

Love Manifested

Love of God

John uses the word love 26 times in our passage of verses 7 to 21, here in 1st John 4. So, it is easy to identify the theme of this passage as “love”. However, in order to understand this theme of love we need to understand the Triune God for understanding of the love John is writing about comes from understanding God. Here in this passage we see clearly the concept of the Trinity. The Bible clearly teaches the concept of the Trinity, although the word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible. The basic concept of the Trinity can be understood and yet, the fullness of the Trinity is far beyond human understanding. Even though this might be frustrating at times, this is a good thing because we have a God that is so amazing and incredible that He defies human definition.

Some religions that claim the God of the Bible would have you believe that there are three different gods and from this that there are many gods. Moses made it clear, “[Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.](#)” (Deuteronomy 6:4) In the Gospel According to John chapter 10 it is clear that the Father and Son are One. In 1st Corinthians 3 Paul well-defines that the Father and the Holy Spirit are One. In Romans chapter 8 the Son and the Spirit are One. In his gospel record John wrote the words of Jesus identifying the three person of the Trinity, “[I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor](#)

knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17) The Bible is clear that there is complete unity within the Trinity, which is one God, not three, but the One God is the Trinity of personalities. We see all three personalities of God working at Jesus’ baptism recorded in Matthew, “When Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’ ” (Matthew 3:16-17) Likewise, as believers, Jesus has commanded us “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20) The understanding of the Trinity has deep implications for what believers think about God and also affects how believers relate to one another.

It is the Triune God’s nature and origin of perfect love that underlies John’s theme of love here in chapter 4, verses 7 to 21. John’s writings are the last of the New Testament and his theme of God’s love is built upon all the writings of the books within both the Old and New Testaments. This theme of love is important for this is the third time John has put it forth to his readers. The love theme is first given in chapter 2 verses 7 to 11. Here John says love is the proof of true fellowship. Second, it is put forth in chapter 3 verses 10 to 17 where John discusses love as evidence of believer’s sonship. Now John returns to the theme of love as the very nature of the perfect love of the Triune God, the one and only God. Love is the reason for the coming of Christ. It is the foundation of a believer’s faith and it is the fulfillment of Christian’s confidence of eternity. It is by God’s love we are born

again.

In 1st John 4, verses 7 and 8 we read, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” John begins with “Beloved” which in the Greek is “divinely loved ones.” As the divine children of God we are to “love one another.” This is the love God has for us, it is *agape* love or self-sacrificing love of service to others, loving someone because they need love and it is a love that loves even the unlovable. This is where we will spend most of our time this morning – God’s love for us and our love for others.

Love Connection

Because of God’s *agape* love for those He calls to be His children we experience a new birth. I want us to focus on the fact that new birth creates the connection between God’s love for us and our love for each other. If anyone ever asks, “*How does the fact that God loves you result in your loving others?*” The answer is it is the new spiritual birth God creates in our souls that enables this love connection. First the connection is between God and us and then love for others. The new birth is the act of the Holy Spirit connecting our spiritually dead and selfish hearts of stone with God’s living, loving, and perfect heart so that His life becomes our life and His love becomes our love. This is the reason John begins with “Beloved” meaning “divinely loved ones” for God divinely loves those who believe in His Son, Jesus.

This is laid out in 1 John 4:7 to 12. John shows this connection in two ways. First, he shows that God’s *nature* is love, so that when we are born again by Him we share His nature. Second, John shows that the manifestation of God’s love nature

is given in history by the sending of His Son, Jesus, so that we might have eternal life through Christ. Let's take time to explore these one at a time and notice how they are connected to the new spiritual birth given by God.

Love – God's Nature

Read along with me beginning at verse 7 where we see God's nature is love.

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” Please take note of two things said here. Verse 7 says, “love is from God” and verse 8 ends saying, “God is love.” These two statements are not conflicting because when John says that “love is from God,” he doesn't mean it's from Him the way an email comes to your computer or even on the rare occasion you receive a hand written letter delivered to your home from a dear friend. John is expressing that love is from God the way heat is from fire, or the way light is from the sun. Love is God's nature. Love is crucial to who God is. It is the essence of who and what He is. It is foundational to every expression or definition of what it means to be God. The sun gives light because it is light. Fire gives heat because it is heat. God gives love because He is love.

John's point is that by our new birth this aspect of God's divine nature becomes part of who we are. The spiritual new birth is the revealing tell-tell sign to you of the indwelling divine life and an essential part of that life is love. The goal of sanctification is to move from love of self to love of God and by this, the ability to love others. By our new birth God's nature becomes the foundation of who we are. As agape love is God's nature it becomes our nature. Look now at verse 12, “No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is

perfected in us.” When you are born again, God himself is revealed to you. He dwells in you and causes your heart to experience His love and then this love overflows as love to others. God’s aim is that His love be perfected in you as you grow spiritually. Take note of the phrase “his love” in verse 12. The love you are given and indwells you, as a born again person, is not an imitation of the divine love of God – it is God’s essence in you. It is an experience of God’s divine love and becomes an extension of that love to others.

Love Revealed

The first way the Apostle John connects God’s love for us and our love for other people is by focusing on God’s *nature* as love and how our new spiritual birth connects us to God’s love. Second, we now consider verses 9-11 where John focuses on the main manifestation of God’s divine love. God’s love is given for the benefit of all who have and will live in human history. Verses 9 to 11 defines this, “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.** ¹⁰In 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.** ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

In John’s mind the great manifestation of God’s love is that God sent His Son— John says that twice in verses 9 and 10. The chief aim of God sending Jesus was for Christ to be the “propitiation” for our sins. That’s what makes sending Jesus the greatest sacrifice of love. Let me take a minute and define this word “propitiation.” It means that God the Father’s Son, Jesus Christ, came to bear our punishment for our sins and thus be the One who removes the wrath of God from us. Or, to say it differently, this means that it was God’s *love* that sent His Son to

bear God's just penalty and to take away God's just wrath from sinning people by bringing them into believing faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, the greatest manifestation of the love of God is God's all encompassing action to satisfy His own wrath.

The way God's Son accomplishes this is found in 1 John 3:16, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us." Then the Son of God became our propitiation by laying down His life for us. Dying for us. John says this is the manifestation of God's nature. This is the way God is. This is who God is.

Love – God Loves First

Notice the directional flow in verse 10, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son." What John is guarding against is that we cannot claim to have found Christ and loved Christ on our own, John says, "not that we have loved God but that he loved us." John is emphasizing that the nature and the origin of love does not lie in our response to God. Love simply does not start with us. As spiritually dead people we only have the world's concept of love, which is a corrupt sense of love given by the evil one. True love is of God and love begins with God. Any loving thing we feel or do is only made possible because we are connected with God by the new spiritual birth. I am only able to truly love Joyce if I love God first and God is the One who gives me the ability to love. Joyce then is right to give thanks to God for my love of her, for by myself I am incapable.

We have delved into two aspects about God's love. First, John shows that God's *nature* is love so that when we are born again by Him, we share His nature. Second, God shows that the manifestation of His love, the greatest act of love in

all human history, by sending His Son so that we might have eternal life through Christ.

Love One Another

I do not want us to miss a specific word in the definition John wants us to understand about our new birth in relation to the manifestation of God's love as well as the nature of God's love. When John says in verse 11, "[Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.](#)" What does it mean and how are we to understand this word "[ought](#)"? If you could set aside everything in the preceding five verses, you might be able to say: *"The point of the incarnation is imitation. God loved us. So we need to look at how He did this and we need to do it also. As believers we are obligated to do so."*

But, John has not forgotten what he has written in verses 7 and 8, "[Beloved \(or My divinely loved ones\), 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.](#)" Knowing that we possess saving faith and for others to observe this change in us of God's love is to know we belong to God. Otherwise verse 8 says, "[Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.](#)" John wrote these words, and if you believe as I do that John was inspired by God, then it is clear that those whose lives are not characterized by love for others are not Christian, no matter what they may claim. The Jewish leaders at the time Jesus walked the earth and the false teaches and prophets during the first century church of John's day knew a lot about God but they did not know God. The absence of true love in their lives revealed their unregenerate condition. The Crusades were not of God for they did not show love for others

as both God the Father and God the Son modeled and taught. The Crusades were neither biblical nor founded on the principal of God's love. It was unregenerate men seeking their own ambition. Look today at any of the Islamic nations and ask where is the love of God? If God's love is absent – it speaks volumes.

So when John writes, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” He means *ought* the way fish ought to swim in water and birds ought to fly in the air and living creatures ought to breathe and peaches ought to be sweet and lemons ought to be sour. People born of God ought to love from their inner most being. It is who we are. This is not an imitation of God, but it is a gift of God. For the children of God, imitation becomes realization. We comprehend who we are when we love. God's seed is in us. God's Spirit is in us. God's nature is in us. God's love is being perfected in us.

Love As Christ Loved

Yes, there is the historical record of seeing the Son of God laying down His life for us and what this offered to the people of the world and how His act of love constrains evil in the world. But what is unique about the Christian life is that there is also the internal knowledge and understanding that comes from being born again and having the very love of God who sent His Son into the world, so that, pulsing through our souls is the life and love of God within. The new birth enables us to experience the manifestation of God's love in history as well as an internal reality of God's Spirit within us.

So I return to what I said at the beginning. I want us to focus on the fact that new birth creates the connection between God's love for us and our love for each

other. If anyone ever asks, *“How does the fact that God loves you result in your loving others?”* The answer is it is the new spiritual birth God creates in our souls enables this love connection. First the connection is between God and us and then for others. The new birth is the act of the Holy Spirit connecting our spiritually dead and selfish hearts of stone with God’s living, loving, and perfect heart so that His life becomes our life and His love becomes our love.

We have seen that this love is both by nature who God is and by manifestation of Jesus what God has done in history by sending own Son to lay down His life that He might be the propitiation for our sins and that we might have eternal life. The new birth connects us to God in such a way that it defines who we are as the children of God. If we are born again we love each other. Simple and clear!

Love - Born Again

What I want to do for the rest of our time is apply this to us here at Canyon Bible. I want to say to you, my beloved, what the apostle John says to us all in verse 11, *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* If we are regenerate people, we are loving people. If we are born again, the love of God is within us. As John wrote in chapter 3, *“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.”* (1 John 3:14) What does this look like in your life and in my life?

John mentions several specific ways that the love of God will become real in our lives through the new birth. I’ll mention just two and the way they are transforming our lives together at Canyon Bible. It is my prayer they will continue and do so more and more.

Love Humbly Rejoice

Reading from 1st John chapter 3 beginning in verse 11, “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.” (1 John 3:11-14)

Now this specific form of love in verse 12 may seem to you totally unneeded. **We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.**” Am I really concerned that there will be a rash of murders here at Canyon Bible? No. I don’t think John feared that either. He doesn’t focus on the murder. He asks in verse 12, “**And why did he murder him?**” This is John’s concern. There is something about Cain’s motive that John thinks will be relevant to the way church community loves each other—and the way we, as individuals, love each other.

John answers his question at the end of verse 12, “**Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous.**” I believe what John is saying here is not if you love you will not kill a brother, but that love doesn’t feel resentful when a brother is superior in some spiritual or moral way. Cain didn’t kill Abel simply because Cain was evil. He killed him because the contrast between Abel’s goodness and his evil made him angry and resentful. It made Cain feel guilty about his heart. Abel didn’t have to say anything; his goodness was a constant reminder to Cain that he was evil. Instead of Cain dealing with his own evil and repenting before a holy God and changing, he took the selfish path and got rid of Abel. If you don’t like what

you see in the mirror it is easier to shoot the mirror and shatter it than change whom you are. If you live in the vicinity of a righteous person it is easier to inflict hurt on the righteous than for you to change.

If we were unregenerate like Cain it would mean that anytime some weakness or bad habit in our lives is exposed by contrast to someone else's goodness, instead of dealing with our weakness or the bad habit, we keep away from those whose lives that make us feel defective. We don't kill them, but we avoid them. Or, we can take the aggressive route and find ways to criticize them so as to defuse the part of their lives that was making us feel convicted. The best way to nullify someone's good point is to draw attention to his or her bad points. The best defense is a strong offensive. This is the world's approach.

John's point is love doesn't act like Cain. Love rejoices when our brothers and sisters are making progress in good habits or improving their attitude or changing to better behavior. Love rejoices in this growth, even if it happens to be faster than our own. This love is humble.

The lesson for us is everywhere you see some growth, some virtue, some improvement in spiritual discipline, some good habit, or a good attitude, rejoice, rejoice in it. Give thanks to God for what He is doing in other people's lives. Compliment them and encourage them. Don't resent another's goodness. Don't be like Cain. Respond the opposite of Cain. Be inspired by other people's goodness. Love is humble. Love delights in other people's goodness. Love doesn't protect its flaws. Love takes steps to change them. What a beautiful fellowship where everyone is rejoicing in each other's strengths not resenting them! This is what the love of God looks like when the new birth gives God's life

and love into people's hearts.

Loving Others – Even If There Is A Cost

The second specific way John says the love of God becomes real in our lives is through the new birth found in 1 John 4:13-15, “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 Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” If God has saved us, the natural result is we love God. If we love God we “testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.” Do the people in your life see God's love in you and know you are different from the world? Even if your love convicts others of their need for a Savior and they shun you or inflict hurt upon you are you willing to pay the price for Christ's glory? Verse 15 is not just for missionaries, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” Every Christian is called to be a testimony to Christ as Luke wrote the very words of Jesus, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) Are you Christ's witness wherever you are? If you are not Christ's ambassador, ask yourself, why not? Do not be like Cain, but like his brother Able who sought to please God.

We quickly continue now in verses 16 to 18, “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.” God’s children do not fear Christ’s return. At some point in the future when Christ returns every knee will bow before Him, even those who did not believe. They will humble themselves before God and then they will be cast into utter darkness. Christians do not live in this world as natives anymore. We are but aliens to this world for our true home is heaven. Because the world cannot inflict lasting pain or take away our salvation we have no fear.

We finish this morning with verses 19 to 21, “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 love God whom he has not seen.

²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” John ends by taking us back once again to the theme of love. We

should have such a strong love for Christ we are willing to lay down our own life for His glory. Up to this point is time we have not had to face this level of persecution here in America. But Able did and many Christians have over the millennia. But what about what John says back in chapter 3, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” (1 John 3:16) Are you at this point in your maturity of God’s love in your life willing to give your life for Christ’s glory? This is the goal, whether God ever asks it of us or not.

Let pray earnestly that God will grow us in love to the point we find great joy in not only serving Him, but each other. Could we be living the Revelation given by Christ to John? “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been

thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” (Revelation 12:10-12) The time of the world is growing short and eternity with God is before us. Let us make our time here on earth count for Christ’s glory and let us love others with the love of God!