

# Monday Evening - I Know Whom I Have Believed

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[ 0 : 00 ] Verse 9 of this chapter, 1 John chapter 4 and verse 9. 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.

In the natural world, rivers run towards the ocean and run into the ocean from wherever they begin. In regard to the ocean of God's love, it's the opposite. Out of that ocean of God's love comes every channel that he uses to bring his salvation to us and into our possession.

And there is no greater subject in all the universe than the love of God. That is made evident by the Bible in many ways.

And even in this passage we read that God himself is love. In other words, while God is characterized by many attributes, those that are actually revealed to us in his word, such as his power, his wrath, his mercy, it is his love especially that comes to us foremost, because he is love.

[ 1 : 37 ] And in anticipation of the communion, God willing, I'd like this evening just to look at these words of verse 9, and look especially at how this emphasizes for us that God's love has been made manifest among us with a purpose that we should or might live through him.

The one who made it manifest, of course, being the Son of God, Jesus Christ himself. And we want to focus this evening on this verse in a way that tries to concentrate as much as we can on the wonder of this.

Because we are in danger at times, as we've said so often, when we know our Bibles as well as we do, though none of us, I'm sure, could say that we know it as well as we should.

But we're in danger even with such a great subject as the love of God, not to dwell upon it as we should, with a sense of wonder. There is no greater wonder, surely, for any of us this evening than that God should have loved us, that God's love should have made such provision for us, that we should come to inherit such things as God's love has brought to us in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.

So there are four ways in which we can relate to the wonder of God's love. First of all, it's a wonder that he loved us at all.

[ 3 : 16 ] It's a wonder that he loved us at all. And that's when you take account of the Bible's own teaching on what we are as fallen sinners.

It's a wonder that God loved us at all considering those aspects of our sin that the Bible makes so clear and that sadly are so neglected by many forms of what passes for gospel churches or gospel preaching in today's world.

It's a wonder that God loved us at all given considering, first of all, what the Bible calls our enmity. We're looking at this from our side, particularly this evening, and you will all know, I'm sure, that there is in the Bible an emphasis on a hostility from the side of God in his relationship to us that through the cross he himself has dealt with in what the Bible calls reconciliation.

It's not entirely a one-sided thing. But we're looking at it tonight from the enmity of our own hearts, from the kind of enmity that Paul emphasizes in Romans chapter 8 and verse 7 where he speaks there about the mind of the flesh.

That's what we are ourselves in our unregeneratedness, in our fallenness, in our sinfulness as sinners. This verse that tells us the mind of the flesh or the carnal mind as it is in the A.V.

[ 4 : 41 ] is enmity against God. And just as these verses in John says God is love, so that verse is defining for us what is the carnal mind.

It is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be as it is in itself. This mind of the flesh, this carnal mind, becomes subject to the law of God only through regeneration, through God's grace at work.

And the wonder of His love is that He loved such people as we are when you consider the Bible's teaching on the enmity of our hearts. Because really we are in enmity against God to the extent that the Bible calls our sin a rebellion.

We are in rebellion against God. We are in revolt against God. And that's not just people who live openly in an avowed atheism or an open rejection of the gospel and are never in church services. When you look deep into your own heart, even though outwardly we may live a decent life and not really have committed any such crimes as you find people committing in great crimes that are publicized, nevertheless in the enmity of your own heart, you know and I know if you accept the Bible's teaching and you follow the dictates of your conscience that you too are included, and I am, in rebels against God.

[6:17] And this is what God loved. Think how difficult it is for you and I to follow as disciples the teaching of Christ, the teaching of the Bible in regard to loving our enemies.

That was an amazing thing that Jesus said to the disciples because they had been so used to the Old Testament and its emphasis on an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you, He said, love your enemies. How difficult is that? When you realize that somebody has an enmity against you and hostility towards you, it's not the easiest consideration of your mind to say, I truly love that person and I must show my love in every possible way for that person.

I must embrace that person in my love. That's the wonder that God loved us at all given our enmity. And of course, our sin is more than just rebelliousness and enmity because the Bible tells us that our sin is guilt.

Our sin involves our guilt against God and it's not that we're waiting for a verdict from God as to where we are in relation to the guilt of our sin. That's already taken place.

[7:40] Because when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, that expulsion itself was an indication graphically of how they were being sent away from what God had provided and indeed from God Himself in the broken relationship that they had brought about.

Not only did they leave with an enmity in their heart, but with a guilt on their heads. And God rightly has a verdict of condemnation written over us through His law that we are guilty sinners, that we have no excuse for our sin, that we deserve hell.

And yet this is what God loved. This is the kind of person God loved. The kind of people God loved. The guilty. That's why the Bible so often uses court language, if you can call it that, just to try and convey to us the seriousness of our sin and the wonder of the love that embraced us as sinners and as guilty sinners.

God didn't come to us and say, I can't actually embrace such a person that's in rebellion against me, that has done such a thing against me, that has treated me so dishonorably, that has rebelled against me and overthrown my laws and doesn't want to live in obedience.

[9:11] I will embrace that person if they stop doing these things. That's not what God said. That's not what God did. God loved. The sinner.

God loved. Considering our enmity and our guilt, it's a wonder that God loved us at all. And then there's also our filthiness.

Our sin is enmity. Our sin involves guilt. Our sin involves filthiness because the Bible so often describes our sinfulness in terms of defilement and filthiness.

And all that's associated with that. That's where you find so much of the Old Testament ritual concerned with our defilement and even in a ceremonial sense, setting out for us the seriousness of sin as defilement, as well as enmity and guilt against God.

And measures that God had given so that that defilement would be dealt with. And isn't that what you find in your confession of sin? Isn't that what David said out before God in the psalm that we sang from Psalm 51?

[10:27] Wash me. Lord, make me clean. Lord, create in me a clean heart. Are we tonight concerned about being filthy and about our sin stinking in the nostrils of God?

Because that's what the Bible really brings before us. We are and we are like. And it doesn't matter how much you try and clean it up and how much you try and avoid the bluntness of the language of the Bible itself at times.

That's really what it brings to us. That's what makes the love of God such an amazing thing. Such a wonderful thing. And you can only appreciate something of the wonder of it.

Something of the amazing quality of it. As you bring your sin into the light of it. As you bring the darkness and the foulness and the filthiness and the stinkingness of your sin and the guilt of your sin and the enmity of your heart.

As you bring it into the light. The wonderful pure light of the love of God. It's then that you begin to realize what a God is this. That's why Micah could say as others as well like him said who is a God like unto you who pardons iniquity.

[ 11 : 48 ] He passes over the transgression of your people because he loves to pardon. Because pardon flows from his love as from his mercy.

You remember the account Jesus gave of the prodigal son. Probably one of the most graphic illustrations of God's love receiving sinners back to himself.

And remember the prodigal son the father in the parable of the prodigal son represents Jesus. Although of course Jesus is himself as we'll see later in this passage is the manifestation of the love of God the Father.

But strictly speaking the prodigal son is a parable about the love of Jesus. This man receives sinners and eats with him. That's what the Pharisees the scribes objected to. That's what Jesus actually then responded to with this parable.

What is this parable saying to us? Here is the kind of person that Jesus receives. Here was this man having wasted so much of his life having spent all that he took from his father's house on a debauched lifestyle.

[ 13 : 03 ] He ended up working as a swineherd looking after pigs. Eventually he came to himself and he came back to his father and I can assure you having worked with pigs for some time that when you work with them your clothes are stinking.

I would never have been allowed into the house without taking off my boiler suit because it is just so smelly. But you don't read about this father of the prodigal saying having seen his son afar off coming back home and that tells you how he was looking out for him yearning for him to come back. You don't find him then saying to the son look son I can see that you're absolutely filthy I'll be happy to have a party for you to celebrate your return and to embrace you but I can't do it while you're dressed like that.

He didn't even allow the son to finish the prayer that he'd been practicing. Why? Because he was so concerned to throw his arms around him and to bury him in his bosom and in the warmth of his love.

And that's a picture for us of the love of God. And all of you tonight who know God as your saviour will be thankful that when you came to him he didn't tell you go and dress yourself up.

[ 14 : 44 ] Go and get rid of some of that filth of your sin first of all before you dare come to me and ask me to embrace you. No, tonight you appreciate the love of God for what it is and the wonder of his love that he loved us at all given our enmity and our guilt and our filthiness.

love. But let's finish the point by saying this is love. Not that we loved God but that he loved us. This is what he loved. This is what he loved in you and in me. The kind of people that the Bible describes us to be.

So it's a wonder that he loved us at all. Secondly, it's a wonder that he loved us so much. It's a wonder that he loved us so much and again there's three related points in that that we can just briefly look at.

It's a wonder that he loved us so much that he sent his own son. That's the question. Who did he send? In this the love of God was made manifest that God sent his only son into the world.

[ 15 : 57 ] Now you might think if God were something like us that he would say well I'd like to do something for these lost sinners. I pity them and I need to send someone to them that's better than themselves but I can't possibly send my son to do that for them.

But that's how the love of God was made manifest that he sent his only son his one and only son and of course that means the identity of Jesus as the second person of the Trinity.

We mentioned a couple of weeks ago I think you remember how our salvation is so firmly Trinitarian and we lose the essence of our salvation if we lose sight of the fact that it's salvation provided by God who is the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit as they themselves interact and as they have their own role in our salvation.

Here's one verse that tells you this is how our salvation was provided this is how we came to know salvation and that salvation is available to us and abundant and offered to us that God sent his only

son.

Now nowhere better in the Bible do you find an emphasis on the deity the absolute Godhood of Jesus nowhere more do you find that than in John's writings and the beginning for example of his gospel as you well know in that profound opening section of the gospel in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

[ 17 : 43 ] This divineness this deity this Godhood of the Son of the Word of Jesus Christ but that's who he sent that was who was sent into the world by the Father and who came willingly would you have sent would I have sent the person dearest to us to die for our enemies but he did it and that's why tonight we celebrate the fact that God is love and that there is nothing else in all the universe like this and that this love of God was made manifest that he sent his only Son but not only that he sent him into the world who did he send he sent his only Son where did he send him to he sent him into this world he sent him into the world as John puts it there

God sent his only Son into the world now when John speaks about the world most of the time if not all of the time he's not talking geographically you mustn't think that when you read here that God sent his Son into the world that he's just simply talking about the world physically as you see it he did come into the world he took our nature there's a physical dimension to it but the world in John is what is opposed to God the world in John is anti-God the world in John is very much unlike God and against God but that's what God loved God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son and it is into that world into those conditions remember it's not a geographical thing it's a moral description of what the world is like and what it consists of and it is into that environment and that context that God sent his Son God didn't say when he was to send his Son into the world go into that world of sinners but I'll cocoon you from all the worst of what they have to offer and to do he didn't send him into an Eden just as he had put the first man and the first woman in that perfect environment he didn't create something like that in this world for his own Son the perfect Son of God the perfect mediator the perfect man as well as the perfect God he didn't provide for him something that would shelter him from the worst of the world he didn't say well you can go so far but I won't allow you to go so far as to touch things like severe temptation and even pain and death sent him into the world with all that it is and that of course means he sent him to endure all that sinners had to do against him he endured as Hebrews says using the older style language the contradiction of sinners against himself none of us here has the remotest idea of what it must have been like for the pure and holy

Son of God to live in this world to endure that contradiction of what was totally unlike himself none of us knows the pain that that meant for Christ his whole environment in this world was one of hostility but that's where God sent him that's where the love of God was made manifest it wasn't made manifest like you see something in the heavens like the meteor shell that you find just now you can see it if you've seen them through the sky at night and they're at a safe distance from you and you can admire it from a distance that's not what this is saying to us about the love of God it was made manifest it is something that became visible and that's itself an important aspect of the text because it's talking about the love of God being something that is seen something that is visibly manifested where was it manifested in his Son in Jesus Christ but where exactly did Jesus Christ manifest it in this world in a world of sinners in a world so unlike himself and if that is not love well what is that God should have manifested his love in such a person in such a place in such a way that's the wonder that he loved us so much as to send his Son into the world that he loved us so much that he sent us his Son into this world and thirdly that he sent him so that we might live through him why did he send him the wonder that he loved us so much but why is it why did he send him so that we might live through him didn't he himself say as the good shepherd in John 10 that this really was the purpose of his coming

I have come that they might have life and have it the more abundantly or in all its abundance he came to not only undo what we had done by our sin but he came to provide in the place of that death and condemnation eternal life the very thing for which God created us but which we forfeited by our sin came that we might live through him but then of course you need to take account of the fact that in this world as he was sent into this world the Son of God Jesus Christ that we might live through him required that he firstly needed to die and that's why John uses words like propitiation because as you know the word propitiation as he uses it here 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 he didn't just send him into this world he didn't send him just simply into this world with its hostility he sent him into this world to be the propitiation for our sins it's a big word and for the young ones it's an important word it deals with things to do with the wrath of God the anger of God and how God himself dealt with that wrath that was directed rightly against us for our sin and yet through Jesus Christ he dealt with his own wrath by making Jesus the propitiation the one upon whom God's wrath was poured out instead of it being upon his people now please get it right this is not saying to us at all that God didn't begin to love us until first of all Jesus had died it's not by the death of Jesus that God has turned into a God who now loves us you begin with the love you begin with that as the ocean out of which the propitiation has come and flowed and been set up and been accomplished it's in love that God provided us with Jesus as a propitiation and there's the wonder of his love even more mysteriously than ever we've seen anything we've seen before that it's in love that Jesus was provided by God the Father so that his wrath would be upon him instead of us it's the same

[ 26 : 23 ] God the God who is love the God who is wrathful against sin and sinners dealing with that wrath for our benefit the wonder of his love the wonder that he loved us so much you know you find in court cases I don't know if the language is still used but it certainly used to be in the old days when somebody had been accused of a serious crime and found guilty that the judge on the bench would actually pronounce the sentence and then very often would say to those whose custody this man found guilty or woman found guilty take him down by which he meant take him away down to the cells let him begin a sentence it's a staggering thing that God should say of his own son incarnate in our place take him down let him bear the hell of his people let him experience and endure and overcome damnation instead of my people do we wonder at that is it something we stop over often enough to just take a bit of it in and just try and take a little bit more with us of the wonder that he loved us so much as to send his own son and then send his own son into this world and in this world make him a propitiation and by that come to inflict his own wrath upon him in the place of his people and that means for Jesus that he himself took out hell to himself because that's the death he died not just physically on the cross but spiritually in his separation from God it's difficult to get adequate words isn't it my God my God why have you forsaken me that's the love of

God providing a remedy for sinners a propitiation in a son and that's why here is Jesus the saviour that we might be saved through him and if you cast your eye forward to verse 14 we have seen and testify that the father has sent his son to be the saviour of the world and what a beautiful word that is against everything we've seen previously of our sin and our undeservingness and against the wonder of God's love for such people as we are and that he loved us so much what luster what beauty what sparkle that word saviour has and that's the word Jesus that's what Jesus means you shall call him Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins the wonder that he loved us at all the wonder that he loved us so much the wonder thirdly that our love is not more like his that our love is not more like his

Jesus said to the disciples having washed their feet he put the question do you know what I have done to you and then further on he developed that by saying as I have loved you so you also are to love one another as you look at the quality of God's love as you look at the way in which it's such a wonder that he loved us and loved us so much you have to put that and I have to put that to myself what about my love how is my love for God is it a reflection in the sense in which love gives and love is liberal and love liberal in giving and love goes out of its way to benefit others that don't deserve it is it anything like that is that what we think of as love or is love something safe for us something without risk something that's going to keep us from being hurt not if it's like the love of God in Jesus

Christ our love for God the Father for sending his Son our love for the Son that he came that he did what he did in this world that he died that he rose from the dead that he overcame temptation and sin and death J.C. Ryle Bishop Ryle as he's popularly known somewhere in his writings has a comment to the effect something like this that when we reach heaven and see Jesus in all his beauty then we are going to wonder how is it that we didn't love him more when we were on earth that's our problem isn't it we just don't appreciate as much as we should the beauty of his love the beauty of his character of his person and so our love is not really as responsive to his as it should be and what about our love for one another look at what he says in verse 11 beloved if God so loved us we also ought to love one another and there's a balance in that verse and it's a very important balance because he's telling us when we look at our love for one another and think

of how we must love one another where do we begin where do we begin thinking about our love for one another as people of God we begin with God's love for us beloved if God so loved us we also must love one another it's that so that's very important isn't it if he so loved us in other words our great example of how we are to love one another is provided in the way God loved us first and foremost and if he says as it is the case God so loved us then we carry that into our love for one another and what a huge challenge that is we are flawed individuals we are sinners we are people who fail so much in terms of love us and everything else so we have to go back again and again to this great ocean of love we have to dip our feet in this ocean we have to go back to where it begins in the love of

[ 33 : 26 ] God and God himself as love and the way it's been manifest made manifest made openly visible to us in Jesus Christ John loves to do that you know he says here in this passage just like he says in chapter one of his gospel no one has seen God at any time so how do you come to actually see and realize God and actually understand something of who he is and what he's like has that been made visible to us yes where in the sun the only begotten the only son as he puts it in chapter one eighteen who is in the bosom of the father I think we mentioned it recently he has brought him forth he has the word is exegeted he has brought the father's heart and manifested it to us so we can say so with respect you look into the heart of God the father when you look into the face of Jesus Christ that's what he's like it's a perfect reflection of God the father and his love and our love for one another is based or motivated by that love of God for us firstly so it's a wonder that he loved us at all secondly it's a wonder that he loved us so much thirdly it's a wonder that our love is not more like his and fourthly it's a wonder if he is not yet your savior isn't it isn't that amazing that such love as this could be refused could be rejected could not be welcomed look at verse 16 so we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us so we have come to know and believe it's not a believing without knowing not is it a knowing without believing

John loves to do that to combine these terms it's a believing understanding and it's an intelligent faith we have come to know and believe the love that God has for us the wonder of God's love as it's brought before us in the Bible is a wonder that's to be embraced to be welcomed to be made your own to be made personal to yourself by receiving all that it offers you and as it's been made manifest in Jesus Christ as you receive him and welcome him so it comes to be manifest in your own heart you have come to know and believe the love that

God has for us let's pray Lord our God we give thanks as we come to conclude our worship here that you have reminded us and taught us of the wonder of your love that you have reminded us of our own smallness and vileness that you have taught us oh Lord that we should indeed stand amazed at your love we thank you for all that your love provides for us we thank you for the way that that will continue into eternity for your people for they will always sing of your love they will always come to acknowledge your fatherly love towards them as throughout endless days of eternity they will sing aloud of your love oh Lord God we pray that each one of us here before you this evening will know that inwardly for ourselves and

Lord if we are tonight hesitating in embracing all that you have to offer us in the gospel of eternal life in Jesus Christ and himself that we might live through him grant us grace we pray and help to open our hearts to you to love you in return for your love toward us hear us we pray for Jesus sake amen let's conclude our service this evening singing psalm 116 psalm 116 this time in the sing psalms version and we'll sing verses 7 to 16 16 the tune the tune 154 verses 7 to 16 rest oh my soul God has been good to you for you oh Lord have saved my soul from death my feet from stumbling and my eyes from tears that

I may live for you while I have breath so we'll sing down as far as verse 16 and from my chains I have been freed by you let's stand to sing rest oh my soul God has been good to you for you Lord have saved my soul from death my feet from stumbling and my eyes from tears but I live for you while I have breath I trusted in the Lord and then I swore I did and wished

[ 39 : 55 ] I am sorely tried and in the very depths of my dismay all men are liars every one I cried and I can I thank the Lord for all he's done with gratitude salvation scoffed ways I thought upon his name and will fulfill I cry to him before his people's face the Lord will hear the death of all his saints hear me

O Lord I am your servant true I am your servant and your holy son and for my days I have been free by you now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always Amen