

All You Need Is [God Who Is] Love | Reading: 1 John 4:7-12

On June 25, 1967, more than 400 million people in 26 countries watched, via satellite, the Beatles perform the song “All You Need Is Love.” They had been asked to come up with a simple song that could be understood by all the nations & this is what they came up with. Their song is very close to the truth, & it is something we can certainly resonate with. For there is a cry for love in the human soul!

I believe the apostle John would add one little clause to the title & refrain of this famous song. Between the words “is” & “love” I think John would add “All You Need Is [God Who Is] Love.” For John opens this new section on love by telling us that love flows from God. Then he goes on to teach us secondly how this love was manifested in God sending his unique Son & thirdly in some sense this love is perfected/completed in Christian community. So that’s a summary of where we’re going today. Some believe these verses to be the summit of this letter.

1. WHERE LOVE COMES FROM (7-8)

John writes in verses 7-8; **“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.”** Let me note two quick observations before we dive into this. Firstly John opens this new section on love by basically saying “you who are loved” – **“beloved”** – & secondly he is again specifically talking about love between Christians – **“let us love one another.”** We are loved & we are to love one another. This is a summary of the reality of the Christian life. John then points us to the source of this love when he says; **“for love is from God.”** John teaches that having this love, specifically for one another, is evidence of being born of God (7) & that not having this love is evidence of not knowing God (8). John’s reason is simply: **“because God is love.”** This means love both flows from God & it is defined by God. In other words without God there is no love & there is no way of knowing true love.

[All people, being made in God’s image, are capable of love, but Christians, of all people, should be known for their love.]

God is the source of love & he is in essence love & those who are truly born of him & know him can only grow in exhibiting his nature. John Piper says it like this; *“Love is from God the way heat is from fire, or the way light is from the sun. Love belongs to God’s nature. It’s woven into what he is. It’s part of what it means to be God. The sun gives light because it is light. And fire gives heat because it is heat. So John’s point is that in the new birth, this aspect of the divine nature becomes part of who you are... The love you have as a born again person is no mere imitation of the divine love. It is an experience of the divine love and an extension of that love to others.”*

So love has its source & essence in God & therefore those who have truly been born of God & know him (note that John links those two things together) become a family of lovers! Whoever loves with a God kind of love displays evidence they have come to know the love of the true & kind God.

2. WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE (9-10)

John Stott writes that; "while the origin of love is in the being of God, the manifestation of love is in the coming of Christ"! John has told us where love comes from (7-8) & now he is telling us what love looks like (9-10). Notice that to do this John zooms in on Christ (9) & then he zooms on further on Christ on the cross (10)!

God sent his Son that we might live through him (9). "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." The love of God was made manifest, was put on display, in God sending his only (unique) Son. We can hear John 3:16 ringing in our ears! Yet instead of "gave" John uses the word "sent" here emphasising that Christ came with the purpose of Heaven, he came to earth on the ultimate mission trip. His purpose to bring life! As Jesus said in John 10:10; **"I came that they might have life and have it abundantly."** In this letter of 1 John we're given vision of the life he came to bring us. To live through Christ means to be born of God & to know him. It means to experience his love & share that love with others. It means to enjoy fellowship with the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. It means to walk in the light, enjoy fellowship with one another, confess & receive forgiveness of sins, to walk as he walked, to abide in him, his word & his will & to have his Spirit abide in us, it means to know the truth, to have confidence at his return, to be free of fear of punishment, to have victory over sin & confidence before God in prayer & so much more. As John says in the next chapter; **"Whoever has the Son has life, whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."**

When we read of Jesus in the Gospels & the NT, we are given a vision of the life that is now ours! John tells us here that God sent his Son into the world that we might live through him. This is powerful stuff if we can grasp it. The love of God brings life. As Galatians 2:20 says; **"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me & gave himself for me."** This leads us nicely to verse 10

God sent his Son that he might die for us (10). "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he has loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." To teach us about God's love John has zoomed in on Christ & now he zooms in further on Christ on the cross.

[On Monday evening I was out on one of the Islands off Kilmeena taking photos of the sun setting over Clew Bay. It's only when I got home that I noticed the red cross on the water in one of the pictures. When I seen it I sensed something of God's heart for the people around Clew Bay & Mayo. That Jesus died to atone for

their sins & they need to know this, have it explained/revealed to them so they understand the finished work of the cross. Not assuming they don't, but making sure they do. Then when I was driving between Westport & Castlebar on Friday evening, on my way to the meeting in Carrick on Shannon, my heart was moved again about this. In light of these verses I was reminded of a prayer a friend prayed for Mayo before we moved from Belfast over 10 years ago. He mentioned the green & red of Mayo. That the green spoke of peace & the red spoke of the blood of Christ. He then prayed the people of Mayo would find peace with God through the blood of Christ. On Friday I believe the Holy Spirit impressed on me that the green also speaks of new life & the red speaks of Christ's atoning blood. God is bringing new life to people to people in this county & this new life will come with (for some it will lead to for others it will be the result of) a deep understanding of the atoning work of Christ. In light of this I believe we are to make sure we are equipped with a clear understanding of the atonement, so we can explain it to others. This needs to be the focus in our personal evangelism.]

Now there are different aspects to the *atonement*, but John here brings us to the very heart of the atoning work of Christ. A sacrifice had to be made & Christ was that once & for all atoning sacrifice. *Propitiation*, which is the word in our text today, has to do with Jesus absorbing God's wrath for us... He stood in our place, became our sin, & took our punishment. *Propitiation* is not a word we tend to use a lot today, however it is the best word we can find to capture this vital & central aspect of the atonement. The basic meaning of the word is "*satisfaction or appeasement of God's wrath, turning it into favour.*" God's righteous anger at our sin needed to be appeased so that his perfect justice could be upheld. A holy God cannot turn a blind eye to sin any more than a good judge can to crime. Christ accomplished this appeasement on the cross by absorbing the full weight of God's wrath on our behalf so that we could have eternal favour with God. We sing of the concept of propitiation when we sing the following words from *In Christ Alone* - "*And on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied - For every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.*"

People struggle with this truth today... which is not a new thing, for Spurgeon wrote in his day that; "*Modern philosophers will accept anything except the blessing Substitute for guilty man.*" John specifically teaches here that God's love is seen most clearly in this act of self-substitution & self-sacrifice. Of all the ways Christ displayed the love of God this is the pinnacle... John is very specific about the work of atonement & we need to be. Kevin DeYoung says; "*No adequate Christian theology will explain the atonement ambiguously or speak of God's saving work in mere general terms.*" For understanding it is the foundation of Christian faith, salvation, assurance & peace & John teaches us here that it is the climax of God's display of love in Christ.

As you know my great passion is expository preaching... Christ on the cross is the great exposition of the love that flows from God. The Cross is the exposition of God's love for us - it is the manifesting, revealing, making clear, putting on display of God's love. This leads to the final point.

3. WHY CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER (V11-12)

In verse 7 John says Christians love one another because they have been born of God & know God. New birth & relationship with God are two key reasons for Christians loving one another. In verse 8 John says the opposite is also true. Here in verse 11 John says; **"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."** In verse 19 he will say this even more directly; **"We love because he first loved us."** So again notice as with righteousness this is not something we produce in ourselves by trying harder etc. No this is something that is only produced through being born of God, being in relationship with God & being loved by God. All the emphasis is once again on God! Remember God is the source of this love; it comes from him not from us, this means we need to drink deeply of his love today & everyday! Humanity is literally loveless without God & it is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus that shows us what this love looks like.

If we really get all this then our lives will become a daily & living exposition of God's love in Christ – they will reflect the selfless, self-sacrificing & self-substituting love of Christ who loved us while we were still his enemies... Our lives & fellowship reflect are to make visible his love. John even goes as far as to say when we love one another God's love is perfected in us & our invisible God is seen among us! We love one another because God loved us & we are to commit to loving one another because we desire the world around us to see & experience the love of God. Jesus taught us this is the key to effective evangelism (John 13:35) & John tells us here it is the proof that God abides in/among us!