

Confidence because we Love

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[0 : 00] But why don't you turn now back in your Bibles to page 1230. Apparently it was 1234. 1230, 1 John chapter 4.

Well, it's sung about in songs. It's celebrated at weddings and it's central to healthy relationships all around the world. It is, of course, L-O-V-E, love, yeah.

Now, some kids were asked about what they thought about romantic love and marriage. John said, love is like an avalanche where you have to run for your life. Okay.

Ava, age eight, said, one of you should know how to write a check because even if you have tons of love, there's still going to be loads of bills. And Kenny, age seven, says, it gives me a headache to think about that stuff.

I'm just a kid. I don't need that kind of trouble. Well, as we've seen, our passage today is all about love, but it's not about a romantic love between husband and wife.

[1 : 03] It's actually about a sacrificial love between brothers and sisters in Christ. You see, some kids might want to run for it when it comes to romantic love.

But as God's kids, we're to work at it when it comes to sacrificial love. And that's how John begins our passage today. So point one, verse seven.

He says, dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. Now, if this sounds like *deja vu*, you're not going crazy.

He did talk about this a couple of weeks ago back in chapter three, just on the left hand side of your page, actually. So back chapter three, verse 11, he talks about this command to love one another. But today he's going to amplify it or add to it. And that's his style of writing. You remember he kind of circles back to the themes and amplifies or adds to it. And today he adds another reason.

[2 : 05] And as we just saw in verse seven, he says, dear friends, let us love one another for or because love comes from God. And so just as natural children share DNA and characteristics with their natural parents, whether it's mannerisms or looks or whatever it is.

So as God's children, we are to share his DNA of love by loving one another. And by doing so, it will show we really are his children, that we really do know him as our father.

And if we don't, then we don't know him. Have a look at the rest of verse seven and eight. Everyone who loves has been born of God. We are his children and know God as our father.

But verse eight, whoever does not love does not know God because God is love. You see the connection? If we're born of God and God is love, then naturally we'll share his character and love one another.

But it's easier said than done, isn't it? Some say the hardest thing about being a Christian is other Christians. And sometimes the people who hurt you the most are those who are supposed to love you the most.

[3 : 24] I think that's partly why it hurts the most, isn't it? So John motivates us by reminding us of God's love for us in the first place.

He did this back in chapter three, verse 16, where he talked about Jesus laying down his life for us. But here he again amplifies it or adds to it. Have a look at verse nine. Now passage. Verse nine. This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him. This is love.

Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. John says, look at God's great love for you.

It's an out of this world kind of love because it's not how the world loves, is it? The world loves comfortably. That is, it loves when it's convenient or affordable or attractive, if they're attractive.

[4 : 30] The world loves comfortably. But God here we see loves sacrificially, doesn't he? He gives up his one and only son. And to die for us that we might live through him.

That we might have life eternal. And while Jesus willingly went to the cross for us, do you think it was comfortable hanging there? In fact, it says in verse 10 that he was an atoning sacrifice for our sin.

He made atonement or that fancy theological word propitiation. That is, he took God's right anger at our wrong sin. And so Jesus didn't just endure the nails and the whipping and the jeering.

He endured God's right wrath at our wrong sin. It wasn't comfortable for him, was it? The world loves comfortably, but God and Christ love sacrificially.

And in case that's not enough motivation for you, while the world loves conditionally, God also loves graciously. You see, the world will often love only if, on the condition, that they love you back.

[5 : 45] And if they don't love you back, well, that's it. I'm ignoring you in life, befriending you on Facebook, divorcing you in marriage. The world loves conditionally, but God loves graciously.

He loves before we even loved him, verse 10. And even when we didn't deserve it, that's grace.

And so do you see how deep the Father's love for us is?

How vast beyond all worldly measure? John says, look at how great God's love for us is and let that move you, motivate you to love one another.

See verse 11? Dear friends, since God so graciously, sacrificially loved us, we ought to love one another.

And so how are you going at loving one another, even sacrificially? Even if it costs you in effort or time or money? If it's a struggle, then look at God's great love for you.

[6 : 51] And realize that you've been shown more love than you'll ever be required to show to someone else. Do you realize that? God's love for you is so great, you'll never exhaust it in terms of loving others in response.

And so you can always keep loving one another. Though, can I say I've been so encouraged by the way you do, whether it's making phone calls or visiting people, whether it's giving at lifts or help, whether it's sending a card or a text.

I was visiting someone in hospital a couple of weeks ago, the same day they passed away, actually. And when I was there, there was a card from some people at Holy Trinity. And when I pointed to it, I kind of opened it to have a look.

He said I could. And I said, oh, it's from church. And his face lit up. He was encouraged, you see, to that act of love. Or whether it's simply asking after people.

Whether it's being open-handed, as we heard in our first reading. I know of people at our church who have given others at church, at flowers, jobs, Uber meal vouchers, a bed, an oven, a bathroom.

[8 : 03] And of course, people who've prayed for others. Which, can I say, is not to be underestimated. You have and do love one another, even sacrificially.

It's terrific. And so keep going. Let God's love for you move you to keep loving one another. So point one, love one another.

And because we do, it gives us confidence that God lives in us. Point two. Verse 12, I think, should be the new paragraph. I think the NIV has got their paragraphs in funny places here. But verse 12.

John says, If we love one another, we can be confident of two related things.

First, that God lives in us. And second, that God's love has been made complete in us. Now, let me unpack that second thing, because that's a bit ambiguous.

[9 : 07] And it actually helps us to work out the first one. When John says God's love is made complete or perfected, he'll use the word perfect later on, but it's the same word as complete here. He seems to mean that God's love has achieved its purpose in us.

You see, God's love sent God's son to die for our sins. And it didn't stop there. It was for a purpose. So that all who believe in Jesus might become God's children too.

And given not just forgiveness of sins, but his spirit who lives in us. And helps us to love one another. Let me see if I can represent it in a flow chart for you.

It starts with God's love at the top. That sent God's son for us. So that all who believe can become his children too. And receive all those blessings. And John is saying, if we love one another, which is right down the bottom right hand side.

If we're at that stage, then it shows God's love at the top. That's not it all. Has reached its purpose down the bottom. Has actually achieved. What it set out to achieve.

[10:17] God's love has been made complete in us. So that we love him and others in response. Let me see if I can illustrate it. It was my daughter's school formal last week. I can't believe I'm at that stage already.

Now I love her. And so my love sent not my son, but my wallet to the shops for her. But it was for a purpose.

It wasn't to go on a shopping spree for any old thing. It was for a purpose to get a formal outfit. And that outfit came with dress, shoes, makeup, hair, nails.

Thankfully, Michelle found a place that hired dresses so we didn't have to buy one, for which my wallet was eternally thankful. But the point is it achieved its purpose of getting a formal outfit.

And when Katie wore that outfit last Wednesday night, my love that sent my wallet was made complete, you see. I don't know if that works.

[11:19] Anyway, let's come back to the Bible. God's love that sent God's son to make us his child with the outfit of forgiveness and life eternal, plus his spirit who works in us to enable us to love God and others.

So that when we actually do love God and others, it's come full circle, hasn't it? God's love that started all has been made complete. And so it helps us to know how God lives in us, doesn't it? By his spirit, which is exactly what John goes on to say in verse 13. He says, verse 13, This is how we know that we live in him and he in us.

He has given us of his spirit. And this happens the moment we believe in Jesus as our saviour and king, verse 14. And we have seen, that is John and the apostles who saw, And testify that the father has sent his son to be the saviour of the world.

If anyone acknowledges or believes that Jesus is the son of God, God lives in them by his spirit and they in God.

[12:29] And now in verse 15 here, the phrase son of God, It doesn't just mean Jesus is God's son. Originally, it was another title for God's king, God's Messiah or Christ.

And so when we hear the testimony of John and the apostles who saw Jesus And acknowledge or believe that Jesus is our saviour, verse 14, And our king, son of God, verse 15, Then God lives in us by his spirit.

But it all started with God's love, didn't it? At the top of the flow chart. And so John says, he summarises this bit in verse 16.

Again, there's a new paragraph for some reason, But I think it goes together, verse 16. And so we know and rely on the love that started it all. God's love for us.

For God is love. Whoever lives in love, you know, loving one another, Will lives in God by his spirit and God in them. You see what he's saying?

[13:40] By loving one another, we show that God has been at work in our lives, That he lives in us by his spirit. But it all started with God's love in the first place.

That's being made complete. But John's point here is that it gives us confidence That God does live in us. He is with us. Which is good news because sometimes it doesn't feel like it, does it?

We often say we're not alone, that God is with us. We sung it in our first song here this morning. And yet sometimes it doesn't feel like it, Especially when times are tough or if we're struggling Or our prayers aren't being answered the way we want, when we want.

We can feel alone. That God is not with us. But the very fact that you still love one another here Is proof that God is still with you, Living in you by his spirit, Helping you to love one another.

I mean you do realise that the way we love one another at church is not normal. You know it's not normal, right? The world doesn't normally love others who are different, From different backgrounds, Or do different things the way we do, And especially if they offend us.

[14:54] If people offend the world, They cut us off. But we keep loving. And the fact that we still try to love one another, Despite all this, Is proof that God lives in you.

Working in you by his spirit. And so he is still with you. Even if it doesn't feel like it. And so if you ever wonder if God is with you or not, Then look back and see how you do keep loving one another in the church.

Despite our differences and difficulties. The other person's difficulties, It's never our difficulty, right? But look back and see how you do love, And be confident that God is with you.

Because he's helping you do that. You're not alone. John says love one another, Point one. And because we do, You can be confident that God is with you, Lives in you, Point two. And you can also be confident on judgment day, Point three. Have a look at verse 17. Verse 17, This should be the new paragraph. This is how love is made complete among us, So that we will have confidence on the day of judgment.

[16:02] How? Well, in this world, We are like Jesus. Here John says, If we are like Jesus in this world, Then we can have confidence on judgment day.

And what was Jesus like in this world? Well, given the context, It's all about love. Jesus said in John's gospel, I love the Father. And do what God commands.

He also said to these disciples, That I love you. And so John's point is, If we love one another like Jesus did, It also shows that God's love has been made complete in us, And we can have confidence on judgment day.

Why? Well, because perfect love, Completed love, Drives out fear. It comes with forgiveness, remember? So we need not fear punishment. Verse 18.

He says, There is no fear in love, But perfect love drives out fear. Because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love, Or not being completed in love.

[17:05] I heard about a couple some time ago, Who wanted the first part of verse 18, Quoted at their engagement notice in the paper, There is no fear in love.

But when they said on the phone, One John 4.18, The person on the phone didn't realize, That there was John's gospel, And there was John's letters. And so he thought, John 4.18.

And that's what he printed in the engagement notice. And the problem with that is, John 4.18 says, The fact is, You have had five husbands. And the man you now have is not your husband.

Not what the couple was going for. But the point here in one John, Is about confidence. Not on a wedding day, But on judgment day.

He's saying that we can have confidence, Because perfect love drives out fear. Again, the word perfect is the same as the word complete. And so the idea is, Going back to the flow chart, God's love at the top, That has achieved its purpose.

[18:10] Given us that outfit, Of not just his spirit on the right hand side, But notice on the left, Of forgiveness, Not punishment. Eternal life, Not judgment.

Because God's love has done that for us, Given us forgiveness, We need not fear, Punishment. On the day of judgment. That's his point. Loving one another like Jesus did, Shows God's love has been made complete, Or perfect in us.

That we really do have forgiveness, And need not fear punishment. And so, Again, If you want to have confidence, On the day of judgment, Then look back, And see how you've, Sought to love one another like Jesus did.

Yes, We don't always get it right, Like Jesus got it right, But we still seek to love one another, Don't we? When we started this series, I played a little game with you, To try and demonstrate this, Let me play it with you again, Very quickly.

Stand up, If you don't try to love one another. Oh, That's right, I know I did this, You know, We do try to love one another, Don't we?

[19:19] And so again, That's evidence, That God's love has been made complete, Has been at work in us, By his son, Through his spirit, So that we can have confidence, On the day of judgment, Forgiveness, Not fear.

So loving one another, Is kind of important, Isn't it? Which is why John returns to it again, Point four, More briefly, Verses 19 to 21, He says, We love because he first loved us, Whoever claims to love God, Yet hates a brother or sister, Is a liar, For whoever does not love their brother and sister, Whom they have seen, Cannot love God, Whom they have not seen, And he has given us this command, Anyone who loves God, Must also love their brother and sister, Here John gives us three quick reasons, And the first really summarizes, What he said so far, We love because God first loved us, That's the top of the flow chart, Isn't it?

That's what comes first, The top bit, Before we get to the bottom bit, God's love actually enables us, To love one another by his spirit, And as we've heard, Motivate us, To keep loving one another, We can, And are motivated to love, Because God first loved us, But second, We're to love one another, Because, We cannot love God, If we don't, Those two things go together, Michelle was listening to the radio last week, And people phoned in, With food combinations, They thought went together,

And one person said, Ice cream and, Wait for it, Tomato sauce, She swore by this combination, She said, Ice cream always goes with tomato sauce, You can't have one without the other, Now I'm pretty sure you can, But I'm also sure, You cannot love God, Without loving one another, We love one another,

Because God first loved us, Enabling us, Motivating us, Second, Because we cannot love God, Without loving one another, And thirdly, Verse 21, Quite simply, We're told to, He commands us to, And if we do, It gives us confidence, That God lives in us, By his spirit, And it gives us confidence, On judgment day, That we need not fear punishment, Do you need, Any more reason, To keep loving one another, Greg, Aged eight, Said love is one of the most important things, In the world, Along with baseball too, Whether you agree, With that or not, John writes here, In verse 11, Dear friends, Since God, So, Loved, Us, We also, Ought to love, One another, Let's pray we would, Let's pray, Heavenly Father, We thank you so much, For your great love, That sent your only son, For us, That we too, Might become your children, Help us to love one another, That we might show, We really are your children, And have confidence, You live in us, By your spirit, Along with confidence, We have forgiveness, So we need not fear punishment, Help us to love, Like Jesus we pray, In his name we ask, Amen.