

“Will He Be Your Valentine?”

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February 13th, 2022

Scripture

1 John 4:7-21

“Beloved, **let us love one another**, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 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. 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 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. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, **God abides in him**, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and **God abides in him**.

By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. **We love, because He first loved us**.

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that **the one who loves God should love his brother also**.”

Introduction

“Now That I Found You” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIPkgQqW7xw>)

What is your favorite love song?

You know you have a true love song when you can sing it to Jesus!

History of Valentine's Day

Two Saint Valentines, both executed:

- 1) For secretly marrying Roman soldiers against the Emperor's wishes prohibiting marriage.
- 2) For falling in love with a woman he was tutoring against her father's wishes, he was imprisoned, and wrote a letter to the woman from prison that said, "From Your Valentine"

The middle of February was a pagan holiday called Lupercalia which was a Roman celebration of fertility.

We do not know for sure which is true, but I like 2) because it seems to match the practice of sending love letters.

"Letters to Juliet", a Verona Italy tradition, where people send love letters annually to a Juliet Society which determines the best love letter of the year every St. Valentine's Day.

What is your motivation for following Jesus?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>Academic</u> Christianity | -> It's a <u>logical faith</u> which involves reason |
| <u>Dedicated</u> Christianity | -> It's a <u>determined faith</u> which involves commitment |
| <u>Devotional</u> Christianity | -> It's a <u>passionate faith</u> which involves a deep love |

Does your faith in Jesus rise to the level of a devotional Christianity whereby you confidently say that you love Him?

Will He Be Your Valentine?

The Apostle John

He's not the "Love Doctor" but he is the "Love Apostle"

John was motivated to follow Christ by Love

- "Love" appears **57 times** in the Gospel of John
- "Love" appears **46 times** in 1 John

"The disciple that Jesus loved"

John 13:23 "There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, **whom Jesus loved.**"

John 21:20-23

“Peter, turning around, saw **the disciple whom Jesus loved** following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” So, Peter seeing him said to Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If I want him to remain until I come, **what is that to you?** You follow Me!” Therefore, this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”

The Audience of 1 John

The letter does not identify the author, but the early church categorically attributed the epistle to the Apostle John.

The content of the epistle’s original language and the use of similar terms and explanations as in the Gospel of John provide support for his authorship.

The letter is dated as coming into circulation near the end of the first century which aligns with the Apostle John’s life better than other Apostolic authors. At the end of his life, John was ministering in and around Ephesus.

It stands to reason that the Ephesian church could have been an initial audience of this letter prior to the letter being circulated around the churches in Asia Minor.

In **Revelation 2:1-7**, the Lord dictates a letter to the Apostle John toward Ephesus where the Lord says, “**But I have this against you**, that **you have left your first love**” (Revelation 2:4).

I would be understandable that the Ephesian church was moving into a more Academic Christianity and John was urging them toward a more Devotional Christianity.

The Lord’s rebuke in **Revelation 2:4** would seem to dictate that the Ephesian church did not heed John’s words. Then again, the churches in Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11) and Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) would have seemed to remain more faithful.

Regardless, we know that John remained in Ephesus for an extended ministry among the churches in Asia Minor, writing and being an elder as the last Apostle who was an eyewitness to Jesus’s work alive at the time.

The Moral Test of Love

I can tell you that I love you all day long, but how do you really know that I do?

Does a Mother Bear actually love her cub?

or

Is the maternal, protective and nurturing aspects of a Mother Bear instinctual?

1 John 4:7-21

This passage of Scripture for today's message is bracketed by John's call to love one another. In verse 7, John calls us **to love one another**. In verse 21, John writes "and this commandment we have from Him, that **the one who loves God should love his brother also.**"

It's clear that the intent of the Apostle is to encourage more brotherly love than he is currently observing in the church.

John writes that the fact that we love others should provide evidence of a changed life!

In this passage, there are **FIVE takeaways** from **1 John 4:7-21**:

1) God is the Essence of Love

1 John 4:7-8

"Beloved, **let us love one another**, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**"

There was a heresy affecting the churches in Asia Minor called **Gnosticism**. The Greeks believed in a distinct separation of the body and the spirit where the body was distinctly evil and the spirit was considered good. They began to explain Jesus in the same way where His humanity was evil, but His spirit was inherently good. This belief is contrary to the teaching of the Bible, however, as Jesus was both fully God and fully man, His entire being was good. There was no evil in Him.

Psalm 92:15

"The LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

The Apostle John uses simple terms when he is writing. He says that "love is from God" – there are four commonly used Greek words for love: (agape, storge, phileo, and eros). John is writing about agape love, the highest and most sacrificial love.

John is saying that **AGAPE** love comes from God. It cannot come from man. We might be able to come up with a family, friendship, or sexual love but we have **no ability to generate that altruistic, self-denying love**. That only comes through the Holy Spirit's influence in your life.

2 Peter 1:2-4

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the **true knowledge of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them **you may become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

You have divinity inside of you via the Holy Spirit. We get God's nature in this transaction.

John then says everyone who exhibits this kind of love is born of God and knows God.

From that influence comes a true, experiential knowledge of God.

You're not getting just head knowledge here. You're getting life experience knowledge.

There are a lot of people hanging out in churches every Sunday that do not know God.

Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"

Jesus will say "Depart from Me" -> "I never knew you".

If that kind of love for others isn't in you, John says you do not know God. Even if you've done a lot of tasks in His name.

Why? Because the Essence of God is Love. You should be able to observe this in your own life.

Do you inherently love others? Or is it a struggle to love others?

2) God's Sacrifice of the Son is the Supreme Example of Love

1 John 4:9-11

"By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, **we also ought to love one another.**"

John writes that he was given a great example to show him what love was all about. That example came from God when He sent Jesus into the world to save His chosen people.

John 15:12-13

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, **that one lay down his life for his friends.**"

We need examples in life to teach us. We learn much better when we have a visual example to follow.

We see Paul put his life on display for his disciples:

1 Corinthians 11:1

“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

The writer of Hebrews also called us to this point:

Hebrews 13:7

“Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.”

John’s most powerful example was Jesus, whose life was provided as an example by God the Father.

John says it’s not so much that we loved God, but more that He loved us.

The most quoted verse in the Bible reads:

John 3:16-17

“**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,** that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

Jesus came to be the propitiation of our sins. That word means “satisfaction” and on the cross Jesus said, “It is finished!” which means “Paid in Full”.

So, John repeats. **If God gave love freely like this, then so should we!**

We ought to love one another **in response to God’s love for us!**

3) God’s Only Current Earthly Display of Love is The Church

1 John 4:12

“No one has seen God at any time; **if we love one another, God abides in us,** and **His love is perfected in us.**”

Jesus came to show us what God was like (John 1:18 says that ‘He has explained Him’).

No one has seen God at any time because Jesus is no longer in the world to show us the love of God up close and personal. John may be the only one who is still alive to have seen His ministry up close and personal with John being the last Apostle alive.

John discusses this concept of “abiding” but it is not some mystical concept. It is the Greek word “meno” -> “to stay or remain in place”

The key word here is **US**. It is “The New Us” -> the true church. His love is perfected in the Church. The word “perfected” means to be complete.

God’s love is completely and exclusively on display in His people! And dare I say, in His people alone. You will not see His love perfected in a plant. You will not see His love perfected in everybody on the planet. Much as we would love to think it, His love is not perfected in a little baby boy just born.

His love is ONLY perfected in His chosen people, who are inhabited by the Holy Spirit, those who are being transformed day by day and who remain in God’s love for their life.

The Church is the world’s only hope to see God’s love on display.

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power **will be of God and not from ourselves**; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus**, so **that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.**”

John 13:35

“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Matthew 5:16

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Love originated with God, it was manifested in the Son, and it is demonstrated by His people.

4) Assurance of Salvation is Reflected by the Love for Others

1 John 4:13-16

“By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and **God abides in him.**”

How do you know that you love God? Are you assured that you will go to Heaven?

The Apostle tells us that we can have assurance when we see the Holy Spirit acting in our life. We know that we “abide” or “remain” over time. Our confidence in our eternal destination **should be on the increase** as we remain in the body.

Continual confession of the divinity and equality of Jesus with God is a sign.

Matthew 10:32-33

“Therefore, everyone who confesses Me before men, **I will also confess him before My Father** who is in heaven. “But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”

Anyone can have a moment of confession in their life. The first of these is usually when you come before the church and state that you believe in Jesus and desire to be baptized.

Baptism is the first visible sign a believer can take when they commit their life to Jesus. Baptism is a visible confession that you are His.

Is it required for entrance into Heaven? No! Jesus’s interaction with the thief on the cross showed us that. Is it desired? Yes! Because it reveals the heart of the believer and allows for the new believer to put their faith on display for their family and friends. It may be the best testimony you ever share.

True assurance, however, is not in the initial event but usually a reflection over a lifetime of commitment.

Think about a marriage between two people who love each other. On the honeymoon, is there assurance of lifetime commitment? **There is definitely hope of a lifetime commitment.** But we have to be realistic in knowing that the divorce rate in the U.S.A. is north of 50% these days.

When do you acquire that lifetime confident assurance in your new spouse? After 5 years? After 10 years? 20 years?

With God, however, you don’t get “some” of the Holy Spirit when you commit your life to Christ. **Once the Holy Spirit comes to live inside you, you have ALL of Him.** In some cases, the Holy Spirit’s renovation is visible IMMEDIATELY. In other cases, His influence is revealed over time. But His influence WILL be shown because he WILL renovate you from the inside out.

2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the **old things passed away**; behold, new things have come.”

If you are in Christ, there is something QUALITATIVELY new that will be shown. Old ways will be passing away...new things will be showing up.

If you believe that you belong to Jesus, and there has been little or no change in the ways of your life, then perhaps you need to come talk to your pastor 1:1 and let's discuss it.

John gives us a specific item that we can look for in our life: **our love for others.**

When THAT kind of love shows up in our life, John says, we should have pretty good assurance the Holy Spirit has setup residence inside us. This is a major determinate in knowing and having the assurance of salvation: showing our love for others as a normal course of life.

So, if the Lord brings someone into your life who definitely needs assistance, and your heart goes out to them, and you are passionate to get them help or make a difference in their life -> that's a sign of the Holy Spirit's influence in your life.

There are other signs of the Holy Spirit's influence in our lives to give you assurance. I wrote a book about FIVE positive signs that reveal your love for God. Get a copy. Read it. Grow in your assurance and test yourself against these signs. Do they show up in your life now?

5) Our Love Provides Confidence for the Future

1 John 4:17-21

"By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.**

We love, because He first loved us.

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that **the one who loves God should love his brother also.**"

John says that the result of this assurance, and the abiding of the Holy Spirit is confidence in the day of judgment. Confidence in our position in Christ is the end goal of the Spirit's influence to John.

He WANTS us to be confident in Him. He does not want us living in doubt of our salvation.

John calls this a perfect love: it is a complete love. It is not a partial love.

There is no Fear in love.

Perfect love literally throws fear out of us.

Perfect love dispels the fear of missing Heaven.

Perfect love removes the possibility of punishment.

We call this FUD: Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt.

When love is perfected in us, FUD goes away.

John says that this shows up in our life **because God first loved us**.

The true test of this love, though, is how we love others in Jesus's name.

If we claim to love God or if we claim to be a Christian, and we do not love each other, then John calls us liars. He calls us fakes. We are pretenders.

If we cannot love the people that we see in front of us, how can we claim to love God who we do not see?

But if we show love for each other, it's an entirely different story.

Not only will we set an example for everyone who sees us. But we will also build confidence and assurance in our own life that we are IN the Kingdom; that we WILL go to Heaven; and that we can approach Him with confidence.

I mentioned different types of Christianity:

Academic Christianity -> It's a logical faith which involves reason

Dedicated Christianity -> It's a determined faith which involves commitment

Devotional Christianity -> It's a passionate faith which involves a deep love

It is not just an Academic Christianity John is talking about.

It's a Dedicated Christianity. It's a Devoted Christianity.

Romans 12:9-18

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love**; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, **devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality**.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”

Will He Be Your Valentine?

If you are committed to one another in love, **He Already Is Your Valentine**.