

God's Love

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[0 : 00] Now, seeking God's blessing, let us turn for a little to words in the portion we read in the first epistle of John, chapter 3, and verse 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.

Now, you'll have noticed that John has said that one who hates his brother does not possess eternal life, for to hate is to be a murderer.

Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. Hatred is the wish that the other person should not live.

It is the longing that that other person might die. That's hatred. One who hates shares the nature of the devil.

[1 : 36] It's a solemn thought. Well, here we see John from this awful picture of hatred and murder, now turning to consider the nature of love.

How Christians come to know the true meaning of love. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.

John is saying, this is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

That's not just what we've read here, though. If you're reading what we call the authorized version, the King James Version of the Bible, as most of us still are, and as we, the version that we always read in our churches, with which we are well satisfied, you will read, Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.

And you will notice, again, as we've noticed many times, that the words of God are in italics.

[3 : 11] Now, that means that not all the ancient manuscripts had these words in them, and that they were put in there by the translators of the Word of God in the 17th century, in order that the meaning might be understood as they believed it should be.

Now, hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. We cannot understand the death of Christ, unless we understand the passion of Christ.

God cannot die. It is impossible from his very nature that he could, even for a moment, cease to exist.

Now, O Lord Jesus Christ was very God, of very God, and as God, he had all the attributes of the Most High.

Christ had. And he could not, therefore, be capable of death, or indeed be capable of suffering.

[4 : 52] But then, he was also man. Just like ourselves, sin alone accepted. And it was as man that he was nailed to the cross and died.

As God, he was in heaven, even when his body was lying in the grave.

He did not cease to be God. He did not lose his almighty power, his omnipotence, when he became man.

nor did he, as God, die or suffer. It was as man that he laid down his life for us.

Well then, we notice that he laid down his life for us.

[6 : 14] And that Christ laid down his life for you. teaches you.

First of all, how great must be your sins. And then it teaches how great must be his love to you. and then it teaches us how safe you must be.

And when we've thought a little of these three points, we will look at the other claim that John makes here.

we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren and try to see what is the connection between the two.

[7 : 28] Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us. And we ought he laid down his life for us.

How great is his love and we ought to lay down our life for the brethren. Well, first of all, that Christ laid down his life for you teaches you how great must have been your sins.

Now, John speaks to believers. Well, then, you who are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have seen your sins.

You have been made to see yourself as a sinner. and when you saw your sins, you were ready then, I hope still are, to acknowledge that your sins might well be described as exceeding sin. You saw your sins sins and you then mourned that you had such a heart as yours, a heart so vile, a heart so deceitful.

[9 : 12] The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? No one can begin to realize that the deceitfulness of the human heart until he begins to see himself when the light from on high is made to shine into his heart.

The heart that is yours if you are an unbeliever tonight is telling you that all is well. That proud heart is saying that you've never been better, that all is well with you if the things that he is saying and that others are saying from pulpits and that the word of God is saying may be true but if true then time enough you will settle that matter in due course all is well the heart is deceitful above all things and when you saw your heart you mourned that such a heart so deceitful should be you but perhaps now you say that such convictions as these passed away you had not seen enough of sin to make you loathe sin and to flee from it to make you hate it so much that you felt that you must leave it you saw yourself as a sinner you saw your sins and then one day you saw the glory of God's character and then you thought that you knew the heinousness of your own guilt seeing the brightness of the holiness of God your whole soul was cast down at the thought of your own sinfulness and your great departure from the living God but you lost the sense of the majesty of God and as a result you lost the sense of your own guilt and then you saw something of the loving kindness of

God to yourself you saw that he had given you all things richly to enjoy you saw that he had kept you safe through all the trials of life there perhaps were many of them you remembered all his goodness to you you looked upon your sin in the light of the grace of God and you then thought that you had seen the worst of sin but no the sense of gratitude passed away and you found yourself still prone to sin and still loving sin and then one day you saw another side you saw

Jesus Christ hanging upon the cross suffering there suffering terribly he had no sin and we believe that as one sinless he had a sensitivity to pain beyond the ordinary sensitivity of man that he that he felt with full intensity the agony of pain and of suffering and you thought that you never saw sin until then when you saw it tear the glories of

[14 : 45] Christ from his head when it seemed even to withdraw the loving kindness of God from him I may the Holy Spirit teach you and me to see the boundless wickedness of sin for Christ had to lay down his life before your sins and mine could be wiped away he laid down his life for us us and that he laid down his life for us teaches us how great must have been his love to us now most people today and I dare say some of ourselves associate

Christianity with the command to love and so they think that they know all about Christianity when they understand its teachings in terms of their own idea of love their own notion of what love is their own concept of love well John found it necessary to explain clearly to his readers what he meant by love as Cain has been the supreme example of hate Jesus Christ is presented as the supreme example of love this

John is saying is how we know what love is by observing that Jesus Christ laid down his life for us the Savior said as we have it in John chapter 15 that the greatest example of love is seen when a man lays down his life on behalf of his friends love then means readiness to do anything for others love of humanity it's a wonderful thing someone illustrated this by telling the story of a city in France long ago a city that was visited by a very deadly plague thousands of the citizens were dying and the doctors and surgeons of that city were waiting upon the sick and doing what they could for them and they had a consultation one day and the outcome of it was that they felt that a post mortem examination should be made of one of the worst cases of that plague one who had died a very sad and a fearful death because of that plague but then the question arose who will make this examination for one thing was certain that anyone who carried out such an examination would certainly die himself within a few hours and one surgeon said well I feel that my life is no

more valuable than another

I propose to sacrifice my life why shouldn't I if I can by doing so discover the cause of this plague and save the city and he he he went to that awful task he wrote the notes that he would normally have written when dealing with any case and then he went to his home and he died now there was no doubt about the love of that man for his city he loved them he laid down his life for those people he loved it and he the proof of the love was that he laid down his life now those who can die for others must surely love those others for they lay down their lives for them now our

[21 : 02] Lord Jesus Christ has proved his love to sinners by laying down his life for them by dying for them and love means just saying no to one's own life when somebody else may live and the truth is that Christ died so that we might not die he laid down his life for us what love there was here and now you look back and you see the loving kindness of the Lord as displayed to yourself in all your journey through life right up till now you look back you see your name in the everlasting covenant your name is amongst the elect of

God you remember those convictions things that so troubled you ah the good hand of the Lord was upon you he was dealing with you you may not have understood then what was happening you you bless the Lord now for the way that he brought you to himself for the grace that was preparing you for grace before grace renewed your heart at all you remember then those convictions you remember your conversion you remember your preservation you remember the grace of God that that was working upon you in adoption in justification in every part of the new covenant and yet although you must certainly think highly of all these things that

God has given you yet you acknowledge that the thought of the death of Christ upon the cross of Calvary swallows all of them up John Flavel said that all these measures are as nothing in comparison with the great love of God in giving his son to be our savior they are all swallowed up in this as the light of candles when that light is brought into the sunshine now friends what have you and I given to Jesus Christ compared to what he has given for us whatever we may be enabled to give we will say at the end we have done nothing at all for the

Lord in comparison with what he has done for us how great must have been his love to us and then that Christ laid down his life for us should teach us how safe we are now some people think that it is possible for that Christ could die for one who will yet perish die that Christ could die for one who afterwards will be lost what does that mean Christ that Christ dies for a man whom

God afterwards punishes and condemns as a sinner after all well that is not what the Bible teaches what does it have to say on this it says that Christ Jesus died in the stead of sinners that he took the place of sinners like yourself and myself that he the just one died in the place of the unjust Christ died in the stead of sinners that God is just and that he will never punish any for whom the Lord Jesus Christ shed his blood if Christ was your substitute if

[26 : 53] Christ suffered as your surety who then is he who condemns who condemns if Christ laid down his life for us if when we were yet sinners we were reconciled to God by the death of his son how much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life oh sins if we are believers today we're numbered upon the head of the scapegoat and there is not one sin that any believer ever committed that will have power to damn that believer believer tonight this is your security this is your safety that all your sins have been atoned for that indeed they were atoned for before ever they were committed he laid down his life for us but then

John makes this other astounding claim we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers now Jesus had commanded his disciples to love one another just as he had loved them in John chapter 15 we are told this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you they were loved by their Lord and Master they were to love one another because of that that was to be their the pattern of their love we ought we should be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren we are we well what does it mean we should be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren or the profession that we made is an empty bust we ought to do this that is the word that is used we ought to do it as a definite

Christian obligation because we belong to Christ just as we ought to follow his example in all things and walk even as he walked and just as if God's love to us is so great we ought also to love one another chapter two we read he who says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked and in chapter four beloved if God so loved us we ought also to love one another the love of Jesus that the example of the

Savior's love is indeed an example it is a pattern a pattern to be followed we do not know precisely what John had in mind when he spoke of the supreme sacrifice clearly he was not thinking of believers atoning for the sins of other people the death of one person could never make amends for the sins of another person it could never pay the penalty of another sins well then while we to a certain extent must imitate Jesus Christ there are some things about them which we cannot imitate now perhaps John was thinking of the possibility of laying down one's life for other people in times of persecution or that he may have been thinking of one's laying down his life for the sake of the gospel that is a possibility but more probably he was thinking of the limit to which one may have to go in self denial and it was a way of saying that love must be prepared to meet the needs of others whatever the cost in self sacrifice we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren well then we may we may the time may come when that will be asked literally of

Christian people in our land again we ought to pray that this would not come that we would not be required to undergo such a trial as that to be tested in that way but what then does it mean if it doesn't mean that to us how can we how can we lay down our lives how can we do much for our brethren just because they are our brethren how can we show love in that way how can we demonstrate love out of love to the saviour who so loved us that he laid down his life for us by loving those who are his by loving our fellow men well we may do much for the minds of others we may help them to overcome doubts we may help them to overcome the fears that beset them we may do a great deal for them just by bringing to them comfort by bringing sympathy to them [34 : 40] Jonathan you remember went to David in the wood and we are told he strengthened his hand in God and again a brother's good name can be injured in various ways now if we love our brethren we will hate to think of anything being said about them that is disparaging we will want to ask the person whom we hear speaking disparagingly of them whether in fact what he says concerning that brother of is the truth what proof is there we will want to stand between him and those who would spoil his good reputation we we should show that love which rejoices not in iniquity and again the body may need help perhaps there isn't so much of that to be seen today not around ourselves however there may be need of comfort of provision made for those who are less well placed than ourselves now we cannot perform miracles but we can perhaps help greatly by visiting someone who is less well placed than ourselves and bringing comfort to such a person and we may think that in a little way there is a laying down of our lives for the brethren there and that we can do that out of love for him who lay down his life for us now we read in verse 17 who so has this world's good and sees his brother have need and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him how dwells the love of

God in him there we have a striking reminder of the duty of works of mercy remember that the Lord said to the rich young ruler one thing you lack go and sell everything that you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven now Christians and perhaps particularly evangelical Christians do not seem to be so prominent in this direction as they once were and as the word of their Lord and Master certainly calls them now to be now when we who have food to spare food enough and to spare see another Christian in need or hear of other

Christians in need it is our duty to show compassion to them and to go and to give them of what we have perhaps in abundance ourselves the Lord said and we are reminded often at this time of year of this very thing it is more blessed to give than to receive certainly true of the early church it was the glory of Christianity in its first powerful effects that no one who embraced it ever lacked the multitude of them who believed were of one heart and of one soul neither said any of them that ought that is that anything of the things which he possessed was his own but they had all things in common so loving and kindly were they to one another that that could be said of them they shared what they had what they had now if we loved each other now as

Christians just as they did then in the early days of the church we would be the talk of the town and even the worldling would say oh see how these Christians love one another and that friends is only what we ought to be doing here we perceive the love of God to us that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren may the Lord help us all to search our own hearts on this matter it's a clear word of scripture to us let us pray we thank thee oh

Lord for the rich provision that was made for us we bless thee that the pangs of hunger are little known in our islands but throughout our land in these days and for many years past there has been provision made oh Lord we thank thee for these things and we pray that that our own riches and material things may not blind any of us to the deeper needs that are ours we pray that we may look

on those things that we receive as the gifts of the God who is so generous and liberal in his provision and who calls us to consider what our own relationship and spiritual things is to himself we pray for the spirit that we may know ourselves we near the end of another year we look back we see how swiftly it has passed we wonder at the swiftness of our lives passing soon for all of us the place that knows us now will know us no more none of us knows how soon we must go hence to be here no more forever oh that we were wise that we understood this that we were considering our latter end and so numbering our days that we were applying our hearts unto wisdom granted [42 : 49] Lord take from us our sins make us pure in heart to know that blessedness of the pure in heart oh give us a desire to be Christ like to live holy lives to be separate from this world to be while while we are in it not of it oh may we know that blessed distinction that the word makes continue with us Lord help us to remember one another help us to know where there is need help us even in this week in which we are entered to know where we should go in our spare time to know who they are with whom we should make contact remember the house bowed we pray that the Lord would bless them giving them his presence to make their hearts rejoice oh it is those who have known the blessedness of communion with thee who sorrow when the sense of that communion is absent give us oh Lord the desire to be more with thee to love thee more to serve thee better undertake for us all oh take from us those things which mar our work and our witness take from the eyes of the the unbeliever those scales that have been there all his days and may he even now be enabled to look at him who he who he he he he he