



FBC Dickson

UNFAILING LOVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES • CELEBRATE JESUS, TRUE LOVE INCARNATE •
S1 JOHN 4:7-19 • 8/9/2020

MAIN POINT

To discuss the incarnation of Christ, who is love, and the implications of the incarnation for us.

INTRODUCTION

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

We often use the word incarnate or incarnation at Christmastime. It is after all what the whole season is about. A time to reflect on, celebrate, and stand in awe and wonder at the incarnation. Defined incarnate means “to be made manifest or comprehensible”. Or “to be invested with bodily or human form”. As it relates to Jesus, when we use the word incarnate or incarnation, we are speaking about him being the fleshly embodiment of deity in earthly form. The person of Christ unifies divinity and humanity.

The passage we are looking at in this chapter also says that God is love. He is the manifestation of love. So if God is love, and Christ is God, then Jesus is love made flesh. Love incarnate.

In what ways does your family acknowledge or celebrate the incarnation of God in Christ?

Why is the incarnation important for Christian doctrine?

UNDERSTANDING

Before we discuss this passage let's first do a quick word study.

Word Study:

Agapao (agape): Greek word used 21 times in these 13 verses.

- Means "love, affection, or benevolence". Often used to describe the deep love God has for his people and for His Son.

Lets now discuss discuss how God's agapao love for us was manifested in Christ and what are the implications for us.

1. True Love's Origin

Read 1 John 4:7-8

According to John, where is love from?

What does John mean when he says "God is love"?

John spells out the origin of love is God himself. This is interesting. Love isn't man made. It didn't originate in our hearts. We often define love in terms of just pure sentiment or in sexual terms. Here John says love has a divine origin. It comes from God, who is love. What does this mean? John Piper says it well when he says "love is from God the way heat is from fire, or the way light is from the sun. Love belongs to God's nature. It's woven into what He is. It's part of what it means to be God. The sun gives light because it is light. And fire gives heat because it is heat". Verse 7 also makes clear that that in order to truly love, one must be born of God. Love is the chief evidence you know God and have been born again. To be born again, is to be changed from the inside out by the power of God. His spirit does a work in your heart enabling a new kind of love. This radical type of love is such a distinguishing characteristic of a true believer that in verse 8 John goes so far as to say that if someone doesn't exhibit this type of love, they do not know God.

2. True Love's Revelation (v.9)

Read 1 John 4:9

How was God's love revealed to us?

What does John means when he says "so that we might live through Him"? How do we live through Christ?

John says that the only way we can come to know the radical, self-sacrificing love of God is for him to reveal it to us. This is a theme in all of Scripture. God can't be found by human means.

He must be revealed by divine ones. God isn't discovered, he makes himself known. So it is with his love.

The word "revealed" in v.9 means to "make known", "to be made visible", to "be made clear or put on display". The primary way God has revealed his love to us is through the sending of His Son. Jesus is the means by which the essence of God's love for us is made visible. In Christ, God has put His love on display. Hebrews 1:3 also makes this clear.

Read Hebrews 1:3

In what ways is Christ the "exact expression of God's nature"?

Christ was the final and fullest revelation of God. He radiated the glory of the Father and was by His very nature God. God's love is so deep that he was willing to send that unique Son, the eternal, pre-existent, and divine Son, into a world cursed by sin to dwell among sinners. The next few verses explain why.

In what other ways has God revealed his love to us?

3. True Love's Demonstration (v.10-12)

Read 1 John 4:10-12

According to John, what is the primary way God demonstrated his love for us?

Why is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus the greatest demonstration of God's love?

John says three very important phrases in verse 10. First, he says, "not that we loved Him". God's love for us wasn't prompted by our love for Him. He didn't see us longing for him or reaching out in love for Him and then decide to love us in response. Our sinful hearts were not capable of the kind of love God has. The bible says that before salvation we had no love for God, we were enemies of God, and haters of righteousness who prefer the dark to light. We did not love first. the second truth of verse 10, "He loved us". God's love pre-empted ours. His love enabled ours. He who is love, loved first. Not only that but his love led him to do something so wild, so drastic, and so magnificent to redeem us that we never would have imagined it. This is the third truth, He "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins".

Jesus offered himself as payment for our sins, taking our curse. God sent his Son, born of a virgin, for the purpose of being our propitiation, our atonement. 2 Corinthians 5:19 speaks of this as well.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:19

How did God reconcile the world to Himself?

What does it mean to you that because we are in Christ, God no longer holds our trespasses against us?

If God loves us in this way “we also must love one another”. God’s love is not only our example but the motivating factor behind our love for each other. Our love of others is a response of gratitude to God for His love for us. In verse 12, John makes a very distinct point about the church. All of us should pay attention here. The love of God, great as it is, is invisible. No one has seen God. But when we love each other as we ought and when we practice agapao, it is proof that God is indeed among us and that His love is real. We are the only visible demonstration of God loves this lost world sees. In us, God’s love is perfected or brought to completion.

In what ways specifically is God's love made complete by our love for each other?

What does our love for each other demonstrate to the world about God?

4. True Love's Implications (v.13-19).

Read 1 John 4:13-19

How is the Holy Spirit in us evidence of God's love?

How does God's love give us confidence in the day of judgment according to v.17?

What is the connection between love and fear in v.18?

There are 3 implications mentioned in these verses.

The first implication is assurance of salvation. When you love as God loves, this is evidence in your life that you have His Spirit, that He abides in you. To love as God loves requires the power of God. The fact that this love abides in us is our assurance of salvation. To love this way, means He is with you. And if He is with you, you are his and belong to Him. God abides in those who confess Christ. If you are a believer today you also have come to know and believe the love God has for us in Christ. You know this because His love is in you, and it will remain in You because you are His. This is the truth the Holy Spirit constantly reminds us of. As the Holy Spirit reminds us that He is in us, our salvation becomes a settled issue in our hearts. God’s love in

you doesn't stir up doubt about your salvation, but it reassures with hope and love that you are his.

In what ways does the Holy Spirit assure us of our salvation?

The second implication comes from verse 17. We can be confident in the day of judgment. John is speaking about how we should view the day of judgment. We should view it both positively and negatively. In other words, because of God's great love we can be confident (positive) in regards to the day of judgment, and not fear it (negative) at the same time. The judgment of God is very real. It will happen. Just as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow Christ will return, and judgement will happen. Jesus spoke forcefully and often about the day of judgment. When you think about it, the purpose of spreading the gospel is so that people may be made right with God and thus be prepared for that day. John says not only can we be prepared, but we can be confident. Why? John says, "for we are as He is in this world". What does he mean by that? The best I can surmise is that if you are in Christ, if you are abiding in the love of God and He is abiding in you, then you stand in relation to God in the same way Christ does. He treats us in the same way as His son.

The third implication from this text is that we can have fearlessness in life. The same agapeo love that builds our confidence in light of judgment also banishes fear from our daily lives. This passage isn't talking about natural fears. Fears such as don't pet bears or swim with sharks or walk up on a pack of wolves. Don't play with a brown recluse. Don't kiss someone with the flu and don't sky dive without a parachute. It's good to fear those things. Your life depends on it. I also don't think this is talking about a healthy fear of the Lord. We should have awe and reverence for Him. What is this passage talking about? I think it means no fear of death, wrath, or final judgment. As believers, we do not have to fear being cast out by God, rejected by God at final judgment, or facing the wrath of God.

Perfect love casts out fear because perfect love has already conquered death, hell, and the grave. Perfect love casts out fear because it has already stood in our place, taken our judgment, and declared us righteous by faith in Jesus.

How does it help us face life knowing we don't have to fear final judgment?

How can we best display our confidence and fearlessness to the lost?

Can you think of any other implications of God's love for you?

The origination of love is God Himself. In grace, he gave that love a face in Jesus. Jesus by his life, death, and resurrection demonstrated that love for us. In Him, we can be assured of our

salvation. In Him, we can stand confidently as we await the day of judgement. In Him, we can live the life God has called us to live without fear of being rejected on that final day. The love that became incarnate in the person of Christ now lives in us, and that should lead us to a life of deeper love and obedience towards God.

APPLICATION

How can you display the agapao love of God to others this week?

Have you take time to thank God for displaying his love for us by sending Christ?

Are you or someone you know having doubts about their salvation? how can you use this passagage to help reassure them (yourself)?

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

Write or insert any Bible study notes or commentary from your preferred sources.

4:7. "Dear friends" introduces a new subject, and it reestablishes warmth and affection following a very pointed and direct discussion. He loves them and will now challenge them to love others as well.

Love flows from or out of God and has God as its source. Not only is this true of God, but all who love have been born of God. John is referring to a particular kind of love that is found only in those who have been regenerated by Christ. The perfect tense of "born" would include the initial rebirth of Christians and the continuing effects this would have in their life, and the present tense of "know" emphasizes that Christians are continuing to grow in knowledge of God. In other words, it is not the Christian's ability to love that causes the new birth, but his ability to love flows from his regeneration in Christ.

4:8-9. John turns from the positive expression of truth to its negative expression. He adds emphasis to the point in v. 7 by stating the converse. Those who do not love do not know God. The absence of love in the life of an individual proves that he does not know God. The one who does not love is a stranger to God. He never even began to have a relationship with God; that is, there was never a time when this person could have legitimately claimed that he knew God. The

reason this is true is because God is love. John has already stated that God is Spirit (John 4:24) and that God is light (1 John 1:5), and now he gives one more encompassing statement regarding the nature of God. In this context John is saying that to know the love of God is to manifest His love. Without this manifestation one could not possibly know, or ever have known, God or His love.

Because His very nature is love, mercy and goodness flow from God like a beautiful river, as sunlight radiates from the sun. Love has its ultimate source and origin in God. It is not an abstract concept but concrete action, as John will now explain. John states that believers are to love, first, because love is the very nature of the God (v. 8) to whom they belong and of whom they are partakers and, second (v. 9), because of the incredible manner in which God's love was displayed. The sentence structure accentuates the nature and uniqueness of Christ. God sent His Son. The corresponding noun is typically rendered "apostle" and indicates one who is sent on a mission with a purpose, as a representative of another. This purpose is that we might live through Him. Life through and in the Son is a subject that greatly interests John. He refers to it no fewer than six times in vv. 9-16. The perfect tense of "sent" emphasizes the permanent consequences of this act. The verb "live" implies that those to whom the Son was sent were in a condition of spiritual death, and His mission was to impart life to them. This life only occurs through Him since He is the true and only mediating agent between God and man (see 1 Tim. 2:5).

4:10. The purpose in sending the Son is not the incarnation but the atonement—God sent His Son to die. Further, God's love is primary, not ours. The death of Christ is extolled, not the birth. John, in concluding the verse with the phrase "our sin," is keenly aware of his own need as well as ours for this propitiatory act. Our act was to sin. God's was to love and send. Man in his natural condition does not love God nor His Son whom He sent. But clearly and amazingly, God loved us. And what incredible and unfathomable love it is: He sent His Son, and He sent Him to die for us. Love is always demonstrated by actions. It is not abstract; it is never complacent or static.

John has already given the purpose for this demonstration of love: (1) to take away our sins (1 John 3:5) and (2) to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). This marvelous act was prompted not by man's love for God but God's love for man. Left to ourselves, we would not love Him. We would hate Him and oppose Him. It took His boundless, sacrificial love to break our hearts of stone and bring us to Himself. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in Him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like Him. 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.

4:11-16. John now builds on his original admonition to love one another (v. 7). For the sixth time He uses this compassionate and affectionate greeting “Dear friends” to exhort his readers. John is not so much introducing a new subject as he is adding to his prior discussion. Once one begins to understand the incredible price paid for sin and the magnitude of personal sin, he will understand the love of God and demonstrate it himself (John 13:31-35). The love God has shown becomes the motive for our responding to others properly. John is insisting that loving God and loving others cannot be divorced, which is exactly what Jesus taught in Matt 22:37-40. John is writing to those who are recipients of God’s love. Since God has loved them in this way, they have no option but to do the same. John used the phrase, “no one has ever seen God” to refer to God the Father in His heavenly splendor, but God the Son makes the invisible Father clearly known (John 1:18). John’s readers probably never saw Jesus in the flesh. False teachers, however, claimed to have made heavenly journeys during which they saw God in heaven. This is impossible. God cannot be seen. Such testimony is based on more than eyewitness. It comes through eyes of faith. After the resurrection the apostles testified to the church. Then the church accepted and repeated their testimony. We do the same.

Third, you do not have to see the earthly Jesus to testify about what God has done through him. You need only hear and believe in the testimony to him from Scripture and from faithful followers. Such testimony is both verbal testimony and God’s love exercised through our lives. Testimony about Jesus tells more than what Jesus did—save from sin. It also tells who he is—the Son of God. Again, all this goes against false teachers. They apparently claimed Jesus could not be human, thus could not die on the cross.

God is love and that the person who lives in love lives in God, and God in him. This is the test of true Christianity in the letters of John. We must recognize the basic character of God, rooted in love. We must experience that love in our own relationship with God.

4:17-18. The judgment seat of Christ received brief mention in 2:28 and now reappears briefly to assure us we can face Christ on that day with confidence. Such confidence comes because we live in love toward God and one another. The person who does not live in love toward his brother may experience shame (2:28). However, if we live in love toward our brothers, we will have confidence when we face Jesus because in this world we are like him. No one who was like Jesus in this world can fear approaching Jesus’ judgment seat. Fear expects punishment. One who loves expects to receive love.

4:19-21. God first loved us and made a relationship with him possible. The text drives home its refutation of the antichrists and false prophets. We cannot claim we love God and then show that we hate our brothers. This only proves one thing: we are liars. It is difficult to prove whether or not we love God based on our actions toward him because we cannot see him. Love for God is reflected in love for his children, our brothers and sisters, whom we can see. Therefore, God gave us this verifiable command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. Jesus stated the principle in other words: whatever you did not do for one of the least of these you did not do for me (Matt. 25:40).

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