nonsensically convinced you all He wanted to do was hurt and withhold from you. Don’t be a fool and continue to walk in such silliness. Stop running away from every semblance of pain. Even the fire and the knife is for your benefit and care. The pathway of surrender will lead you to love; the pathway of self-protection however will keep you locked in death.

Next this passage turns very practical. **1 John 3:17-18**, “But whoever might have the world's goods, and sees that his brother now has a need (and continually has this need) and whose heart is already closed against him (*aorist active*), how does the love of God now abide in him? Being in the *indicative*, the implication is that God’s love does not now abide in Him. Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue {the Greek word “glosse”—to gloss over with excuse and explanation}, but in deed and truth. In the same way that the love of Jesus was very practical (He

laid down His life, He healed, He fed, He comforted, He spoke truth, and He even died for us), so too our lives are to be very practically lived with regard to one another. Your eyes are to be open for the types of needs that now and continually plague a person; and if you are in a position to meet them, you need to. It is how you love. If you don't, your heart is already hardened toward such things and the love of God is not now in you; and that is a statement of fact.

Picking up in **3:19-21**, by this kind of living—by loving as we have been loved—we will be able to dig down deep in our soul and know that we are now of the truth, and our hearts will be secure in Him regardless of the ways our heart condemns us. Our heart is wicked and it will always try to find a reason to condemn us. But God, who knows all things, is greater than our heart and so we can rest in the confidence of truth, the confidence of His Word, and the confidence of His love in and through our lives. But again, it all rests on the proof. Do we love or do we hate? If we love, practically, we can stand in confidence regardless of what our heart says. And if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God that we love. In other words, we have pushed out the lies and we have refused to receive the accusation. Instead we are confident we now keep His commandment to love and thereby do the things that are pleasing in His sight, because we have chosen to live by faith and not by fear.

According to **3:22**, whatever we ask we receive from Him, and that is a statement of fact. The way this works is that if we are surrendered to Jesus, proven by our love for one another, then we know Jesus will only ask for things in accordance with His Father's will, because He still only lives to do the will of His Father. Thus, His requests in and through our lives will always be answered, for they are pleasing to

the Father.

1 John 3:23, This is His commandment, that from beginning to end we believe (*aorist active*) in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and now love one another, just as He commanded has always commanded us (*aorist active*). The key to our ability to love is to actively believe in the name. The name defines for us our reality—our truth—and we must be willing to bet our lives on the name if we are ever going to love as we have been loved. This is why without faith you cannot love. His name has the power to drive out fear; in fact, His name gives us no reason to fear. As long as you hold to and choose your fear, you DO NOT believe in the name. You don't believe that He is your I Am; your Most High God; your Lord God Almighty, your Refuge; your Shepherd, Your Healer; your Provider, your Peace, your Lord of Host, or that He is always there. You DO NOT believe that He is your Righteousness and the one who sanctifies you; or that He is the I Am, who is everything you need all the time. You DO NOT believe! You MUST believe in the name if you are to love.

3:24. His commandment is to always believe and His commandment is to love one another as we have been loved. For the one who now keeps and continues to keep His commandments now abides in Him and Jesus abides in that person, and that is a statement of fact. And we know this is true because of the Spirit whom He has given us, for the fruit of the Spirit is love (**Galatians 5:22**). All these passages in **1 John** strips away all religious pretense and gets to the nitty-gritty. Therefore, it is time to be honest. Do you love? If not, you hate and Jesus does not now abide in you. If you want to escape this reality, you will have to decide to trust Christ in others—it is a choice. You can do this by believing He is the **Lord**, the one who is in control of all outcomes. He is **God**, the one who knows the end from the beginning

and is therefore able to arrange and order all things for the sole purpose of your being conformed into the image of the Son. And since you being like His Son is the goal, you can be assured that He has nothing but love for you, for He adores His Son (*John 3:35, 5:20*). Besides, Jesus has always lived giving up His life for you demonstrating the depths of His love. You also have to trust that He is your **Almighty** and therefore confidently live in the reality that He has set your feet on a broad place, you are always safe, and no one and nothing can harm you or thwart His plans for your life.

Rest in these truths, believe in His name, and if you do you will be able to truly let people in, give them a voice of authority in and over your life, and the fruit of it all will be a rich, deep, delicious relationship where His love is known and experienced. Only His Spirit can help you do this, but you have to be willing, you have to fight, and you have to reject the lies and demands of your *flesh*. Stop running from the pain and surrender to Him as the Lord your God Almighty. This is something you can do by His power and something you **MUST** do in order to know Him and to love as you have been loved.

Let's Pray