

God and godliness

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[0:00] And ask all of these things in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. God and godliness. God and godliness. Those are the two things that John wants us to know about in these 14 verses.

But this evening, I'm going to divide those two points into three points. So the first two points have to do with God, and the last point has to do with godliness.

The first two has to do with God, and the last has to do with godliness. So our first point this evening is this.

Where does God's love come from? Where does God's love come from? Or, put properly, the first point is the genesis of God's love.

The genesis of God's love. Where does God's love come from? And the answer to that is that it comes from God. God's love originates in God. It comes from God.

[1:00] And the second point this evening is the gift of God's love. What does God give us to show that he loves us? What does he give us to show that he loves us?

And the answer to that question is that he gives us himself. God gives us himself. So the first point, the genesis of God's love is God.

The gift of God's love, the second point, is God. And thirdly, the goal of God's love. Why does God love us? He loves us so that we may be lovely.

God loves us so that we may be godly. The goal of God's love is godliness. So firstly, the genesis of God's love. Where does God's love come from?

In verse 7, he calls us, he invites us, he calls us beloved. In verse 7, he says, beloved, let us love one another. For love is from God.

[2:01] Love is from God, he says. If you were to walk down the street in Edinburgh and ask someone on the street what love is and where it comes from, they may give you various answers.

They may give you, they may say that love is a feeling. They may say that love is a commitment. They may say that love is an intimate relationship. They may say that love is an orientation. They may say that it is hard to define. But that you will know it when you see it. But John doesn't start off like that. He says love is from God.

And in verse 8, he says anyone who does not love does not know God. And here is the programmatic statement. He says God is love.

God is love. John doesn't say love is love or love is God. He says God is love. Have you thought about that?

[3:02] Love is not just a part of who God is. It is all of him. God's love, in fact, permeates all of his attributes. So God's holiness is a loving holiness.

And his love is a holy love. In other words, everything that God does in this world is out of his love. Because that's who he is.

And because God is an infinite God, God's love is also as infinite as he is. A fish could soon drink the ocean dry before we can exhaust the love of God.

Because God is love. And he is infinite. And so is his love. His love is infinite. So you go in.

You go in to God and he is love. You go in to God and he is love. Because he's infinite. You go in and you go in. He is love.

[4:05] You go in and in and in. He is love. Because our God is love. He is love. He is infinitely love. And he is not just love. He's a Trinitarian God, we know.

We confessed this evening. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Because he is a Trinitarian God. Love existed before the world was made.

And one theologian said that God the Father is the lover. And God the Son is the beloved. And God the Spirit is the love between God the Father and the Son.

And God the Son. Maybe it is hard to put our minds together to grasp that truth. But it is plain that the love that we experience began before time began.

It began in the Trinity. There was perfect communion between God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. And there was perfect unity. There still is perfect love and perfect unity.

[5:12] And out of that love he created this world. That love bursts out. And we see it in our own loves, in our families, in our friendships.

We see it in the church especially. Which John reminds us in verse 10. 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. We did not love God. God loved us.

God didn't look through the tunnel of time and say that I love this man or this woman. Because he is righteous. God loved us.

God always precedes all love for him. Before we were even made, God set his love, his affection on us, the Bible says. Before the creation of the world, the triune God who created the cosmos, he loved you.

[6:17] He loved you before the stars were made. so the scriptures speak about God's love as his abundant goodness his loving kindness his husbandly love for his bride his chesed love God's love is not a fickle passion like all loves are often it's a steadfast love it's an unchanging love as God himself is do you know God's love if you are a believer this evening you have been loved by God and you know that love but if you are not a believer you can come to know this love by looking at the gift of God's love his son you can ponder the love of God and the great heights of it as John invites us to this evening but you may ask like all of us do from time to time if we have been loved by such a great love what what is the tangible proof of that love because if we have been Christians for for for just five minutes we know that our experiences often contradict what we read in the Bible we we face suffering we we put our sins to death we fight our sins and sometimes we wonder if God truly loves us because our experience says otherwise but John wants us to know that yes this love of God that begins in

God is actually also poured out and given to us and that's our second point what is the gift of God's love what does God give us to show that he loves us he does give us all kinds of benefits but ultimately though those benefits may come and go depending on the seasons of life we are in don't they God's gifts are the earthly gifts that we enjoy they come and go beautiful marriages come to an end because the spouse died our sin gets in the way but ultimately though God gives us himself he gives us himself to know so that we may know rather that we are indeed loved by God and because God is a Trinitarian God he gives us his Trinitarian self he gives us his triune being he gives us his son verse 9 in this is 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 we all died in Adam like Adam rebelled we all rebelled in Adam we left our maker but God sent his son into the world into this this broken world have you read the news the brokenness the brokenness we see shootings here shootings there assaults here and assaults there brokenness everywhere even within the church but God sends his son into the world this world that we inhabit

God sent his son so that we might live through him and verse 10 verse 14 and we have seen and testify that the father has sent his son to be the savior of the world he is the savior of the world and verse 10 towards the end of verse 10 he said but that in this is love not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the the propitiation for our sins what is propitiation propitiation is a is a fancy word that captures a a fundamental reality about who we are we are as humans because of our fall because of our rebellion we stand condemned and we are under the right judgment of God because of our sins and Jesus Christ not only did he live for us but he also died in our place did not only did he keep the commandments of God perfectly on our behalf but he also took the punishment for our law breaking he absorbed the wrath of God on the cross that is propitiation he was sent to be the propitiation for our sins verse 14 again the father sent his son to be the savior of the world so Jesus Christ comes into the world to redeem people from all tribes tongue and nation now and he he had been doing that from Adam to the last person who will ever be saved and he came for you

Jesus Christ came for you he came for you yes he came to redeem you from your sin he came to give himself up for you so the gift of God's love in the person of his son and in verse 13 in the person of his spirit verse 13 says by this we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit he has given us of his spirit by this we know that we remain in him the assurance that we have as believers of our standing before God the confidence that we have before our standing before God that is from the Holy Spirit but even before that the reason we we confess Jesus Christ as Lord and the reason we can understand a hard passage like this it is because the Holy Spirit God the Holy Spirit has opened up our eyes to see and our ears to hear and our hearts to love he has been doing a work among us and the Holy Spirit living in us is God's guarantee that he has given himself to us so the gift of his son the gift of his spirit in turning our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh and thirdly the gift of the father in verses 15 and 16 whoever confesses that Jesus is the son of God

God abides in him and he in God God sends the Holy Spirit to open up our eyes so that we may behold the savior and savor him and he does that and then he brings us to himself so that we may abide in him and he in God and we in God what a wonderful truth that is God abides in us God remains in us God resides in us God lives in us the one who believes in God's love remains in that love and God remains in him we participate in God we live in God like a sparrow that lives in her nest we live in God do you know yourself to be given that gift the gift of God himself the father the son and the Holy Spirit and we share in in God even as we live our earthly lives even as we fall and falter and even as we get up and straighten up and and follow our Lord Jesus Christ as strangers and aliens even in our own homelands we participate in in God the three in one the same love that existed before time was made before the world was made reached out into creation reached out into the the messiness of our lives to the to the murkiness of sin itself reaches down and brings us back to himself love reaches down love lifts us up back to love back to God love of God the father love of God the son love of God the spirit given to us so secondly the gift of God's love is

[15 : 29] God it is God so the genesis of God's love where does God's love come from it comes from God himself the gift of God's love what does God give to show us that he loves us he gives us the greatest gift imaginable he gives us himself his triune self and thirdly and lastly the goal of God's love the goal of God's love it is godliness it is godliness I could have easily said that the goal of God's love is God because God created us and we fell and he redeemed us and he's slowly sanctifying us slowly and he's bringing us to himself so in one sense the goal of God's love is God he gets the glory and we return to him but in this life he calls us to be godly godlike he wants us to hear he wants us to believe and he wants us to do and in verse 17 we are told of these things verse 17 through 21 we are reminded that we are called to be godly verse 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 god is reminded us of his great love he has reminded us of his great person and the love by which he has loved us and as we love god with our mind in that way thinking about who he is in himself and how he has loved us god's love is perfected in us and that ongoing perfection actually gives us confidence to stand before god's throne after all this book is written to give us christian confidence right christian assurance and out of that assurance we ought to love one another in verse 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 what does that mean it means that because god has loved you in this way in giving himself he has actually removed all fear that you may have of him as a judge you don't look at god as a judge anymore because he has loved you he's your father he's your friend he's your comforter fear so fear is out the window and the fear that keeps you chained to yourself it's gone now those chains are broken now and now you can actually love people without thinking what you can get from them it drives out fear verse 18 and because jesus took our punishment we don't have to fear anymore when that fear is gone it makes us fearless to love others and john tells us in verse 20 that that that we can be hypocrites sometimes if anyone says i love god and hates his brother he's a liar for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen god whom he has seen cannot love god whom he

has not seen you can talk about trinitarian theology all day long talk about the love of god that existed before time began and still not love your brother he says we have to be called out of our hypocrisy we ought to love our brothers and sisters verse 21 this is the commandment that we have from him whoever loves god must also love his brother if we have been loved by god and if that love actually does come from god the father god the son and god the holy spirit and that love has

actually given you God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, then you are to love the people that you see, the people that you can touch tangibly. They say that Edinburgh is one of the best cities to live in the world, and I agree with that. I've only lived here for eight months, and it is such a beautiful city, and today was a great reminder that it is actually a wonderful city to live in. But I was looking up a survey, and it said about one-fifth of the adults in Edinburgh feel lonely, one-fifth that's about one in five people in Edinburgh, all the people, and this loneliness also affects the youngest populations of the city, so the oldest and the youngest, they're affected by loneliness. How can you love your lonely brother and sister in their old age and in their young age? How can you love your neighbor, your closest neighbor, for those of us who are married, our closest neighbors are our husbands, our wives, our children. How do we love them? How do we love them? And I think God's word actually gives us a framework for how we can love them. You remember God's commandments, the ten commandments are actually about loving God and loving our neighbor. The first four commandments are about how we can love God, and the last six commandments are about how we can love our neighbor. So God actually doesn't leave us without help. His commandments, the last six commandments of the ten commandments, give us a rubric for how we can love people in a tangible way. So I'm going to go to Exodus 20 and just read the last six commandments. This is the fifth commandment, Exodus 20, verse 12: Honor your father and mother. Honor your father and mother. That's a way to love people. Do you honor your parents? Do you honor the leaders in your church? Do you honor authority? Do you honor all the people in your church? That's one way to love people. Verse 13: You shall not murder. That's a negative commandment. What is the positive of it? Instead of murdering, you can love people by giving life. You can adopt, you can give for the life-sustaining needs of other people around you. You can care for life from the womb to the tomb, as they say. You can promote life and build it up and give to organizations that support work against, for example, abortion. That's the sixth commandment. The seventh one: You shall not commit adultery. How can you use that as a positive way to love your neighbor? You can be faithful in your singleness, you can be faithful in your marriages, you can be faithful in loving your neighbors, your children, your brother, your sister. Verse 15: The eighth commandment: You shall not steal. So instead of stealing, you can work hard for six days; you shall work the Lord says, work hard, earn your money, be industrious, and then out of that money, instead of stealing, give people your riches. The ninth commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. How can you use that as a positive commandment? Instead of using your tongue to cut people down, you can actually use it to build them up, speak words of grace, words of love, words of the gospel to remind them of their standing before God, even as they suffer from their own sins, remind them of the gospel, the riches that they have. What about the tenth commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife, his male servant, female servant, etc. Instead of wanting what others have, you work hard for what you need, and instead of trying to desire to want what others have, you would try to add to other people's prosperity, would add to people's belongings. That's the way to love your neighbor, and the struggle is, though, a lot of things get in the way of our loving our neighbors. Sometimes it's laziness, sometimes it is self-centeredness, we only think about ourselves, sometimes it's fatigue, sometimes we're just busy, sometimes it's anger, bitterness, or unforgiveness, but when you know that you have been loved by God, and that love actually comes from God, and that love actually gives you God, you can actually love people in a risk-taking way if these verses are written to give us Christian assurance, and they are, they are written to show that we actually belong to God. If we have confessed Jesus Christ, then out of that confidence we can actually be risk-taking lovers of people, we can be risk-takers, we can love people with a love that does not look for reciprocity. May these verses actually remind you of God's love, the genesis of God's love, may they remind you of God's gift of that love, his himself, his trinitarian self, and may that cause you to be godly, to be lovely, may God add his blessing to the preaching of his word. Let us pray, may, may.