
REASON FOR THE CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

THEME: CHRISTIAN LOVE

(1 JOHN 3:18-24)

ADEOYE, EMMANUEL (EVANGELIST)

True Christian love means loving in deed and in truth. The opposite of "in deed" is "in word," and the opposite of "in truth" is "in tongue." Here is an example of love "in word": *"If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled'; and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" (James 2:15)*

To love "in word" means simply to talk about a need, but to love "in deed" means to do something about meeting it. You may think, because you have discussed a need, or even prayed about it, that you have done your duty, but love involves more than words - it calls for sacrificial deeds. To love "in tongue" is the opposite of to love "in truth." It means to love insincerely.

To love "in truth" means to love a person genuinely, from the heart and not just from the tongue. People are attracted by genuine love, but repelled by the artificial variety. One reason why sinners were attracted to Jesus (*Luke 15:1-2*) was because they were sure He loved them sincerely.

"But does it not cost a great deal for the believer to exercise this kind of love?"

Yes, it does. It cost Jesus Christ His life. But the wonderful benefits that come to you as by-products of this love more than compensate for any sacrifice you make. To be sure, you do not love others because you want to get something in return, but the Bible principle, *"Give and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:38)*, applies to love as well as to money. John names three wonderful blessings that will come to a believer who practices Christian love.

Assurance (vv. 19-20). A believer's relationship with others affects His relationship with God. A man who is not right with his brother should go settle the matter before he offers his sacrifice on the altar (*cf. Matt 5:23-24*). A Christian who practices love grows in his understanding of God's truth and enjoys a heart filled with confidence before God. A *"condemning heart"* is one that robs a believer of peace.

An "accusing conscience" is another way to describe it. Sometimes the heart accuses us wrongly, because it *"is deceitful above all things, and*

desperately wicked; who can know it?" (**Jer. 17:9**) The answer to that question is, "God knows the heart!". More than one Christian has accused himself falsely or been harder on himself than necessary; but God will never make such a mistake.

A Christian *who* walks in love has a heart open to God ("God is love") and knows that God never judges wrongly. John may have remembered two incidents from Jesus' life on earth that illustrate this important principle. When Jesus visited Bethany, He stayed at the home of Mary and Martha (**Luke 10:38-42**). Martha was busy preparing the meal, but Mary sat at His feet and listened to Him teach. Martha criticized both Mary and Jesus, but Jesus knew Mary's heart and defended her.

The Apostle Peter wept bitterly after he had denied his Lord, and no doubt he was filled with remorse and repentance for his sin. But Jesus knew that Peter had repented, and after His resurrection the Lord sent a special message (**Mark 16:7**) to Peter that must have assured the hot-headed fisherman that he was forgiven.

Peter's heart may have condemned him, for he knew he had denied the Lord three times, but God was greater than his heart. Jesus, knowing all things, gave Peter just the assurance he needed. Be careful lest the devil accuse you and rob you of your confidence (**Rev 12:10**). Once you confess your sin and it is forgiven, you need not allow it to accuse you anymore. Peter was able to face the

Jews and say, "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just!"

(**Acts 3:14**) because his own sin of denying Christ had been taken care of and was forgiven and forgotten. No Christian should treat sin lightly, but no Christian should be harder on himself than God is. There is a morbid kind of self-examination and self-condemnation that is not spiritual.

If you are practicing genuine love for the brethren, your heart must be right before God, for the Holy Spirit would not "shed abroad" His love in you if there were habitual sin in your heart. When you grieve the Spirit you "turn off" the supply of God's love (**Eph 4:30-5:2**).

Answered prayer (vv. 21-22). Love for the brethren produces confidence toward God, and confidence toward God gives you boldness in asking for what you need. This does not mean that you earn answers to prayer by loving the brethren. Rather, it means that your love for the brethren proves that you are living in the will of God where God can answer your prayer.

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments" (1 John 3:22). Love is the fulfilling of God's Law (**Rom 13:8-10**); therefore, when you love the brethren, you are obeying His commandments, and He is able to answer your requests. A believer's relationship to the brethren cannot be divorced from his prayer life. If husbands and wives are not obeying God's Word, for example, their

prayers will be hindered (**1 Peter 3:7**).

An evangelist had preached on the Christian home. After the meeting a father approached him. "I've been praying for a wayward son for years," said the father, "and God has not answered my prayers." The evangelist read **Ps 66:18** - "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." "Be honest with yourself and the Lord," he said. "Is there anything between you and another Christian that needs to be settled?"

The father hesitated, then said, "Yes, I'm afraid there is. I've harbored resentment in my heart against another man in this church." "Then go make it right," counseled the evangelist, and he prayed with the man. Before the campaign was over, the father saw his wayward son come back to the Lord.

These verses do not, of course, give us all the conditions for answered prayer, but they emphasize the importance of *obedience*. One great secret of answered prayer is obedience, and the secret of obedience is love. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (**John 14:15**). "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.... If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love" (**John 15:7,10**). It is possible, of course, to keep God's commandments in a spirit of fear or servitude rather than in a spirit of love. This was the sin of the elder brother in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (**Luke 15:24-32**). A believer should keep His Father's

commandments because this pleases Him. A Christian who lives to please God will discover that God finds ways to please His child.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Ps 37:4). When our *delight* is in the love of God, our *desires* will be in the will of God. Abiding (vv. 23-24). When a scribe asked Jesus to name the greatest commandment He replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Then He added a second commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (**Matt 22:34-40**). But God also gives us *one commandment* that takes in both God and man: "Believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another" (**1 John 3:23, NASB**). Faith toward God and love toward man sum up a Christian's obligations. Christianity is "faith which worketh by love" (**Gal 5:6**).

Faith toward God and love toward men are two sides of the same coin. It is easy to emphasize faith - correct doctrine - and to neglect love. On the other hand, some say doctrine is not important and that love is our main responsibility. *Both doctrine and love are important*. When a person is justified by faith, he should know that the love of God is being shed abroad in his heart (**Rom 5:1-5**).

"Abiding in Christ" is a key experience for a believer who wants to have confidence toward God and enjoy answers to prayer. Jesus, in His message to the disciples in the Upper Room (**John 15:1-14**) illustrated "abiding." He compared His followers

to the branches of a vine. So long as the branch draws its strength from the vine, it produces fruit.

But if it separates itself from the vine, it withers and dies. As we have seen, when a believer walks in love, he finds it easy to obey God, and therefore he maintains a close communion with God. *"If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him"* (**John 14:23**). The Holy Spirit is mentioned by name in 1 John for the first time in 3:24. John introduced us to the Holy One (**1 John 2:20**) with emphasis on the Spirit's anointing and teaching ministry. (This parallels **John 14:26; 16:13-14**) But the Holy One is also the *abiding* Spirit (**1 John 3:24; 4:13**).

When a believer obeys God and loves the brethren, the indwelling Holy Spirit gives him peace and confidence. The Holy Spirit abides with him forever (**John 14:16**), but when the Spirit is grieved, He withdraws His blessings. The Holy Spirit is also the *attesting* Spirit (**1 John 4:1-6**), giving witness to those who are truly God's children.

When a believer is abiding in Christ, the Spirit guides him and warns him

CONCLUSION:

It assures you confidence and courage in spite of the difficulties of life. Dr. Rene Spitz of New York made a study of children in foundling homes to determine what effect love and neglect had on them. The survey proved that children who were neglected and unloved were much slower in their development, and some of them even died. Even in a physical sense, love is the very atmosphere of life and growth. It is even more so in the spiritual sense.

In fact, it is a matter of love or death!

of false spirits that would lead him astray. There are four levels on which a person may live. He may choose the lowest level Satan's level - and practice murder. Murderers *"have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"* (**Rev 21:8**). Or, a person may choose the next level - hatred. But hatred, in God's sight, is the same as murder. A man who lives with hatred is slowly killing *himself*, not the other person! Psychiatrists warn that malice and hatred cause all kinds of physical and emotional problems.

The third level - indifference - is far better than the first two, because the first two are not Christian at all. A man who has constant hatred in his heart, or who habitually murders, proves he has never been "born of God. But it is possible to be a Christian and be indifferent to the needs of others. A man who murders belongs to *the devil*, like Cain. A man who hates belongs to *the world* (**1 John 3:13**), which is under Satan's control. But a Christian who is indifferent is living for *the flesh*, which serves Satan's purposes. The only happy, holy way to live is on the highest level, the level of Christian love. This is the life of joy and liberty, the life of answered prayer.