

Abounding In Love, Part 1

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[0 : 0 0] Valentine's Day. This is a marketing cash cow for Hallmark, at least it was, but it's great for chocolatiers the world over. Sarah Miller, if you're watching, thinking of you right now, but I got to be honest with you all. I just got to be honest. I've been a little off my game this Valentine's Day season, a little off my game. Let me tell you what happened. Four or five weeks ago, I saw Valentine's Day come in. I saw it was the 14th, but it was confused because it's like, on a Sunday, what does that mean? For some reason, I thought, I'm 49 years old. I don't know why I'm thinking this, but somewhere along the way, I started thinking that Valentine's Day is like Thanksgiving. You know how Thanksgiving's on the last Thursday of November? I started thinking Valentine's Day is on the second Thursday of February. I don't know how it happened, but I've been scrambling. I've lost my romantic edge, guys. I've lost a step.

When you hear romance, I'm guessing you associate it with a kind of love, romantic love, wooing hearts, winning affections, writing poetry, singing air supply to the one you love, chocolate, chivalry. Well, this morning, as we turn to 1 John 4, 7-11, there's a different kind of love in the air. Not the romantic love of Valentine's Day, but the gritty, sacrificial, agape love that originates in the God of the Bible. Brothers and sisters, this morning, we are being commanded to love one another with the same kind of love. So, have you lost a step when it comes to loving your brothers and sisters in Christ? Are you allowing circumstances or even sin in your heart to get in the way of laying down your life for your brothers? Have you lost an agape edge?

The command is to love one another. You see it in verse 7. Beloved, let us love one another. Here's the big idea. God's love for us puts the must in our love for one another.

Shorthand, God's love puts the must in our love. So, this morning, what I'm going to do is I'm going to walk you through these five verses, chapter 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. And I'm going to make four points to help you see and feel how God's love puts the must in our love for one another. So, let's look at point number one, the must of our love. Now, I'm going to read this passage in just a second.

Let me just kind of set something up here. Our loving one another as Christians is a must, not a maybe. It's a must, not a maybe. That verb love in verse 7, beloved, let us love one another.

[3 : 5 2] That's not a call to romantically love one another. This is a love to chapter 316 of 1 John. It's a call to lay your life down for your brothers. By this we know love, verse 16, that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. John characterizes Christian love as laying down your life. Sacrificial. And in verse 16, you see the word, we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. That carries this sense of obligation, of duty, of must. We actually see the same exact word in verse 11 of chapter 4. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

We must. So the clear emphasis from this passage, I'm going to help you to see it, is that God's love for us puts the must in our love for one another. Now, interestingly enough, the Greek word for the word love is the word agape. There's a few different Greek words for it. It's classically known as God's unconditional, sacrificial love for his own. In verses 7 through 11, do you know how many times the word agape shows up in these five verses? 13 times? And so to help you get the feel of it, I'm going to read agape back into verses 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, so you get the thrust. You ready?

Those agape? Those agape by God, beloved. Let us agape one another, for agape is from God, and whoever agapes has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not agape does not know God, because God is agape. In this, the agape of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world, so that we might live through him. And this is agape. Not that we have agaped God, but God has agaped us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Those agaped by God, if God so agaped us, we also ought to agape one another. You picking up

on the emphasis?

This word love is used two ways in this passage. God's love for us, and our love for one another. And what I'm going to show you in the last point of this sermon is how John connects those dots. But what you need to see here is the clear emphasis. And by the way, we will have obstacles to overcome in order to love one another this agape way, to lay down our lives for one another. The chief of which is ourselves. To die to ourselves so that we can love one another. It's not easy, but it's a must, not a maybe. God's love for us puts the must in our love for one another. Let's go to point two, the grounds of our love. You see this in verse seven and eight. When you read verse seven, beloved, let us love one another. What follows that is the word for. And that word for is signaling reasons. We are to love one another. We must love one another because of this, for this reason.

[7 : 53] Look where he goes. For love is from God. The source of this agape love is none other than God. John is anchoring our love for one another in the love of the great triune God. All throughout 1 John, we see different references to the different persons of the Godhead. There's God the Father, multiple references. God the Son, multiple references in 1 John alone. God the Holy Spirit, he is the anointing. He's God's seed, multiple references. If you want to see the references, I've got the references, ask me afterwards. But what we see in 1 John is depictions of the persons of the Trinity. And the Trinity is the Bible's teaching that God has eternally existed as three distinct persons, each fully God, and yet one God. There's one Godhead. So here's why I'm going with all this stuff. Our God, our great triune God, has always existed as a holy, loving plurality. Love didn't come into existence when God created the earth. The grounds and source of our loving one another is sourced in the very essence of our triune God who has been experiencing love from eternity past.

This isn't something he made up. This is something he is. This past summer, Billy taught a class on the attributes of God. There's incommunicable attributes, things about God that we don't share, and then there's communicable attributes.

When you hear communicable, you probably think like disease, COVID. Not in this case. We get to share in God's attributes of agape. Now the question becomes, well, how do you do that? How does that happen? That doesn't happen with everybody. It's right here in the text. Whoever loves, verse 7, has been born of God and knows God. How is it possible that we can share in this agape love? Because God has born us for it.

[10 : 21] Here's what you need to know, Christian. Brother, sister in Christ, you are the product of the triune God's coordinated work of love called salvation.

God the Father lovingly ordained you, ordained your salvation before the foundation of the world.
God the Son lovingly accomplished your salvation on the cross.
And God the Holy Spirit lovingly applied the finished work of Jesus to you, making you a child of God. All in love.

In John's language, in 1 John, to be converted, to be saved, to become a Christian, he uses the language to be born of God.

To be born of the Spirit. It's what Jesus taught on in John 3 to Nicodemus. It's what the Apostle Paul talks about as being made a new creation in 2 Corinthians 5.

[11 : 25] In order for someone to be able to love like God, they first need to be loved by God. Born of God.

Did you notice those little words, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God? That is a saving knowledge of God.

And not just facts. It's entering into a salvific relationship with God. Listen to how Jesus talked about it in his high priestly prayer in John 17.

Jesus says, And this is eternal life. This is salvation. That they know you, the only true God in Jesus Christ whom you have sent. That they know you. That they've entered into a relationship with you. A saving relationship. They've been reconciled to you. Our loving one another is grounded in the triune God's love for us.

[12 : 33] God must love. It is who he is. It's who he's always been. And that's why there's a warning in verse 8. Anyone who does not love, agape, lays down your life like God, does not know God.

Does not have a saving relationship with God. Because God is love. If you're in a saving relationship with God, you're going to love like God loves.

A non-Christian has not been born of the Spirit. Someone who hasn't become a Christian, they've not experienced God the Father's love in Christ for them. And as a result, they're not going to lay down their life for other Christians.

God is love. And if someone is not loving like God loves, they don't bear the family resemblance. Have you ever noticed different families have different kind of family traits?

Sometimes it's the way they talk. Sometimes it's the way they look. Sometimes it's what they do as a family. You've got the musical families who do music together. You've got the board game families who play board games together.

[13 : 51] You've got the outdoor camping families. What do they do? They camp together. You've got foodie families. What do they do? They eat together. There's the always doing something families.

There's the chilling on the couch families. How about the family of God? Do you know what the family of God does? They love.

That's our trait. That's our chief characteristic. That's what sets the family of God apart from everybody else. We love. We lay down our life for one another.

Just like God in Christ did for us. The love of our triune God puts the must in our love for one another.

Now I can imagine if you are chronically unloving, if you are unwilling to lay your life down for another Christian, you probably wonder, hey, what does that mean for me?

[14 : 56] It could mean one of two things. First, that you're not born of God. You have yet to enter into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

You've not experienced God's love, and so you're not loving other people. And the way to respond is to repent of your lovelessness and turn to Jesus, who is God's love manifest to you, and enter into a relationship with the living God.

It will change your life. I have no regrets. Or, you may be a Christian. You just have a serious case of theological amnesia.

You have forgotten who God is, your God. You have forgotten that He's a God of love. You have forgotten how much He has loved you.

And if you forget God's great love for you, it's going to make it very difficult for you to overcome any obstacles of loving other brothers and sisters who you may kind of have some conflict with.

[16 : 06] Who you are determines how you love. God's love for us puts the must in our love for one another.

We burn God's love in our love for one another. Point three. The grit of our love.

The gospel grit of our love. This is in verses 9 and 10. God's gritty, sacrificial love for us puts the must in our gritty, sacrificial love for one another.

What's interesting is that in verses 7 and 8, John is talking about love. And it's rather in the abstract. But when he turns the corner into 9 and 10, he goes from abstract in general to specific and concrete.

He starts talking about a specific demonstration of God's love. The greatest demonstration of God's love that all humanity has ever known or ever will know.

[17 : 28] The sending of his son. What's interesting about verses 9 and 10 is that verse 9 and verse 10, they kind of parallel each other.

They have a similar form. They start with the same words. Notice in verse 9, in this, and you look at verse 10. It says, in this, in this is love.

They're very similar. They're parallel, but they're very different too. So what we're going to do is we're going to take both similarity and differences, and we're going to be instructed by them in terms of God's great love for us and how we are to love one another.

The first thing you can't miss is how God's love gets real. Look at verse 9. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us.

That word made manifest, if you flip back to John chapter 1 verse 2, speaking of Jesus, the life was made manifest, and we've seen it.

[18 : 37] That phrase made manifest means to reveal, to make known, in this case, to be made real. What we have, what we're talking about here is the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

It's what John just talked about in 4.2. By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus is the Christ and has come in the flesh is from God. That Jesus is the second person of the Trinity made incarnate.

It's God's love made real. Here's what you need to understand. This is what God's love for you didn't stay vague. It didn't stay conceptual or theoretical.

It became specific, real, and concrete in the real flesh of Jesus. Not only is God's love real, God's love took the initiative.

Look at verse 10. In this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that He loved us. The love with which God loves us is not some man-centered, man-initiated, man-generated love.

[19 : 57] It's not that. God's love with which He loves us is God-centered, God-generated, God-initiated. Look at verse 19. We love because He first loved us.

He initiated. He didn't wait for us to love Him and move towards Him. He took the initiative and moved towards us and Jesus. That's His love. We see His love taking initiative.

Next feature of this love is in verses 9 and 10. He entered in. We read it this way.

And this is love. This is love of God. Verse 9. Was made manifest among us that God sent His only Son into the world. Entered in.

Look at verse 10. And this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that He loved us. And sent His Son. This sending is God the Father sending God the Son into our predicament.

[21 : 04] Entering our space. Entering our time. Experiencing what we experienced. He entered in. God's love became real.

It took the initiative. And it got messy. Maybe you remember this great verse from John 3. 3.

For God so loved the world. For God so loved the world. That He gave. He sent His only. One and only Son. That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. God entered in.

His love became real and entered in. Is your love. Is your love real? Is your love taking the initiative? Is your love entering into the worlds of other people?

Jesus experienced inconvenience. He suffered. He eventually died. Jesus took on flesh in order to enter our world. to meet us where we're at.

[22 : 06] And it was for a purpose. The next feature is in verse 9. It's called a purpose clause. 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. God's goal in loving us was not simply sending Jesus.

The sending of Jesus was to accomplish His goal. And that was for us to live in Jesus. He came that we might live.

Remember what Jesus said in John 10.10? I came that they, you, might have life and have it abundantly. The ultimate purpose in God's sacrificial, gritty love was for us to live through Christ. To be reconciled to God. To be reconciled into a life-giving relationship with God. His aim was our life. To live for Him and by Him and like Him.

[23 : 24] To flourish in Jesus as a branch connected to the vine. He came that you would live.

Are you loving people unto life in Christ? The next feature, the last one. We see at the end of verse 10.

And 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. In order for us to live for Christ, Jesus had to die to satisfy God's wrath for our sin.

Here's what I love about God's love. God's love doesn't sweep our sin under the carpet. God doesn't do an end around our sin.

God doesn't ignore or dismiss or belittle our sin. God sent Jesus to squarely and fully face and deal with our sin.

[24 : 33] God sent Jesus to squarely and fully face and deal with our sin. That word propitiation, it's a picture of a sacrifice, a pure and perfect sacrifice. In which God's wrath is poured out on someone's sin.

Someone's sin is placed on that sacrifice. God's wrath is poured out on that sacrifice in full. So there's no more wrath to be poured out.

None. Jesus is our propitiation. He's our perfect sacrifice. He came in love in order to take on all of God's wrath for your sin and mine so that we could live.

How's that for love? How's that for gritty, sacrificial love? Love. Love. It's a tall order, isn't it? And we're being called to love the same way.

When we read those two little phrases, in this, the love of God, in this is love, we're being shown the greatest demonstration of love of all time.

[25 : 47] And we're being said, you are the recipients of this love. And now you go love the people the same, you brothers and sisters. It's real. It takes the initiative. It enters in.

Its aim is life. And it doesn't work around sin. It deals with sin. This is how we love one another. This is how we love one another. God's gritty gospel love for us puts the must in our gritty gospel love for one another.

You can sum all this up by saying, it cost Jesus his life. And it was worth it. God wanted you to be in relationship with him.

The fourth point is the mandate of our love. And this is in verse 11. This is where I want you to see the points connecting. Verse 11 echoes the must of verse 7 and connects a couple dots.

Beloved, if God so loved us, how did he love us? How did he love us, John? How did he love us? Real initiative.

[27 : 11] He took the initiative, right? He entered in, right? He came for life. He deals with our sin. That way.

That way. If God so loved us, we also ought, must mandate. We ought to love one another.

When you hear mandate, you think mask mandate. This is the love mandate. And we are to put this on every day. We love out the love mandate.

Because of God's sacrificial, gritty love for us, we must love one another. When I was growing up as a boy, I think this was in the 70s and people were bored in the 70s and didn't know what to do.

So what they would do is they would fill gymnasiums with dominoes. And they would have these very elaborate kind of domino falls, these chain reactions of you just start pushing over one domino.

[28 : 18] You lay that down. And from there are like thousands and millions of dominoes laid down. And it would become a huge uproar of sound.

And it would transform a room. What we see here is the domino effect of God's love. One red domino.

Jesus' death laid down. Bumping into us. And we lay it down. Lay it down. Lay it down.

It becomes a roar to the glory of God. And a transformational glory to God. Of us loving one another.

We fulfill the new mandate to love one another. John 13, 34, and 35. Thirteen times this word agape is used.

[29 : 25] God's love for us. God's, and our love for one another, it's used in two different ways. But the connection is, the connecting point is, it's a chain reaction.

It's a cause and effect. God's love for us in Christ compels us to love one another like Christ. God's love for us in Christ.

Now, I've got a little bit more pastoral work to do. Because it's one thing to tell you, love this way. It's another thing to actually help you identify obstacles to that.

And so, to bring this to a close, I want to help you identify two categories of obstacles to loving one another. The first is circumstantial categories to love one another.

Things that are somewhat out of our control. For example, living in a pandemic. And the isolation that happens as a result.

[30 : 32] It can make it difficult for us to lay down our lives for one another. To really love one another. And so, when we hit an obstacle in the road, if you're driving, you just reroute and you find another way around it.

It's a gospel reroute. And so, when we bump into a pandemic obstacle, we just reroute. We find other ways. Through Zoom, live streaming.

Much more intentional, individually, personally. It's a circumstantial obstacle that we need to reroute around. But there's other circumstantial obstacles.

For example, cultural differences. I love where we're located as a church. I love it. And it poses some challenges, even obstacles, to loving one another.

Sometimes those come along racial lines. Sometimes those come along political lines. But we've got to do a gospel reroute. Race matters. Politics matters.

[31 : 36] But they don't matter as much as Jesus. We can't let cultural differences like race and politics become an obstacle to our loving one another.

There's another circumstantial obstacle. And I'm not sure if you are fully aware of this one. That's why I'm going to bring it up. We would all say that there's tremendous blessing in established relationships.

Whether that's family in town or long-term, very deeply committed friendships in town. But it can become a circumstantial obstacle to loving one another.

Because what can happen is, these people I treasure so much, these are the people I keep to. Instead of going beyond.

Here's the gospel reroute. It's not diminishing how precious these people are. It's going out of your comfort zone and starting to love other people beyond your networks.

[32 : 44] It's going out. These are the circumstantial obstacles. And these were the easy ones. Let's talk about the obstacles in your heart.

Sin obstacles. If you look over at verse 17, John, chapter 3, 17, John points to a very specific way in which love is being stymied in this church.

But if anyone has the world's good and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? He's closing his heart. If you have means and you see a brother in need and you don't help, you're not loving.

I've got a list of things here. Other ways, we close our hearts to one another. And we need to gospel reroute everyone.

Laziness. Laziness. Laziness keeps you from taking the initiative with others. gospel reroute.

[33 : 59] Gospel reroute. Remember how God took the initiative. Grumbling. Grumbling against other Christians. You are criticizing them.

You are standing over them. You need to gospel reroute. It's getting in the way of you loving others. And when you realize what God in Christ has done for you and what God in Christ has done for those other people, the initial response is not grumbling but gratitude.

Sexual immorality is not loving one another. Whether that is an illicit relationship with someone not your spouse or looking at things that Jesus would say is adultery in your heart.

But gospel reroute and live. Remember, your body is not your own. You've been bought with a price.

So glorify God with your body. Greed gets gospel rerouted into generosity. Impatience gets gospel rerouted into long-suffering and bearing with one another.

[35 : 10] Sinful anger gets rerouted into kindness and tenderness of heart. Imputing motives gets rerouted by the gospel into believing the best in other people.

The fear of man gets rerouted by the gospel into fear of God. Claiming rights gets rerouted by the gospel into laying down your rights.

Grudges get rerouted to forgiveness. Snobbery. Partiality. Thinking that you're better than someone else because of how much money you make, how smart you are, where you live, the advantages you've got, it gets rerouted by the gospel into becoming a servant of all.

Unconfessed sin rerouted into walking in the light. Comparisons rerouted to comparing yourself to God.

Fear and anxiety rerouted by the gospel into abiding trust and a hope that will never end.

Contentiousness. Contentiousness. Divisiveness.

[36 : 18] Gets rerouted by the gospel into peacemaking. Fifteen. Obstacles.

By which we close our hearts off to loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. The gospel's the solution. We lay down our lives. We lay down our lives.

Just like God and Christ laid down his life for us. God's love will cause you to love out the love mandate.

God's love for us puts the must in our love for one another. It removes the maybe. God is love.

God's love is the must of our love. God's love is the grounds of our love. God's love in Christ is the gospel grit of our love. And God's love is the mandate of our love.

[37 : 21] And it removes obstacles. Today's Valentine's Day. Love is in the air. But the love of 1 John 4. It's not the romantic love of Valentine's Day.

It's the sacrificial gritty agape love. That Jesus died for. So that we can extend to one another. And it's to characterize every Christian.

Today may be Valentine's Day. But for us brothers and sisters. Every day is agape day. Every day. And we start.

Every day. With God's love for us. And then you'll find the must. Of loving one another. Will you pray with me?

Lord we are very aware of our limits. In terms of loving one another. We are very aware that we would.

[38 : 19] Rather remain comfortable. Than be inconvenienced. God would you grow us. Would you grow us. In your.

Christ like love. For one another. That we would do the same. Show us. Convict us. God make us. Lovers of each other. In the agape sense. And I pray that God. As a result of. The way we love one another. This city would see.

And believe. That you God. Our father. Really did send Jesus. To reconcile them. To himself. We pray this.

In the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Thank you.