

## 1 John 4:7-16

### Love Perfected in You

Christians have not always presented a good picture to the world. Too often we have failed to show the beauty of Jesus Christ and the glory of God, because we have failed to love as God loves. As a result the world in general has turned away from the Christian faith. But it has turned and found nothing that satisfies the needs and cares of the human heart.

Is there a way to make the world take another look at Christianity? Yes, there is. Through the centuries people have displayed many different symbols to show that they are Christian. Monks wore special haircuts, people wear crosses around their necks and some people wear special lapel pins. There is nothing necessarily wrong with any of that. But there is a sign that will immediately mark you out as different—as a child of God. And that sign is love. Not just any kind of love, but the love of God.

I said last week at the end of my teaching that Christianity must emphasize two things: truth and love. Jesus Christ was the preeminent expression of truth and love. He held them and offered them in perfect balance. When a woman caught in adultery was brought before him and he was asked if she should be stoned, he said, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” Then to the woman he said “I” do not “condemn you; go and sin no more.”<sup>1</sup> Christianity is to be the expression of Christ’s life in the world. Therefore our lives should reveal truth and love in all that we do and say.

In Ephesians 4:15 we are encouraged to speak the truth in love so that we grow up and mature to be more and more like Christ. The phrase “speaking the truth in love” is literally, in the Greek, “truthing in love.” We are called to learn the truth, obey the truth, love the truth and proclaim the truth in both words and deeds of love. The expression of God’s truth and God’s love is what our lives are to be about. And what great life that is! Therefore, the apostle John, after telling us to know, preserve and proclaim the truth about Jesus Christ, now tells us to love.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>He who does not love does not know God,

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<sup>1</sup> John 8:1-11

for God is love.  
(1 John 4:7, 8)

John tells us to love one another. Our love is not just for those we like or who are nice to us, we are to love everyone. Every human being is a person who has or can have fellowship with God. Every person is a living, breathing, child of God or someone searching for God. We are to share the love of God with people no matter who they are. The love of God is not just mere sentiment. It is an interest and concern for another person's interest and well-being.

It shouldn't matter if he or she is rich, poor, black or white, old or young, male or female, Republican or Democrat. The love of God takes no notice of what someone does for work or how they are dressed. The love of God sees another person with hopes and dreams, with longings and heartaches and fears, and asks, "What can I do to help? Let me seek that person's highest good even at the cost of my own personal sacrifice." Let me give you a few biblical examples.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. <sup>43</sup>Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup>Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup>and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

<sup>46</sup>So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.  
(acts 2:42-47)

Now, this doesn't mean these believers lived in a commune or pooled and redistributed their property. But it does mean that they held their goods as stewards of God's blessings. And they were ready to share at a moment's notice as needs arose. Again, from Acts, we read,

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power

the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

<sup>34</sup> Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, <sup>35</sup> and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

(Acts 4:32-35)

Just like in Acts 2, these followers of Christ understood that all they had belonged to God. Therefore, when a brother or sister in the Lord had a need, those who could meet it, did so. And this love of God is not limited to physical goods. We can share the love of God by teaching someone something or by encouraging or counseling, or comforting. Scripture tells us in Romans 12 to,

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; <sup>11</sup> not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord... <sup>13</sup> distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep...<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.  
(Romans 12:9-21)

When we love with our sleeves rolled up, ready to work and give, we show one another and the world what the love of God is like. Sacrificial love for the good of another, even for the good of someone who does not deserve it is how God loves us.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.  
(1 John 4:8)

“God is love.” This is one of the highest and most beautiful affirmations of what God is like. Love isn't just something God does; it is what He is at the heart of His character and nature. Even God's judgment and condemnation arises out of love, Sure! Attack a child while that child's mom or dad is around and watch that parent's love go into flame to protect and defend the child. Sin attacks and destroys God's creation and so God must condemn it and destroy

sin. But here is the remarkable and wonderful thing about God's love. His love actually compels Him to reach out to save the sinner.

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. <sup>10</sup> 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 John 4:9, 10)

What kind of love is the love of God? It is love for the unlovely—for sinners, for people who do not love God, for people who hurt other people. Romans 5:8 declares "...God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." John 3:16 says "God so loved the world." What world? The world you and I are a part of. The world of hate, stealing, hostility, prejudice and unkindness: The world where we seek our own no matter how it affects or hurts someone else. This is the world that God sacrificed His Son for. Jesus Christ died bearing our sins on the cross, because God sought out our highest good at great cost.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.  
(John 3:16, 17)

Let's read 1 John 4:9 again.

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.** [my emphasis]

God gave His Son "that we might live through Him." Does that grip your heart? The wages of sin is heartbreak, tears, pain, suffering and death. God gave Jesus Christ for sinners, for you and me that we might live! That is the sign of love. Stamped forever on the pages of history is a bloodied cross where God gave His Son so we could live. If you have ever been gripped by the love of God seen in Jesus Christ crucified so that you may live, you will never, ever go back to a life of selfish indifference.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.  
(1 John 4:11-16)

It is no good claiming that you know God if the love of God cannot be seen in your life. Verse 12 reveals a bold and great reality. It states that God is invisible now to the human eye. But here is a stunning fact. God is made “visible” in us when we reach out to others with the love of God.

The Greek word translated “perfected” means to reach its final end. When we love others the way in which God wants us to love then He abides in us. His love is in us and it reaches out to touch another person; it reaches its end goal. It touches someone's heart and they can see something of God!

I tremble to preach this! I tremble to understand this! I tremble to live this way. But I can—we can, because God's Spirit is within us. The gift of the holy Spirit gives us power to love. Where can someone see the love of God? In me and in you! Where can someone know the truth about God? From me and from you. When we confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God abides in us and we in Him. We have fellowship with God so that our joy may be full.

Many people today have no knowledge of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But someone, somewhere is reading the gospel according to you. What do they see? God's love is perfected; it reaches its final end, its intended end, when through you it touches someone's heart.

People struggle in our day and time for a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. People are in need of peace for their troubled hearts. The world has a need and a right to look at us to find the answers in truth and love. Truth and love mark us out as the children of God. Truth and love lets the world know who we are and why we are the way we are. Truth and love offers hope. And we can live in truth and love.

