



**Adult Sunday School Lesson for March 18, 2007
Released on Wednesday, March 14, 2007**

"The Source of Love"

**Printed Text: 1 John 4:7-21
Background Scripture: 1 John 4:7-21
Devotional Reading: John 21:15-19**

1 John 4:7-21

4:7 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.

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.

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.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spir'it.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Je'sus 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.

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.

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.

INTRODUCTION

As 1 John 4 opens, the apostle reminded his readers, "Many false prophets are gone out into the world" (v. 1). That being so, the spirits that were inspiring these teachers needed to be put to the test. To a young congregation Paul wrote, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:19-21).

Obviously, we must begin by determining whether what is being taught is in harmony with the Holy Scriptures.

LESSON BACKGROUND

John learned firsthand that we love because He first loved us (see John 21:20).

Previously, we saw John demonstrate that love for fellow Christians is a test that reveals whether a person is really walking in the light. Now John goes further: love is also the test that reveals if a person actually is born of God. Since God is the ultimate source and embodiment of love, anyone who is genuinely born of God will reflect His characteristics. A person without love is a person who is not God's child. We will see John establish that such a person does not even know God.

LESSON AIMS

Facts: to show that love from God is essential to fellowship with Him and other believers.

Principle: to define how God is love and what that should mean in scriptural terms.

Application: to consider how salvation through Christ should affect believers' relationships with one another.

Example of Love (1 John 4:7-12)

1. How does love give evidence of "being born of God" (1 John 4:7)?

Being "born of God" simply means being born again, not by flesh but by the spirit. If you are born of God, you believe in His Son Jesus Christ and will exhibit the quality of Jesus, which is love. If you are in fellowship with Christ, you will

have genuine Christian love and no longer continue in sin (3:9), you will live right (2:29), and have victory over the world. If you do not have that Christian love, you have no fellowship with Christ and therefore, you are walking in darkness.

Christ abides in the Father and the Father in Him. The Father is Love and so is Christ. Therefore, if we abide in Christ, we too will have and exhibit Christian love that reflects Jesus Christ and His Father. This dominant attribute of our Father (love) must be seen in those who claim to know Him.

2. What is meant by the phrase "God is love" (v. 8)?

The phrase "God is love" means love is the nature of God; He is the Originator/Creator of love. God is fundamentally and essentially Love. It is His nature to love; and it is not because our attractiveness has drawn love out of him or because we have won merit points... we are all sinners and thus unattractive to God. He loves us, not because of what we are, but because of what He is" (Morris, *New Testament Theology*, Zondervan).

3. What does it mean that Christ the "propitiation for our sins" (vs. 10)?

Christ is the "propitiation for our sins" is the way God forgives sin. God provided Jesus to be the sacrifice for sin. When Jesus gave His life, God accepted Jesus' suffering as payment for sin's penalty. This payment turned God's wrath away from us – God was propitiated (God was satisfied). We could never have turned away God's wrath on our own (see also Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2).

4. What are some ways God is seen to be dwelling within the believer?

As we look at several passages of scripture in this lesson, we see that God dwells in the believer in the following ways:

- by us loving one another with God's perfected love (v. 12)
- He gives us his Spirit (v. 13)
- whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 15)
- by believing on the love God has for us and by us also dwelling in love (v. 16)

5. How might it be said that God has been seen and yet never seen? (vs.12)

We as believers know that no human has ever seen God or the full glory of God. However, those who love one another show that God is dwelling in them and that His love is being made complete in their lives. Of course, we cannot see God, for He is a spiritual being (John 4:24). We can nevertheless see the effects that God makes in a person's life. If the world cannot see the difference Christ makes in our lives, they are justified if they say we do not practice what we preach (see Matthew 5:16).

Proof of Love (1 John 4:13–16a)

6a. What are some evidences of the Holy Spirit in a person's life? (v. 13)

When a person has the Holy Spirit within him/herself, that individual's behavior reflects Christian character (Gal. 5:22-25). The character of a Christian exhibits love that is obedient to God and strives to live a righteous life.

Our knowledge *that we dwell in* God is not based on some mystic, mysterious experience. It is based on the fact that God has *given us of His Spirit* (Romans 8:9; 1 John 3:24). We know that we have the Spirit because God—who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18)—has given us His firm promise (see Acts 2:38). Thus God's promise of the Spirit and our practice of love join together as proof that we are in Him and He is in us. Love is the first and greatest fruit that His Spirit produces in us (again, see Galatians 5:22).

6b. Why is confessing Christ important? When is this done? (vs. 15)

First and foremost let us understand that God expects us to confess that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus promised that if a person confesses Him before others, He will confess that person before His Father in Heaven (Matthew 12:32). However, if we are ashamed to own Him before men, He will not own us before His Father.

When we confess Christ, we are identified as a true believer. While professing faith in Christ is an important part of receiving the Lord (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Tim. 6:12), we must continue to acknowledge Him throughout our Christian lives (Matt. 10:32-33; 1 Pet. 3:15). Let us keep in mind that everyone will not confess Christ but there will come a day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:9-11).

Results of Love (1 John 4:16b-18)

7. I know that God has love, but how do I keep connected with Him (v. 16b)?

God does not just "have" love, *God is love*. He embodies everything that is good about love and encompasses the entire range of love's expressions. God and love are so much identified with each other that to dwell *in love* is to dwell *in God*. Furthermore, when we dwell in this love, God himself also dwells in us.

8. Why should Christians have no fear of judgment? (v. 18)

Christians should have no fear of judgment because their love has been perfected, or made complete. Such love leads to "boldness," or confidence in the Day of Judgment. For the Christian, the judgment is not about whether he is going to heaven or hell. That issue was settled when he/she came to know Christ as Saviour and affirmed by his perseverance in the faith (2 Pet. 1:4-11).

If Christians are fearful, it indicates that something is lacking in their development of Christian love. There is no place for fear in the perfected love that John wanted his readers to know and experience. Therefore, love that is perfect or full grown will cast out fear. While fear paralyzes and has torment, genuine love confirms our salvation. The person who still lives in unhealthy fear of God is not yet mature. He or she is not yet made perfect in love (see 2 Timothy 1:7).

Grand Summary of Love (1 John 4:19–21)

9. How has God “first loved us” (vs. 19)?

Now John sums up his grand teaching about love. God is the source of love. When *we love him*, it is only *because he first loved us*. Without God’s initiative we would not have known genuine love; neither would we have known how to love. When we abide in God and His Spirit abides in us, divine love becomes a natural part of our lives. We give back to God the love He has shown us. At the same time, we pass on this kind of love on to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

10. How did John view a person who claimed to love God but did not love his brother (vs. 20-21)?

The practical test of love, as seen before, is that God’s child must love the *brother* or sister in Christ. A person who says *I love God* but then hates a fellow Christian *is a liar*. There is a logical reason for this fact: we have been made in the image of God.

“Our capacity for love originates in God’s love for us” (Allen).

This is why John found it completely incomprehensible for a person to say “ I love God” (v. 20) while hating his Christian brother. It is hypocritical to claim to love the unseen God while not loving the brother we can see-and help (3:17).

Therefore, we must love both God and one another, which Christ declared to be the greatest of God’s commandments (Mark 12:28-34).

CONCLUSION

Source of Love

Love does not just happen. It is a virtue of the order, created and demonstrated by God himself. If the world were merely an evolutionary accident and the law of the jungle demanded survival only of the fittest, then there would be no room for self-sacrificing love. But just as the creator of the universe and the source of all life, so is He the source of true love.

Without our knowledge of God, searching for the source of love would be an impossible task. We would be like the early explorers who were hopelessly ill-equipped when they searched for sources of great rivers. If we had only scientific observation to guide us, we would ultimately give up on love and agree with the law of the jungle: the strong devour the weak. If we had only the history of human empires as our guide, might conclude that there is no real love to be found. It is only in the spiritual realm that we are able to trace love back to its divine source. But unlike the source of a river, which becomes smaller and smaller as it is traced, the divine source of love becomes greater and greater as we draw nearer. Also unlike the source of a river, the source of love does not need to be increased by tributaries. God’s love can never be diminished or depleted; it flows from God’s infinite heart.

Channels of Love

When we recognize that God is the source of love, we next realize that He intends for us to be the channels of that love. We become the passageways through which the mighty river of God's love flows. This love will bless countless lives, but only as we allow it to flow through us.

God continues to be the dynamic source of the love that flows through us, but He has given us the responsibility to direct that love in ways that would please Him. For instance, we know that we should direct generous love toward the widows and the orphans (James 1:27). We should be channels of divine love toward those who are helpless, homeless, and hungry (Matthew 25:34-36).

To be like Jesus means being ready to extend God's love to children (Matthew 19:14), to social outcasts such as Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10), and to people of other races such as the woman of Samaria (John 4:9). To be like Jesus means surprising people with the range of our love. To be like Jesus means also surprising people with the intensity of our love. Jesus' love for John marked that apostle for life. He never forgot that he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

Finally, we must remember that love begins at home. If we cannot love those who are nearby, we deceive ourselves to think that we can love those who are far away. It is in our own family and in our own church that love builds its foundation (Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 5:8). It bears repeating: How can we love the God whom we have not seen, if we do not love our brothers and sisters whom we have seen?

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you for showing us your love even when we were sinners and enemies of your kingdom. Help us to learn to love you better and to be channels of your love to all our brothers and sisters. Thank you that there has never been a greater love than the love Jesus showed when he died in our place. Forgive us when we fail to love but let us learn from our failures. In the name of Jesus, the ultimate example of love, we pray, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER: Focus on the source of Love

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Study 1 John 5:1-12 "The Way to Love"

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