**Courageous Love**

*1 John 4:7-21*

**Introduction**

We are continuing our study this morning in the book of 1 John … just two more weeks in fact. Have you noticed the number of times that John seems to be saying the same thing in slightly different words?

John’s writing is more circular than linear. He addresses the same issues from a slightly different perspective on multiple occasions, so it is possible to see some of his primary emphases by seeing the issues he discussed time and time again.

* He is constantly bringing up the issue of genuine or saving faith. For John, everything rides on this crucial point.
	+ That is because there are only two kinds of children … children of God and children of the devil. There are only two kingdoms … the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil. There was no middle ground.
		- There are doctrinal tests … how we view sin (chapter 1) and how we view Christ (chapter 4). In order to have genuine faith you must understand those two points.
		- That is why throughout this series we have tried to explain the importance of knowing for such which child you are or which kingdom you serve. Eternity is at stake.
		- If you don’t “know that you know that you know” then we want you to be able to have the kind of assurance that John writes about.
	+ At stake is whether you have a new birth “birth certificate”
* He is also emphasizing the importance of righteous living and loving others (sometimes specifically referring to loving fellow believers and sometimes referring to members of the community).
	+ In other words, John is equally concerned about two moral tests for a person who genuinely knows Christ. He must live righteously (walking in the light … pursuing purity). He must also love his brothers (in the church and in the community). These matters are motivated by the love that God has for us.
	+ John’s point is that while assurance of salvation is always based on the finished work of Christ. Those who have assurance are living out their salvation in very meaningful ways in terms of their behavior.
		- Walking in the light was something genuine believers do … they confess their sin and rely on the strength of their great advocate.
		- They live righteous lives
		- They seek to love in very tangible and identifiable ways.

These themes fit perfectly with our annual theme … Loving Our Neighbors. P. Viars explained 5 ways that we needed to particularly accomplish this theme in 2014.

1. Implementing our soul care initiatives to achieve deeper friendships within our church family.
	1. John is like all over this.
	2. John expects those who are genuine believers to love those in the Christian community.
	3. One of the words we have used around here is “connection.” We want people to feel connected … to have friends and to be friendly to others.
		1. That is why we emphasize Intro to Faith … Men of Faith … serving in Living Nativity.
	4. Importance of being welcoming in our service [talk about dynamics of the 11 service]
2. As individual church members, growing in our ability to build stronger relationships with those who live right around us.
	1. John also has drawn our attention to our witness and challenged us to remember that we are to show love to those in our community. Finding ways to connect to our neighbors.
3. As a church family, developing our "parish mentality" to especially serve those who live near our two ministry campuses.
	1. This is simply item #2 expressed at the corporate level. The same passages in John that speak to #2 also speak to #3. Here is where ministries like LN and CFE fit. We are seeking to be a blessing to those in our community.
	2. It also involves ministries like first Friday where parents of young children or single mothers can drop off their children and receive some time for a date or for some peace.
4. Launching our Faith Community Development Corporation to serve urban neighborhoods with excellence.
5. Constructing the first phase of our Senior Living Community.
	1. If you have not been behind the community center in the last two weeks then I would encourage you to visit. There is some construction going on. Moving day is happening for a couple of seniors before the end of the year.

So the study of 1 John has been particularly helpful in thinking about all these areas. As we continue our study please turn with me to 1 John 4:7-21. That is on page 187 of the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you.

* Read the text

**We would like to consider three facts about Courageous Love from 1 John 4:7-21**

**I. The Lord Commanded Us to Love One Another (vv. 7, 11, 21)**

As I read the text it was clear that John wanted us to remember his command.

* Love one another serves as the intro, the conclusion, and the middle point. In fact, a form of the verb to love is found 17x in this passage alone.
* I think the sheer repetition clearly makes the point.

So, if you walk out with only one point, then here it is … “Love One Another.” The next key point in the logic is then … what does it look like to love one another?

Earlier this year we taught a series on 1 Cor 13 in order to help us understand the definition of biblical love. Let’s remind our selves of some of the key points.

1. **Remember how love is defined**

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7 – Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered,* 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

The reason this passage is so important is that it helps us quantify specific areas of change in our love. I highly doubt that any of you would have said, “You know PR, I think I have the love thing down so well I don’t need to change.” But admitting the principle and have a specific step of application is a different matter.

So this passage puts the cookies on the lower shelf.

* Love is not jealous … I can celebrate the success of my brother, sister, co-worker, or friend without getting all wound up.
* Not brag and is not arrogant … “there is you and then there is ME” or the analogy of the ME monster. I can enjoy hearing about others without having to top their stories.
* Does not keep a record of wrongs … that is hard, especially when this is the 4, 961 time he/she has done that.
* Believes all things … that can be really hard when someone close to you has done things to erode trust.
* Hopes all things … that can be really hard when there seems to be a track record of very little hope.

In other words, when John uses this command he is using it with the full weight and force that true biblical love carries. He also knows that this must play out in very tangible ways (see 3:18 “not in word or speech, but in deed and truth.” He knows exactly what he is commanding.

* Saying something is hard or difficult is not the same as saying it is impossible.

John commands us to love one another because genuine Christians love. We can offer this kind of love in part because we can …

1. **Remember that love is only possible because God’s character is love (v. 7)**

Love does not originate with you or me. Love is bound in the character of God. When Moses asked to see God’s glory God not only showed him a piece of his glory with his eyes but he also spoke about his character. He said, The Lord, the Lord God gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.

What commands what is inherently bound in the character of God.

**1 John 4:7 – Beloved, … love is from God**

If love is from God, that is, bound in his character, then it is absolutely imperative that I have his grace, compassion, and mercy filling me so that I can, in turn, love others.

This reminds us of our dependence. We are not saying Love One Another … LOA … LOA by just trying harder.

* We are saying that in order to LOA you have to focus on the Lord’s love for you.

In chapter 3:1 we were invited … “See how great a love the Father has placed on us.”

* The content of the love is found in 3:16 .. he gave his life.
* What it accomplished is that we became Children of God (new identity) and a glorious future (where we will see the Lord as he is and be amazed at just how wonderful he is).

My point is that God has not left us to our own devices. He has given us what we need (the indwelling Spirit working in us, new spiritual life, and an example to follow) in order to love one another.

I think the proper response to this point is praise the Lord. Thank you Lord that you provide all that is necessary in order for me to carry out the commands you gave me.

In this passage, we also see

**II. The Lord Provided Necessary Motivation in order to love one another (vv, 9-11, 13, 19)**

I mentioned that John writes in a circular fashion meaning that he brings up the same issue on multiple occasions. When preaching this passage it is possible to bring those elements together into a more unified whole.

The motivation includes …

1. **God gave us His son so that we might live (vv. 9-10)**

**1 John 4:9-10 – By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.**

The Lord knew that without his intervention we would not be able to love one another. That is one of the reasons he sent his son.

We needed spiritual life and we were not capable of producing it on our own. In order to accomplish that fact, Jesus had to be the propitiation for our sin.

Sometimes we find really big words in the Bible. Ones that we would not normally use in our daily conversations. At times, translations have changed these words into phrases like “atoning sacrifice.” I am not sure that I much clearer.

* The illustration that may provide clarity is the one that PV often uses during the passion play … no not the joke about crying babies. It is about the judge [tell the story]
* Jesus’ work on the cross was essentially him taking the wrath of the Father on his head for the sins that you and I committed.

Talk about a great gift … this is not simply the kind gesture of the car in front of you paying for your Starbucks coffee. This is the God of the universe taking the wrath that you deserved.

Matthew 27 is one of my favorite passages … we find several ironies of the cross of Jesus in it. (Matthew 27:27-54 if I have time)

* The person the soldiers mock as king really is the king
* The one who is portrayed as powerless is actually powerful
* The one who cries out in despair is the one who actually trusts in God
* If Jesus saved himself then he could not have saved others
* The one who died gives new life

That is huge motivation. It is the motivation that we need in order to love one another.

The motivation does not stop there however.

1. **God chose to love us first (vv. 11, 19)**

I think we all understand this concept. If you are married you probably have a story that goes something like this. I was really excited about my spouse before he/she was excited about me (or vise versa). In other words, there was someone who was on the lets build our relationship page and one person who needed some convincing.

* If you were the one who needed a little convincing then you can remember how the love of the other person slowly but surely won you over.
* If you were the one who loved first, then you can remember how long it took for your spouse to get on the same page.

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

**1 John 4:19 – We love, because He first loved us.**

God chose to love first. He made the first move. He reached out in love toward you and me. In that love won us over. But his move also results in motivation to do what he commanded … love one another.

Lets think about a couple of application points for just a minute:

* What would be true if our service was characterized by loving one another
	+ Everyone would be spoken to either out at the coffee area or actually in this room. [talk about the need to be here at 10:55]
	+ In other words this is not just a “visitor issue” it is an everybody issue.
* Would you be willing to love the person in your neighborhood first?
	+ Some neighbors are a pain. But that does not mean there are not opportunities for loving them … especially this time of year.
* Would you be willing to love a family member first even if you don’t believe they will offer the same love in return?
	+ For some this is really difficult because of all the hurt caused by the other person.

But what puts all of this in perspective is that God is the one who loved us first so we should be willing to love others first as well. The motivation for loving one another is not over. We also see that …

1. **God gave us His Spirit (v. 13)**

**1 John 4:13 – By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.**

P. Viars explained earlier in our series that one of John’s purposes is to provide assurance. Here is an example of that.

* While believers are to live righteously and love one another and these “tests” give reason to evaluate one’s life … assurance does not ultimately come down to those things. They are merely one piece of the puzzle.
* Biblical assurance is grounded on the work of God. It is Christ’s work on the cross through his propitiation that grants salvation. Here it is the Spirit’s work that enables us to believe in the gospel.

The indwelling Holy Spirit is how we know that we abide in him and he abides in us. It is his work that gives us confidence and assurance.

* You see, the tests of righteousness and love are sufficient to ask the question of our salvation, but it is only the work of God by sending his son, the work of the son by propitiating me (taking my wrath), and the indwelling Holy Spirit that seals me for the day of redemption.
* The tests allow me to ask questions, but is it only the work of God that really gives me assurance of my salvation.

Once assured, I am motivated in order to love others.

To this point in the sermon two points have been made clearly: (1) We are commanded to love one another. It is one of the moral tests so to speak of our salvation and (2) We are motivated to this command because God gave us his son so that we might live, because God chose to love us first, and because God has given us his indwelling Spirit. The final point that John discusses on multiple occasions is that …

**III. The Lord Produces Amazing Results when we Love One Another (vv. 7-8, 15-20)**

This point is worded very carefully. It is not simply that loving one another produces results but that the Lord uses our love for others to accomplish some very significant results. In this passage there are four of them.

At a very minimum that will help us remember that all of our boasting is to be done in the Lord and not in ourselves.

1. **Loving one another demonstrates you have a relationship with God (vv. 7-8, 12, 15-16)**

Notice how often this subject comes up in these verses …

**1 John 4:7-8 – Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

**1 John 4:12 - No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.**

**1 John 4:15-16 – Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**

We see three aspects of our relationship with God in these verses that are displayed when we love one another.

The first is “Born” terminology. Everyone who loves is born of God the Bible says.

* A few weeks ago I used the analogy of the birth certificate. We all received one when our mother’s gave physical birth to us. Mine says I was born Jan 27, 1971 in Marion, Ohio.
* But John emphasizes new birth that is the birth born from God. Where I trade in my “child of the devil” card for my “child of God” card.

Loving one another is a demonstration that I have had this new birth.

The second aspect of that relationship is “Knowing” terminology. Everyone who loves knows God because God is love.

* The point being made is that those who really know God love others. Knowledge about God or about the Bible does not, by itself, result in love for one another.
* A famous Bible teacher told a story of a professor he had. The professor gave a lecture on Romans 6-8 and then ended his comments with “but I don’t believe a word of it.” You see, it is possible to have a knowledge about God without that knowledge impacting how we function.
* Loving one another, on the other hand, is a demonstration that we not only know about God, but that we have a personal relationship with him.

The third aspect displayed by love is “Abiding” terminology. If we love one another, God’s love abides in us or the one who abides in love abides in God.

* Abiding terminology is a very popular subject for John the apostle. In his gospel, John says that we must abide in Christ for apart from him you can do nothing.
* It demonstrates one of the most wonderful aspects of a NT Christian’s relationship to the Lord. It is one of abiding or ongoing indwelling.
	+ Talk about David and “take not your Holy Spirit from me”

When you love one another, one of the results is that you have confidence that you are born of God, you know God, and you abide in Him.

As amazing as that sounds, there is more …

1. **Loving one another makes the unseen God clear (vv. 12, 20)**

**1 John 4:12 – No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.**

**1 John 4:20 – If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.**

John explains that no one has seen God. But God’s handiwork is visible. In Romans, God’s work is visible in creation. As people look at the amazing creation of God, it points to a creator behind it. In 1 John God’s handiwork is seen in the love for others.

We live in a world that is broken in addition to a world that is beautiful. Common grace extends to believer and unbeliever alike. However, it is the effects of saving grace that make God more clear.

Our community based ministry is justified by passages like this. There are all sorts of things that you could do with your time.

* You could keep up to date on all the latest TV shows (talk about my experience at Warner Brothers Studio).
* You can watch all the games.
* Or you can find ways to love one another so that the unseen God becomes evident.

Relate to CDC, LN, CFE, musical, being a good neighbor (leaf raking time)

John adds a little fact on the end … you can easily see your neighbor, your brother.

* Thus, he is easy to love because he is there.
* How can you expect to love God who you cannot see if you cannot love the one you can see?

The point is clear. Loving others is one of the ways that God is seen among his people. Of all the groups, believers in Christ should be known as the most loving and caring of all.

We also see …

1. **Loving one another produces confidence for the day of judgment (v. 17)**

**1 John 4:17 – By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.**

As a little boy I learned the parable of the talents. [develop] Almost equally as long I have heard in reference to us the statement “well done thou good and faithful servant.”

* But I was always puzzled by one thing. Not everyone who was judged heard such positive words.
* In fact one person said, “I was afraid and went away and hid your talent … he is what is yours” and the master responded “You wicked, lazy slave … take away the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten.”

How do you know that you are not in that group?

* How do you know that in the parable of the talents you are not the wicked, lazy slave?
* How do you know in the words of Matthew 7:21 that you are not the person who the Lord says, “depart from me for I never knew you, you who practice lawlessness.”

John answers that question emphatically … by loving one another! You will be in the group who hears “well done thou good and faithful servant” if you love one another.

* You can have confidence at your death not only that you are a genuine Christian, but that you will also receive a positive review IF you love one another.
	+ That is entirely consistent with what Jesus taught in the sermon … he did not know them because they were practicing lawlessness.
* I find that encouraging and hopeful. The Lord does not simply give us a warning and leave us to our own devices.
	+ He tells us … here is how you can be sure that you are in the positive group.

Well one more ….

1. **Loving one another results in a fearless life (v. 18)**

**1 John 4:18 – There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.**

Many of us have learned that ministry to people involves risk. We try to love people and they either spurn our love or say that what we do is not very loving anyway.

It is possible to become a cynic in that environment. We no longer desire to love because we are dissatisfied with how the person responds. I have two responses that I think are helpful

* We have already seen that loving others has amazing results.
	+ It shows I am born of God; it shows that I know God, and that I abide in God.
	+ It also makes the unseen God clear to others in my life.
	+ As I just mentioned, it gives confidence for the day of judgment. Therefore, we don’t have to worry about how they respond. We have all the wonderful results that we actually need.
* A second response is that perfect love casts our fear. If fear remains it may indicate that we are not exercising the perfect love of God.
	+ Instead our love is faulty, weak, and insufficient. So we are driven again to our knees that the Lord would help us to love with his perfect love.

**Summary**

Friends, this passage is loaded. We are commanded to love … if we walk out of here without some way that we are going to actively work at loving others then we have completely missed the point of the text. We are commanded to love.

But we are not commanded for no reason. In fact, the Lord has provided many reasons 3 of which are in this passage. We should love others because God gave us his son so that we might have life, because God loved us first, and because God gave us his Spirit.

If John had stopped there, it would have been great, but he kept going to add some of the results of such love … it confirms our relationship with Jesus, it makes the unseen God clear, it provides confidence for the day of judgment, and allows us to live a life without fear.