

God is Love part 2 – Why we love, because God is love

Scripture references from the ESV

I John 4: 7-21 ⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot ^a love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Does what you know about God, what you have been taught and what you see in his people lead you to believe that

God is love.

That is the description of God in this passage (**vv8,16** above). It is the essential nature of who God is:

- God is Spirit – he exists invisibly and without physical form
- God is light – he is holy and righteous
- God is love – within God as Trinity there has existed an eternal love.

The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. The Spirit loves the Son and seeks to glorify him, and the Father and Son love the Spirit. All of that is happening because **God is love**. That love of God within himself as Trinity has overflowed and continues to overflow to us in:

- God creating us. You have been created **not** so that you can have a great life on this earth, but so that you might come to know God and delight in him, seeing his excellency and his great worth.
- God rescuing us from the sin that blinds us to his stunning beauty. God, in his great love and mercy, has come to rescue us so that we might come to know and delight in him.

Love seeks another's welfare and happiness and the most loving thing God can do is to put his glory on display (in creation, in redemption and supremely in the person of Jesus) and to rescue us from the blinding effect of sin so that we might see his beauty for the sake of our joy. Thus he is honoured as the most glorious, gracious being that he is.

As people who have been saved from sin, we are caught up into this loving relationship between Father, Son and Spirit, not primarily to escape Hell (though we do escape) but in order to know God and delight in him.

If God, by his Spirit, caused us to really grasp this, then not only would we be the most joy-filled people on the planet,

we would be the most loving people on the planet

John commands us to love one another three times (**vv7,11,21** above). He is teaching a truth about God's nature and love, because he wants us to be a people who also love. That love is not only love for God, but love for God's people within the church family. We might think we're not doing too badly with our relationships, until we read how God defines love. (**1 Cor 13:4-7** below). When God commands us to love one another, he expects that to be worked out as:

- Being patient and kind with one another
- Not envying one another or boasting about our own selves
- Not being rude or irritable to one another, or insisting on our own way
- Not being resentful when others are successful, or rejoicing when someone fails or suffers wrong

When we look at the standard God has set, we realise we need help, and that help is available. God never commands without giving the ability to obey the commands. The love commanded in the Bible is a supernatural love that differs from the love shown by non-believers. There is a God-like quality to Christian love and it is to God we must turn.

1. God's love for us shows us what true love is like (v7 above). The source of love is not found in us, but in God, and John shows us what that love looks like (vv9-10 above).

- It is a love that reaches out to people who are unlovely. We have not loved God and yet he loved us!

God loved us when we did not love him

We are born with a sinful nature that does not want God to rule over us or to submit to his commands. In effect, we say to God (just like the crowd when Jesus was condemned) we will not have you as our God.

God's love is a love that reaches out to those who are unlovely and even hostile to him.

- God's love is sacrificial love. God has every right to respond to our hostility with wrath and it would be utterly just for God to condemn every sinner to Hell for all eternity.

Yet because of God's love for his people, God made a way to satisfy his just and holy wrath. He sent his one and only Son as a substitute to absorb the wrath we deserve and so he is free to forgive us and adopt us into his family, bringing us into the relationship of love that exists between the Father and the Son.

God's love is a sacrificial love that costs

We are to love others with this same quality of godlike, costly love that reaches out to those we find unlovely.

2. God's love for us motivates us to love. (v11 above). John uses God's love for us as a means to motivate us to love one another. Those of us who have experienced and known the love of God are obligated to love one another.

We cannot withhold love from others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ, when we have been so sacrificially and wondrously loved by God. God is our loving heavenly Father.

Indeed, he is love, and out of his own nature, he has overflowed with love for those of us who are his children. He has brought us into the life of his one and only beloved Son, so that we too are loved with the same love he has for his Son.

- Take a moment to contemplate this awesome fact, remembering that he has done this at great cost to himself.

What is the greatest kindness we can do God? Obviously, it is to receive his love and love him in return, but we must also love others, especially those whom he loves. The love of God that you enjoy is the same love that your brothers and sisters enjoy.

- God loves them with the same love with which he loves you. How can we slander God's name as a loving Father by withholding love from his other children?

As we ponder God's love for us, something begins to happen in us. We begin to feel his love for us and we begin to feel love for those he loves. It motivates us to love others as he has loved us.

- It is possible that one of the reasons why we don't love other people is because we have failed to really grasp the love of God for us.

We become like the things we gaze upon, so if we spend a large portion of our time on social media or watching TV, then our lives will reflect the ugliness of those things. We have not spent time enough time pondering God's love for us.

- Our souls were made for beauty – the beauty of God and his love for loveless people.

When we spend our time gazing on his beauty, and his love for his people, we will want to become like him.

We will want to reach out to others with love.

3. God's love empowers us to love (vv7,12,19 above). In these verses, we see that:

- Love comes from God (v7 above)
- Love is perfected (accomplished) in us because God abides in us and we in him (v12 above)
- The only reason we can love God or other people is because God first loves us (v19 above)

We can see clearly the distinction between Christian and secular love.

People who don't know and follow Jesus do show love to other people, sometimes sacrificially and to people who are unlovely, due to God's common grace to all people. Despite sin, there is still something of the image of God in every human being. The difference between that kind of love and Christian love is the motivation and the source of love.

- For Christians, the motivation is God's love and his glory, and the source is God himself.
- Christians know that they can't love as God loves, unless they are trusting in God. They know they need to receive from God before they can give out.

Secular love never reaches out to Jesus Christ for help, and can easily be for one's own glory. This passage:

- challenges us to sacrificially love the unlovely in the same way God has loved us through Christ
- reminds us that God is the fountain of love from which we can draw so that we too can love

When we struggle to love one another, we are able to confess our failure to the Lord and ask for his help, knowing that he will give us what we need to love.

Then he will get the glory.

When we seek God's help to obey this command to love one another, there are two results.

- Assurance of salvation (vv8, 12 above).** The evidence that we know God and are united to him is that we will love one another. (More on this next week)
- We make God's love visible. (v12 above).** God is Spirit and invisible to our eyes. His presence is with us but we can't see him. The only time he was seen in physical form was when Jesus Christ walked the earth.

If we can't see God, how will we see God's love displayed? John tells us that it is as we love one another with the love God himself supplies.

God is seen to be abiding in us by our loving one another in the Christian community.

Does what you have seen in God's people lead you to believe that **God is love**? When you have spent time with God's people, do you come away with the thought that God is love? According to John, that is what should happen!

God is love,

so it stands to reason that we who belong to him, who have been born again by his Spirit, and who know him ought to display that love of God.

Take time this week to think through the Bible's description of love in **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** (below):

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Ask the Lord to show you where you have failed to love family, friends or church in that way, and confess that to him, knowing he will not crush you but in his mercy will forgive you. Where you need to exercise love in a particular way, ask God to help you, trusting that he will come and abide in you to such an extent that you will be able to love.

Trust in God shows itself in action so then go and act out the miracle by doing that sacrificial loving act, making visible the love of the invisible God.