

**April 7, 2024 (Lesson 6)**

## **BE MADE COMPLETE IN LOVE**

1. Love Others as God Loves Us (1 John 4:7-12)
2. Love Is the Distinctive of God's People (1 John 4:13-18)
3. Walk in God's Love (1 John 4:19-21; 2 John 1:4-6)

Central Truth: Christians demonstrate their love for God by loving others.

Focus: Examine and emulate God's love.

Evangelism Emphasis: We demonstrate God's love for the lost by loving them.

Golden Text: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7).

In both his Gospel and his Epistles, John has much to say about love. He declared God's love for the world is so great that He gave His only begotten Son so we could be reconciled to Him. This is understandable when we realize God is the personification of love. He does not just *do* acts of love; He *is* love. Love is the essence of His nature, making Him the source of all genuine love.

God loves every human being. The greatness of His love is seen in that He loved us when we were sinners, alienated from Him. God expresses His love for those who have become His children through faith in Christ by ministering to our needs, filling our heart with joy, and protecting us from Satan. He also shows His love to us by correcting us when we make a misstep. Furthermore, God identifies with us in our afflictions, rejoices with us when we rejoice, and remains faithful to us under all circumstances.

Because God first loved us, we love Him and our brothers and sisters in Christ. In fact, Christ set the standard of our love for one another as the way outsiders will know we are His followers. John even wonders how we can love God whom we have not seen, if we don't love our fellow believers whom we have seen. When Christ abides in two people, they enjoy a kindred spirit. They

discover that, in spiritual matters, they have much in common. They may be different in many ways, but their love for God and His Word forms in them a common bond.

The love of God in our heart manifests itself in a love for the lost and a passionate desire to see them turn to the Lord. Since Jesus came into this world to seek and to save the lost, how can we possibly have His love in our heart and not long to see others saved?

## **1. LOVE OTHERS AS GOD LOVES US**

### **A. God Is Love (1 John 4:7-9)**

**7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.**

In the previous verses, John talks about the spirit of antichrist and the spirit of error and how these manifest themselves in man's inhumanity to man. He calls on his readers to distance themselves from this kind of behavior and to exhibit that which is most Godlike; that is, to love one another. The love the apostle is talking about shows itself through a consuming passion for what is best for others. There is nothing selfish or self-serving about this love; rather, it is always reaching out and finding ways to be a blessing to those it encounters.

John gives a compelling reason for loving one another—"love is of God" (v. 7). It is God's nature to love, and if we have become partakers of the divine nature, then it becomes natural for us to love also. Love is both a gift of God's grace and a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It pleases the Lord when believers demonstrate this trait toward one another and toward those outside the circle of the saints.

Showing love to one another is also a sign that we Christians have been born into the family of God, and that we truly know God. Some may boast of their knowledge of God, but true knowledge manifests itself in love for God and others. If love is absent, then no true knowledge of God is present. How can it be otherwise, since God is love? God demonstrated how remarkable His love is when He gave His only, well-beloved Son on the cross so people might have redemption. The fountain from which His love flows never fails. It should flow just as freely from us to others, and especially to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The plan of redemption was born in the love of God, and it was carried out when Jesus Christ freely suffered and died to make this glorious salvation available to us. Christ dying on the cross means we who were dead in trespasses and sin may now enjoy abundant, eternal life.

§ *Why did God love us first? How did He prove His love?*

#### **B. Real Love** (1 John 4:10-11)

**10 Herein is love, not that we 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 ought also to love one another.**

We did not initiate the love between God and ourselves. God loved us first. In fact, we were sinners and enemies of God. The Apostle Paul recognized this when he wrote: “God demonstrates His own love toward us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:8-10 NKJV).

This love cannot be matched. Because we were hopelessly lost in trespasses and sins, we needed a Savior to become our “atoning sacrifice” (1 John 4:10 NIV). So great was God’s love for us that

He sent His Son to die on our behalf so we might enter into eternal life. This is the only way the justice of God could be satisfied. Christ paid the price for us, although we were utterly undeserving.

If God loved us when we were unlovable and alienated from Him, how much more should we love one another now that we are redeemed by the blood of Christ? The greatest motive we have for loving one another is God's love for us. We walk in holiness because He is holy; we show mercy because He is merciful; and we love one another because He is love. We should love one another for God's sake. There may be some things about the personality of some believers we do not like, but that does not free us from the call to love them. They are God's children, our brothers and sisters in Christ, members of the same family, and therefore deserving of our love.

### **C. Complete Love (1 John 4:12)**

**12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.**

In his Gospel, John made this same assertion about God: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (1:18). Jesus provides the clearest revelation of God that we have. People had many ideas about the nature of God, not all of them good, prior to the coming of Jesus. But Jesus shows us what God is really like. He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (14:9).

Since God is invisible, and Christ has returned to Heaven, the best way people can see God now is through His children. The world sees God most clearly in His children when we love one another. However, nothing turns people away from the Christian religion more readily than when they see us fighting among ourselves. If we cannot show love to one another, how can we expect to attract a lost world to our Savior?

When people see the love of God in us as we show love to one another, they perceive God dwells in us. Loving one another also brings His love to full expression in us. Showing our love to others is another way of showing our love for God. We cannot claim to be mature Christians until love for others is a central part of our confession. The importance of love is expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:13: “Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love” (NLT).

### **Beyond a Mere Concept**

Until we know Jesus, God is merely a concept, and we can't have faith in Him. But once we hear Jesus say, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9 [NKJV]), we immediately have something that is real, and our faith is limitless.—Oswald Chambers

## **2. LOVE IS THE DISTINCTIVE OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

### **A. Proof in the Spirit (1 John 4:13-14)**

**13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.**

John speaks of the mutual habitation between God and us. Not only does God dwell in us, but we also dwell in Him (v. 13). By faith, we enjoy a union with God that has been made possible by the work of Christ on our behalf. The assurance of this relationship is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He is not only the Spirit of love, He is also the Spirit of truth. The primary truth He imparts to us is that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. Jesus said, “When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (John 15:26 NKJV).

John could speak as an eyewitness to events surrounding the life of Christ. He had seen the life He lived, the miracles He performed, and the suffering He endured. John was also witness to the voluntary nature of Jesus' death. Jesus willingly gave up His life that He might give life to lost people. Not only was John at the cross when Jesus died, he also saw Him after His resurrection. Furthermore, he recorded one of the strongest statements relative to the coming again of the Lord to be found in Scripture (see John 14:1-4).

Observe that the Father who has “given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13) “sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (v. 14). The triune God works in unison to provide salvation. Christ came under the blessing and authority of the Father. There is no division among the Trinity; they work in harmony to make the various aspects of salvation a reality.

The term “Saviour of the world” only appears in John's writings—once in this epistle and once in his Gospel. The Samaritans who heard and believed the witness of the woman at the well referred to Christ as “the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42). They had no interest in a message of salvation that was for the Jews only, but they had considerable interest in a message that spoke to people everywhere—including Samaritans.

§ *How can we live in God while He lives in us?*

§ *What message does the Holy Spirit want to communicate through us? How can we communicate it?*

#### **B. A Life of Love (1 John 4:15-16)**

**15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.**

Previously, John has said if we love one another, God abides in us. Now he gives another evidence of the abiding presence of God in our life—our confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of

God. This confession is to be made openly and publicly, even if it means we face the prospect of persecution. If we do not confess Jesus is the Son of God and His atonement covers all our sins, we have no message to proclaim and no hope of eternal life. Paul wrote, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10 NKJV). This call to confession involves more than mental assent—the demons believe . . . some unrepentant people believe. But, in both cases, there is no communion with God. They believe in vain. Faith that saves means a surrender of the heart to Christ, followed by a walk of obedience that takes His commands seriously. When our faith is anchored in Christ, He dwells in us and we dwell in Him.

As we “know and rely on the love God has for us” (1 John 4:16 NIV), His “love becomes a working force in us” (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*). As Paul recorded: “I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39 NLT).

God's love is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (5:5), but it is not to lay dormant there; it must flow out to others. Without the Holy Spirit, our hearts are cold and indifferent, but His work is to warm our hearts and enhance our love for God and for others. That love evidences that the Holy Spirit is at work in us.

§ *What does it fully mean to “confess that Jesus is the Son of God” (v. 15)?*

**C. Perfect Love** (1 John 4:17-18)

**17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.**

The longer we serve God and the closer we grow to Him, the more perfect our love becomes. As our love matures, our confidence grows so we can stand calmly and boldly on the Day of Judgment. This does not lessen our awe of God. It does mean when God looks at us believers in the final judgment, He will see Christ in us and deal with us accordingly. This is the assurance Jesus expressed in John 5:24: “I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life” (NLT). In that day, the sins of our past cannot condemn us, for the blood of Jesus has washed them away. Thus, we can face God with confidence on that day. We understand we are nothing and Christ is everything.

For believers who fear the Day of Judgment, love has not been perfected. There is no fear in love; the two are incompatible. We cannot approach God in love and hide from Him in fear at the same time. If Christ is living in us in this world, we have no need to fear. After all, that is what being a Christian is all about—being Christlike. Many are the testimonies from loved ones of believers who faced death and judgment in perfect calmness and confidence. They understood their place in Christ and looked forward to His warm embrace upon their arrival on the other side. Of these, it could be said they had been “made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18).

### **Victory Over Fear**

To win the war against fear, we must know the true God as He is revealed in the Bible. He works to give us lasting peace. He receives joy, not from condemning us but in rescuing us from the devil. Yes, the Lord will bring conviction to our hearts concerning sin, but it is so He can deliver us



from sin's power and consequences. In its place, the Lord works to establish healing, forgiveness, and peace.—Francis Frangipane

### **3. WALK IN GOD'S LOVE**

#### **A. Loving People (1 John 4:19-21)**

**19 We love him, because he first loved us. 20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.**

“We love.” John states this affirmation in contrast to *we fear*. The reason we love, or even have the capacity to love, is that God first loved us and the Holy Spirit has poured His love into us. God's love for us is from eternity to eternity. Out of His love, He gave His only begotten Son to die for our sins and make reconciliation to Himself a possibility. In return for the love God has shown us, He is the first object of our love. Out of our love for God, we follow the pattern He has established in loving one another.

There is no way we can love God and not love our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus said the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). The thought we can love God and show an ungodly attitude toward His followers is preposterous. If such an attitude exists, it must be eradicated and replaced with the same love shown to God. Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 25 that behavior toward His brethren will be equated with behavior toward Him on Judgment Day.

We may not like everything about certain Christians, but this does not take away our Christian duty to love them. We should remember we were unlikable and unlovable when God saved us. We were sinners and enemies of God, yet He loved us.

## Practical Love

A wealthy Christian woman saw a poorly dressed boy gazing into the window of a shoe store. She asked him what he was doing. “I was praying that God would give me some shoes,” he said.

The lady took the little boy into the store, summoned a bowl of water, and washed the little fellow’s feet. She then bought for him a pair of strong, comfortable boots. The boy, amazed at what had been done, looked at the kind woman’s face and said, “Please. Ma’am, are you Christ’s wife?”

May our love for others show to the extent that others might ask us, “Are you a brother or sister in Christ?”—Author unknown

### **B. Living Out the Truth (2 John 1:4-6)**

**4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. 5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.**

John addressed his second letter to “the elect lady and her children” (v. 1). We are not told who this lady is or where she lived. She appears to be an individual of great distinction who was devoted to the service of Christ. The apostle praises her for the manner in which she has raised her family and the principles she has instilled in them. Some scholars do not see this woman as a person, but rather as a personification of a local church, and her children as individual members of the church.

The apostle commends the elect lady for the spirit and conduct he had seen in some of her children. Their life brought honor to the gospel of Christ which they had embraced. Not only had they received the truth, but John found them walking in the truth (v. 4). It is not enough for us to know the truth; we must live it out daily.

In verse 5, John reminds the elect lady how important it is to “love one another.” This is not some new requirement he is putting on her, but rather something expected all along. This is the living out of a principle found in both Testaments.

The commandment “which we had from the beginning” probably means the one she had from the start of her experience with the Lord. “Love one another” was a commandment she had known from the first days of her Christian walk. It is possible to fake belief, and confession can be made with the lips only, but love is more difficult to counterfeit.

In verse 6, John declared the interrelationship of love and obedience. Obedience finds its expression in love, and love finds its expression in obedience. “Walk in it” refers to God’s command to love. When all of God’s precepts have been condensed into one, we are left with the command to love God and one another.

§ *We know God’s command to love one another. Why can it be difficult to “walk in it” (v. 6)?*

## **LOVE ONE ANOTHER**

The beautiful word *beloved* appears five times in 1 John (3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11). The word is beautiful because it tells us, as believers in Christ, we are being loved. Jesus proved once and for all that God loves all people. And nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:35-39).

John knew God loves us, and he in turn was directed by the Holy Spirit to tell us we ought to love one another. If we know God, we know what love is. And if we know what love is, we know how to love. If we relate to others as God relates to us, we are showing love. We are following the example of Jesus Christ.

### **Daily Devotions**

M. God’s Love for the Rejected (Genesis 29:31-35)

- T. God's Loving Kindness (Psalm 63:1-4)
- W. God's Love Declared (Psalm 103:1-12)
- T. God's Great Love (John 3:14-18)
- F. Love Proves Discipleship (John 13:34-39)
- S. The Greatness of Love (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)