

Love One Another

1 John 4:7-13

Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow with me beginning in verse seven as I read down to verse 13. John says, "Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knows God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." This was manifested or displayed the love of God toward us because that God sent His only begotten son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and he sent His son to be the sacrifice or the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to also love one another. No man has seen God at any time. Now, if we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us.

Verse 13, "Hereby we know that we dwell in Him and He dwells in us, because He has given to us His spirit," literally of His spirit. I basically grew up in San Bernardino. From the time we were young, we were living right up against the foothills of the mountains, San Bernardino mountains. We would hike up into the foothills. I remember one time we were hiking and we found this little stream and I'd never seen before. I thought, "Well, that's really cool." We made the decision that we were going to hike all the way up the stream to find its source. Now that could have been that mean we'd have to go all the way up to the mountain, but it only took us about an hour. We hiked up. I'll never forget, I'd never seen it before. We found the source of the stream. It was actually an artesian well. Right out of the ground just came bubbling up, fresh, clean, clear water. I'll never forget, I got down on my hands and knees and I just drank right out of that artesian well. It was so awesome.

John, in his epistle, comes the third time to the subject of love. But this time what he's going to do, he's going to follow the stream of God's love right to its source and he's going to make it very clear that the source of love is God himself.

We get one of the most profound statements in all the Bible about God. John says, "God is love," and John says also that love is of God, or that love is coming from God. He is the source. He's, so to speak, the artesian well of all love. I like to stop and think about that. Love has its source, love has its origin in God. Any love that we can understand comes from God. He is the source of that love.

John comes back to the subject. When he first mentions it in chapter two, it's the issue of fellowship with God. If we are in fellowship with God, then we're going to love our brother. If we are loving our brother, then it's a mark of his son ship. We belong to God. The life that is real is a life of love and a real love comes from God.

Robert Law said about this passage within these verses, first John rises to its Sublimate heights. I would say that this passage that we cover today is really the mountain peak of first John when it speaks here of God's love.

Now, what I want to point out in this passage is three reasons why we as Christians should love one another. The context of this appeal, this command to love one another is Christians loving Christians. Now we're to love other people as well, but in the context, it's Christians loving Christians.

If you're taking notes, I want to give you three reasons that you and I as Christians should love one another. Reason number one, because of what God is. Love. God is love. Or because of God's very nature, we're going to find that these three reasons that we should love one another all come from God as the source.

Go back with me to verse seven and eight. John starts with beloved. He's practicing what he preaches. He reminds them, I love you and God loves you. Let us love one another. Why? For love is of God and everyone that loves is born of God.

Then the negative, he that loveth not does not know God. Why? Because God is love. Verse eight. Now this command here, or this actually appeal, is to love one another. Notice in verse seven, he uses the phrase love one another, again in verse 11, love one another, and again in verse 12, love one another. In verse seven it is an appeal, and then in verse 11, it's a command, it's an imperative in the Greek. Love one another. Then in verse 12, it's evidence of our salvation.

Now the word, in the Greek, the Bible was originally written in the New Testament in the Greek language, the Greek word for love is a Greek word agape, or pronounced ag-o-pay. In our English language, we use one word for love. We use it from, I love peanut butter and jelly, and I do to, to I love my wife, and I do, but I love peanut butter and jelly a lot less than I love my wife. I got to get that in there. The love I have for my wife is a lot different than my love for peanut butter and jelly. Got through that one.

We love, I love to skate, I love to ride a bike, I love to play tennis, and you tell your wife, I love you, but we only have one word for love. In the Greek they had the word philia, brotherly love, friendship love. They had the word eros. We get a word erotic. It's sensual love. They heard the word storge, which is the word for family love. And then they had the word agape, which was actually coined because of God's love and Christianity. It's used in John 3:16, for God so agape, loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son.

Agape is a giving love. It's a sacrificial love. It's a self-denying love. We're going to see that it's a love that has its source in God. God doesn't love us because of who we are. God loves us because He is love.

Now, John gives two reasons for the carrying out of this appeal to love one another. First one is in verse seven, for love is of God. The NIV translates that for love comes from God. John is saying the true love, agape love, has its origin or its source in God. The son is the source of our life, and God is the source of love. Now, John's twofold conclusion that everyone that loves is number one, verse seven, born of God. Love is an evidence sign or a birthmark that you have

been born of God, or you become a child of God. God becomes your father. And then notice also in verse seven, you also know God. God is your friend.

Love is of God. And then notice in verse eight the amazing statement there. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is... What? God is love. What does that mean? That means that God is to His very nature, as to His very character, as to His very essence, is love. Now, he didn't use it in the abstract, love is God, and there's some people that want to deify love or they deify the emotion of love. But that isn't what John says. John says, God is love. We need to hang on to that and we need to remember that. What does it mean that God is love? It means that it's such a necessary integral part of his very essence that he can do nothing without love. Love never is or can be absent from His being.

Now, this may seem like some kind of a theological concept, but it's really rubber meets the road. If you get sick, God is love. If you lose your job, God is love. If someone you love dies, God is love. Whichever way the wind blows, God is love.

Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher from England said he saw a farmer one time that had a weather vein on his barn and the weather vein said, God is love. He thought, "Well, that's kind of weird. Why would you put God as love on a weather vein?" So one day he asked the farmer. He says, "Why does your weather vein on top of your barn have the words God is love?" He told Mr. Spurgeon, he said, "Because it reminds me that whichever way the wind blows, God is love." I like that. Even when in darkness, even when in adversity, even when I'm going through trials and testings, when my eyes can't see the evidence of God's love, my heart can't feel the evidence of God's love, and I begin to question or freak out, does God really love me? Does God really care? I know that God is love. Amen.

No matter what happens in your life now, you may be going through a storm right now. You may be going through a trial right now. Hang on to this truth. Never doubt in the dark what God has spoken in the light. The Bible is very clear that God is love.

John tells us that God is spirit, God is life, and God is love. We can bank on his nature and bank on his character. But one little warning before I leave this point, there are those who believe that because God is love, that God will not judge sin. We need to remember that God is also holy, and that God is also righteous, and that God is also just. Now His holiness is a holy love. His righteousness is a righteous love. His justice is a righteous loving justice. It's impossible for God to do anything that's unloving, but let me warn you, if you think because God is love, He won't judge your sin, you're wrong. If you think because God is love, He's going to let you into heaven no matter what you do, you reject His son and however you live, you're deceived. God will judge sin.

He is a righteous holy God. One day we will give an account to God. So we need to understand all the attributes of God and all the nature and character of God. Yes, God is love, but that doesn't mean He's going to condone our sin. God isn't a tenderhearted grandfather that gives His grandkids anything they want. The other day, my granddaughter's coming over Thursday

night, we got a time when the two of us are going to be together. Her mommy and my wife are going to go do something and it's just Madison and I. She said, "Papa, can we make s'mores?" We have a gas fire pit in the backyard. Can we do s'mores? You think I'm going to tell her no? I don't like s'mores. The last thing I need is chocolate and marshmallows. Yes, we'll do s'mores! Two things she loves is candy and s'mores, and so let's eat candy and have s'mores. And then when her mom comes home, take her, have fun. Pray for me Thursday night, I'm going to be all s'mored up.

But I'm so glad that God, though He loves me, He's not just a tender hearted grandfather. Can I have that? Yeah. Can I have that? Yeah. Can I have this? God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we want. When you pray and maybe somebody you love to say, oh God, heal them. Oh God, heal them, and God doesn't heal them, maybe they die. Don't forget, God knows best, that God loves you.

Maybe there's someone here this morning that's bitter and angry because God didn't answer prayer the way you wanted Him to. God is love. I know no matter what happens to me that God has a loving purpose and a loving design and God is in control of my life. I rest on this very important point.

Let me give you the second reason that Christians should love one another. It's in verses nine to 11. It is because of what God did. Number one, because of what God is, love. Number two, because of what God did, sent His son. Go back with me to verse nine. John says, "And this was manifested, or demonstrated, or displayed, the love of God toward us because that God sent," notice that. This is what God did. "Sent His only begotten son into the world that we might live through Him." Verse 10, "Here in His love," this is love. Not that we love God, but that He loved us, and He sent His son again. Verse nine, He sent His son. Verse 10, He sent His son, to be the propitiation or the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Again, verse 11, beloved of God so then loved us.

We ought. If God so loved us, then we ought, it's obligatory. We ought to love one another. Now, three verses and three important truths. Verse nine, how do we know that God is love? Verse nine says, and this was manifest the love of God that He sent His only son that we might live through Him. How do we know that God is love? God sent His son. The NIV translates this. This is how God showed His love toward us, or literally among us. How did God make visible His love? He sent His only son into the world. This is God's greatest gift.

This is why Paul in two Corinthians nine said, "Oh, thanks be unto God for His indescribable gift." When our kids were little, we had a little child book. I don't remember the title. I think it was titled, This is How I Know God Loves Me. I remember reading it to one of my girls one night and it said, "How do I know God loves me? He gave me a mommy and a daddy. How do I know God loves me? He gave me a warm bed to sleep in. How do I know God loves me? Next page, God gave me a house to live in. How do I know God loves me? He gave me food to eat. How do I know God loves me? He gave me hands and feet." I caught myself one time thinking, what about kids who don't have a mommy and a daddy? What about kids who don't have food to eat,

or hands and feet? How do they know God loves them? Here's the answer, so clear from this Bible, from this passage. How do I know God loves me? God gave His only begotten son to die for me on the cross.

If you're ever tempted, if you are ever tempted to doubt the love of God, take a good hard long look at the cross of Jesus Christ. Someone said the cross of Jesus Christ was not only a work where He died for our sins, but it is a word where He's speaking and saying, "I love you." Someone said, I asked the Lord how much He loved me and He reached out and said this much and died upon the cross.

How do I know God loves me? You and you and you and you, every one of us, we were the object of God's love and Jesus came and He gave His life and He suffered and died, and the Father sent His only begotten son. What does that mean? The phrase only begotten means only unique son. It speaks of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Again, the NIV translates this His one and only son. John tells us who God the Father sent, His one and only son. He didn't send angels, he didn't send [inaudible 00:18:01], he didn't send other creatures. He didn't create some being to die for man's sin. He sent His only begotten son. He tells us where God sent Him, into the world, this dark world, this Christ rejecting world, this sinful world. He tells us why God sent Him, verse nine, that we might live through Him. We have life through the coming of Jesus Christ.

But notice also in verse 10, we see the greatness now of that love. In verse 10, it says, herein is love. Not that we love God. Now, that's marvelous thing, but it's no big deal to love God because He's lovable. But this is how we know that He loved us and sent again His son to be the propitiation for our sins. We see here in verse 10 the greatness of God's love and that it is self initiated. Our love did not call forth His love.

Now, I hate to mess up your day, but God does not love you because you are lovable. You say, speak for yourself preacher boy. I think God loves me because I'm so attractive. Sorry. Now you might be. Notice I said you might be. You might be attractive, but that's not why God loves you. Well, I think God loves me because I'm such a wonderful person. He looked deep, deep, deep, deep, deep into my heart and He knows what a great guy I really am. The Bible says the heart is deceitful. It's desperately wicked. Who can know it? You think you have a good heart? The Bible says the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. God didn't love you because you have a good heart. Well, God loves me because I'm charismatic. I'm a really funny guy. I'm a nice person. I'm generous. That's why God loves me. There is no reason for God to love you. Just thought I'd encourage you.

But it does really encourage me because I know I'm not lovable. I know my sins. I know my weaknesses. I know my shortcomings. I know how wretched and miserable and sinful I am, and I am overwhelmed to think that God loves me. Have you ever been overwhelmed with the idea that God actually loves you? He loves you. He loves you more than your kids or your husband or your wife or your family, your friends. God's love is amazing. The love of God.

Matter of fact, God's love is great. Ephesians 2:4, God's love is unchanging. James 1:7, God's love is eternal. Jeremiah 31:3, I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee? God's love is amazing that He sent, notice in verse 10, He sent His son to be what? Now the technical term propitiation. Propitiation. What does that mean? I think the simplest way to understand that technical word is to change it to atoning sacrifice, or atoning satisfaction. This is the death of Christ, God word. When Jesus died on the cross, he died to propitiate, or satisfy, God the Father.

Let me give you an illustration. If I were in my car and I were jamming down Scott Road a hundred miles an hour, I would be breaking the speed limit. I'll use this illustration for service people looked at me like, I can't believe you drive that fast. This is a story, okay? It's not real. My car won't go that fast. Hypothetical, Pastor Miller, late for [inaudible 00:22:10], cop pulls me over. "Did you know you were going a hundred miles an hour in a 55 mile an hour zone?" "Officer, I'm Pastor Miller. I pastor revival Christopher, I'm late for church. I've got to speed." You think I'm going to get away with that? As a matter of fact, shh, don't tell him I'm a pastor, okay? So I get a big fat ticket and I'm going to court and I come before the judge and the judge says, "I can't believe you were going a hundred miles an hour in a 55 zone. I'm going to fine you \$3,000." Wow. Well, I am a pastor. I don't have \$3,000. What am I going to do? Come Sunday morning, say we have to take a special offering for my ticket? Dig deep brethren. Hallelujah.

Can't do that. But the judge's son is in the courtroom and he loves me and he's got the money. He steps forward and he says, "Father, I love John. He's flaky, but I love him. Shouldn't have been speeding, but he did. He broke the law." And so he gives the \$3,000 and the judge brings down the anvil, paid in full. You're free to go. The law has just been propitiated. It has just been satisfied. It doesn't mean I didn't sin, but it means the law, which has been broken, has been satisfied. The Bible says before God, that we've all sinned. We've all fallen short of the glory of God. The wages of our sin is death. I have to pay the ultimate price, die for my sin. Jesus said, I love you and I will come and I will die in your place and I will satisfy the holy righteous demands of God's law.

God doesn't just lovingly willy nilly say, "I forgive you all," because he is a holy God, His law has been broken, it has to be paid for Him to be righteous and just. So because He loves us, but He is also holy, the solution to the problem is, "My son, I will give to show you My love. He will die in your place so that you can be forgiven and you can be free," but you have to accept the price. If I rejected the provision that I would pay the price, I would be separated from God for all eternity. That's what it means that He is our propitiation.

God's love is amazing. God's grace in saving us, is amazing. God's love is seen in the cross of Jesus Christ. We have an obligation. Here's the point, verse 11, beloved, if God so loved us, and it's actually since God loves us, we ought also to love one another. God so loved us, He gave His son to be the sacrifice for our sins. We have an obligation. We ought to also love one another. Now, when you get to verse 11, the command there means that it's an obligation. He is commanding us as Christians to love one another, which indicates that love is not just an emotion. Love is not just an emotion.

Love is not an emotion. Love is a verb. It's an action word. It's something you do. It's why people, "I don't love you anymore. I don't have feelings for you anymore." Whoever said you're supposed to have... What's feelings all about anyway? Should you have feelings? Yeah, but you don't go on feelings. You show me any married couple that's been married more than a few years, they're married more than a few years because they love each other and that means that they're committed to each other. They don't always have feelings for each other. You get married, you don't wake up every morning, "I love you!" "I love you too!" She's like, "Get out of the way. Why don't you wipe the mirror? Where's my breakfast?"

Not every morning, by the way, just once in a while. But love is a commitment. I love what Warren Warby said. He said, "Love is not a passing emotion. It's a continual devotion." Don't forget that. God's love is something that we need to show toward all brothers and sisters in Christ. It's an obligation. Here's my third and last point, or reason that Christians should love one another. Verse 12 to 13, because of what God is doing abiding in us. We have what God is, love, what God did, gave us His son, greatest demonstration of God's love, and then right now in the prayer, what God is doing, He is abiding in us. So we have the love of God in us, we can show the love of God to others.

Notice verse 12 and 13. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us. How do we see God? No man has seen God. We see God through His loving children. We see God manifested through His loving children. Notice verse 13. This is how we know that we dwell in Him and He and us, because He has given to us, notice that little word of, His spirit. Now, it doesn't say He's given us His spirit, but He has, it says He's given us of His spirit. That means the Holy Spirit is dispensing into our hearts. Paul said in Romans five, shedding abroad in our hearts the love of God, and then we can become dispensers. We're not the source, we're just a channel. The source is from God.

Now, how do you reconcile verse 12? No man has seen God at any time with the Old Testament references to Moses seeing God face to face, or in the Old Testament where people said that they saw God or spoke with God. Here's how this is explained. In the Old Testament, when God appeared and they saw so-called God, they saw a manifestation of God. They didn't see God in His essence, they saw a manifestation of God. When Moses saw the glory of God, he saw a manifestation of God, or when God would appear in human form in the Old Testament, that's called a theophany, God appearing as a man. If Christ were to appear, and He did in the Old Testament, that's called a Christophany, Christ appearing. But that's not an incarnation, what we have in the birth of Jesus Christ when God infused humanity with deity for all eternity.

What they saw in the Old Testament wasn't God in His essence. They saw the glory of God, or manifestation of God. What John is saying in his epistles, no man has ever seen God in His essence. You want to know why? Because God is spirit. You can't see a spirit. That's like someone saying, "Just show me God and I'll believe. Just show me God and I'll believe." Well, God is spirit. You can't see God. It's like show me air and I'll believe there's air. You ever seen air? No. Do you believe there's air? Yes.

I saw the wind. It was blowing. You don't see wind by the way. You see the effects of the wind. When the wind blows, you're not actually seeing the wind. You're seeing the wind blow things, the cow flying by, and the car going by, and the roof of the house flying away. You see the effects and the power of the wind, but you don't see wind. I can't take a jar, go outside and grab some wind. "Come on in. Hey, check it out. I got some wind in my jar. Want to check out the wind? It's right there inside that jar. Yes it is. Check it out." "I don't see nothing." "It's in there!" And be like, I don't see God. I don't see God. God was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, have I been with you for so long, Philip and you've never seen me? He that has seen me has seen the Father. God lives in Christ.

Now Christ, the Holy Spirit, God is in you. Though no man has ever seen God at any time, why does John throw that in that verse right there? Because he's trying to say, if you love the brothers, if you are loving, people are going to see God in you. That's what he's saying. A lot of people won't read the Bible. A lot of people won't go to church. A lot of people don't see God in creation. But God can be seen in your love, the love of God. How can you love that person? How can you love them? How can you be so kind to them? It's the love of Jesus Christ shed abroad in our hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit, which He has given to us. I don't have the love I need to love you. You don't have the love to love me. We need to love one another and the love of Christ. By the way, this is how the body of Christ works. In the church, the only way we can apply to one another is if we're apart or connected to other Christians. I can't forgive one another if there's nobody to forgive. I can't wash others' feet if there's nobody's feet to wash. I can't bear one another's burdens if there's no one another, there's nobody else around. God knows nothing of Lone Ranger or Christianity.

Christian life is to be lived in the life of the community of God's people. We will step on each other. We'll bump each other. We'll offend each other. Sooner or later I'm going to say something that offends you. It's almost weekly I offend somebody. So we love each other, we forgive each other and we just keep going. Right? You'll offend me, I'll offend you. But we're brothers in Christ and sisters in Christ, and we love each other. We forgive each other. This is what it means to love one another.

As love is seen in us, I heard the story of some missionaries who are working among the American Indians. Out in the desert one day they found an Indian girl who had been cast away from her tribe. She was living under these bushes. She was sick and dying, and they didn't want to care for her. Lovingly they took her and they brought her to the missions hospital and they nurtured her and took care of her. The Christian doctor there nurtured her back to health and life. They thought, "Well, we need to go in and share the gospel with her." So they went to her and they said, in the hospital room, they said, "Jesus loves you and we love you." She said, "Well, why would you take care of me when my own tribe rejected me?" He said, "It's because of Jesus. Jesus loves you and you can trust Him. He can save you." At the very moment, the doctor that had taken care of her walked into the room. She, looking at those missionaries, she said, "If this Jesus that you're speaking of is like that man," referring to the doctor, "I can trust him with my life."

You see, our lives display the love of God. It's not what we believe. It's how we behave. Are you exemplifying the love of God through your life? He's the source, but we are the channel. St. Augustine said, love has hands to help others. It has feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has ears to hear the sighs and the sorrows of men. This is what love looks like. How true that is.

Notice His spirit dwells in us, verse 13. This is how we know that we are in Him and He in us. It's a mutual abiding. We're in Christ and Christ is in us. How? Because He's given to us of His spirit. We are in Him. He is in us. He's given to us of the spirit.

Now, what is the fruit of the spirit? What's the very first mention of the fruit of the spirit? Anyone know? Love. It is the Greek agape. The fruit of the spirit is love. When you are a Christian and when you surrender to the Holy Spirit, He produces His fruit in your life. It's on the top of the list, love. I believe the patience. I believe the self-control. I believe the kindness. I believe the gentleness. All the things that are listed as the fruit of the spirit, I believe that those are the evidence of love, or the fruit of love, or the byproduct of love, or the manifestation of that love. The fruit of the spirit is love.

What is love? It's patient. It's kind. It's long suffering. It's faithful. Those are the things that are manifested in the life of the believer who is filled with the spirit and yielded to the spirit and walking in the Holy Spirit of God. Three reasons why Christians should love one another.

By the way, notice last Sunday our topic was truth, believing truth. Today the topic is love. Never divorce the two. Truth and love go together. If we have only truth, we can become hard, dogmatic. I know the truth. If we have only love, we become sentimental. We don't stand for what is right and true. Today our culture wants truth, or they want love, but they don't want truth. We need to be careful that we balance it off with speaking the truth in love.

Why should Christians love one another, number one? Because of who God is. God is love. Secondly, because of what God did, He gave His only begotten son. And thirdly, because of what God is doing, He's dwelling in us.

This love has its source, the triune God. God the Father is love. God the son manifested God's love by dying on the cross. God, the Holy Spirit who lives in us has shed abroad God's love in our hearts, so we should love one another. How does this happen? When we are born of God. That's my question for you this morning. Have you been born of God? When you're born of God, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you. When the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you, then you have the capacity. You have the ability to love even unlovely people. You have the ability to love people that are unlovely because that's what God does. We have God's love.

Now think about it. We love Him because He first loved us. We get the idea that I love people who love me. I love people who are nice to me. I love people who are like me. If you really have God's love, your love for people is not based on anything they are, they do, or they say, because that's how God loves you. God doesn't love you because you're lovable, nor should you love

others because they're lovable. You got that?

God's love is unconditional. God's love is unchanging. God's love is eternal, and we don't have it. We don't have it. John Miller, in his own strength, in his own resources, I don't have the love I need to have for others. But if I'm a child of God and if I'm filled with God and I'm walking with God and I'm tapped into God, God fills me with His love and He overflows to others around me.

If you haven't opened your heart to Jesus Christ, that's what you need to do this morning if you're not a Christian. Jesus died on the cross for your sins. He rose from the dead and He is alive today to forgive you and give you the hope of heaven. If you are a Christian, ask yourself, am I believing truthfully about Jesus? Am I living righteously? Am I loving sacrificially? Those of the birthmarks of a true child of God.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.