

God Is Love

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Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:7–19

Text: 1 John 4:7

One of the Bible’s most wonderful phrases is “the love of God.” We find these words often in the Bible, such as in Romans 8:38–39, where Paul declares, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life,...nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Here Paul speaks of the love that lives in and proceeds from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible also speaks about the “God of love.” See 2 Corinthians 13:11: “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” Here Paul reminds his readers that they must love one another and “live in peace” if they would enjoy the presence of Him who is “the God of love and peace.”

Love of God, God of love: these are three simple words of one syllable each. They are not an empty formula or mere cliché but are deep and profound.

By God’s grace, I would like to bring you a message, on the declaration of the apostle John that “God is love” (1 John 4:17) in a series of three groups of three points. First, we will discuss three things this text does *not*

mean; secondly, three things it *does* mean; and lastly, three points of application for our hearts.

But first, we must define what the word “love” means, especially when the reference is to our God and Father. The core idea is “to cherish” or “to value greatly.” In a world where men hate God and hate each other, it is astonishing to hear that God loves this world, that He has expressed His love by sending His Son to die for sinners, promising life and salvation to all who put their trust in Him. Such is the extent to which God cherishes and values us!

I. What “God Is Love” Does Not Mean

The first thing “God is love” does not mean is that “love is God.” The phrases “love is God” and “God is love” are not reversible or convertible statements. There are ways of saying something that is the same back and forth in logic and grammar. For example, “a sphere is a round object” or “a round object is a sphere.” Unfortunately, some people use flawed logic with “God is love.” They say, “Well, if God is love, then love is God.” No, that would be like saying, “An orange is round, and a baseball is round; therefore, a baseball is an orange.” God is love, but not everything that goes by the name of love is God. This popular error of saying that love is God deifies the feelings of the idea of love and depersonalizes God. We find this in humanism and in the many romantic ideas of God, which approve of nearly anything that goes by the name of love. There are spurious and deceitful kinds of love, known in Scripture as “the love of the world,” “the love of the flesh,” “the love of pleasure,” or “the love of money.” These are not love but covetousness and concupiscence, an inordinate desire to possess whatever we see and use it as we will. The end of all such false love is death and destruction.

Even sinful movements like homosexuality frequently use false reasoning about love, as if all forms of love are God. Homosexuals who claim to be Christians sometimes say things like, “Well, this relationship I’m in is love, and I like it, therefore, this must be God.” When we formulate our ideas of love from the world rather than from the Word, we will always end with a faulty or shallow view of God.

The Word of God teaches us the true idea of love. Too often, a Christian thinks of love as warm feelings oozing with sentimentality. There is a correct word for that—a Yiddish word, *schmaltz*. We say something is “schmaltzy” when it is gushing with feelings of nostalgia and sentimentality. Now, there is a place for that—most of us, no doubt, are rather sentimental—but let’s not confuse sentimentality with spirituality. The Bible says, “God is love” (*theos estin agape*). The love of God is something far other and far better than schmaltz.

The popular idea that love is God makes love ethereal and non-substantial. You can’t get a hold of it. But the love of God is different. It is real because it is rooted in God. This love that God is affects the feelings, but it is more than a feeling. It affects the heart, the mind, the soul—our whole being—because God is love in His whole being. So, to say that love is God is the first mistake.

The second error is to say that God is *only* love. People who think this way say, “Well, if God is love, then that is all God is.” We reduce all God’s attributes to just one. We find that idea in liberal theology, and it usually eliminates holiness, justice, wrath, and other uncomfortable attributes of God. It also does away with the whole idea of hell and eternal punishment. This idea that God is only love is behind phrases you may have heard, such as “My God wouldn’t send anybody to hell,” or “God loves everyone unconditionally.” But those statements are not anywhere in the Bible. They are contrary to Scripture.

No Christian would say, “God is only love, and therefore, none of these other attributes apply to Him.” But sometimes, well-meaning but misdirected and imbalanced Christians say something close to that: “God is *primarily* love.” For example, they say that, among the wonderful attributes of God, the love of God stands out as the Mount Everest. He is more love than He is all His other attributes combined, they say. They may mean well, but that is immature theology, if not simply mistaken.

An important relationship exists between all the attributes of God. God is love, but He is also many other things. We dare not make any one of them primary at the expense of making others secondary. Those who consider love the main attribute of God usually downplay His holiness or justice, and you can see it in their lives. In fact, I believe that nearly all practical errors can be traced back to a faulty view of God. So if we say that God is primarily love and we minimize His holiness, that manifests itself in a lifestyle of license and self-indulgence. If we move to the opposite extreme and say that God is mainly holiness, legalism will normally be the result. Imbalance in our view of God will result in imbalanced lives.

The truth is that God is infinite in all that He is. He is infinite in love and infinite in holiness. It is impossible for one infinity to be greater than another infinity! God is infinite love and infinite holiness. He is infinite power and wisdom. He is infinite in all that He is.

The third error is a strange one. It says that *God is not love*. This notion is easy to disprove with the following logic: if it is true to say, “God is love,” it is not true to say, “God is not love.” Very few people would explicitly deny that God is love, but some views come close to saying that. I am no expert on Islam, but it seems from reading about

their religion that Allah is not love.¹ They minimize his love. The idea of love is for humans perhaps, but it is not in Allah.

What about those who do believe in the God of the Bible? They sometimes overemphasize other attributes of God at the expense of God's love. As some overdo God's love, others minimize God's love. They say things like, "The essence of God is holiness; love is *merely* one of His attributes." Others will say, "Yes, God is love"; however, the way they understand it is that God is just describing Himself anthropomorphically; hence, God is not really love, for love is only a human thing. God is not a man, and therefore, it is just an illusion or figure of speech.

There is also a figure of speech called *anthropopathy*, or *anthropopathism*, which means that we attribute to God human emotions to draw some sort of analogy. Some overdo it in this area and say, "We love, so in some sense, yes, I guess you could say God loves, but not really." No, that's wrong, and it leads to an explicit denial of our text, "God is love." The fact that God is love and we have a kind of love doesn't mean that God is less than love. It means that He is more than love as we know it. He has perfect love in a greater way than we have love.

Then there are those who greatly minimize the love of God, even by appealing to other great biblical truths. Among those who are Calvinists, there can be a kind of "hyper-Calvinism" that says, "God loves only His elect; He does not love the non-elect or the reprobate in any way. He has no love of any kind, no goodness, no mercy, to all universally. Everything positive is reserved for His elect.

1. Though Islam affirms that Allah is merciful, indeed, more merciful than all others, his mercy is strangely and largely devoid of love. Allah reserves his love and favor for those who deserve or win it by their godly conduct. The Koran calls them "winners" and describes those who forfeit His love as "losers."

That is not what the Bible says, and that is not historic Calvinism. But you see, behind that error is a distorted view of God that would basically say that God is not really love but is only love in a relational way to some people.

So, the Bible says that God is love. He is not *just* love, and He is not *barely* love. God is love—infinite, eternal, and unchangeable love. And now that we have set aside three things that the phrase “God is love” does not mean, let us move on to what “God is love” does mean.

II. What “God Is Love” Does Mean

What does it mean that God is love? You see that phrase on greeting cards people send. Maybe you have a plaque on your bedroom wall reading, “God is love.” Little children like that. It’s very simple but very deep. So, let’s go into the depths and see what the Bible says. Here are three things the Bible means when it says, “God is love.”

1. *God is love in His very essence.*

The first way God is love, according to the Bible, is that God is love in His very essence. This comes from the operative verb in that sentence—God *is* love. That tells us love belongs to His very being or essence.

We find that sense in two parallel passages. The first is John 4:24, when Jesus said that God is a spirit—that is, purely spiritual, uncreated, immortal, and invisible spirit in His very being. He doesn’t have material substance or a physical body like we do. That is in reference to His essence.

Secondly, in 1 John 1:5, we read, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” Here, too, the reference is to His being or essence, for this same God is enrobed or encircled by “clouds and darkness” (Ps. 97:2). When it says that God is love, it is talking about something that concerns God’s essence, what He is within Himself, His

internal nature, not just His external relations with His creation. God is love *in Himself*, not just loving to others. Way back in eternity, before anything else existed, God was love in His very being. We are talking about His eternal substance—not what He becomes and not what He is in relation to other things. That springs from His nature, as we see if we look back far enough into eternity—His eternal substance, His eternal nature. God is unchangeable in all that He is; therefore, it would be legitimate to say, “God is love, God has always been love, and God always shall be love.” So the first point is that God is love *in His essence*.

Now, love is not some thing or some part of God. The Westminster Catechism of Faith (WCF) says that God has neither parts nor passions. We can’t say, “Well, the love of God is like the arm or leg of God.” That is not what it means. God has no parts; all of God is love. The love of God is simply God Himself loving. It is God who is love.

When we say that God is love in His essence, we do not mean God is love because He meets some higher standard of love—that there is a threshold of love somewhere and God meets it; therefore, God is love. No, this runs parallel to other biblical concepts. For example, God is truth. He is not truth because He meets a higher standard of truth; He *is* the standard. It is the same thing with love. He is love by His essence, eternally. There are no other standards. He is the standard. So when God shows love, it comes from His very being, which is eternal and absolute. It comes from within Him.

God doesn’t derive love from anything or anybody else; God’s love is self-generated. We find a fitting illustration in the sun and moon in the sky. The light that reflects from the moon comes from the sun, but the sun doesn’t reflect light. Rather, it radiates light. God is light. He is like

that sun. He is love. He doesn't *reflect* it from some other source. It comes from His very being because God is love.

All the attributes of God harmonize together. God is holy and God is love, and that tells us that His holiness is a loving holiness and His love is a holy love. It is the same thing with God's infinity. Infinite God is love, and therefore, God is infinite in His love. We find this expressed in the Bible. Psalm 86:5 addresses God as "plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."

Let me give you a practical application at this point. If God is infinite in His love, that means we can never exhaust it. There is more than enough to go around for us in our deepest valleys and, certainly, for all eternity. Charles Spurgeon once said, "We can no more exhaust the infinite love of God than a little fish can drink up the oceans." He said that we are like little thirsty fish. Then he went on to say, "Drink on, little fish, you will never drink the oceans dry." My dear brethren, we need the love of God, and we need never fear that God will have to ration it out and make us wait in line because there is only so much to go around. He lavishes love on us and says, "Drink all you want because there is more in My infinity than you will ever be able to exhaust."

My point is, God is infinite, God is love, and therefore, He is infinite in His love. And since it is a holy love, it is a pure love. When it says "God is love," that means He is absolutely pure love without even one micron of impurity. No wrong motives, wrong desires, or wrong thoughts are to be found in His infinite love. God's love is unlike our best love. Your love on your most sanctified day will still be mixed with indwelling sin, which permeates the best of us in our best thoughts, words, and actions. Only when we get to heaven will we be totally pure. But God has always had an absolutely pure love. We need to get on our hands and knees and fall on our faces and say, "God is pure love!"

Sadly, we do not know what that is like in our human experiences. Some of us have been hurt by very impure love that is really only lust masquerading as something else. Sometimes we have been wounded when someone stops loving. Or when we try to love, we find it hindered by our tainted motives. But this never happens with God. His is an absolutely pure and infinitely absolute love.

This love within God is a kind of magnetism. God is love, and God is lovable. You see, love is a heartfelt, affectionate “going-out” to another. Within God, there is a going-out among the persons of the Godhead, a magnetism that binds God to God. It binds Him to Himself without weakness, for God is *powerful* love. He is infinite in His power and in His love, so it is an omnipotent love.

So there is our first point, that God is love in His very essence.

2. Love in God is essential to the Trinity.

God is love, therefore, He has always been love. Let’s go way back into eternity in our imaginations, long before creation. The Bible says, “before the world began” (Titus 1:2). What was before the world began? Eternity. And back in eternity, there was no earth, no humans, no animals, no angels, nothing except God—from all eternity, God from Himself and within Himself. And back then God was love. How could God be love? Since God is love in His essence, God, in His highest degree of love, loves Himself. There was no one else to love. God loves Himself. If our highest duty is to love the Lord our God—I say this in a holy way—it is God’s highest duty to love God, and He does. The Puritans stressed that if our greatest privilege is to worship God, it is also part of God’s eternal being to worship Himself.

We occasionally have problems with the idea that God loves Himself because we say, "Wait a second, isn't self-love wrong?" Many people think nothing is wrong with self-love in us, but there is when we, by nature, love ourselves more than we love God. Hence, we become gods to ourselves and usurp God's place and deny His claims on us. Self-love in us easily becomes selfishness and greed. It results in a man-centered universe in which we forget that we are not God. But God is God, and there is nothing wrong with God loving Himself. That is His ultimate prerogative. God loves Himself. So when the Bible says that God is love, we also understand that God loves Himself.

By its very definition, love requires an object. It is a transitive verb; you love *something* or *someone*. You have your back against the wall and say, "Yet there is only one God in eternity—no angels, people, or animals. So whom did God love?" God loved Himself. You respond, "Yes, but where is the object of God loving Himself?" Here we find that God is both subject and object, God loving Himself. There is only one God, and this therefore tells us that there is something plural within God—the Trinity. God loves Himself. This is a glorious aspect of the Trinity.

God does not simply exist as one but as one in three persons. He is a God who exists always in relationship. We are given a vision in the opening verses of John's Gospel about the reality of God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," and so on. There in the beginning was God with God! There was not only God in the glory of His unity and in the glory of His own uniqueness but there was also this marvelous reality of God with God. That means that in God there is always "with-ness." There is always togetherness. There is never loneliness or isolation with God. There is always love in God because from eternity God the Father loved God the Son. There was never a more loving Father, and there was never a

more loved Son. And that love was reciprocated. That love is impossible for a monad, for one being that exists in undifferentiated isolation. He has nothing to love. I feel pity for Allah. But in God, there is with-ness. In God, there is and was always love, fellowship, and communion.

When God made man, He made him in His own image. God made him for community, for fellowship, for with-ness—for life in communion and community. And man must find that need fulfilled in his fellowship with God at one great level. God walked in the garden, and Adam came and spoke to Him. There was that great familiarity between God and man before the fall. And on that vertical plain, man had fellowship with God: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God” (John 17:3)—consider the with-ness there! And then God says, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18). God provided, for man’s social needs, a wife. He provided a family to meet man’s needs for togetherness with his own kind. It is a glorious thing that when Jesus Christ becomes man, He becomes man in the image of God. He became man in the image of God’s togetherness, in the image of God’s with-ness. Christ had a need for fellowship. He finds marvelous fulfillment in fellowship with God, at the beginning of every day to appropriate His Father and to walk with Him, while nothing makes separation between Him and His Father. Oh, the marvelous conversations they had, the marvelous prayers He offered to His Father as His only begotten Son, through the veil into the holiest place! And He went with boldness. He said, “Abba Father,” and He found fellowship.

Let’s examine this in a bit more detail, starting with the Father. The Bible repeatedly says that the Father loves the Son. John 3:35 reads, “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.” John 5:20

reads, “For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.”

So many verses tell us about this love of the Father for the Son. At Christ’s baptism, the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). Colossians 1:13 calls Him the Father’s “dear Son”—literally, the Son of His love. Consider John 17:24, where the Son of God is praying to His Father: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” So the love of the Father for the Son isn’t just something after the incarnation. We are not talking only about incarnation love but ontological, inter-Trinitarian love from eternity past.

Proverbs 8:30 puts these words in the mouth of Jesus: “I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” God promised the Messiah in Isaiah 42:1, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” So the Bible is replete with verses like this that say that the Father has always loved the Son, within the bounds of the Trinity.

There are different kinds of love, but this love is a perfect, unique love. When the Father beheld the Son, He took a delight in the Son. He looked at Him and saw the essence of all beauty and all goodness. And when He beheld the Son, He had a perfect smile from all eternity due to this wonderful love of the Father for the Son. Now, remember, this love is eternal. There never was a time when the Father did not love the Son, and there never was a break in this love, where the Father said, “I need to take a break for a minute and recoup my resources.” No, God always had more than enough love from all eternity. From eternity, this loving relationship of the Father was going out to the Son in a benevolent way, in a way of delight toward the Son.

This is closely related to the biblical doctrine of *eternal generation*, which means that the Father always had the Son and the Son was ever with the Father. The Father loves the Son within the Trinity. What's more, the Son loves the Father as well. Jesus faithfully delivers the commandments of His Father to His disciples, "that the world may know that I love the Father" (John 14:31). This is true in His dual nature, and Jesus had no sin. He always kept the laws of God. He kept the Great Commandment to love the Lord your God. We are going deeper than that. We are going back into eternity before Jesus became a man. God the Son loved God the Father from all eternity in His deity. As the Father eternally loved the Son, so the Son eternally received and returned that love unbroken, immediately, perfectly, without delay or hindrance or interruption. Infinite love is given to an infinite object and being returned perfectly for all eternity. Christ, being eternal God, has the infinite capacity to receive that infinite love and to return it in an infinite way perfectly acceptable to the Father.

Consider a few short sentences from one of the great Puritans, Robert Traill:

The love of one creature to another is sometimes very great. The love of the believer for Christ is so great, or the love of God to His chosen greatly exceeds both, and so does the love which Christ bears the church. But above all, beyond all these is the love which the Father has to the Son. In the first case, it is a creature loving a creature. In the second it is a creature loving God. In the third it is God loving a creature. Fourth, it is Christ loving His own body. In all, either the subject or the object of the love is a creature, but here is a paternal deity that loves and filials that Son Deity that is beloved. Surely there must be a height and depth, a length and breadth here that passes knowledge. The infinity of the Father to the Son secures all good to those whom the Son loves.

God's love to God is never unrequited. Doubtless, there are people here who have had a heart broken by unrequited love. You have loved somebody, and they don't return it. Or perhaps they loved you for a time but then stopped loving you. That is sad. That is an effect of sin in the world. It was never like that within God, and it never shall be. God's love is never unrequited; it is never too late; it is always returned. And the Father and Son always took this eternal love and delight in each other. Jonathan Edwards put it this way:

The infinite essential love of God is, as it were, an infinite and eternal mutual holy energy between the Father and the Son, a pure holy act whereby the Deity becomes nothing but an infinite and unchangeable act of love which proceeds from both the Father and Son. 'Tis all an holy energy consisting in that infinite flame of pure love and holy delight that there is, from all eternity, between the Father and the Son, immensely loving and delighting and rejoicing in each other.

That is great theology. Who says Calvinism is dry and emotionless? No, this is good theology for the heart—the Father loving the Son, the Son loving the Father, a self-perpetuating dynamo of holy love!

But what about the Holy Spirit? Romans 15:30 speaks of “the love of the Spirit.” Here is where theologians are of one of two minds. Some say that as the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, so the Spirit comes in. The Father loves the Spirit, the Spirit loves the Father, the Son loves the Spirit, the Spirit loves the Son, and so forth. That is granted. Others such as Edwards go deeper and say, “The Spirit Himself is that bond of love between the two going back and forth.”

Someone once asked Cornelius Van Til, “What is the deepest thing you meditate on?” In a flash he said, “Oh, it is the ontological eternal Trinity. You are on holy ground

just to meditate on this love between the members of the Trinity.”

This helps us understand the nature of God’s holiness. In true love, there is always a jealousy that protects it. This jealousy is good and right between husband and wife, a jealousy that you will not share the object of your affection with another. It is between that bond of love. The same thing is true within the Trinity. The Father loves the Son and the Spirit, and they love each other in a jealousy. When anything in creation dares to intrude upon that love within and between each member of the Trinity, a holy jealousy arises within the Deity itself.

For example, when someone comes between the Father and the Son and questions the deity of the Son or questions His perfect humanity and sinlessness, the holy jealousy of the Father rises up and says, “How dare you say that against My Son, in whom I love and delight?” The holiness of God springs like a flame issuing forth from the holy love within the Trinity. Holiness and love within God are not at loggerheads; they work together in a marvelous way.

This love within the Trinity, then, is a self-perpetuating dynamo of living energy and holy glory.

3. God is love, and therefore, God displays His love.

Out of love to each other, the members of the Holy Trinity chose to allow that love to overflow Themselves so that it might be displayed outside of God Himself. The internal love of God now becomes externalized to His creation. It began back in eternity in the covenant of redemption, which has been called the covenant of love. God predestined all things and said, “I will display this love in a variety of ways.” There are different words for love as well as different flavors and degrees of love. God is the source of all true love.

First John 4:7 says, "Love is of God." Out of love, God gives good gifts to His creation. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning." God is love; therefore God is loving and shows love to His creatures.

He so loves that He gives, and He does it in a variety of ways and degrees. There are those who say, "If God doesn't love everybody and everything equally, that is not right." God loves His creation. He loves the flowers differently than He loves the animals, yet He loves both. God loves the animals in a greater way than He does the dirt and trees. In the same way, God has a higher love for humanity and then, of course, the angels. But within humanity, it is God's sovereign prerogative to show different kinds and degrees of love. Election is His sovereign choice. God has a general love for all, but He reserves a special love for some. It all comes back to God being love; He displays the wide variety of His love. God loves all people with some love, and He loves some with all love.

Now in this display of the special ultimate love of God, God draws His elect into the special love bond within the Trinity. Look again at John 17:26, the last verse of Christ's High Priestly Prayer: "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." The elect, therefore, were created and chosen to be the love gifts between the members of the Trinity. If you are married, you men give your wife a love gift; and you wives, you love your husband and want to show him your love. It is the same with parents to their children. The Father, Son, and Spirit within themselves in all eternity had this love, but in creating things to display it, the things they create become not only the gifts between one another but the conduits of their love. So the love from the Father to

the Son flows through us, and we get to enjoy some of that love. He brings us into the bonds of the Trinity. Now mind you, we do not become divine, but we do partake of and enjoy the love within God Himself.

The Father gives us to the Son as a gift of His love, and it goes back to the Father. That is to say, the love that is within God and is displayed within you and in His creation finds a focal point in the incarnation, in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son is between the Father and the Spirit within the Trinity. Consequently, when the Son incarnate becomes the revelation of the love of God, we can say that the Lord Jesus Christ is the love of God in human flesh. It is not just poetry; it is good theology to say, “Jesus is love incarnate.”

Maybe some of you have been looking for love in all the wrong places. Do you want real love? Come to Jesus. He is love in the flesh, perfect love beyond our wildest imaginations. He is better than we could ever dream. He is God’s love manifest in the flesh and offered to all in the gospel.

III. Applications

Let’s consider three applications of these truths:

1. This truth, God is love, should move us to worship God. God reveals His essence to us so that it might be reflected back to Him in the appropriate manner of worship. Worship is the act of acknowledging the worth of God and declaring what God means to us. Therefore, God shows His love for us and commends His love to us, and it should move us to worship Him. When we ponder that God is love, we should not just simply feel sentimental or just feel good within ourselves, but this should move us to worship such a God who, within the Trinity, chose to display His love to us. This should move us to worship such a God as this with a holy wonder and delight, with rejoicing and singing.

2. The fact that God is love should move us to love God.

When we know how wonderful God is, what a loving God He is, that should move us to love Him in return. And that helps and enables us to keep the greatest of all the commandments, to love the Lord your God with all your soul, mind, heart, and strength.

Edwards wrote, “If holiness in God consists chiefly in love to Himself, holiness in the creature must chiefly consist in love to Him.” When we seek for true holiness without love, that is not holiness. Genuine holiness is bathed in the effectual love of God. When coupled with worship, it becomes a loving worship, a worshipful love, what the old theologians called *adoration*. We enjoy a holy, loving intimacy with God. In 1 John 4:19, we read, “We love him, because he first loved us.”

3. We should love one another.

This is where we came into the text, and this is where we will go out. This is 1 John 4 over and over again. For example, it says, “Let us love one another, for love is of God.” God is love. When we are moved by God, saying “God is love” is easier than to immediately love God, but the demands of love don’t end there. We need to also let that love He has shown us, which fills our hearts, spill over to others. Remember, God loves them too! It is not always so easy to love our fellow sinners, nor for them to love us. But the love of God makes it possible because that love flows through us. God’s loving grace flowing through us even enables us to love our enemies. If we don’t, then we really don’t know what it means that God is love. We appreciate those three precious words best in a loving relationship with God *and* in a love for the creatures God also loves.

All through his first epistle, John teaches that likeness is the proof of relationship. The great proof that we are truly related to the eternal God and belong to Him

is that we are like Him—especially in exercising love. John says that everyone who loves has been born of God. We are naturally too sinful for such divine love. Martin Luther said that sin turns us in upon ourselves. We do not naturally reach out to others in selfless, self-sacrificing love. But when the Spirit of God breaks into our lives and we are “born of God,” God shows us His love for us in Christ. God plants within us the seed of a new beginning. He stirs within us a love toward those who belong to Christ.

John Owen said, “Christian love is to be as unconfined as the beams of the sun. It doesn’t select on whom it will shine its beams.” Our love should not shine only on those who we think deserve it, for who is deserving of God’s love? Our love is to shine on everyone because God Himself so loved the world that He sent His Son to save it. Love, as much as righteousness, is part of the Christian’s birthmark. God is love, says John, so we too must extend love.

“God is love.” Does that move you to worship God, to love God, and to love each other? Amen.

