

“OH HOW HE LOVES YOU AND ME!”

I JOHN 4:19-5:1

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

Is verse 19 more closely connected with v. 18 or v. 20? Does it round off the discussion of perfected love bringing confidence and driving out fear, or does it introduce the discussion of love for God demanding love for one's brother? Burdick favors the connection with v. 18 since the statement here that “we love” gives assurance that the issue of not being perfected in love does not hold true for these genuine Christians. However, it seems that there is a stronger logical connection with v. 20 and that the love of v. 19 focuses more on love for God—as “He loved us” seems to favor, along with the statement “I love God” in v. 20. Once again, the verse likely transitions between the two sections.

In this section John switches “gears” from a focus mostly on God's love for us to our love toward God and brothers. Do You “love God”? If so, how can you demonstrate that? The best way you show it is with your life.

YOU MUST LOVE YOUR CHRISTIAN FAMILY AS GOD HAS LOVED YOU.

I. THE BASIS OF OUR LOVE (19)

A. The fact of our love—“We love.”

1. Up till now the focus has been on God's love toward us in Christ (4:9, 10, 11).
2. John speaks of “love” in general—whether toward God or toward men (the emphasis in I Jn.).

B. The Possibility of our love—“because **HE** first loved us.”

1. The kind of love of which John speaks is *agape* love—selfless, sacrificial, and focused on the object. **As always, this “love” is the high form of selfless sacrifice for the benefit of the person loved. Love is not necessarily attracted to the person because of some loveable qualities, nor does it always experience “warm emotional feelings toward the one loved, nor does it always run with the natural inclinations of our individual nature. True love reveals itself in its beneficent concern for the welfare of others” (H. 225).**
2. The focus of God's love was in the act of Redemption—“he **loved** in the past.
3. He took the initiative—“first” loved; once again “He” can refer to God or Christ.
4. He loved “us”—totally undeserving sinners!
5. We can never know genuine love except through the Father in the Son.
6. This verse is more specific in saying that our act of loving results from God's act of loving. Prior to this the emphasis has been on God's love manifested and known to and believed by us; now John speaks of our love. Barker notes that “we return to him his own love and love him with the gift of his love. So also we love our brother with the love God has loved us with” (p. 347).

II. THE FOCUS OF OUR LOVE IS TOWARD CHRISTIAN BROTHERS (4:20-5:1)

A. **Logical Necessity:** One cannot love God if he does not love his brother [Christian brother—see 5:1] (20).

1. The false claim—“I love God.”
 - a. But he “hates” his brother. [To “hate” someone is the same as not loving them.]
 - The strong contrast—“am loving God and his brother he is hating.”
 - b. In character he is a “liar.”
 - Cf. 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 22; 5:10; Jn. 8:44
2. The impossibility of loving God
 - a. Not loving the brother is evidence that he is not saved—not a believer; thus he **cannot** love God.
 - b. He “has seen” his brother—knows him and his needs, and has opportunity to help. This brother is still “in his mind's eye.”

- c. He “has never seen” God—lacks the same opportunity to focus love toward Him; more difficult to love one whom you cannot see (especially when in reality you don’t know Him).
- B. **Dual Command:** One must love his brother—it is commanded (4:21).
1. This commandment—likely Dt. 6:5—quoted in Mt. 22:37ff.; cf. Jn. 13:34.
 2. “Him” is ultimately the Father, but involves the Son.
 3. Cannot be loving God without loving also one’s brother.
- C. **Family Relationship:** One cannot help but love his brother because he shares the same Father (5:1).
- John here ties together the two primary qualities of NT Christianity—**Faith and Love**.
1. Each one who believes that Jesus is the Christ **has been begotten/born** of God.
 - a. Applies to all who so believe—no exceptions.
 - Here the new birth is related to *belief*; elsewhere the new birth is related to various forms of Christian behavior, such as acting justly and *righteously* (2:29), *not* practicing *sin* (3:9; 5:18), and practicing *love* (4:7).
 - Some argue that the begetting comes first, not the believing; God first brings the new birth, then man believes. John says that one who believes “has been begotten of God.” Believing here does not refer mainly to the initial act, but to the continuing manifestation of faith. Burdick argues that **“It is equally possible—and more in keeping with John’s argument in this context—to understand the verse as saying that anyone who believes in the incarnation is a child of God. The point of the passage is that belief is a sign of new birth, not that belief is a consequence of new birth”** (p. 343). John 1:12 seems clear that one does not have the “right” to become a child of God until he “received” Him, even those who “believe on His name.” Verse 13 follows with “who were born...”
 - b. “Believe” is more than intellectual; involves a relationship with a person—commitment to Him.
 - c. The Incarnate “Jesus” is also the Christ—Messiah and Son of God.
 - d. “Of God” means out of/from God as the source of the birth.
 - e. The verb means the act is past but results continue into the present.
 2. Everyone who loves **the begetter** loves also **the one begotten**.
 - a. Applies to all who so love.
 - b. The loving is continual both ways.
 - c. The one begotten has the nature and character qualities of his begetter—his Father.
 - d. One cannot love the Father without loving His children! **After all, they share the same “Daddy”** and they have the same divinely begotten new nature.

CONCLUSION

We love because He first loved us.

- 1) Our love responds to His love out of gratitude.
- 2) We love by following His pre-eminent example of love.
- 3) God provides the power to love through His grace which we experience in Christ; this is the primary point, although the first two explanations are also involved.

There is a **logical necessity** for us to love our brothers.

We have been given a **dual command** to love our brothers.

We have a special **family relationship** that requires us to love our brothers.

YOU MUST LOVE YOUR CHRISTIAN FAMILY AS GOD HAS LOVED YOU.