

A Proof that We Love Father

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. – 1 John 5:1

Believing in Jesus in His capacity as “the Christ”, that is, God’s anointed one, is the basis for the new birth. Whatever vague thing faith is for those outside of Christ, to John, there was no such thing as faith apart from some identifiable object of faith. Ultimately, faith believes the Person of Jesus; that He was anointed by God to enter the world as a man, that He demonstrated sinless manhood in harmony with God and that He died in the place of every person who failed to achieve such sinless manhood. On the third day, He rose from the grave to prove that He does indeed hold the keys that can release us from the shackles of sin and death.

There is no salvation apart from Jesus. As narrow-minded as that assertion is judged to be in this culture where the pursuit of spiritual truth seems to be such an arbitrary endeavor, Christ-followers cannot bend. “Christ and Him crucified!” remains our gospel. But, there is another truth on which we cannot bend. Anyone else who knows Jesus is our brother by virtue of the same birth to the same Father. They are ours. We are stuck with them, not as a burden, but because; “... everyone who loves the Father loves the child as well.”

Because we have been born of God, we, along with many others are being “conformed to the likeness of his Son so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Romans 8:29). In any nuclear family, there may be tensions, growing pains as well as any number of lessons in the arts of compromise and getting along. But, in any remotely healthy or even normal family, a child will ultimately learn that it is hard to cozy up to one parent if there is an expectation for that parent to estrange himself or herself from the other children at the pleasure of the first child. There can be nothing but conflict until every sibling eventually comes around to understanding: “everyone who loves the Father loves the child as well.”

The Baptists in a small town were between pastors when a deacon died. The family asked the Methodist pastor to conduct the funeral. This was his first year in ministry and the Methodist pastor felt he needed approval from the bishop of the area. He sent a telegram asking: “May I bury a Baptist deacon?” The bishop quickly replied by telegram: “Bury all the Baptists you can!”

Christ’s cause is strongest when the love of God finds ways to bridge man-made barriers of denomination, tradition, socio-economic status, *etc.* But, nowhere is a visible manifestation of love more critical to the cause of Christ than in the local church body. There will inevitably be points where Christian brothers and sisters differ, but what they share in common is so much greater. May we always be willing to come together, not just in a unity of mission, but, especially, in that tangible love that identifies the disciples of Jesus to a world that is watching us all.

Think of those headless frames at fairs and carnivals painted to represent a muscle man, a clown, or even a ballerina. You stick your face in a hole where the head is supposed to be. A companion snaps a picture because the pairing of body and head is funny, even bizarre. When we picture Christ as the head of any given local body of believers, does everything look perfectly normal, or does the world laugh at the misfit?

Too often, in the untapped places of our hearts, we choose to believe that working on mutual love is not a crucial thing – just some optional fruit that some believers do better than others. Is anything at stake when brother chooses estrangement from brother? Can the connection to Father really remain normal?