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God's Love Must Ignite Our Mutual Love

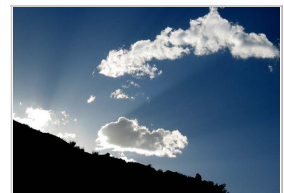
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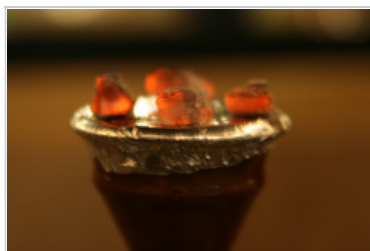
Heaven is a World of Love, by
Jonathan Edwards



The Mental Agonies of Hell, by
Robert Murray M'Cheyne



The World Ripe To Harvest: Reap or
It Perishes



1 John 4:7-12

By now you are no doubt beginning to see why John is called the Apostle of love. The word love appears over 50 times in this short epistle, and this is the fourth sermon I've given on the matter of loving the brethren. You might say that John is enamored with this concept. He loves to talk about love. And no doubt he should.

You may be thinking, "Do we really need to focus on this passage? Do we need to address this again? Haven't we covered it enough?"

[I'm actually glad that we don't have bulletins that we pass out for these services. Some of you might have seen that we were addressing the subject again and maybe moved on to another church for something different.]

I asked myself this just this week, "Do I really need to deal with this topic again?" After all, you all have certainly demonstrated a great deal of love towards us over this past week. For which we are very thankful.

But the fact of the matter is, yes, I think it is important. I think you will agree that it is far too easy for us to forget that this is our chief duty before God. And I sincerely believe that the only reason why John stresses it so is because he knows that the embers of our hearts can turn cold rather quickly.

He was obviously writing to a congregation that was failing to see the necessity of loving one another. John needed to stoke their hearts and affections. And the way he does this is by repeating the message over and over. And as he calls us to love he give us reason after reason why we must do so. It is almost as if he is simply trying to add more and more kindling so that the flame of love might be increased all the more.

And in our passage for this morning we see a few more reasons added to the list. This time, as he calls you to love the brethren, he zeros in on God's love.

Really, our eyes are lifted heavenward to see the love God displays in himself, in his Son and in us as his people.

In the first part of our passage, verses 7-8, John says that we must love one another because of the love God possesses inherently.

I. We must love because of the love God has in and of himself [7-8]

Read it with me. It says, "*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.*"

Now you see what John is saying here. He's saying that Christians love because they have this personal

connection to the Lord. We've been born of God. We know him [i.e. we have a personal relationship with him]. And since love comes from God and since God is love there is absolutely no way that we can do otherwise.

A couple of weeks ago Caleb spoke on the attribute of God's love in our Confession of Faith. There you saw something of the overwhelming beauty of our Lord. Caleb reminded us that our when it comes to love, no one does it better than our God. That is because his nature is love. As light is in the sun, so love is in our God.

This is not to neglect the other attributes in God. Don't think that John is saying that God is only love or that God's attribute of love is greater than any of his other attributes. Not at all. John is simply stressing this attribute for this particular point that he is making. He is singling out the fact that God's nature is to give of himself. His whole orientation is to bring about the blessing or good of others. And since we have a relationship with the very source and fountain of love, John says, "How can it be that we do not love?"

Think about it this way, if you come to have a personal relationship with a light socket, what's going to happen to you? You will be filled with the same charge that that light socket possesses. And if you come into contact with anyone else while connected to that light socket, then they are going to experience something of the same jolt.

That's something of what John is saying here. That which you are connected to should influence you and how you relate to others.

Perhaps we could draw upon the language of biology that John uses. My wife thinks that my daughter is a direct reincarnation of myself. There are some things that are obviously biologically inherited. She has a rather high pain tolerance, like I do. Her energy level parallels mine. And much to Elizabeth's chagrin, she even has the same weird sense of humor.

This is my child. She has been born of me. She knows me, and so she has come to share some of my same traits.

The same is true when it comes to our relation to the Lord. If we truly are God's child—if we really know him the way a Christian should, then we will demonstrate something of the love that is inherent in him.

But that's just one reason why we should love one another. We must love because God is love. He has love in and of himself.

You'll notice though, that after John talks about the love God has inherently, he talks about the love he has for us. His love in Christ.

II. We must love because of the love God displays in and through Christ [9-11]

In verses 9-11 John speaks of Christ's sacrifice. And what he's trying to do is get you to see the sheer grandeur of his love.

You know, it's one thing to say that a guy is rich. But it is a whole other thing to see just how much money he has or see how much he can purchase with that money.

And that is what we see in these verses. John shows us how great God's love is by telling us what he did to purchase our salvation. He wants to overwhelm you with the measure of his love, so that you will be moved to love each other. As verse 11 says, "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*"

Well then, how great is his love? You can begin to see the immensity of it in verse 9. John mentions that God sent his "only Son" into the world.

I do not suppose any of you would be inclined to give up any of your children. It would be heart wrenching to lose just one of your offspring. But if you only had one child, certainly losing that child would be even greater in its sensitivity.

If you have multiple children, you sort of have to split your affections between them. Not that you love any one less, but you have to share your love and split it between them. But if you only have one child, then all of your love has no other place to go. That child becomes the center focus of your affection. And so you showered your love upon them and cherish him in a particularly high way because he is the only one.

To have to part with this child would most likely be even more heart wrenching because of his increased endearment to you. Perhaps you have even seen TV shows or news broadcasts that do this. Your emotions ache more when you see someone lose their only child.

Yet God did not spare him. And when you remember that He sent his one and only son into the world, to be mishandled by men, and ultimately killed, you have to say "What love!"



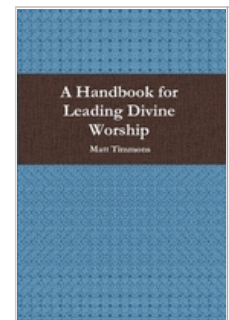
The Danger of a Life of Pleasure



How Shall We Escape If We Neglect So Great a Salvation?



Judgments, A Call to Repentance



A Handbook for Leading Divine Worship

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Add to this the extremities that Christ underwent. Verse 10 says that Christ came to be the “propitiation for our sins.” You might have a different word there. Perhaps you have a translation that says “atoning sacrifice” or “expiation.” None of them are words we use in common parlance. The word means “an appeasing” or “something that satisfies.”

Yesterday some of us went out to the Radar’s for Joy’s party. When I got there, I was quite hungry. I got to propitiate my hunger with the delicacies that they served up. They encouraged me to do my part to help clear out some food and I was happy to oblige.

Well, John is saying that Christ’s sacrifice appeased God’s appetite for justice. The wrath that God has due to our sin was completely satisfied because Christ gave his life for us.

Now think about this in regards to the love of God. Many people misrepresent God’s love. They think, “God is so loving that he would never create a place called hell.” But this is to distort God’s love. It is to make it something that it is not; a love that is flimsy and over-indulgent.

Here we see that his love is not like that at all. We even see that it is a greater kind of love than that. It is a love that would not hold his son back from the terrible violence of hell. It is a love that is greater because of the sacrifice involved.

Is this not a great love?

But that’s not all. The love God is highlighted in that he gave his only Son, and that he sent him forth to undergo the torturous pains of hell. But John says, “Wait a minute!” That he would even love you is something! Look at verse 10, “In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us.”

He’s saying, “It’s easy to love God. God is very lovable. There’s nothing not to love about God. But that’s not true when it comes to you!” You are not very loveable. Because you are a wretched sinner, there is nothing in you that would draw God’s affections naturally.

John’s reiterating something of what Paul says in Romans 5, “God shows his love for us in this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

You know, the greatness of your love is shown in what you are able to love. They say, “He’s got a face only a mother could love.” But really, if mom could see you the way God does, she wouldn’t love you.

The fact that God would even dare to glance at you, let alone crucify his only son for you, should show you the great measure of his love.

And the application is easy to make, “Since God so loved us, we ought to love one another.”

John brings up one other reason why we must love one another. He says we must love one another because of the love God reveals through us.

III. We must love because of the love God expresses in and by us [12]

When we love one another something glorious happens. God works through it to manifest his own love. He even reveals himself by it.

Look at verse 12. He says, “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.”

Now get what is being said here. Since God dwells in us, something of his very own nature comes into view when we love one another.

You young people know that you can’t see God. He is a Spirit and does not have a body like we do. But John says that there is a way we can become acquainted with him. We can grasp something of God’s nature when we see his people loving one another. When we interact the way we are supposed to interact, then God becomes visible to those who might not otherwise see him.

I believe F.F. Bruce says it well in his commentary. Bruce says, “The love of God displayed in His people is the strongest apologetic that God has in the world.”

I think that this is what Peter gets at when he talks about the women submitting to their unbelieving husbands. Peter says that these unbelieving husbands can be won without a word simply by the conduct of their lives.

How can this person be won to Christ without a single gospel word being spoken? How can they know God if it be not through the Scripture? It is through the unvocalized preaching of our love.

I’m glad to have the opportunity to serve this congregation. I look forward to having the opportunity to expand the ministry of the church, particularly when it comes to doing some outreach. I have a deep desire to do

some evangelistic work.

But no matter how important it is to be going out to the highways and byways to preach the gospel, it is no less important that this church be knit together in love. When someone enters this community of believers, it should be as if they walk out of the cold of night. The love that they see here should be in direct contrast to the lack of love that they experience in the world. In drawing near to us, they should see something different—something divine. It ought to be the character of God himself that they detect in our midst.

Conclusion:

We've been focusing on this notion of love for quite some time now. And it will come up again in future messages. However, I personally think that this is John's best argument.

I began by talking about how John keeps mounting up reasons for us to love each other, like putting kindling on a fire. I find that this is not just putting a few sticks on the fire to help it grow. Every now and again I've seen guys take oil and dump it on their camp fires to increase the intensity of the fire.

I find that this passage is like pouring oil on the argument. We have had the opportunity to consider the very nature of God—how he is pure and infinite love. We also considered the greatness of that love as it is shown in Jesus Christ. Then, to top it all off, we are told that we can be that which causes people to see the invisible God.

I pray that these glorious truths would be oil upon your hearts—the fuel that will make your love for each other burn brightly.

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