

Love One Another

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[0:00] Go ahead and turn to 1 John 4, 7-12.

So 1 John 4, 7-12. And we'll read tonight's passage before we do some review. 1 John 4, 7-12 say, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love has been perfected in us. Does it seem like we've covered these verses before?

[1:15] We've talked about several times as we've gone through 1 John that John often returns to the same theme, but he adds a little more detail each time he comes back to the theme. This is actually the third and final time that John is going to appeal to the subject of brotherly love.

He first mentioned it in chapter 2, verses 7 through 11, and there it was given as an indicator of someone who is walking in the light. The second occurrence that we saw came in chapter 3, verses 11 through 18, and also all the way even through verse 24, and it's mentioned as evidence that someone is a child of God.

Just so we remind ourselves of what he's already said, we're going to go ahead and read those earlier passages to get that in our minds as well. So, let's go ahead and look at 1 John 2, 7 through 11.

1 John 2, 7 through 11 say, Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now.

[2:40] He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

1 John 2, 7, and 8 sound a bit confusing when we first read them because John says he's writing no new commandment. Then he says he is writing a new commandment.

That message can be characterized as old or from the beginning because it has its roots in the law. Listen to Leviticus 19, 18, going back to that law.

God says, You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. Then if you go over to Romans 13, verses 8 through 10, Paul summarizes the law there.

So Romans 13, 8 through 10 say, Oh, no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, all are summed up in this saying, namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

[4:04] Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. So you can see from those verses that it's an old commandment, but the old commandment is also new in at least three ways when we see it in the New Testament.

The commandment of love is new in the sense in that it is seen in Jesus and established by him through his death and resurrection. We can see that from Ephesians 5, 2.

Listen to what Paul said there. Ephesians 5, 2 says, And walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

The command is also new in that Jesus, by his obedience, fulfilled the whole of the law, and he also gave it a depth of meaning that it had never known before.

Listen to Jesus' own words in John 13, verses 34 and 35. Jesus said, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

[5 : 15] By this, all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Jesus gave the command to love a new standard. If you remember what we just read in Leviticus, Moses said, Love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus said the new standard is to love as he has loved us. Love is to serve as the distinguishing characteristic of discipleship. Christians' love and support for one another enable us to survive in a hostile world.

As Jesus embodied God's love, so now we, as disciples, should also embody Christ's love to each other. And that love then becomes a sign to the world, as well as to every other believer.

The command is also new because, for those who believe, it makes possible a new and eternal life in which they are motivated by the grace of God to fulfill that command, to have self-sacrificing, Christ-like love.

You can already tell by what we've looked at that this type of love is different than how the world views love. And that's because the Christian standard is to love other believers as Christ has loved us.

[6 : 29] The second time John came to the theme of love, he reminded us just how Jesus has loved us. So if you want to, go ahead and flip back a couple of pages and look at 1 John 3, 11-18.

1 John 3, 11-18 say, For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain, who was of the wicked one, had murdered his brother.

And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.

He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us, and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

[7 : 38] My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 1 John 3, 16 is the verse that specifically reminds us of how Jesus loved us.

And that verse also calls us to action based upon Jesus' love for us. Again, 1 John 3, 16 is the verse that says, By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us, and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

In John's Gospel, John quoted Jesus when Jesus said essentially the same thing. Listen to John 15, 12 and 13. Again, this is John's Gospel, chapter 15, verses 12 and 13.

Jesus said, This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Jesus' expression of love then becomes the measuring stick for every expression of love. As we've already said, Christian love is self-sacrificing and giving. Christ giving up his life for believers epitomized the true nature of Christian love.

[8 : 53] So Jesus' path to the cross marks the selfless, self-giving way of life to which his followers are called. When that verse says we ought, it's emphatic, and it accentuates the fact that like Jesus, we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

So John's point is that Christians have an obligation to follow the example of our Lord even unto death, if such an occasion presents itself. Tonight, as we get further into chapter 4, John is going to build on what he's already written about love in chapters 2 and 3.

If you remember back to earlier, about five weeks ago, when we covered the first part of chapter 4, you may be wondering how this passage fits with the first six verses of chapter 4.

Because verses 4, 1 through 6 focus on having a proper view about Jesus. And to remind ourselves of that, let's look at just the first three verses of 1 John 4.

1 John 4, 1 through 3 say, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God. Because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

[10 : 04] By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.

And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming and is now already in the world. At first glance, verses 7 through 12 seem to have completely changed topics.

The first two sections of chapter 4 really do go together, though, because the sections explain another verse from 1 John chapter 3. This is in your handout as well, but listen to 1 John 3, 23, speaking about God this time, John says, And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment.

Once again, that says, And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment. In the first few verses of chapter 4, verses 1 through 6, the subject is the first part of that commandment.

That's the part about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then when he gets to verse 7, now John is going to flesh out the whole idea of loving one another.

[11 : 26] We're going to break the passage into three sections, and each of the sections gives us a description of what true Christian love is. The main points are paraphrased from Pastor Don's first two Sunday morning sermons as our pastor a little over six years ago.

So the first thing John tells us is that Christian love is a reality of God's greatness. Christian love is a reality of God's greatness.

We see that in verses 7 through 10. Listen to verses 7 and 8 again first. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. We know that the Greeks had at least four different words for love.

One of those was storge, and that means affection in modern Greek. It's natural affection, like what parents might feel for their kids. The second one is eros, which refers to sexual or erotic love, and that word is not used in the New Testament.

[12 : 39] The third is one we're more familiar with, and that's phileo, and that usually referred to a love between friends, and it emphasized a mutual interest between parties. So it's used about 20 times in the New Testament.

The last one is agape, which refers to the unconditional love that God has for his people. The unconditional nature of this love is what differentiates it from the other words for love.

So in verses 7 through 12 of 1 John, what type of love do you think John is talking about here? He's definitely talking about the agape love.

Of course, we just said that's the unconditional love that God has for his people, and it's the same type of love used for Christian love in the other 1 John passages that we just reviewed. If we look at verse 7, John is referring again to that particular kind of love that has been found only in those who have been regenerated by Christ.

And the perfect tense of born, then, includes the initial rebirth of the individual and the continuing effects of that rebirth and what it will have in their life. The present tense of knows, then, emphasizes that the individual is continuing to grow in the knowledge of God.

[13 : 59] In other words, it's not the person's ability to love that causes the new birth. His ability to love flows from the new birth or from the regeneration in Christ.

Unbelievers, of course, can love others to some degree, but not in the way that God's indwelling presence enables Christians to love one another. If you look at the first clause of verse 8, John now turns from the positive expression of the truth to the negative expression, he adds emphasis to the point in verse 7 by now stating the reverse.

Those who do not love do not know God. The absence of love in the life of an individual proves that he does not know God because the one who does not love is a stranger to God.

He never even began to have a relationship with God. That is, there never was a time when the person could have legitimately claimed that he knew God. The reason this is true is because God is love.

John has already stated that God is spirit and that God is light. We saw that God is spirit in 1 John 4:24 and we'll actually get to that next week.

[15:13] And we know from 1 John 1:5 that God is light. That's one of the passages we talked about a little earlier. Now he gives one more encompassing statement regarding the nature of God.

And in this context, John is saying that to know the love of God is to manifest his love to others. Without this manifestation, then, we show that we couldn't possibly know or ever have known God or his love.

God is love means that God continually gives of himself to others and seeks their benefit. We know there was eternal love between the persons of the Trinity even before the world was created.

And God's love is the ultimate source of any love that Christians display toward one another. The concept that God is love is not unique to the New Testament, though.

It traces its way back to the Jewish Old Testament understanding of God as a living, personal, and active being rather than the concept that the Greeks had.

[16:16] The Greeks thought that God was more distant and abstracting character. We have a tendency today in some modern theologies to transpose the equation God is love into the reverse.

Love is God. That's really not a biblical ideal. It's not a biblical teaching either. As John makes absolutely clear in this passage, the controlling principle of the universe is a sovereign, living God who is the source of all love and who loves because he himself is love.

God's love is not an abstract principle or sentiment, but it was made manifest in the sending of his only begotten son into the world so that sinful humanity might live and receive eternal life.

And we see that from verse 9. Verse 9 says, In this the love of God was manifested toward us that God has sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him.

Christians love, then, in order to follow the supreme example of God's sacrificial love in sending his son for us. The judgment of sin on the cross was the supreme example of God's love because he poured out his wrath on his beloved son instead of pouring it out on sinners.

[17:38] When we look at that verse, some people can get hung up on the word begotten. The Greek word translated begotten there suggests a one and only son.

It doesn't necessarily convey the idea of a birth. The son of God is the father's one and only or his unique son. If you look at the Gospel of John, John made it clear that the Son of God has always existed.

So if you want to, go ahead and turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 1, and we'll look at verses 1 through 5. The Gospel of John, chapter 1, verses 1 through 5, says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Skip down just a few verses in that chapter and look at verse 14 of John 1. John 1, 14 says, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

[19:03] The Son of God has always existed, but he became a man when God gave him to the world. So the term only begotten emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ as the one and only of his kind.

It was he whom the Father sent into the world as the greatest gift that's ever been given, and the greatest gift that ever will be given. And he sent him so that we might have eternal life.

Going back to tonight's text, life through and in the Son is a subject that greatly interests John. He refers to it no fewer than six times in 1 John 4, verses 9-16.

The perfect tense of ascent in verse 9 emphasizes the permanent consequences of this act. And the verb live implies that those to whom the Son was sent were in a condition of spiritual death, and his mission was to impart life to them.

This life occurs only through the Son because Jesus is the true and only mediating agent between God and man. Look at 1 John 4-10 now.

[20:17] That verse says, In this is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

John begins verse 10 by choosing to emphasize the fact that man in his natural condition does not love God nor the Son whom God sent.

But amazingly, God loved us. So what incredible and unimaginable and unfathomable love it is that God sent his Son and God sent his Son to die for us even though we had yet to love God. love then is always demonstrated by actions. It's not an abstract principle. It's never complacent or static. John's already given us the purpose for the demonstration of love and that's to take away our sins.

We saw that in 1 John 3-5 and to destroy the works of the devil. We saw that in 1 John 3-8. So God's marvelous act was prompted by God's love for man not man's love for God.

[21 : 28] So the sending of God's Son was both the revelation of God's love and indeed the very essence of God's love itself. So it's not our love that's primary but God's and God's love is free and uncaused and spontaneous.

We saw when we read verse 10 there that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins and propitiation means appeasement or satisfaction.

The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross satisfied the demands of God's holiness for the punishment of sin. So Jesus propitiated or satisfied God.

Hebrews 9-5 translates a form of propitiation as the mercy seat. Christ literally became our mercy seat like the one in the Holy of Holies where the high priest splattered the blood of the sacrifice on the day of the atonement.

Christ did this when his blood spilled on behalf of others satisfied the demands of God's holy justice and wrath against sin. Notice that John concluded verse 10 with the phrase our sins.

[22 : 40] So John is keenly aware of his own need for forgiveness as well as our need for forgiveness. Our act was to sin. God's love was to love and sin.

So listen to that again. Our act was to sin. God's act was to love us and sin. All our love then is a reflection of God's and a response to God's love.

The origin of love lies beyond human effort and initiative. Left to ourselves we would not love God. We would hate him and oppose him and of course we see that today with unbelievers today more and more.

It took God's boundless sacrificial love to break our hearts of stone and bring us to himself and it will take that for God to save anybody. You might see a little appearance of inconsistency arises because if God loved us before Christ offered himself to die for us what need was there for that reconciliation?

We might think that the death of Christ was unnecessary but when Christ is said to reconcile the Father to us this refers to our guilt.

[23 : 57] When we're conscious of being guilty we can't conceive of God other than being displeased and angry with us until Christ absolves us from that guilt. God then whenever sin appears wants his wrath and the judgment of eternal death to be understood or comprehended.

We must be terrified then by the present prospect of death until Christ by his death abolishes sin and until he delivers us by his own blood from death.

God's love requires righteousness so that we must be persuaded that we are loved so we must necessarily come to Christ then in whom alone righteousness is to be found.

So God interposed his own son to reconcile himself to us because he loved us. This love was hidden then because we were temporarily enemies to God continually provoking his wrath.

Besides the fear and terror of an evil conscience took away from us the enjoyment of life but through faith we started to understand that God began to love us in Christ.

[25 : 06] If men could redeem themselves by our works Christ cannot be the only true propitiation as he's called here. But because we don't redeem ourselves through works that's why we need a propitiation outside of us.

God's love sets the standard for the love that Christians are called to embody. So sin brings divine wrath but on the cross Jesus bore that wrath for our sins.

From the verses we just looked at we can see why Christian love is a reality of God's greatness. Verse 11 shows us the second thing that Christian love is.

Christian love is a response to God's gift. Christian love is a response to God's gift. Properly understood the grace highlighted in verse 10 demands a particular response from us.

Look at verse 11 again. It's a short verse that simply says Beloved if God so loved us we also ought to love one another. God sending his son gives Christian salvation privilege and it also gives an obligation to follow this pattern for sacrificial love.

[26:21] Christian love must be self-sacrificing like God's love. John builds on his original admonition to love one another. For the sixth time he uses the compassionate and affectionate greeting Beloved in this letter and every time he does it he uses it to exhort his readers to do something.

John's not really introducing a new subject here but he's adding to his prior discussion. Once somebody begins to understand the incredible price that was paid for sin and the magnitude of personal sin that person will understand the love of God and be willing to demonstrate it himself. The love that God has shown then becomes the motive for our responding to others properly. Once again we see John use the word ought there and it infers that there's an inner motivation and obligation to love others.

This obligation or debt really can't be postponed for any reason because it's one that we rightly owe. We know that phrase here as a gospel debt right? John is insisting that loving God and loving others cannot be separated which is exactly what Jesus taught in Matthew 22 verses 37 through 40.

So listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 22 37 through 40 and I'm actually going to back up to Matthew 22 34 to set the context for you.

[27:53] So Matthew 22 34 through 40 say that when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they gathered together then one of them a lawyer asked him a question testing him and saying teacher which is the great commandment in the law Jesus said to him you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your mind this is the first and great commandment and the second is like it you shall love your neighbor as yourself on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets love does make specific demands including certain absolutes the proper motivation for correct interpersonal relationships then always remains a profound sense of gratitude for what God has done for us and of course we know that God has done that for us through Christ Jesus and Jesus is twofold answer should warn

Christians against emphasizing either piety for God or social concern at the expense of the other we need to do both going back to 1 John 4 Matthew Henry summarizes 1 John 4 11 like this Matthew Henry says the example of God should press us we should be followers or imitators of him as his dear children the objects of the divine love should be objects of ours shall we refuse to love those whom the eternal God hath loved we should be admirers of his love and lovers of his love of the benevolence and complacency that are in him and consequently lovers of those whom he loves the general love of God to the world should induce a universal love among mankind kind the peculiar love of God to the church and to the saints should result in a peculiar love there so that's why

John can say if God so loved us we also ought to love one another we've seen that Christian love is a reality of God's greatness we've seen that Christian love is a response to God's gift the third characteristic of Christian love shown in this passage is that Christian love is a reflection of God's glory Christian love is a reflection of God's glory verse 12 is where we learn that no one has seen God at any time if we love one another God abides in us and his love has been perfected in us love is the heart of Christian witness nobody can see God loving because God's love is invisible Jesus is no longer in the world to manifest the love of God so the only demonstration of God's love in this age is the church verse 12 is striking both in what it affirms and the order in which it affirms it literally the verse begins

God no one has ever beheld the verb here implies a careful observation or close scrutiny the word theater actually is determined from that verb no man has seen God in his unveiled essence glory and majesty indeed we're incapable as finite simple creatures of looking on God it would certainly be to our death it can be seen though in the lives of those who demonstrate his love toward others there are no exceptions to that there are no exceptions to who has seen God and there are no exceptions to the time frame we see that no one has ever seen God Jesus claimed that one who had seen him though had also seen the father remember that from John 14 9 but this is not the kind of seeing referred to here what Moses saw in Sinai or what

Isaiah saw in the temple were theophanies they were revelations by which God made himself visible to the eye so God manifested himself in some form to Moses and Isaiah but he did not reveal himself in all of his fullness Jesus also was veiled in human flesh So much so that multitudes who saw him did not recognize him as God Jesus grew to Nazareth veiled in that human flesh the people around him did not know that he was the son of God and even today no man has seen God

in all of his fullness the second section of verse 12 opens with the conditional sentence it says if we love one another which of course leaves open the possibility of not fulfilling the condition not everybody who professes to be a child of God actually manifests this kind of mutual love for the brethren but it's God's rightful expectation that we should do that

[33:09] God who revealed himself in Christ is also revealed in the life of those in whom he abides! So mutual love for the brethren is evidence that we are children of God a person loves because God has come to dwell in him and that's how the love of God is brought to its goal bringing something to its goal is the sense of what John means by the word translated perfected in verse 12 the word could also be translated as completed God's love is given to us not that we might hoard it for ourselves but that it might be poured out through us to others when we do love one another in this way it's proof that we are in God and God is in us and that we are partakers of his spirit listen to this quote about verse 12 from Matthew Poole Matthew Poole said the essence!

of God is to our eyes invisible incomprehensible to our minds but by yielding ourselves to the power of his love so as to be transformed by it and habituated to the exercise of mutual love we come to know him by the most pleasant and most apprehensible effects experiencing his indwelling vital operative presence and influences whereby he is daily perfecting this his own likeness and image in us this is the most desirable way of knowing God when though we may feelingly apprehend him nigh or near to us and in us the old English makes that a bit difficult to take in at the first reading so listen to that one more time the essence of God is to our eyes invisible and comprehensible to our minds but by yielding ourselves to the power of his love so as to be transformed by it and habituated to the exercise of mutual love we come to know him by the most pleasant and apprehensible effects experiencing his indwelling vital operative presence and influence where he is hereby daily perfecting his own likeness and image in us this is the most desirable way of knowing

God when though we cannot behold him at a distance we may feelingly apprehend him near us and in us said another way if you want to know what you can look at what he has done for us and what we should do for one another this invisible God actually lives in us the love he has for us is made visible and complete as we love one another this is the way that the world sees God's love as is expressed by him through our lives as usual John leaves little doubt about the application for this section of his letter the application is simply this love one another you thought you had a handout with no blanks against you the application is simply this love one another John's argument in verses 7 through 12 can be summed up as love originated in

God was manifested in his son and demonstrated in his people love originated in God was manifested in his son and demonstrated in his people in this is love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins beloved if God so loved us we also ought to love one another you Thank you.