

—{1}. **1 John 3:16-18** **The Measure of Love**

A. Introduction

- 1. it was originally a play called 'Pygmalion' by Shaw
 - a. but the more familiar Eliza Doolittle is "My Fair Lady" the heroine of the musical (opened in New York in 1956)
 - b. Freddy courts Eliza. Daily he writes to her of his love. Eliza's casts his notes aside, crying out in frustration:
 - Words! Words! I'm so sick of words!
 - I get words all day through
 - First from him and now from you ...
 - Don't talk of love lasting through time.
 - Make me no undying vow, show me now! ...
 - Sing me no song! Read me no rhyme!
 - Don't waste my time, Show me! —{2}.
 - c. it takes more than mere words to express love
- 2. that's the message this letter of John has for us this morning
 - a. what is the measure of love? what are its bounds?
 - b. well, love has to be more the mere words
 - c. love must be greater than simply pleasant sentiments
 - d. as faith is defined by obedience, love is defined by actions

B. Love's Inception 1 John 3:16a

- 1. What is the inception of Christian love?
 - a. where does it start? ... what is its origin?
 - b. the Bible makes it very clear that Christian love – love in us that we show in our lives – is not natural in its origin, but rather supernatural, spiritual, heavenly

c. the first part of the first verse of today's text confirms this

2. Hereby we know love, because He gave up His life on our behalf;

3. Christian love has its root and source in God Himself

a. John 3:16 tells us that God's love is defined by His actions

b. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (AV)

c. in this chapter, John is building his picture of Christian love by what he has said in verse 1: "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." (NAS)

d. in the next chapter we shall encounter this verse: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." (1 Jn 4:10 NAS)

4. but the verse tells us something else

a. love is more than something which can be felt or surmised

b. love, says John, can be known

c. this is the wonderful paradox expressed in Ephesians 3:19, "and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God." (NAS)

d. love is factually recognizable and readily identifiable

e. because love is distinguished by what it does

f. God's love is knowable; God's love is a fact; God's love, if you will, is capable of proof ... how? Because of what God has done through Christ and the cross to save us from sin.

g. upon this basis and foundation, John now applies it to the Christian: what should be the measure of Christian love?

C. Love's Intensity 1 John 3:16b

1. ... and we ought to give up our lives on behalf of the brothers.

2. Christian love is to be measured side by side with Christ's love

- a. Jesus Christ modelled love for us
- b. so love is defined, not by a dictionary, but by a Person
- c. a love where no price was too great; no, not even death
- d. we can, perhaps, picture ourselves in some circumstances showing such love – for someone dear, precious to us
- e. Princess Alice was the third child of Queen Victoria. Prime Minister on reporting her death to the House of Commons, told a touching story: The little daughter of the Princess was seriously ill with diphtheria. The doctors told the princess not to kiss her little daughter and endanger her life by breathing the child's breath. Once when the child was struggling to breathe, the mother, forgetting herself entirely, took the little one into her arms to keep her from choking to death. Rasping and struggling for her life, the child said, "Momma, kiss me!" Without thinking of herself the mother tenderly kissed her daughter. She got diphtheria and some days thereafter she went to be forever with the Lord. Real love forgets self. Real love knows no danger. Real love doesn't count the cost. ^{-(3)}}.
- f. yes, love for a close relative or friend, might ignore death

3. but the love Christ models goes even beyond that

- a. Romans 5:6-8 (NLT): "When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."
- b. that is the intensity of the measure of the Christian love that John would have us to show one another
- c. a love measured by an intensity casting out fear of death

D. Love's Involvement 1 John 3:17

- 1. Whosoever should have the wherewithal of life of the world and should see his brother having need and should shut his heart away from him; how does the love of God abide in Him?
- 2. from time to time we hear in the news of some act of abuse
 - a. a woman attacked, a youth beaten, a child hurt
 - b. while some have heard but ignored the cries

c. or while onlookers stood by, seemingly helpless, unhelping

3. such events remind us of Jesus' story in Luke 10:30-37

- a. it was told in order to answer the question posed to Jesus: 'Who is my neighbour?' in connection with the command, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'
- b. but it also answers the questions, what does to love mean?
- c. there was the man travelling down from Jerusalem to Jericho, beaten, robbed, stripped, left to die by thieves
- d. I am sure the priest who came by considered himself as a loving man, obedient to the law ... he offered sin offering for the people, partook with them their peace offerings ... but to stop and to touch this man who might die at any instant ... well, he wouldn't be able to minister for a week
- e. likewise, the Levite; maybe one of those in the choir; maybe even humming 'How amiable are thy tabernacles' no doubt thought himself loving; he even went and looked at the wounded man but ... not much point; the thieves may still be around; let's get on my way
- f. but, the Samaritan got involved: stopped, bandage up the wounds, poured oil and wine to stop infection and start the healing, took him to the inn, and, to the innkeeper said, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you."

4. involvement means

- a. giving of our time, our wherewithal, our means, our selves
- b. when we behold the wounds and needs of our brothers

E. Love's Integrity 1 John 3:18

- 1. Dear children, let us let us neither love by means of word, nor by means of the tongue, but actually and truly.
- 2. yet, even doing all those things can still fall short
 - a. if the actions of love are wrongly motivated
 - b. is our love the response of duty, or of gratitude to God
 - c. Rev. Mark Murphy points out the three types of love in a manner that is easy to remember: —{4}.

- (A) the "IF" kind of love – conditional: I will love you if ... if you're kind, if you're good, if you're lovable, if you're fun to be with – it's a reciprocal kind of love
 - (B) the "BECAUSE" kind of love – responsive: I love you because ... you're beautiful, you're exciting, you have a wonderful personality – at best a provisional love, lasting only as long as the response is activated
 - (C) the "IN SPITE OF" kind of love – unconditional; no strings attached, regardless of shortcoming weakness, flaw, and unloveliness
- d. "IN SPITE OF" love is loving actually and truly
 - e. "IN SPITE OF" love is love with integrity
 - f. men and women, as easily as God does, will see through any love that does not have integrity.

F. Conclusion: (James 3:13 NAS): "Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behaviour his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom."

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. “My Fair Lady” by Lerner & Lowe © 1956 (?)
3. “Mother’s Love Is Stronger Than Death” from Rev. Brett Blair’s Illustrations, Kerux illustrations #19811
4. “Presenting Christ or Peddling Christ?” by Rev. Mark Murphy, Kerux sermons #22635