

## **Sunday School Lesson November 15, 2020**

Good morning, I hope you are well and feel blessed.

Lesson for November 15, 2020, "Confident Love"

Background Scripture from 1 John 3:11-24, 2 John 4-11, 3 John 5-8

How do we know that we are truly Christians? The answer given to us in this week's lesson is very simple. We have learned to love others because of Jesus. The world is looking for genuine Christianity so that they can follow it, but unfortunately, it is hard to find. Love is the sign of those who say they are following Jesus. The defining mark of a Christian, is that people should be able to see Christ's character and love in us. The love of Jesus has been revealed to us in God's Word. The love of Christ is the measure of the love that each of us should aspire to in our lives. His perfect love is demonstrated by His amazing statement that "Greater love has no one than this: that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13). That is the highest standard of love. The love Christ has for His people is the standard we should strive to attain to. It is an unreachable standard, yet we have been asked to conform to that standard, to strive toward that standard, to live with the love Christ showed us so that we can conform to His image.

The three epistles of John were not written to any specific church, but was sent as a pastoral letter to several Gentile congregations and all believers everywhere. This letter was probably written between 90 and 95 A.D. from Ephesus before John was exiled to the island of Patmos. After, Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., Christians were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. By the time John wrote this letter, Christianity had been around for more than a generation. The main problem facing the church at this time was declining commitment. Many believers were conforming to the world's standards, failing to stand up for Christ and compromising their faith.

False teachers were plentiful, and they were accelerating the church's downward slide away from the Christian faith. At the time of the letter, false teachers had entered the church denying the incarnation (becoming human) of Jesus Christ (I John 2:18-23). John wrote to correct these serious errors. He opens this letter by declaring that he was an eyewitness to the humanity of Christ while stating his reason for writing (I John 1:1-4). He then presents God as "*light*," symbolizing absolute purity and holiness (John 1:5-7), and he explains how believers can walk in God's light and have fellowship with Him (I John 1:8-10) with Christ as their defender (I John 2:1-2). John urges his

readers to obey Christ fully and to love all the members of God's family (I John 2:3-17). He warns his readers of "*antichrists*" and the antichrist who will try to lead them away from the truth (I John 2:18-29). The Apostle wrote to assure true believers that they possessed eternal life and to help them know that their faith was real in light of the return of Jesus Christ (I John 2:28-3:1-10). Our lesson begins with verse 11 as John gives another way to identify Christians', love for others.

In verses 17-18, of chapter 3 John poses a question to his readers. He asked, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" John's question might ask this: "How can God's love dwell in anyone who has plenty and recognizes that a fellow Christian has a need, and refuses to have compassion or mercy on him by sharing what he has?" Putting this in perspective, if "love" can motivate us to sacrifice our life for someone, certainly it should motivate us to sacrifice our goods for someone.

Love, will not allow a believer to refuse to help a believer in need. We won't selfishly hold on to our material goods when we know a believer is in need, and we have the means to help. There are needy people who can and should be helped by their Christian brethren. This may include people who are sick, out of work, or otherwise suffering financially. To these, we should reach out and help, for in doing so we are ministering to Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46). Our primary concern should be for those in the family of faith, or other believers, we should not exclude helping anyone (Galatians 6:10).

If we fail to love, we are left with feelings of guilt that hinder our confidence in the Lord. When our actions are motivated by love, we can approach God with boldness and receive what we ask of Him. When we love as He directs and engage in those actions that please Him, we can have confidence that we are in His will. When we obey God's commands, He honors our requests.

Verse 23 states the commandment. "And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us." It requires that we love each other, especially those in the body of Christ. We must also remain in fellowship with God, which means staying connected to Him through meditating on the Word and praying. But the commandment to live also means that we must stay connected with other Christians. When we obey God's commandments and live in intimate fellowship with Jesus, others will witness a change and ask what fuels our joy. Our confidence and our love are anchored in the fact that we know Christ lives in us and we live for Him.

This lesson reminds us that no matter what happens in the world, we are commanded to love one another. Consider what the church can do to

promote love and unity in a world that seems to be torn by strife, hatred and confusion. Are there answers to these problems, and if so, who should be leading the way to solve them? The church, the government, or us?

As God transforms us we come to understand love and compassion more fully because we're tethered by faith to the one who is love, because we have sought the one who defines and loves compassion, the one who calls us to compassion.

Love and compassion are at the center of the Gospel, and as we look at the life and ministry of Jesus, we see Him engaged in love, compassion and social justice actions at every turn. He feeds the hungry. He defends the oppressed. He stands up for women's rights. He loves the outcast, the despised, the rejected, and the sinner, and calls on the rich and powerful to give their money to the poor and take care of the needs of the helpless.

The mission and message of Jesus is pretty clearly summarized in Luke 4:18-19. He wants to give sight to the blind, liberty to the captives, and deliverance to the oppressed. If we look at the actions of Jesus throughout the Gospels He did these things both spiritually and physically. Sometimes Jesus met people's physical needs before He addressed their spiritual needs, and other times He addressed their spiritual needs first. He set an example for us. He did not tell those in need they needed to turn to the government to supply their needs and He does not expect us to do that. He told us to not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." If we have the means He said take care of that brother or sister.

**Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.**

Next week's lesson November 22, 2020, "Sharing Love"

Background Scripture Acts 4:32-5:11.

*Sources for this lesson: The Bible, International Sunday School Lesson and Commentary, Dr. Craig Rikard, Lesson on Abiding Love, from South Georgia Advocate, David Cook, with Standard Publishing Lesson on Abiding Love, Halley's Bible Handbook and The Present Word Adult Bible Lessons.*