

What The Gospel Does

1 John 4:15-17

Reading: 1 John 4:7-21

[7] Beloved, 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. [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. [10] In 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. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [12] No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. [13] 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. [16] 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. [19] 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. (ESV)

Opening Illustration

- Worship leader's wife — accepted with "right" political affiliation
- Our Vision: A community filled with all kinds of people learning to love one another, making Jesus impossible to ignore.
- Andrew Peterson, We Will Survive [The Burning Edge Of Dawn]
- Grace calls us to the frontiers of love.

"Do you remember how I used to say
Love is a fire and it's gonna burn us up
To make the space for grace to grow
Now it feels like love has called my bluff"

Diving Right In — verses 16-18

*[16] 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.*

- “By This” = Abiding in Him (vs. 16)
- “Confidence on the day of judgment”
 - “Perfected love” = Stott: a developed love; a mature love (imp: practiced; habit)
- False teaching John addressed:
 - Error: Maybe Jesus was just a spiritual projection and simply appeared real;
 - Error: Maybe Jesus was a regular man who was temporarily anointed by God.
 - 1 John 1:1: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life”
 - Heresies —> Christianity into mystical religious practice —> devoid of love
- Surprise: He doesn't appeal to perfect theology as our source of confidence on the day of judgment, but perfect love.

The Gospel Is Love (vs. 9-11)

[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. [10] In 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. [11]

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

- Love is rooted in the gospel; Love IS the gospel
- **What is the love that John speaks of?**
 - Not clearly defined
 - But we can see love in action: Propitiation
 - And we can see love's effect: Reconciliation; intimacy
 - This tells us that love isn't primarily sentimental. This tells us that love isn't primarily emotional. This tells us that love is pro-active; intentional; not rooted in a person's merit, kindness, beauty, or utility; etc.
 - We love because he first loved us. Period.
 - 1 John 3:18: *"Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."*

"I Love God"

[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.

- Many of us claim to love God — totally subjective
- Love of the invisible God is verifiable.
- Via maturing love for one another.

How Do We Mature In Love?

- We don't love because of a person's merit — *[19] We love because he first loved us.*
- Abide in God — We currently abide in malice, bitterness, rage, passivity, fear, defensive sarcasm...
 - You have to face what's underneath; what we suppress.
 - *[18] There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.*
 - *Developed* love casts out fear...of the judgment
 - *Developed* love casts out fear...of each other
- You will face deep inadequacy...and that's good!

- See the exposure of your lack of love as a gift from God — he's calling our bluff; he's making space for grace to grow
- Feel the guilt (don't suppress it)
 - Your legal status before God remains innocent, not guilty
 - But the *feeling* of guilt drives us to brokenness, confession, repentance...
 - The feeling of guilt can cultivate holy affections for Christ

"We are, not metaphorically but in very truth, a Divine work of art, something that God is making, and therefore something with which He will not be satisfied until it has a certain character." CSL

- Begin to feel sad for your limited love.
- Remember you are loved.
- Devote yourself to community — like Jesus did. Love cannot grow in isolation.
- Watch longing for love grow.
- Notice new sensitivities to others that you will develop.
- Remember you are loved (grace — note how often John says, "Beloved" — God sees us and we still remain objects of his affection)
- Love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength. Loving takes practice, perseverance, and thinking. Love is not passive in the sense that it just happens. It is cultivated.
- Remember that the fruit of love comes about by the Holy Spirit. Be kind to yourself.
- Emphasis is on giving ourselves away to others

Conclusion

- Big implication: We all must become students of our own hearts and behavior. We need to be examining ourselves, holding our lives up to God's word, to discover impairments and to be about addressing those.