

God is Love

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[0 : 00] Two verses we're going to look at, the same from verse, we're going to look at verse 7 to verse 12. Find these words on page 1023 of your church Bibles.

That section that begins, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

God is love. Now, for those of you who were here last Lord's Day evening, you know that we're starting a small mini-series on God.

Last week we were considering that marvelous, that wonderful truth of God, that God is light. God who is light and whom is no darkness at all.

God who shines his light into dark hearts. God who brings his light to shine into the hearts of sinners, such as ourselves, to bring sin-stained people into his kingdom, into his very kingdom of light, so that you and I can dwell in his light forever.

[1 : 16] And this evening we're going to consider another aspect of God's revelation of himself. Love. Love. That John has been telling us here. He's been telling us here in verse 8, and as we read on, even beyond our immediate paragraph into verse 16, again, John tells us that God is love.

We're going to consider this tremendous, wonderful, this great statement about God, the statement that's so often misunderstood about God. But as we go through this wonderful little section, this section that tells us that God is love, then we're not just looking at the nature of God, the character of God per se.

We have to look at how this truth is applied to ourselves. How you and I can apply and must apply this truth in our own conduct, in our own relationship with God and with one another.

So it's not a lecture on the love of God. Of course not. This is a sermon. I hope to enthuse each one of us, each one of you, to love the God of love.

To love one another. Why? Because God is love. And we'll see how that argument traces itself through in this very teaching that John gives us. But as we say, before we even move any further in our thoughts, then we do, and it's so important to meditate on God.

[2 : 47] To know Him as God has made Himself known in Scripture. You know, we're going to spend a whole eternity, those of you who know the Lord as God, you're going to spend a whole eternity knowing the eternal God.

But on this side of eternity, it's for you and I to know Him and to keep knowing Him. Because the more we know Him, the more we'll seek to live for Him.

And the more we seek to live for Him, the more we'll seek to be like Him. And the more we'll want to tell others about Him. So if you're serious about your life, if you're serious about your soul, then I plead with you, know God.

And keep knowing the one who's light and who's light love. The one who's spirit, the one who's grace. One God, one Lord. The one who's infinite, eternal and unchangeable.

So, let's look at more detail at this passage itself. Three things I've highlighted for us to consider this evening. As we see in verse 7, this opening word that speaks of the pastor of love.

[3 : 58] This word beloved. And then verses 7 to 10, the God of love. And then following on from that, the people of love. But firstly, the pastor of love.

Where we see this word beloved. And I know, I've been up myself, we can just race through this passage and almost skip that first word there. Without really, you know, stopping to absorb what we're seeing right at the start here.

Even very commentaries that are used in this passage often just miss the first word out altogether. But we've got to stop and see what's happening here. Because immediately we see love expressed

in this word beloved.

Who's writing this? This is John. John the author. John the disciple. John the apostle. This is the same disciple who in his gospel spoke of himself.

It's the disciple whom Jesus loved. And now he's addressing his readers as beloved. So what are we seeing here? We're seeing that John has a pastor's heart.

[5 : 05] He's got a pastor's heart for his people. This is just a small letter of 1 John. But if you were to count the number of times that he addresses his readers as beloved.

It's six occasions. Beloved, beloved, beloved. Six times. Because he has such a pastor's heart of love for his people. I mean, he's about to launch in this little section here, this passage in love.

On the love of God. On the love of brothers and sisters, one for another. So appropriate that he begins this section with addressing his readers, addressing us as beloved.

And this is John. John knew the love of God. John, of course, as we said, he knew the love of the Lord Jesus. And from that love, from the love of God, that love of God in Christ, John can call his congregation beloved.

And this is a wonderful, marvelous, genuine testimony from John. Because John has this pastor's heart. I know there are other pastors here this evening, but this pastor's heart.

[6 : 14] This heart of love that should characterize every minister of God's word. In fact, should characterize anyone who's in any kind of leadership in the church. In any congregation.

Love. Love that should abound even within the congregation of God's church. So that even not just simply leaders, pastors, even one another, that we see each other as beloved.

And of course, where does that love come from? It comes from heaven. The love that comes from heaven that reaches the heart of, yes, of those who've been given responsibilities in the church.

But ultimately, the responsibility given to even our leaders in the church is to love one another. To love in that spiritual care one for another.

And that love that should be seen within. And that love that should be seen amongst the flock of Christ. And so, I ask you, as I ask myself, is that seen in this congregation?

[7 : 20] Is this aspect of love seen in this congregation? That you see one another as beloved?

And then I have to ask myself, in my pastor's heart, that I reach out to you in love.

And I know that's reciprocated. It was mentioned today. The reciprocation of love one for another that means so much even to a pastor. So, we've got the pastor's heart here, the pastor of love, the pastor of love, even here in John's example.

But then look at verse 7 to verse 10. The God of love. Beloved, well, we've read these verses a number of times already this evening. Just look at them. Just as we go through these verses, study them.

Take them in. Absorb them as we speak of them. I think we have to agree that, you know, love must be the most overused, misunderstood word, even in the human dictionary in relation to its meaning and speech.

And especially, especially in relation to God. Because, you know, how many times have we heard the phrase, how can a God of love do such and such a thing? And, you know, 101 examples, 101 statements come after such and such a statement.

[8 : 42] How can a God of love do what's happening in the world? And the argument being God can't be a God of love after all. But if you're to know God, the God who's made himself known through his word, then we have to understand that the God of love, the God who is love, that that love includes his justice.

That love includes his wrath against sin. It includes punishing the disobedient who willfully reject God. So that knowledge of God and his love has to be understood as scripture tells us.

So we begin with God's word and understanding who God is and his love. So to know God, we've got to search the scriptures. We've got to discover what God has said of himself.

It's the God of love. And to apply that knowledge, that truth in our lives as we love him and as we love one another. So we have to search the scriptures.

What does God's word tell us? How does God make himself known as the God of love? Well, we go back to the Old Testament. You've got to cast your neck back into the Old Testament. What do we find there?

[9 : 55] We find there God described in his love. Remember when God spoke with Moses. God told Moses of his character in abounding, abounding in steadfast love.

He tells Israel, God tells Israel, that he's loved them with an everlasting love. And he tells his wayward people through Hosea the prophet. I'll heal their apostasy. I'll love them freely. For my anger has turned against them. And you see, that love isn't just a description of God's nature. It's a love that tells of God's love in action.

Psalms 94, he tells of God who's rescued him from danger. He said, if the Lord had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence.

When I thought my foot slips, your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up. Love in action. Or that great passage that we were looking at not so long ago in Lamentations 3.

[11:00] The great passage that tells of God's love. That love in averting and averting his anger against his wayward people. Lamentations 3. The Lord will not cast off forever. But though he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

So the people whom John is writing to, they already know from their knowledge of Scripture. They know the God who is love. The God of love who shows his love in action. That love reaching out to his people. That love delivering his people. That love rescuing his people. That love shown in his acts of faithful love towards them.

So the same people, the same people who already know the God of love. Who already know that that love has been revealed to them in his word in the past. They know that love in the present. And they've known salvation in Christ because of God's love. So this knowledge of God, this knowing God, knowing that God is love, has enormous practical consequences for any church, for any congregation.

[12:16] Because if God is love, then his love has been given to each one of his children. Paul put it like this in Romans 5 verse 5. He said this, God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

So in other words, we're able to love one another because God has poured into your heart something without which you continue in loveless hatred or loveless coldness or loveless thinking that glorifies self.

But we have a glorious inheritance. We have an inheritance of love. If you know the Lord Jesus as Savior, you're a born again believer. You're born in Christ. You're born into the family of God. Born of God. The God of love. And so you're able to love. You're able to love with that Christ-like love because, well, his children. God's children are made like him in love and made like him to love. That's what John says later in this chapter. We love because he first loved us.

[13:43] So if you know God as your heavenly father, remember this. You've been born, born in love. You're a new creation in Christ. You've a new nature in Christ.

So it follows then that that new nature calls for you as a Christian to live your life as a life of self-giving love. It's that life that characterizes a Christian who follows the Lord Jesus. Now we've mentioned this already this morning. I said there's an overlap in this evening and quite rightly so. We mentioned it in our midweek meetings. We've been looking at the subject of holiness. What it means to live our lives to the glory of God.

And we've learned in these studies, we've learned that before we can even consider our own acts of obedience to God, first of all, we've got to be rooted in the good soil of the gospel. In other words, we must know God. We must revel in his grace and revel in his mercy and revel in his love.

[14:46] And meditate on who God is and meditate on what God has done for us and what God is doing for us in his grace. So with that knowledge of God, we're motivated to live for him.

Living our lives with that knowledge of God. God's love. So in our lives, in our lives of love, we love because God first loved us. God first, us second. We love because he first loved us. We love with that knowledge of the God of love. And he's called us in love. He's saved you in love. He's delivered you from darkness. Brought you into his kingdom in love. And the more that you and I grasp the love of God for sinners such as ourselves, the more surely we'll seek to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And there's a reverse to this, of course, in verse 8. As John tells us here, anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. A loveless Christian is a contradiction.

[15 : 56] I mean, a person who claims to know God, a person who claims to follow Jesus, and yet harbors even the modicum of hatred in his heart for someone in a congregation or in a fellowship, that's living a lie.

That has no place in any congregation. No place in any gathering of God's people. Yes, of course we hate the sin in our own hearts as in the hearts of others.

And of course we have to exercise discipline in our church. We were thinking of this this morning, but the discipline is exercised in love. We have a relationship with the God of love.

We have a Heavenly Father who disciplines us as children in love, and is restoring us. We noticed that this morning. So how does love show itself in the church?

How does love show itself in a congregation? And correspondingly, how does lack of love show itself? Well, it's got action.

[17 : 02] Love, if we were thinking of the God of love who shows his love in action, then love within a church and a congregation is seen in action. Think of the love of God shown to us in grace, the act of grace.

As we're told here, the great act of sending his Son, giving his Son, giving us Jesus. And so God continues to show his love and his faithfulness, and his compassions that are new every morning. He's providing for us and all that we need, so that all our needs are met in the Lord Jesus. His love seen in the daily bread that he gives us, in his daily encouragement that he gives us each day from his word.

And if you and I are born of God, we show love in action. Even the very praying one for another. Even the very coming alongside one another, and another person's need.

It's the works of grace that Jesus spoke of in Matthew. In Matthew's Gospel. I was hungry and you gave me food. It was the act of love. I was hungry, you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink.

[18 : 13] I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. Love in action as opposed to love in action.

You see the difference? The inaction. The non-action of love that seeks first the kingdom of self rather than the kingdom of God. The inaction that hates a brother for whom Christ has given his life. That inaction when we walk on the other side of the road when a brother's in need. So love is seen in action.

And as you act in love, you'll do so on the basis, on the grounds of the God of love. That God is love. And any denial of love, any denial of love of another person is actually a denial of the love of God for sinners.

You know, we really do have to grasp this great love of God. This great love of God for us. If you and I are to press on and love one for another.

[19 : 26] And that's what John's doing in this passage. He continues there in verse 9. In this the love of God was manifest among us that God sent his only son to the world so that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. The God of love. Still being emphasized here. I mean, as we said just a moment ago, this is the beloved disciple.

John who'd known firsthand the love of God and Jesus. And that's that love that John, when he wrote his gospel, when he said and he declared that God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And it's that love that John marveled in when he wrote down Jesus' words, when he recorded these words of Jesus, telling of the great truth of God's abundant love for undeserving sinners.

John can't get away from focusing on that love. And that's what he's doing here in echoing, echoing what he first wrote in this gospel.

[20 : 38] And, you know, he's just been absorbed in the amazing love of God for us, as you and I have to be absorbed in that love. That love of God that was manifest, that was made known.

Where? Well, look at what verse 9 tells us. Where this love was manifest. Verse 9. Among us.

Among who? Among sinners. Among sinners who deserve nothing of God's love.

Because of a rebellion against God. So, just pause and reflect on these amazing words. God's love manifest. God's love shown.

God's love revealed. Among us. God's love revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus. Jesus coming to live. Among us. I mean, no illustration.

No illustration really can come anywhere near explaining this great love of God for us. You know, that God should send his one and only Son. That God should send the Lord Jesus, who we loved from all eternity.

[21 : 42] That God should send his Son. The Father should send his Son into this fallen, wicked world of sin. And do what the Lord Jesus did for us.

I mean, how can anyone not respond to that love? The love of God and Christ. How can we not respond with gratitude? With the gratitude of a heart that expresses itself in love to God and love one to another.

You know, we're in verse 9 here. Let's see it as verse 9 continues. You know, God's love seen in sending Jesus to live among us. For that purpose.

So that we might live. So that we might live through him. You and I deserve eternal death. Eternal separation from God. But instead, what do we find here from God's word?

We find that God's abundant love in sending Jesus was for a purpose. So that you might have eternal life in Jesus and through Jesus.

[22 : 43] You know, we just gasp in astonishment. The more that we think of the love of God. The more we think of God's love for sinners such as ourselves. The more we see God's love revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus.

But you know, we've been thinking about the love of God seen in the Lord Jesus. Seen in the incarnation of the Son of God. But you know, there's more.

There's more to be seen. There's, if you like, a greater height of God's love for us to be seen. And that higher love, of course, was seen on the cross. The cross of Calvary.

Because John tells us in verse 10. In this is love. Not that we have loved God. That he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

You see the purpose. In love, God sent his Son to do something for us. And it's something we really have to grasp. Because what we're reading off in the cross of Christ is an expression of the love of God for sinners.

[23 : 46] We're seeing the height and the depth and the breadth of God's love there on the cross of Jesus. And this word, this propitiation for our sins, don't be put off with a word such as this.

What John's telling us here, essentially anyway, is that Jesus was the peace offering. Jesus, the one who appeased God's wrath to turn away God's wrath.

And of course that peace offering was himself. It was Jesus. Our sin and our human nature, of course, alienated us from God. The penalty for sin being death.

But God in his love, God provided that, the means, the Lord Jesus. So that we're declared not guilty. Because the sinless Son of God took our sins upon himself on the cross.

That great transaction again we were mentioning this morning. And all who are his credited with his righteousness. So that God will look upon us not as sinners, but as righteous, even the righteousness of his Son.

[24 : 53] So Jesus is that love gift from God given to us. Given for us. A peace offering that appeased God's righteous wrath against sin.

Jesus, the Son of God, appeasing his Father. Appeasing the wrath of God there on the cross.

There's the love of God on the cross. The love of Christ. Christ's love seen in his death for sinners.

So that propitiation, that peace offering for our sins that God the Father accepted fully. The wrath of God turned away. Turned away from sinners.

The wrath turned on to Jesus. Jesus hung there and bore our sins. And again, there's a practical consequence for you and I in relation to that great act of God's love for sinners.

You see that in verses 11 and 12. Beloved, if God so loved us, we all sought to love one another. No one has ever seen God if we loved one another.

[25 : 57] God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. Just take this in. Just take in this argument again.

God has loved us. He's loved his people. With that love. With the love that sent his Son into the world to be among us. For us. For us.

So that you and I might have life everlasting. Now let me just, as it were. As it were. Stand at the cross. Just you stand at the cross. And look on your Saviour who died for you there.

See him. Look on him. See him who knew no sin. He made sin for you. You gaze on the Lord Jesus and gaze on his love. Gaze on the love of Christ as he's dying for you there.

And as he's crying out, it is accomplished. All that the Father had asked him to do. Accomplished. In love. For you. Now step back from the cross.

[26 : 59] And you come back into the congregation. And you look around. Look at your brother and sister in Christ. How can you not love him? How can you not love her in Christ? How can any of us remain in any kind of self-absorbed mindset for self as Lord?

How can you not love one another having stood at the cross? Having seen love in action. And then come back into the congregation as it were.

When we see the Lord Jesus and his love for us. And surely that should put to death any foolish pride.

Any self-importance. And surely we should have that response of a self-giving love. Loving God. Loving one another. And doing so actively.

And doing so visibly. Because that love will be seen in action. And it's going to have amazing repercussions. That verse 12 tells us.

[28 : 01] No one has ever seen God if we love one another. God abides in us. And his love is perfected in us. You know this verse I think more than any other verse really struck me.

As I was studying this just not so long ago. It's almost had to stop and just gasp. In awe and astonishment. I mean what's John telling us here?

You know he's saying we who are physical. We who are visible. By our demonstration of the love of God. We can reveal the love of God.

The love of the unseen God. We can reveal that love to others. In other words so that God's love is made complete in us. That God's love reaches.

We would say reaches his aim. In the fullness of that love being seen in love one to another. Or maybe put it like this. If you know the Lord Jesus as your saviour.

[28 : 58] You want to know the world to know him. You want others to know the invisible God. How do we do this? We do it by our love.

The love of the Christian that reveals the love of the unseen God. So our love in action perfects the love of God. Revealing to others the unseen God.

The God of love. You know we live in a world that has little time for the Bible. Little time for God's word. I don't know what the exact percentage is.

But I'm pretty sure something like 95% of Scotland's population tonight. Will not have attended church today. God's word won't have been heard in the vast majority of our homes.

Or wherever else. You know we live in a land where not that long ago the Bible. Even though the Bible at the very least. Was on the shelves of most of the houses of our land.

[29 : 57] That's certainly not the case now. So how can our world. How can our fallen world. The world that we live in. How can they know what God is like? How can they see God?

How can they know God? Well the answer is incredible. The answer is staggering. The glory of God. The majesty of God. God's love. Will be seen in the light.

Or should be seen in the lives of his people. You in whom God's love abides. The acted out love.

That makes known the love of God. To others. Excuse me. You know. For any church that professes love for God and Christ.

Surely it's from the church that the love of God is seen in how we love one another. Last Sunday night some of us were around at Duncan's house sharing in a small communion.

[30 : 57] Which we know we do every so often. We were in that room. That room. That front room that has new windows. The windows that had just been installed. And someone in the house. Someone that evening mentioned.

Mentioned that you know through these windows. Neighbors would actually be seeing what was happening in that very room. That they'd be noticing the small fellowship of God's people sharing in that simple fellowship meal.

And shouldn't that be the case with the church? Shouldn't that be the case with us? You know. Somebody's written the church is the world's window to God.

So if others are looking on. And seeing this church. And seeing the expression of love one for another. And they will see the God who's inspired that love.

They'll see the God who is love. But if the world, all the world's seeing is a church squabbling. Infighting. Gossip. Hurt. Legalism.

[31 : 56] What kind of picture are they going to have of God? What picture does the outside world have of this congregation or any other congregation that professes the name of Jesus? Well I pray that you and I radiate the love of God.

So that the world will know that God is love. The world will know that God is love. As you know him is love. And others by seeing even this very congregation express the love of God in action. That others will want to know that love for themselves. That others will want to know the God of love. And come into his glorious kingdom. And live that life of love. To the glory of God. Forever. Amen. Let's pray. Lord we marvel at your love. Your love that should save sinners such as ourselves.

Your love that should reach down to undeserving sinners such as me and such as all who are here. We thank you Lord that your love extends.

[33 : 04] Extends far beyond anything we could possibly even dare to imagine. We give you thanks Lord that your love is an eternal love. And so we pray Lord that each one here will know that love in his or her hearts.

And that in knowing that love as you pour out your love into the hearts of your people. That we will show your love. Even before this watching world. So continue to bless us we pray.

And forgive us our many sins we ask. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Well let's close in Psalm 133 page.

Thank you.