

We love Him because He first loved us (Quality: Very Good)

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Preacher: Warboys, Ralph (1927-2008)

[0 : 00] In dependence upon the Lord, I ask your prayerful attention to the first epistle of John, chapter 4, and especially verse 19.

The first epistle of John, chapter 4, verse 19. We love him because he first loved us.

We love him because he first loved us. Now, reading this morning from the last chapter of John, we read how the Lord asked Peter three times, Lovest thou me?

Three times Peter had denied his Lord and Master. Questioned, he replied, I know not the man.

I know not of what thou speakest and say. It reminds one of the words of Delilah to Samson.

[1 : 27] How canst thou say thou lovest me when thou hast mocked me these three times?

Her love was not to Samson, but to the money that was promised her by the Philistines. We have sung, ere we are not to love the world, nor the things of it.

No man can serve two masters. Thousands have tried. Thousands have tried. But not one has ever succeeded.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon. The subject of our verse this evening is concerning love.

And I would like firstly for us to consider this word love. And then secondly, to consider God's love.

[2 : 38] Though it is mentioned secondly in this verse, God's love began before his people's love began to him.

Just as it is in a natural family. The parent loves the newborn babe before the newborn babe can in any way be said to love its parents.

Let us consider then this word love. I doubt if there is another word so misused in our English language.

You may hear it said, you may say it yourself. I love this article of food. I love a fine day, a windy day.

I love my employment. That is not really love. Where there is love, naturally or spiritually, there is a willingness to make sacrifices for the object of that love.

[3 : 54] The parent that gets up for the ailing child in a cold winter's night, leaving a warm bed, does not do that for wages.

They do it because of that love to their child. They are willing to make a sacrifice. If you were to say to the person that said they love their work, that means you are willing to pay your employer to allow you to work.

I think you would find they didn't love their work. They might find it interesting. They might enjoy doing it. But surely the word love should not be applied.

Now, secondly then, let us consider that what we are told here.

God loved us. Remembering that the epistles are written not to all mankind, but to those who were already manifestly and made clear as the children of God.

[5 : 11] God's mother, we are told that the children of God. And your concern and mine should be when we read the epistles and read those words, you, we, us, brethren, sons and so on.

Does it apply to me? May I be now and in eternity?

May I be now and in eternity? I mentioned that love in these epistles of John does not mean natural love, but spiritual love.

For we read in verse 7, Every one that loveth is born of God. And there are thousands in the world who love their husbands, wives, children, parents, but by their lives show they are not born of God.

But where there is spiritual love, then that person is indeed born of God.

[6 : 25] And for you that are younger, this means, of course, the new birth. The Lord, in speaking to Nicodemus, who came to him by night, said, Ye must be born again.

There are many things we may or we may not do. We may marry, we may remain single, we may become parents, we may die childless, but we must be born again to enter heaven.

Quickened by the Holy Spirit. And how do we know the newborn baby is alive?

Before the days of stethoscopes and ultrasonic scans? Is it not by its feeble cry? And how is a cry made?

How do you hear my voice at lesson? Because air that has been breathed in is breathed out over the vocal cords. And so that newborn baby who cries in distress, for it must be a traumatic experience for the baby as well as the mother to be born, that cry can only be made after air has been breathed in.

[8 : 05] And we read in Genesis, God took dust of the earth and breathed into it. And Adam became a living son.

Are we indeed born of God? But to come more especially to God's love. Now I read from that epistle to the Romans.

And there we have clearly set before us that doctrine of election, in which I spoke, how it was shown in type this morning, that though there were thousands, undoubtedly thousands of fish, in that sea of Tiberias, only a definite number, were brought out of nature's darkness into light, and then, in that order, to the feet of Christ.

And the apostle was inspired to write concerning Jacob and Esau. We read in Genesis, the twins struggled together within Rebekah.

She had been married to Isaac 20 years before these twins were born. And having conceived, they struggled together within her.

[9 : 52] And what a wonderful example. What did she do? She didn't go and ask and inquire of her godly husband Isaac. She didn't go and ask Abraham.

For he was still alive until the twins were 14. She did what you and I should do. She went to inquire of the Lord.

And the Lord said to her, Two nations are within thee, and the elders shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

And this was said before the children were born, they had not done any good or evil. One was chosen to eternal life.

The other was left to perish in their sins. If there is any doctrine that arouses the enmity of the nominal religious person, it is this, the doctrine of election.

[11 : 06] But how well the poet put it, though God's election is a truth, small comfort there I see till I am told by his own mouth that he has chosen me.

And the apostle continued, giving Pharaoh as an example that for that very purpose he was raised up to show God's power.

His heart was hardened that he would not let the children of Israel go, though he said many times they could go, but when the plague was removed, then he changed his mind.

And the apostle continued concerning the potter and the clay. Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump?

One lump, one part of that lump, no better than the other of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour.

[12 : 27] A vessel is, of course, that which contains something. I was speaking at Ogington last Lord's Day concerning that vessel that the dear woman had in the time of drought when she had but a handful of meal and a little oil in her vessel.

But that was to be sufficient until the Lord sent rain upon the earth. Have you the oil of grace in your heart?

The vessel is not the important thing in itself, though important in God's sight, but no value in and of itself.

It's what is in it that is valuable. And he endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.

In a natural figure, years ago, when a murderer was found guilty, the judge would put a black cap upon his head and pronounce the death sentence that that person would be taken from the court to a place of confinement and then to execution to be hung by his neck until they were dead.

[14 : 26] But, supposing there were two men, both guilty of murder, both sentenced to death, yet the Queen, on the advice of the Home Secretary, could say, this man is not to die.

And he would be spared the death sentence. Was she to blame because the other had the sentence of the law carried out and was hung and put to death?

Not at all. He was put to death because he had committed the crime of murder. she was not to blame because he was not spared.

And so, that sets forth the doctrine of election. And election, of course, speaks of choosing. God choosing some to eternal life and leaving others to perish in their sins.

We have the case of the two thieves that were crucified with Christ. Both thieves, we don't read that one was a murderer and the other a thief.

[15 : 55] They were both as bad as each other. But one was chosen to eternal life. Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.

And notice how he had godly repentance. He acknowledged the justness of his condemnation. We indeed justly, for we receive the dear reward of our deeds.

but this man hath done nothing amiss. I can remember at the age of fourteen when the poet's words were indeed my very soul's expression.

Should sudden vengeance seize my breath, I must pronounce thee just in death.

And if my soul were sent to her, thy righteous law approves it well. Now, how was God's love to his chosen people made manifest, made known and revealed?

[17 : 16] Well, we have it in the ninth verse. God 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.

And the Lord, in speaking to Nicodemus, said, God so loved the world. Nicodemus, like Peter, until he saw that vision in the book of Acts, thought that only Jews would be saved.

But the Lord said before Nicodemus, he had a people in all nations, but that word world does not refer to all mankind. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Was there ever love like this? You see, in a natural figure, we who are parents and grandparents would give our lives to save our child's life.

So would thousands in the world. A natural emotion. But would you give your child's life to save an enemy's life?

[19 : 00] No, you'd say you can't expect us to do that. Writes Paul to the Romans while we were yet enemies. Christ died for us.

God so loved. God so loved. Well, might the poet say, God only knows the love of God.

Oh, that it now was shed abroad in this poor stony heart. That 53rd chapter of Isaiah is one that we might say one's favorite, one of one's favorite chapters, but one as often as it were felt staggered by that verse.

it pleased the Lord to bruise him. It pleased God the Father that his only begotten Son should suffer.

Our minds cannot comprehend it. Remembering it was not, of course, only the sufferings of the body, though we understand death by crucifixion was one of the most prolonged agonizing death that wicked minds could devise, but God knew the sufferings that Christ would endure in his Son, bearing the punishment for his people's sins that they deserve throughout eternity.

[20 : 49] eternal and infinite punishment compressed to few hours. Mathematically, it could not be done, but faith believes it was done.

Of his suffering so intense, angels have no perfect sin. God so loved his people that he gave his only begotten sin.

He first, before we loved him, he first loved us. And in general, I think I am right in saying that a father loves his child more than the child loves their father.

father. But when that child becomes a father, they will love their child more than they loved their father. Generally speaking, but certainly it is true spiritually, God's love to his people infinitely exceeds their love to him.

the Lord taught my parents. And often unable to sleep, I look out of the window and seeing the moon, I've considered this fact.

[22 : 27] how the love of God to his people is set forth by the shining of the sun.

Their love to him set forth by the shining of the moon. And we know the sun's light and warmth is constant, day and night, summer and winter.

We have a night season because of the rotation of the earth and we are turned away from the sun, but the sun's light and warmth hasn't changed.

And we come into winter because of the inclination of the earth's axis to the plane of the ecliptic that it revolves around the sun. And it is then summer time in the southern hemisphere, but the sun hasn't changed because we have snow and ice.

I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore because of that, ye sons of Israel, no, ye sons of Jacob are not concerned.

[23 : 50] Always notice when the Lord's people are described as Jacob and when they are described as Israel. The same person, but yet a different person.

Jacob means a deceiver, a supplant. Blind Isaac said to Jacob, art thou my very son Esau?

And Jacob said, I am. Barefaced lie. He reaped what he sowed. Laban deceived him with his wife, thought he had married Rachel, and behold, it was Leah, deceived him over his wages, and most bitter of all, his own sons deceived him.

Concerning the supposed death of Joseph, as ye sow, so shall you reign. but his name was changed to Israel. As a prince, thou hast power with God, and hast beheaded.

But because I change not ye sons of Jacob, with all your sins and backslidings, are not concerned.

[25 : 02] and so that love of God set forth by the shining of the sun. We are told if the sun could suddenly be removed, the earth would very shortly be an icy ball, a ball of ice, as it were, and life on earth would be extinct.

And is not that so spiritual? But the shining of the moon, even at its best, is but a poor reflection.

People may say the moon was so bright you could read a book. You try it, you'll have great difficulty. And sometimes it cannot be seen at all.

Waxes and whites, just like our love well at least like my love. We love him because he first loved us.

Well now thirdly let us examine as we can with a microscope whether we have a love to him.

[26 : 26] whether we have a love to him. Remembering what I said in that definition of love, a willingness to make sacrifices.

And this is shown by a love to the brethren. we know that we have passed from death unto life, spiritual death, to spiritual life, at the new birth because we love the brethren.

Loving the brethren did not bring us from death to life. That was the work of the Holy Spirit. But the evidence proving we have passed from death to life is a love to the brethren.

Remember I said that love in this epistle means spiritual love. I had a natural love to my parents when I had no spiritual love.

Despised them as old-fashioned and out-of-date and when we could we'd be free from all constraints and go into the world. But through the Lord's mercy we were brought to have a double love, a natural love to them as parents, but also a spiritual love to them as brethren.

[28 : 04] As brethren. An evidence of having passed from death unto life. and we are exhorted, let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth.

In the Acts of the Apostles, I think it is the fourth chapter, we read the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one spirit, and no man called anything he possessed his own, but they had all things common.

I think of the spirit that David showed when he prepared with all his might for the temple. David had desired to build the temple himself, but was told because he had shed much blood he would not be allowed to, but his son Solomon were.

Human nature would say, it's going to be called Solomon's temple, let him get on with it. But no, David prepared with all his might.

Gold where gold was required, not silver in place of gold, silver where silver was required, brass for brass and so. And then as it were he sat back and considered, who am I and what are my people that we are able and willing and willing to offer after this song.

[29 : 58] For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

Have we possessions? They are only loaned unto us to be used in the Lord's service. Have we health and strength? They are not our own, but his.

we are told in James to confess our faults one to another. A month or two ago, I was engaged to preach at West Street Croyd in morning and evening, a journey of about 85 miles each way, looking forward naturally to a rest in the afternoon.

afternoon. But I had a phone call on the Friday evening from Gravesend to say that through Mr. Peter Dawson being unable to preach, that would I go there in the afternoon, a journey of about 30 miles each way.

I told them I would gladly consider it and phone back on the Saturday morning. and in the meantime, that thought kept being suggested to me, I'm sure it was from the devil, spare thyself.

[31 : 24] Tell them you're almost 80 years of age. You need a rest in the afternoon. Spare thyself. Spare thyself. But I phoned back on the Saturday and said, if the Lord will, I would venture.

And on the journey there in the afternoon, spare thyself kept reverberating in my mind until the Lord dropped that word in.

He that spared not his own son, but freely gave him up for us all, shall he not with him freely give us all things?

All my rebellion was swept away. And I spoke from that text. He spared not his own son.

Should we then spare health and strength, possessions, separation from loved ones, which is often a sacrifice not appreciated by congregations that ministers make?

[32 : 35] Let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth. love the Lord.

Let us each examine ourselves. We have in John, in the 14th chapter of John, searching words.

if ye love me, keep my commandments. And in a previous chapter, he gives us one of those commandments, a new commandment I give unto you, yet not a new commandment, that ye love one another.

And he continued in that 14th chapter, and here you can examine yourself, and I examine myself.

He that hath my commandments and keep it them, he it is that loveth me.

[33 : 58] And then in the 23rd verse, Jesus answered and said unto him that is Judas, not Iscariot, the writer of the epistle of Jude, if a man love me, he will keep my words.

And that means obey my words. Constrained through love. We can perhaps keep commandments, but not through love, through fear of punishment.

As an illustration for you dear younger friends, when I was at our village school in the early 1930s, we had a head mistress of the old-fashioned soul.

Five minutes late and you were kind, talking in class, you were kind. The slightest disobedience met with physical punishment.

We kept her commandments, but solely through fear of punishment. And as the expression is, when the opportunity occurred, got our own back on her.

[35 : 25] There was no love, though there was obedience. But with our parents, we desired to obey because we were constrained by love, to please them, to do what they wanted because of love.

Do you and I obey his commandments through love? Many things might be set before you.

There is, of course, the ordinances of his house. If we love him, we shall desire to do as he said, this do concerning the ordinance of the Lord's supper, this do in remembrance of me.

If ye love me, keep my commands. And as James writes in his epistle, the man that is a hearer and not a doer only, shall be blessed in his deed, not for his deed, but in his deed.

Notice the small prayer. And in keeping of his commandments, there is great delight. Solomon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me.

[37 : 18] In Ephesians, we have a few verses that are very sweet concerning love.

And you find there the apostles' great desire to know the love of Christ.

And he desires for the Ephesians that Christ may dwell, live within you, in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, to understand at least in measure, with all saints.

Notice four dimensions are quoted. What is the breadth and length and depth and height? If we were asked to describe the size of this chapel, we would say so many feet or meters long, so many wide, and so many high.

if you were asked to describe the dimensions of an iceberg, you'd also have to include the dimensions of depth, in terms of volume, of course, six times that amount that appears, of Christ.

[38 : 53] And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. We can only, as it were, know a little part in this life.

It will take eternity to know the full amount which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Lovest thou me. I think of that hymn, it is not the one I've asked to be given out at the end, though I almost chose it.

Tis a point I long to know, oft it causes anxious thought, do I love the Lord or no?

Am I his or am I not? Whenever, as it were, that hymn comes to my mind, I have to cry with the public and God be merciful to me, the sinner.

[40 : 07] Why? Because I've enjoyed singing from an early age. And I've sung that hymn many times when it wasn't causing me the slightest anxious thought at all.

I was lying. I can't mitigate it or water it down. I was lying when I said, oft it causes anxious thought.

God be merciful to me, the sinner. But now we can say it from the heart. do I love the Lord or no?

Am I his or am I no? And he continues, I think it is one of dear John Newton's, could I joy his saints to me?

Find at times the promise sweet, not always, but at times the promise sweet, choose the ways I once have had, if I did not love the Lord.

[41 : 12] Say, poor sinner, love is thou made. Amen.