

**LOVE DEFINED**

## 1 John 4:7-10

**Intro:** The subject of God’s love for us, our love for God, and our love for each other, were all subjects that were very dear to the Apostle John. It runs like a golden thread through all of this First Epistle of John.

We notice it first in 2:5. Then it emerges again in 2:7 through 11. Then look at 3:1. Next we see it 3:10 down through 19, and he picks it up again in verse 23.

It becomes prominent again in the first verse of our text for this morning, chapter 4, verse 7, and continues on down through verse 13. Then look at verses 16 where it appears again and the Apostle John continued speaking of love on down to the end of chapter 4.

And then it is the theme of the first three verses of chapter 5.

Twice in chapter 4 we are told that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). But we need to remember that in chapter 1, verse 5, the Apostle John began by saying that the message he had to convey to his readers was that “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” Light in Scripture as it relates to the character of God speaks of His absolute purity, which is a reference to His righteousness and His holiness. Most if not all of the references to righteousness in 1 John have to do with the righteousness of Christ, but, of course, we know, or should know, that the divine attributes of God and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, are all the same. They are all love, and they are all righteous. Some expositors emphasize the love of God to the extent that they ignore His righteousness.

In verses 9 and 10 of our text for this morning, the Apostle John says that the Gospel is the expression of God’s love for us. In Romans, at least at the beginning Paul says that the Gospel is the revelation of God’s righteousness. But in Romans 5 he also brings in the fact that the Gospel is a revelation of God’s love for us. I am referring to Romans 5:8 where we read along with verses 6 and 7,

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were

yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-8).

The Gospel includes both: the righteousness of God and the love of God. And both Paul and John speak of both: the righteousness of God and the love of God. But while Paul began his letter to the church at Rome by stressing the righteousness of God, the emphasis in 1 John is on the love of God. But Paul included the love of God, and John spoke of the righteousness of God. In order to understand the Gospel we have to see that the Gospel is both a revelation of God's love and of His righteousness. If He hadn't loved us, He would not have saved us. But in order to save us, His righteousness had to be satisfied. And so Christ died as an expression of God's love for us (and also His love for us), but He also died as a sacrifice offered for our sins that God might be just in declaring those to be righteous who believe in Jesus. You will find that statement in Romans 3:26.

But we need to keep in mind as we go through 1 John that the Apostle John was writing to a group of believers who needed assurance of their salvation. That is the purpose of the tests that he has given in this epistle. And one of those tests, and a very important one, has to do with love – God's love for us, our love for Him, and our love for one another as the people of God. The Apostle John showed how important this matter of love is by the way he kept coming back to it, even repeating what he had said before.

Now let us look at verses 7 and 8 of 1 John 4. Here the Apostle John was saying again that

### **I. OUR LOVE FOR THE LORD'S PEOPLE IS EVIDENCE THAT WE ARE BORN AGAIN (1 John 4:7-8).**

He had said this back in chapter 3, verse 14. Look back to that verse and you will see what he wrote:

14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death (1 John 3:14).

In our Tuesday Bible Class where we studied 1 and 2 Peter, we learned that the Apostle Peter was a great believer in repeating him as he taught the truth of God. He acknowledged that he was repeating himself, and he made no apology for it. And he wrote down, under the guidance of the

Holy Spirit, what he had taught them over and over again, so that after he went to heaven they would still be able to read what he had taught them. He was not talking about repeating sermons; he was talking about repeating the truths of God's Word. Most of us have to hear Scripture over and over before we get it. That's why we should be reading the Bible over and over, reading it at least once every year. I don't know how many times I have read through the Bible, but I can assure you that even in reading it again this year there have been verses that I have read which I felt that someone had slipped them in since I read it last year. Of course that did not happen, but the Lord keeps opening His Word to us. Things we have known before become more precious, and the Lord keeps opening His Word to us so that it never gets boring, but seems to be ever new.

What does verse 7 tell us? Remember to read the Bible just like it was written to you because it is for you. The Apostle John told all of his readers who had professed faith in Christ, "Beloved, let us love one another."

I think that it is interesting that Paul in writing to the believers at Thessalonica, said,

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another (1 Thess. 4:9).

But then he went on to tell them to love each other "more and more."

When in our text the Apostle John said, "Beloved, let us love one another," he was not telling them something new. They, like the saints at Thessalonica, knew that we ought to love each other, but the Apostle John said it again anyway. I imagine that all of us added to our parents' gray hairs because they said to us, "How many times am I going to have to tell you not to do that, or to do something else?"

But the Apostle John was not talking just about the kind of love that people may normally have for each other. We know that because he went on to say, "For love is of God." The Apostle John used the same words for "of God" that he did in verse 6 when he said, "We are of God." The love he was talking about came lit. *out of God*. It came from God to them. It was a divine love. Paul said that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). In Galatians 5:22 we read that "the fruit of the Spirit is love." And then

John went on in our text to say that “every one that loveth” (with that special love which God has put in our hearts for each other) “is born of God, and knoweth God.” What greater assurance can you want than that? If you realize this, that you would rather be with the Lord’s people when you could be with the world’s people, and if you have a concern for the Lord’s people that you never had until you trusted Christ, this is good news. You are born again! You have a new life with a new love, a love for people who love the Lord Jesus. This is evidence that you have been born, again, *out of God*, and, consequently, you know God!

But verse 8 tells the other side of the truth. Just as if you love the Lord’s people, and want to be with them, and want to be helped by them, and perhaps help them, then you can know that you have been born again and know God, SO if you don’t love the Lord’s people, then you don’t know God because “God is love.”

The Apostle John gives us two definitions of a Christian. He is one who has been born again, that is, he has a new life from God. And secondly he is one who has been brought experientially to know God, not as well as He can be known, but at least as his heavenly Father.

You probably have been impressed with all of the hatred that there is in the world. Even with how much there is in our own country. Our politicians are torn apart with hatred. They don’t need to agree with each other, but neither do they need to hate each other. What a difference it is to be among the people of God, people who really know God through His Son Jesus Christ, and to see the love that they have for each other. One of our ladies came to me just a few days ago and asked if there was anything that she could do to help out with our people. And before I could get back to her she had gone to visit one of our shut ins, and they had a great time together. I know that this lady has plenty to do without that, but she felt compassion for the lady she visited. What an illustration of the love of God at work in the heart of one who knows Him!

Now in the last two verses of my text for the morning, I believe that we have what I have called,

## **II. LOVE DEFINED (1 John 4:9-10).**

Verses 9 and 10 say exactly the same thing, but with different words. When Professor Paul Felix, or we could call him, President Paul Felix

because he is the President of the Los Angeles Bible Training School as well as being a professor at The Master's Seminary, he encouraged us to take a verse a day in Psalm 119 and work our way through that entire Psalm of 176 verses. And some of us are doing that, and what a blessing it is! I would encourage you to do the same with 1 John. Verse 9 gives us the Gospel, and verse 10 gives us the Gospel. But they state the Gospel in slightly different ways. Let us look at verse 9 first.

Both of these verses tell us one thing about the love of God. It was a love which not even God could keep to Himself. It had to be "manifested." What does this mean? It means that God's love had to make itself known. It had to be shown. There had to be a demonstration of it. He couldn't hide it.

But notice that this love had to do with "God" and "us." Now when you consider Who God is, and who we are, how could "God" and "us" be joined together by the verb "love"? They shouldn't be joined together. It is incredible that a holy, perfect, all-powerful, all-wise, eternally good God could have anything to do with sinners like you and I are. It is surely unthinkable that He would love the likes of us! But the glorious fact is that He did love us, and He still loves us, and He will always love us. I am not talking about everybody, but I am talking about those whom the Father chose in eternity past because He loved them, and now we can put ourselves in that little pronoun "us." More about this in a moment.

But what did He do to demonstrate how much He loved us? He "sent His only begotten Son into the world," a fallen, sin-cursed world of humanity. His only begotten Son. This does not mean that there was a time when the Lord Jesus became His Son, but it means that God has no other Son who could be considered a brother to the Lord Jesus. He is uniquely and eternally God, the Son. Obviously the Lord Jesus was, and is, the Father's most precious treasure. The Father sent His Son into the world as a human being in order that those whom the Father loved "might live through Him." He came that those who were dead in trespasses and sins, might have the gift of eternal life. And that life was Christ. Later, in chapter 5, verses 11 and 12, John would write,

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:11-12).

1 John 4:9 conveys the same truth that the Apostle John had expressed in

his Gospel in John 3:16. Christ not only saved those whom the Father loved from eternal death, but a living relationship was established between Christ and those for whom He became their life.

This is the definition of love.

But now look at verse 10. Spurgeon, in one of his messages on 1 John 4:10, said, “John, with love in his heart, soars aloft, and using his eagle eye, looks over all history, and all space, and at last poises himself over one spot, for he has found that for which he was looking, and he says, [pointing to Christ], “Herein is love.” The Lord Jesus Christ is God’s definition of love, true love, eternal love, divine love.

It is not that we loved God, because we didn’t. True love never originated with us even though there are millions of reasons why we should have loved God. But we didn’t love Him. We didn’t even want Him. We didn’t seek Him. But true love was displayed when He loved us. But He didn’t just say so, and leave it at that. His love prompted Him to send His Son “to be the propitiation for our sins.”

We had this word “propitiation” back in chapter 2, verse 2. Paul used it in Romans 3:25. Reading from Romans 3:23 we have this message:

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:23-26).

Jesus Christ came to be the atoning sacrifice for all who would believe in Him. By the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God was satisfied that Christ had paid in full the obligation we were under because of our sins. Many refer to “propitiation” as God’s satisfaction concerning the full atonement of those for whom Christ died.

This is *love defined*. What God did in sending His Son to die for the sins of those He loved, when there was only one reason why Christ should die for us who were totally unworthy sinners, and that was because God loved

us and sent His Son to die for us.

The Apostle Paul expressed it this way:

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-8).

No other definition of divine love will do. And this is the love with which we are to love each other, the love which shows that we have been born again and that we have eternal life.