

LOVE GOD AND LOVE YOUR BROTHERS

1 John 3:1-24

Key Verse: 3:16

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”

In chapter 1, we studied Christian koinonia. We must establish Christian koinonia in our families, in our church, in our society, and in our country. As our forefathers cultivated this vast land of America and built many houses and log cabins and communities and states, so she became the nation which had the fear of God, because they practiced Christian koinonia. We studied chapter 2 with the title, “Live in the Light.” We are the children of God. Therefore, we must live in the light of Jesus. We should not live in the darkness of the devil. It is imperative. In chapter 3, we are going to study how we prove ourselves to be the children of God. For this, we must acknowledge the love of God and we must love our brothers as ourselves.

First, how great is the love of God (1).

Look at the first part of verse 1. It says, **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”** How great a privilege it is to be called the children of God. Here, “children of God” has deep meaning. The love of God is that God sent his one and only Son to save men from their sins. There were so many people. How can it be that God should send his one and only Son to save us from our sins? It was because God could not send someone else, because of their sins. God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ. Let’s think about how difficult it was to send his Son as the atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world. Here the words “atoning sacrifice” are the same as the sacrifice lamb. Could anybody send his or her only son as the atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world? No. It is impossible for anybody.

There is a story about an Indian giver. A certain American Indian had nine sons and three daughters. But they were very poor and the parents could not take care of them properly. So the Indian father went to a well-known American missionary and asked for some money on the condition that he would give him one of his nine sons. The American missionary had no children. So he was very happy to give a remarkable amount of money to the Indian father. Then the Indian father brought one of his sons. The next day, early in the morning around 5:00 a.m., the Indian father brought the money bag back and sat down on the ground and cried

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and cried. The American missionary asked him what the problem was with him. But he did not answer. Instead, the Indian father continued crying. After two hours, the Indian father said to the American missionary, "Here is your money bag." It meant, "Give my son back to me." The Indian father thought he had nine sons, so giving one son to a childless American missionary was a good thing. The Indian father thought he could use the large amount of money for his family and let the American missionary adopt his son and care for him and give his son a higher education. But overnight his assumption vanished. Instead, his son given to the American missionary seemed to have been calling him, crying and waving his two little hands, calling, "Daddy! Daddy!" The Indian father felt like dying, not to mention getting some sleep. So he went and brought his son back. Since that time, a saying spread, "You are an Indian giver."

It is easy for anyone to think that he could give one of his sons for the sake of blessing others. However, practically, to give one's son to others is impossible as far as humanity is concerned. One day, a UBF senior shepherd asked a junior shepherd, "Since you have three sons, can you give one of them to Dr. Noah Rhee?" The junior shepherd was very obedient. So he went home and talked about the story to his wife. His wife was furiously mad and yelled at him, "Are you really crazy? What are you talking about? You don't know what you are talking about! You may have to go to a mental hospital!" The couple had never quarreled before. But this time, he was rebuked by his wife and got sick for three days. To be rebuked by his wife was not easy.

In 1995, the UBF International Summer Bible Conference motivated many missionaries who came from 45 countries. These missionaries' concept of world mission was just flying on an airplane and going to a foreign land. But when they arrived in the foreign lands, they had to learn a foreign language. They had to be familiar with foreign culture. Then the devil made them doubt the love of God. But through the 1995 UBF International Summer Bible Conference, they were greatly motivated to the degree that they wanted to be life-giving missionaries. Now there are missionaries in 15 countries whose ministries are in the stage of discipleship training. Missionaries in another 15 countries have worship services between husband and wife. They also pray that God would bless them and give one man of God for each mission field.

Therefore, our 1997 UBF International Summer Bible Conference is very important for overseas missionaries. We must give good influence by showing them that UBF USA has greatly revived. We must show them God's vision, and

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that UBF USA is an inspiration and source of strength to them. But UBF USA did not grow for the last year, except for Chicago. So the senior shepherds asked three chapter directors to quit their full-time jobs. According to their reports, they make \$70,000 to \$100,000 annually. But for the sake of missionaries from overseas, the senior shepherds asked them to quit their full-time jobs and engage in full-time student evangelism so that we may be a blessing to overseas missionaries. They are very willing to do so. But they are delaying their resignation because they worry about their secure job positions and their future security. Here we learn that just working hard is easy. But working for God by giving up their dreams and working with life-giving spirit is not easy at all.

How do we know the love of God? When we believe that God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice to save men from their sins, we can realize the love of God. When God's one and only Son had to come to this world in a human form it might have been very easy for him if he only had to sacrifice his office job or some kind of position. But it was not easy for him. In addition, he had to give up his honor, glory and power of the kingdom of God and come down to this world of darkness. Jesus was infinite God. But he had to be limited in time and space in a human form. Jesus' incarnation is full of grace and truth because he gave up all his glory, honor and power of the kingdom of God. From God's point of view, Jesus' incarnation is also a life-giving sacrifice and unmanageable sorrow. How can we understand God's sorrow when he sent his one and only Son to this world to save men from their sins? There is a story about a mother crow. One day, early in the morning, a mother crow saw a bunch of hunters going into the forest. The mother crow flew to the hunters and said, "You can hunt many kinds of animals and birds. But please don't kill our baby crow, which looks most beautiful in the world." So the hunters did not kill beautiful birds. They shot down the most ugly-looking bird. To the mother crow, her baby crow was the most beautiful and most precious. But to the hunters, the baby crow looked most ugly. So they shot the baby crow. Later they came to know that the crow they shot was the mother crow's baby. This familiar story tells us that each one's child is the most precious and most beautiful. But God gave his one and only Son Jesus Christ. John 3:16 says, **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."**

When we read verse 1, there is the word, "lavished." It means that God did not spare his Son, but freely gave him to us so that we may be saved from our sins. When we think about the word, "lavished," it is a very difficult word to practice to fallen mankind. One can give a junky car to his friend. We can give some of our

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used furniture to our friends. There is a young man who received his grandma's furniture. When his shepherd saw it, it was not worth giving away to the Salvation Army. It is not easy for anyone to give one's son as the atoning sacrifice. But God lavished his one and only Son Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice to save men from their sins. This is the love of God and this is the reason that God is love. In order to send his one and only Son, God had to let his one and only Son sacrifice in many ways. First, God made his Son renounce all his heavenly glory and power and made him humble until he was born in a stable of an animal and laid in a manger.

Why was he born in the stable of animals and laid in a manger? It was to become a friend with the most fatalistic people of the world. Why was he laid in the manger? It was because he wanted to become friends with the most sorrowful people. Jesus did so, finally, to make friends with all kinds of wretched sinners. Now we understand how God lavished his one and only Son to save us from our sins.

Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. But he has mighty power to save all men from their sins. The problem is that sin demands only holy blood. This is the reason God made his one and only Son the Lamb of God. Jesus' coming to this world was promised and prophesied and fulfilled. Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist, came six months before Jesus. John knew who Jesus was. One day, John the Baptist saw that Jesus was coming toward him. Then he was overwhelmed by sorrow and said to his disciples, **"Look! Oh look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"** (Jn 1:29) When John said this, he must have cried at the thought of Jesus becoming the atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world. Isaiah the prophet knew about the coming of the Son of God to the world to become the atoning sacrifice. So he said in Isaiah 53:1, **"Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"** To Isaiah, even to hear that Jesus would be the atoning sacrifice was too sorrowful to believe. So he cried out, **"Who can believe this? Why should this happen to Jesus?"** Isaiah cried and cried. Isaiah 53:7 says, **"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."** Jesus took all our infirmities and transgressions silently, so silently. God's lavishing his one and only Son is indeed remarkable and is beyond description. When Jesus had to become the atoning sacrifice on the cross, the earth shook and the rocks split (Mt 27:51). Jesus' atoning sacrifice made the heavens and the earth cry.

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Look at verse 1a again. **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!”** We become the children of God by the precious blood of Jesus. We become the children of God by the infinite love of God. Here we learn that we must have great pride being the children of God. Our God is Almighty. And we are the children of the Almighty God. Our God is holy, holy, holy God. Because God is holy, we are the holy children of God. When we read Mark chapter 5, there is a young man who became a slave of self-torture, because he was possessed by the evil spirits. Without God we are under the dominion of Satan. Without God we are the children of darkness. But God lavished his one and only Son as the atoning sacrifice. Thus, we became the children of God (Ro 8:15-17).

Look at verse 1b. **“The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”** We are the precious children of God. The reason the world does not know us is that they did not know God. When we are saved by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, our value system changes. When we became the children of God, we were brought out of the darkness into the marvelous light. People who live in darkness unconditionally hate the children of God, because when the children of God come around them their sinful lifestyles are exposed in public, and what is more, their darkness vanishes away. It is natural that the children of darkness hate and despise the children of the light. Otherwise, they will vanish by the children of the light. There are many people who love their pet dogs. And there are also many people who hate the children of the light without question.

Second, the hope of the children of God (2-3).

Even though we are the children of God, we live in the world. Sometimes we feel that to be the children of God is not easy. But in reality, it is very easy when we have the hope of God. First, we must believe the Second Coming of Jesus. Look at verses 2-3. **“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”** These verses explain that as Jesus promised, he comes again.

In verse 2, his coming is expressed with the words, “when he appears.” While we are living in the world, to woman, the marriage problem is serious. To man, the future security problem is a bone-crushing item. But we should not be

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caught by the things of the world. We must wait for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. When we have faith that he is coming again we can be holy pilgrims. When we have faith that he is coming again we can be faithful. When we have faith that he is coming again we can live a holy life. When we have faith that he is coming again we can love God and we can love our brothers. When Jesus comes again we will see him face to face. We will all be changed to be like him. 1 Corinthians 15:49 says, **“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.”**

But it is not easy for us to believe the Second Coming of Jesus because we still have a craving attachment to the world. When Jesus talked about going up to the Father's house and coming back again, his disciples worried about their future security problems, and Peter went into the restroom and cried with a loud voice. But John 14:1-3 says, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”** Many times Jesus taught his Second Coming to his disciples. Matthew 24:42-44 says, **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”** 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11 explains the Second Coming of Jesus very well. It says, **“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”** Verses 2-3 poetically describe the hope of God's children. Let's read them together. **“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”**

Third, do not keep on sinning (4-10).

St. John warns the children of God not to keep on sinning. It is because sin is lawlessness. When we keep on sinning, the world becomes lawless. When we keep

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on sinning, the beautiful children of God all become like the devils. Most importantly, those who keep on sinning cannot see Jesus. Those who keep on sinning become ignorant and cannot realize the love of God. Finally, they all become the children of the devil. The children of God must keep themselves away from deceptive people, because he who does what is sinful is of the devil, and the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work (8). Those who are born of the devil will keep on sinning. Those who are born of God do not keep on sinning. We know that we are the children of God when we love God and when we love our brothers (9-10).

Fourth, the way to know the love of God (11-15).

How do we come to know the love of God? Look at verse 16. **“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”** Those who love God and practice God's love to their brothers are those who know the love of God. There are many people who say, “I love God.” There are many people who say, “God is love, so I am saved, despite my wretchedness.” These people make use of God's love. They will be condemned. Look at verse 13. **“Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.”** We should not be surprised if the world hates us. It hates us because we have passed from death to life. In other words, when we live in the light those who live in the darkness hate us continuously. The world hates us because we love our brothers. The world wants us to hate one another diligently. But people of the world see that the children of God love one another. We buy Big Macs and pray for one another. They cannot understand why we love one another. They think the children of God are weird when they love one another (13-14a). But the Bible tells us that those who do not love remain in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and has no eternal life (15). They are like Cain, who killed his lovely younger brother out of his petty emotional feeling (12).

Fifth, practice the love of God in our practical lives (16-24).

Look at verse 16. **“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”** There are many people who say, “I love God. I love my brothers.” But if they have to spend even a little money for their brothers, they become very unhappy. Look at verse 17. **“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?”** We Christians should not love our brothers with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth (18).

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When we do so, we come to know that we are in the truth (19). When we are in the truth, we have the peace of God. But when we do not have the love of God in our hearts, the feeling of condemnation accompanies us. When we come to God, God is greater than our hearts. Therefore we must practice the love of God, and when we are tired of practicing the love of God we must come to God for help (18-20).

When we want to help others, sometimes we have no money. What's more, we have many excuses not to love our brothers. Then we have a sense of condemnation and lose confidence that God would bless us when we pray (21-22). Therefore, we should not love our brothers with our speculation. We must love our brothers with the love of God, as our Lord Jesus Christ showed us. When we are going to practice the love of God to our brothers, we must believe that the word of God is the holy commandment of God. When we are going to practice the love of God, we must be ready to obey his command. Then we come to know that God is love and we can love our brothers.

May God richly bless you. As God loved us through his Son Jesus Christ, we must also love our brothers with our lives.