

4-11-21

CHARACTERISTICS OF GODLY LOVE

TEXT

I John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

I John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

I John 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

I John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

I John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

I John 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Sometime in September 1983 I preached at the Elkdale Baptist Church for the first time. I remember the message I preached. I preached from I Cor. 13, the love passage. I preached on the characteristics of love. That was 38 years ago. A lot has happened in 38 years. Many many of the founders of this church have gone home to be with the Lord. Our nation and world has become more and more anti-christ in nature. Back then I used to hand write all my sermon notes. I preached on I Cor. 13 because the Bible says that love is the greatest virtue a Christian could have.

I Corinthians 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

I Corinthians 13:2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

I Corinthians 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

According to these verses, without love you are nothing! All the sacrifices we make, all the knowledge we have, all the great works we can do are nothing without this virtue. The Apostle that wrote more about love than any of the others was the Apostle John.

Bishop Jerome wrote: "When the venerable John could no longer walk to the meetings of the Church but was borne thither by his disciples, he always uttered the same address to the church; "he reminded them of that one commandment which he had received from Christ Himself, as comprising all the rest, and forming the distinction of the new covenant, "My little children love one another" when the brethren present wearied of hearing the same thing so often asked why he always repeated the same thing, he replied, "Because it is the commandment of the Lord, and if this one thing be attained, it is enough.."

If the Apostle Paul could repeat himself in this matter, I think it fitting that I repeat myself in reminding us about this commandment. This the greatest of all commandments is wrapped up in love. First to love God, and secondly to love our brother.

I John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

I John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Now the reason people do not love, nor do they know how to love is all because they do not know God! Only God can teach a person how to have a true biblical love.

This morning I want to talk to you about the characteristics of true biblical love:

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE BIBLICAL LOVE.

I. TRUE BIBLICAL LOVE STARTS WITH KNOWING JESUS CHRIST.

I John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

I John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

I John 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

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I John 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Note what I John 4:7 says,

I John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

In order for us to know how to love we need to be born of God. Only then can we truly love. Love is a characteristic of godliness. A person who is not born again cannot love, will not love, because love is of God.

Fish swim.

Dogs bark.

Cows moo.

Christians manifest true Biblical love.

There is a worldly love, and there is a godly Christian love.

Did you ever notice that the people that are the icons of this world and are lauded and glamorized as love icons are the ones that have the biggest problems in their so called love lives.

One great example is Rita Hayworth, she was the most popular pin up star in WWII and in fact she was called the "LOVE GODESS" of the 1940's

The fourth atomic bomb ever to be detonated was decorated with a photograph of Hayworth a cut out from the June 1946 issue of Esquire magazine was painted on the bomb. Above it was stenciled the device's nickname, "Gilda" in two-inch black letters. Gilda was Rita Hayworth's latest hit movie.

Now how is it, the people that the world looks to as their Icons of love were never successful themselves in their love lives and marriages. Rita Hayworth was married 5 times and had several lifetime affairs, and died alone.

We could go on and on with examples of Hollywood scandals and marital breakups.

How is it that a world that claims to be full of love and compassion and tolerance cannot tolerate each other when they get married?

Without Christ the world does not know how to love.

1. THE WORLD DOES NOT KNOW GOD AND THEREFORE DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO LOVE.

FOR THEM LOVE IS AS FOLLOWS.

A. Love is just sexual appeal.

Most young girls are all wrapped up in an emotional experience while most young men are wrapped up in the sexual attraction.

I used to have a roadie that worked for us in the band, that used to go into McDonalds and look at the young girl behind the cash register and say "I think I love you.. What are you doing tonight?" Many of these young girls would fall for this line.

II Timothy 3:6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

I wonder what would happen if the same fellow turned around and said.. I lust after you what are you doing tonight?

I was a guest speaker at a Church in Poconos that was looking for a Pastor. They were candidating a man who was not young and handsome, when I overheard the young

teenage girls saying how can we have a Pastor I don't enjoy looking at? Think about it if our country gives 16 year olds the vote how they will vote?

The world just puts on the appearance of love.

B. According to the world, love is just being nice.

Mr. Rogers Neighborhood.

Love is just being nice all the time. Never saying anything that convicts or hurts a person's feelings.

There is a time not to be nice.

Jesus whipped people for desecrating God's house. There were times I had to tell people to never come back to our church.

John 2:13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

John 2:14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

John 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

John 2:16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

John 2:17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

They did not crucify Jesus because He was nice all the time.

JESUS WAS NOT NICE ALL THE TIME. That is why the Pharisees had Rome crucify Him!

Matthew 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

C. To the world, love is tolerance for alternate lifestyles, and everything wicked and debauched and immoral etc.

This kind of love is what the Bible calls inordinate.

Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Love must have limits and restraints based on the natural bounds established by God.

WHEN A MAN LOVES ANOTHER MAN LIKE HE WOULD LOVE A WOMAN, IT BECOMES WRONG.

There is a certain feeling a man should have for the a woman, the sexual appeal, the desire, this is natural. The Bible is clear about this:

Leviticus 18:22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.

Leviticus 18:23 Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion.

Leviticus 18:24 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you:

Leviticus 18:25 And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

Romans 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Romans 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

Romans 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

Romans 1:27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

Is there a way to answer the world about this issue when they will not hear the Bible? The world thinks speaking the truth is being mean spirited.

D. THE WORLD CANNOT KNOW WHAT IT IS TO LOVE BECAUSE THEY KNOW NOT GOD!

There is a facade of love but without Christ and God in their hearts they are filled with the works of the flesh that produce misery strife, divisions, hatred, and every evil and wicked thing!

Doing wicked has this world become so that they no longer even hide it. They attack anyone that holds conservative standards. They are vicious and vindictive. They do not even try to hide it anymore.

2. ONLY BY HAVING CHRIST IN YOUR HEART CAN YOU TRULY KNOW HOW TO LOVE.

I John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

I John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

When you receive the love of God in Christ Jesus, God teaches you how to love.

I remember when I first came to the church, I had a young lady that came to me asking me to marry her and her finance. This young couple were like the model young couple. If you were to see two models posing for the ideal photo shoot of a happily married couple this would be that couple. I met with them and went over the gospel with them. The boyfriend was a nice young man, but was honest and admitted he was not saved, and did see the need to get saved. The young girl was raised in the church and knew she was saved.

I told her later I could not marry them because they would be unequally yoked. But I said, let's meet again and give it time maybe your fiancée will come around and receive Christ. Give him time. His biggest problem was he could not see how he was that bad a guy to deserve hell. She said, no, Pastor, I love him and he loves me, and I want to get married. I said, I'm sorry I can't do it but why don't you give it time and see if he comes around. I spent hours trying to convince her to wait and not marry him right away.

She insisted, and went out and hired a minister to marry them, and then moved away to the Springville Montrose area. A few years go by and she calls me for counseling. Now they have a little baby. I go to visit and this same lady says to me Pastor you were right, my husband isn't saved and I don't love him anymore. Now I spend a couple hours trying to convince her to stay married!

It used to be that there was all kinds of social, economic, and religious pressure for people to stay married. Today it is just the opposite. People change marriage partners like people sell and trade in their cars.

Only by having the spirit of God in your heart.

Only by being born again and saved.

Only by the grace of God can people today have a long lasting and enduring love.

I tell young people, don't even entertain marrying someone who does not know the Lord.

Today I would also say, don't entertain marrying someone who says they are saved but is not living for the Lord. It is easy to say you're saved! I have seen a lot of young people going off to Bible colleges thinking that they will be safe marrying someone they meet at Bible college only to find out later the person they marry is no better than an unsaved person.

II. OUR MAIN DUTY IN LIFE IS TO LOVE GOD.

Solomon the wisest man that ever lived said,

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

To fear God is to love God.

Deuteronomy 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

When Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment note what He said:

Matthew 22:36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Matthew 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Matthew 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

If you love God He will teach you to love your neighbor.

If you love God you will love your wife. Ephesians 5.

If a wife loves God she will love her husband.

If children love God they will love and honor and obey their parents.

There are many verses in the Bible that teach that when we love God He teaches us how to love one another.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

I Thessalonians 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

II Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

I John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

I John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

III. THE SCRIPTURES CLEARLY TEACH AND DEFINE GODLY LOVE. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE LOVE DEFINED:

1. LOVE IS LONGSUFFERING.

I Corinthians 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

makrothumeo, mak-roth-oo-meh'-o; from the same as 3116; to be long-spirited, i.e. (obj.) forbearing or (subj.) patient:-bear (suffer) long, be longsuffering, have (long) patience, be patient, patiently endure.

----- Dictionary Trace -----

makrothumos, mak-roth-oo-moce'; adv. of a comp. of 3117 and 2372; with long (enduring) temper, i.e. leniently:-patiently.

2. LOVE IS KIND:

chresteuomai, khra-ste-yoo'-om-ahee; mid. from 5543; to show oneself useful, i.e. act benevolently:-be kind.

----- Dictionary Trace -----

chrestos, khra-se-tos'; from 5530; employed, i.e. (by impl.) useful (in manner or morals):-better, easy, good (-ness), gracious, kind.

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

What is kindness? It is speech filled with grace and goodness. Jesus words were filled with kindness. Think about the way He approached Peter after he denied him three times. Did He rail at him or even bring up his fault? No! He just kindly said,

John 21:15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

John 21:16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

John 21:17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Proverbs 31:26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

Dr. Nettleton. Key to a good marriage is wrapped up in one word.
THAT WORD IS KINDNESS.

What is Kindness? It is a soft answer.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

3. LOVE ENVIETH NOT.

Why are envy and love contrary to one another?

To envy is to have ill feelings toward others who excel.
Should not have ill feelings toward someone who does you wrong.

Why did Cain kill his brother? He envied the favor he received.

4. Vaunteth not itself.

perpereuomai, per-per-yoo'-om-ahee; mid. from perperos (braggart; perh. by redupl. of the base of 4008); to boast:-vaunt itself.

----- Dictionary Trace -----
peran, per'-an; appar. acc. of an obsol. der. of peiro (to "pierce"); through (as adv. or prep.), i.e. across:-beyond, farther (other) side, over.

Those who brag lack love.

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Philippians 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Philippians 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Philippians 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

Philippians 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

Philippians 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

These verses describe how Jesus mindset was the opposite of what Paul described as vaunting oneself!

5. LOVE IS NOT PUFFED UP.

Pride brings contention:

How often pride has brought division.

Proverbs 13:10 Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

I Corinthians 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

How often a war has been averted when a humble man answered a proud man with humility instead of pride.

Gideon prevented civil war when answered the proud men of Ephraim with humility in Judges 8:1-3.

Judges 8:1 And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.

Judges 8:2 And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?

Judges 8:3 God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

Remember Abigail prevented the bloodshed of her whole household when she humbled herself and apologized for her proud husband Nabal before David.

How many fights and contentions have been prevented by humility rather than pride.

6. LOVE DOES NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY:

Love does not seek to embarrass others.

A person who loves behaves appropriately and does not cause embarrassment.

Some things are best kept quiet rather than expose a fault.

Joseph was a just man, and a loving man, and rather than make public Mary's pregnancy he kept it private and was thinking about putting her away privately. Later the angel confirmed her story. He even took her to wife and let people think Jesus was his son!

7. SEEKETH NOT HER OWN.

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Philippians 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Did Jesus come to earth seeking His welfare?

Why do people get bitter and angry? Is it not because they feel they have been defrauded or taken advantage of? Is that not seeking you own?

When a parent sacrifices for his child is that not true love?

The truth is most children do not love their parents. Paul said,

II Corinthians 12:14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

There is a love that a parent has for their children. They will sacrifice for them, and seek their welfare. They will save up send them to college, seeking their welfare and progress. Then that child leaves home becomes successful makes more money than the parent. Why does a parent do this for their child? It is true love. It is a love for a child that is a natural paternal godly love. How sad it is that as a generation becomes ungodly, this natural love is lost. We have parents who sacrifice their children for their own wealth and comfort. Abortion is one example of how a wicked generation seeks their own and not the welfare of even their own children! Again abortion is an example of the kind of love and compassion this world has.

I talked about Rita Hayworth who in the world was hailed as "The Love Goddess". Glenn Ford's son wrote in his father's biography that around 1945 when Rita Hayworth was young Glenn Ford got Hayworth pregnant and she had an abortion in France. If she was the love goddess of this world, just who was her father but a the prince of darkness of this world.

8. IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED.

Does not easily get angry and flustered and frustrated.
Does not quickly fly off the handle.

A person that is filled with the love of God can get provoked but not easily. In other words it takes a lot. They are not the kind of people that fly off the handle at the least little thing.

9. LOVE THINKETH NO EVIL.

A person of love does not surmise evil in others unless there is evidence.

For some people everyone else is guilty till proven innocent.

Some people are always seeking to indite others of evil and everyone is suspect.

How many people have been railroaded because of hatred and bias?

I Corinthians 13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

John Gill:

...thinketh no evil; not but that evil thoughts are in such a man's heart, for none are without them; though they are hateful, abominable, and grieving to such as are partakers of the grace of God, who long to be delivered from them: but the meaning is, either that one possessed of this grace of love does not think of the evil that is done him by another; he forgives, as God has forgiven him, so as to forget the injury done him, and remembers it no more; and so the Arabic version reads it, "and remembers not evil"; having once forgiven it, he thinks of it no more; or he does not meditate revenge, or devise mischief, and contrive evil against man that has done evil to him, as Esau did against his brother Jacob; so the Ethiopic version, by way of explanation, adds, "neither thinks evil, nor consults evil"; or as the word here used will bear to be rendered, "does not impute evil"; reckon or place it to the account of him that has committed it against him, but freely and fully forgives, as God, when he forgives sin, is said not to impute it; or such an one is not suspicious of evil in others, he does not indulge evil surmises, and groundless jealousies; which to do is very contrary to this grace of love.

10. Rejoiceth not in Iniquity.

I Corinthians 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Love does not have a morbid delight to see others hurt.

How many people go to car races hoping to see someone will get hurt?

How many people have, "a serves them right attitude" when others are hurt or suffer.

How many people enjoy the pleasure & companionship of evil doers?

Romans 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

There are some that delight in evil, and find it entertaining. This is not the spirit of God and is not in the spirit of love.

11. LOVE BEARETH ALL THINGS:

I Corinthians 13:7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

To bear up to tolerate and to endure without complaint, this is true biblical love.

Anna Jones was one of the most loving souls I knew. Her living conditions were hard, she lived without running water for years yet she never complained. She bore all these difficulties with a good spirit.

Jesus suffered for us on the cross and did not complain. He bore all adversity for us. The Bible says when we are tempted to complain:

Hebrews 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Hebrews 12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

12. Hopeth all things.

The person who loves does not lose hope. Hope and faith go hand in hand. A person who is filled with the love of God also should be filled with faith in God!

A person filled with the love of God is filled with hope.

13. Endureth all things.

Love perseveres: How many people just think they have had enough?
Love endures and preserves. Love hangs in there.

The failure of marriages in our country speaks for our lack of love in our society.

To endure hardships a person has to have the right kind of spirit.

The Spirit of God gives his servants the Spirit of godly love and love endures all things.

III. CONSIDER THE LONG TERM ENDURANCE OF LOVE.

I Corinthians 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

I Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

I Corinthians 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

The Virtue of Love will endure through every dispensation.

Paul said to his readers:

There will be a time when there will be no need for prophecy.

There has come a time where the church no longer needs tongues.

There will be a time when knowledge and theological abilities will not be necessary.

BUT THERE WILL NEVER BE A TIME WHEN WE WILL NOT BE EXERCISING AND ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF GOD'S LOVE TOWARDS GOD AND OUR FELLOW MAN.

Conclusion:

So after 38 years of ministry, I am more convinced than ever, what we need more than ever is to exercise ourselves to a life of being filled with the love of God! Maybe when I get so old and decrepit that I can no longer walk to church by myself, maybe I will find myself repeating myself like the apostle Paul, it would be worth repeating that we need to love God and love one another.

It starts with knowing and loving God, and then He will teach us how to love one another in harmony with I Cor. chapter 13! Like the Apostle John said, if we do this that is sufficient, that is enough.