

## UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

1 John 4:7-21

INTRO: Our subject this morning is that of unconditional love. When we put this series of messages on the internet they will go on by sermon title, not series title. But I have titled this series, "The Subtle Undoing Of The Fear Of The Lord." I began with two messages on the fear of the Lord. In the first message I sought to define and describe the fear of the Lord. I have told you that the word fear means fear. In some cases it may include the ideas of awe or reverence, but it still means fear. We have shied away from calling it what it is and that has not done us any good. Then I gave one message showing you verse after verse in Scripture, dealing with this subject.

Now I have asked in numerous teaching situations I have been in, "Do you think in America, Christianity is getting stronger and stronger or weaker and weaker." And I always get the answer, "It is getting weaker." And maybe to most Christians over the course of Christianity's existence, that has often been the feeling. Maybe we are brutes for punishment. Yet it seems we recognize that it is getting weaker and we point back to other ages when it was stronger. In America right now, you can point back 50 years and see a lot of strengths that we have lost now. To think we would come to the point of accepting the seeker friendly method of doing church, or much worse now, the emergent church movement would not long ago have seemed an impossibility. But we are now fully into the emergent church movement. There is no doubt we are losing ground fast.

But wherein lies the problem? What is it that has weakened us to accept unbiblical and ungodly teachings. Take for instance Sarah Young's book, "Jesus' Calling." Or take the book, "The Shack." Or take translations like the Messages and consider, why are we so terribly weak that we cannot see through these things? Why! And I recommend to you that such teachings as unconditional love; unconditional forgiveness; and unconditional eternal security have all subtly affected our thinking and downplayed the seriousness of sin and the fear of the Lord in the life of the believer. I know what I will have to say in these messages will be offensive to some. I only encourage you to think it through honestly.

And so, this morning I want to begin with the subject of unconditional love. So pervasive has the teaching of unconditional love been in the church that one stands in danger of being considered an unbeliever if one does not agree that the Bible teaches it.

Many years ago I was talking to Dave Griffin. He was the head of the Canadian SS Mission in BC and a great man of God. We talked about this subject and he said, "You have trouble with this subject too, huh?" I gathered that he did as well. I thought I was mostly alone in my concerns. The other day I was listening to David Hocking and he dismissed the subject of unconditional love as though any Christian should know that. He is a powerful thinker and an uncompromising preacher. It is for years that I have wrestled with this subject. It is so very subtle that it is extremely hard to refute.

#### I. WHAT IS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE?

The first thing on order then, in considering this subject is defining our terms. What exactly is unconditional love? I would like to give you about 15 minutes to ponder and write down what you think it might mean but I cannot afford the time. There are many writers, song writers and New Age writers who speak of unconditional love. I typed 'unconditional love' into the internet browser and got almost 2 million hits. Do we have a big subject here or what. And you will say, "I didn't know so many Christians were onto this subject." I don't have time to check but I would be surprised if most of those who have written on unconditional love are non-Christians. This subject is a favorite of the world, the New Age, psychologists, Buddhists and more. If you don't believe that check out the internet or YouTube.

So let me give you a Wikipedia, definition of unconditional love: "**Unconditional love** is known as affection without any limitations. It can be also love without conditions. This term is sometimes associated with other terms such as true [altruism](#), complete love, or "mother's/father's love. Each area of expertise has a certain way of describing unconditional love, but most will agree that it is that type of love which has no bounds and is unchanging. It is a concept in ones mind comparable

to true love, a term which is more frequently used to describe love between lovers. By contrast, unconditional love is frequently used to describe love between family members, comrades in arms and between others in highly committed relationships. An example of this is a parent's love for their child; no matter a test score, a life changing decision, an argument, or a strong belief, the amount of love that remains between this bond is seen as unchanging and unconditional. In religion, unconditional love is thought to be part of [The Four Loves](#); affection, friendship, romance, and unconditional."

Let me give you another definition that kind of summarizes most of those I read in an article titled, "What unconditional love really is and how to give it". The writer says, "It is important to understand the definition of unconditional love to be able to give it, it is the kind of love that expects nothing back, places no limits, and does not set any ideals or conditions on what it should be. When you love in this way you do it without expectation of reciprocity and with no preconceived notions of how or if they will express love back to you. This is the kind of love you see exhibited by parents and children, brothers and sisters, true friends, and the best of romantic relationships."

Now that particular definition ran on and on with similar ideas. So let us consider unconditional love from that definition. Have you ever seen parents love their children like that? No expectations? Doesn't matter what the child does its all good? Have you ever seen brothers and sisters love like that?

How about in the best of romantic relationships. Does it work like that? Does man love unconditionally? Let's take a romantic relationship that has come to the wedding day. Everything went wonderfully well. The reception is over. And when a couple would normally leave for their honeymoon the new wife says, "That was a wonderful day honey. I did not realize it would be so tiring. Would you please take me back to my parents now? Tomorrow I will ask them if I can see you again." Now remember, unconditional love is the kind of love that expects nothing back. Oh no. So you get married but you expect nothing back. Nothing. If

it is unconditional it expects nothing back. It has no limits. So, because this wonderful husband expects nothing back, he will take her right back to her parents and come see her when she wants and take her back home when she wants.

And then one day she goes with him on the honeymoon, and they come back home. And, oh yes, by the way, now that she has finally moved in with her husband, she has now decided she does not want to do the cooking either, nor the wash. But that is OK. His love has no limits. It expects nothing, and since it has no limits, he is quite happy to live the rest of his life like this. This is the bliss of unconditional love.

But it was no problem for him to love her like that because there were no clothes to wash and there were no supplies to make meals with because he decided that if his wife loved him unconditionally she would not mind if he did not go to work, since he really disliked work. So he never went to work. And since she had no expectations, it was a wonderful married life they had. But it wasn't long, because their lives were both very short. No money, no food, just love. How do you like that? Here is an altruistic husband and wife. The husband loves the wife unconditionally. He expects nothing from her. The wife loves her husband, she expects no money; no groceries; and they live happily ever after.

Well, Warren Smith has opened our eyes to the vast subject of the NAM. He spoke a number of times of the book, "A Course In Miracles." This New Age book was written by Helen Shucman between 1965 and 72. It is as NA as anything you will ever get, and it is filled with the idea of unconditional love, though the phrase itself does not occur in it.

An article by Greg Mackie gives this title: "How would the Course define 'unconditional love?'" Then he gives a short answer, and here it is, "Unconditional love is the Love of God, the only real Love: a limitless, changeless Love that embraces everyone and does not have to be earned in any way. We are forever worthy of unconditional love, because God created us as beings who are both lovable and

loving, and our true nature cannot be changed. We can restore our awareness of God's unconditional Love and of our own true, loving nature by meeting the conditions necessary for this restoration; in particular, by loving our brothers unconditionally through forgiveness." Now in all that remember that according to the NA teaching we are all God. That is the God he is speaking about.

When I was working my way through some of this, I noted that the word 'God' is written with a capital G. So called Warren Smith to see what they mean in this quote by God and it being spelled with a capital G. So I told him I was doing some messages on the subject of unconditional love and I said, "Warren, I am doing some messages on unconditional love right now, and I need some information on a quote regarding the course in miracles." Well, I got nowhere. I couldn't write down what he all said. I said, "Woa, start all over again. Here's my question." And he took off again. But eventually I got what I wanted.

When I told him about my subject he said, "I got introduced to the subject of unconditional love through Gerald Jampolski, and that was his understanding of the teaching of 'The Course In Miracles.'" Warren Smith told me about Jerry Jampolski who was brushed on the head by an Indian guru with a peacock feather and it changed his life. You can go on YouTube and check him out on unconditional love and unconditional forgiveness.

As I was talking with Warren he kept moving very fast and suddenly I said, "Woa. Don't say another thing, I'm going to lose it. Now repeat what you said so I can write it down." And this is what he said, "Unconditional love in its simplest form is the undoing of fear." Then he said, "That comes almost verbatim from the course in miracles! The title of these messages is, "The Subtle Undoing Of The Fear Of The Lord."

Unconditional love, what is it? It is love that has no expectations. It is affection without limitations. And here is a part of the quote I gave you earlier: "It is important to understand the definition of unconditional love to be able to give it, it is the

kind of love that expects nothing back, places no limits, and does not set any ideals or conditions on what it should be. When you love in this way you do it without expectation of reciprocity and with no preconceived notions of how or if they will express love back to you. This is the kind of love you see exhibited by parents and children, brothers and sisters, true friends, and the best of romantic relationships."

## II. HOW DID WE COME TO THE VIEW OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE?

So, let me ask, how did we come to a view in the Church that so pervasively teaches unconditional love? Has love always been taught like this? I do not know if anybody has done any work on tracing the history of the present view of 'unconditional love' in the church. It is my view that it has its origins in the preaching of a Mr. Moorhouse, called the 'boy preacher' from England. No doubt he had no intention that this teaching should ever go to where it has come today. He was a good man. In the book, "The Life Of D.L. Moody" written by Moody's son is the account of Mr. Moorehouse and his influence on Moody. Moody had not met this young man when the young man approached him. He told Mr. Moody that he would like to come to Chicago and preach. Moody took one look at this young 'beardless' lad and said to himself, "He can't preach." He wanted to take the same boat to America that Moody took and he wanted Moody to let him know which boat he was taking but Moody didn't give him the time of day and never let him know because he thought, "He can't preach."

Several weeks after Moody was back in America this man wrote Moody a letter and said he would be willing to preach for him. Moody says this, "Well, I sat down and wrote him a very cold letter: 'If you come West, call on me.' I thought that would be the last I would hear of him." Well, Moody got another letter and answered in much the same way. Shortly after he got a letter that Mr. Moorehouse would be there on Thursday. Moody didn't know what to do with this man because he was sure he couldn't preach. Moody told some of his church officials that he would not be there Thursday and they recommended he not let this young man preach since, 'he might do more harm than

good.' Moody said, "Well, you might try him. I will announce him to speak on Thursday night. Your regular meeting is on Friday. After hearing him you can either announce that he will speak again the next night or you can have your usual prayer-meeting. If he speaks well both nights you will know whether to announce him or me for Sunday meetings. I will be back Saturday."

Well, to Moody's surprise, when he came back and enquired about the 'young Englishman' His wife told him that the people liked him 'very much'. So he asked, "Well, do you like him?" And she said, "Yes, I liked him very much. He has preached two sermons from that verse of John, 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," and I think you will like him, although he preaches a little differently from you." So Moody said to his wife, "How is that?" "Well, she said, "he tells the worst sinners that God loves them." And this is what Moody said to her, "'Then' said I, 'he is wrong.'"

You see, Moody was born in 1837 and the message on God's love was clearly not a common teaching in his day. That God loves sinners was a foreign concept to Moody. That tells us a lot about the preaching of that day. We also know that that was a short-coming.

Now let me quote from the book again, "Sunday came, and as I went to church I noticed that every one brought his Bible. The morning address was to Christians. I had never heard anything quite like it. He gave chapter and verse to prove every statement he made. When night came the church was packed. 'Now, beloved friends', said the preacher, 'if you will turn to the third chapter of John and the sixteenth verse, you will find my text.' He preached the most extraordinary sermon from that verse. He did not divide the text into 'secondly' and 'thirdly' and 'fourthly'; he just took the whole verse, and then went through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation to prove that in all ages God loved the world. God had sent prophets and patriarchs and holy men to warn us, and then He sent His Son, and after they killed Him, He sent the Holy Ghost. I never knew up to that time

that God loves us so much. This heart of mine began to thaw out; I could not keep back the tears. It was like news from a far country: I just drank it in" (138-139).

From that time on the love of God began to be a subject for the pulpits and I believe that was the first root of all the unconditional love teaching of today. It did not start off wrong, it just morphed into all kinds of false teaching.

I am not a historian but it seems to me that from that time on the subject of love brought about great changes in preaching so that today even the world and the NAM have adopted it. It never started off like that, but it morphed into error of the highest kind so that even the world and NAM find it valuable.

I told you in the last message that as I was talking with Warren Smith about unconditional love and the NA he said something and I said, "Woa. Don't say another thing, I'm going to lose it. Now repeat what you said so I can write it down." And this is what he said, "Unconditional love in its simplest form is the undoing of fear." He said, "That comes almost verbatim from the course in miracles!" And I have titled these messages, "The subtle undoing of the fear of the Lord!"

Now let me ask you, where did the NAM get its idea of unconditional love? ES Williams traces it to Erik Fromm. He says that Erik Fromm was the first to use the phrase 'unconditional love' (Christ or Therapy, 65). Fromm was a psychologist. So it may have gone from the preaching in the church to the psychologist to the NAM. But, the roots go back, I think, to DL Moody and the preaching of the 'boy preacher'. If that is correct, I have no doubt at all that they had absolutely no intention of such a development.

### III. WHAT IS LOVE?

Well, let us go now to the most important definition involved in this whole subject, the definition of love itself. I think that probably the biggest problem with all of this talk about unconditional is that love itself has not been properly defined.



Marriane Williamson, gives this definition of love from the course in miracles and I quote: "The course does not teach the meaning of love for that is beyond what can be taught. It does, however, aim at removing the blocks of love's presence which is your natural inheritance. The opposite of love is fear but what is all encompassing can have no opposite. This course can therefore very simply be summed up in this way, Nothing real can be threatened, nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God." Now that is profoundly enlightening, is it not? She is saying you can't define love so you cannot know what love is, but you know it is all encompassing and therefore can have no opposite, so fear does not exist and since fear is not real, therein lies the peace of God. Wow! In other words love cannot be defined.

Now I confess that a definition of love has been one of the hardest tasks I have undertaken. But, if you can't define it, then you can make it mean whatever you want it to mean and that is exactly what she does. She then goes on like this, "It does, however, aim at removing the blocks of love's presence which is your natural inheritance. The opposite of love is fear but what is all encompassing can have no opposite. This course can therefore very simply be summed up in this way, Nothing real can be threatened, nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God."

I cannot begin to deal with the problems in that, she says the opposite of love is fear. That tells me her definition of love could never be right. You see, if one does not begin with a proper definition of love, one can make it mean whatever one wishes it to mean, and that is what has been done in this very New Age book called, "A Course In Miracles".

I will not take much time here because I have covered my own view of love here several times before. But I want to briefly define what love is. In Scripture, generally when it speaks of love in the NT it is speaking of agape love. We are familiar with that. The Greek language, which is the language of the NT, had a number of words that we would translate by our one word 'love', and therein lies the biggest problem when we speak of love.

The Wikipedia in its article on unconditional love said this, "In religion, unconditional love is thought to be part of [The Four Loves](#); affection, friendship, romance, and unconditional." If they are correct in that assessment, the unconditional love corresponds to agappe love. Yet when the world speaks of unconditional love it attaches it to the meaning of one of the other three. The world talks about love as, say parent or sibling love. But that is not agappe love, that is phileo love. Then they talk about it as the love of romance, but that is not agappe love either, that is erao love. In this lies the whole problem. In 1 John 4:7-21, the passage that was read for us earlier, the word 'love' occurs in one form or another 29 times and it is always agappe love, as it is in most of the NT. Agappe occurs 106 times in the NT, whereas stergo and phileo occur but a few times.

So, let me define love, no matter in which form it is found, as I have come to understand it. It is my view that the root idea of all the words translated love is that it is an attraction or attachment of one kind or another. All loves have this in common. If it relates to people, the attachment has to do with relationships between two or more people and that is the area we are talking about when we speak of unconditional love.

So, there is phileo love, which I see as the attraction or attachment of relatives or close friends to one another. This love is based on emotions that causes one to seek to nurture that relationship. I might call it family love or friendship love. Erao love is the attraction or attachment or longing between those of opposite gender as in marriage. I might call it physical or sensual love. When we talk about love, very many times it is this word we have in mind. But the Bible never uses either the word erao or any word with its root. Many young couples turn to 1 Corinthians 13, but that chapter does not deal at all with this kind of love. This word is not even used in the Scriptures, and yet we connect it with biblical love. Stergo love, a word that is used a few times in the NT is, as I see it, an attraction or attachment based

on loyalty of one person with another, say as with a boss or ruler.

These loves; erao, phileo, and stergo, I believe, are all based at least to some extent on the emotions. As I see it, when we speak of love in English, or even in our German, we usually have in mind the loves spoken of as either erao or phileo in the Greek. But when the NT speaks of love in verses like John 3:16 and most others, it is agappe love. And agappe love is an entirely different kind of love.

In human relationships agappee love is the attraction or attachment of one person to another or others. But it is not based on emotions. It is grounded in a conviction or knowledge of truth which causes one to act on behalf of the welfare of another person. It does not have to do with feelings. So, agappee love can be commanded because it is based on truth or facts, not on ever changing emotions. This love is reasoned love. It will do right even when one doesn't feel like it.

Let me give you an illustration I have used before. For those of you who know Vanderhoof, my home town where I grew up, you know that when you come from the east you go down a long hill until you come into the Nechako River Valley and the town is situated in the valley. And one day I came down this long hill. A lady came dashing out onto the highway with a stricken look in her face and she was flailing her arms in desperation to stop me, which I did. Her son, a young man, had been working underneath his car. He had the car blocked up and he had taken the drive shaft off. And when the drive shaft was off, it allowed the car to roll off the blocking and he was trapped underneath and panicking.

Nobody had to tell me that the right thing to do was to help. It was not related to phileo love because I did not even know them. It was certainly not erao love and it was not stergo love because we had built up no loyalty. I did not know them. I could have said, "Well, I don't even know you. You are not my friends nor am I bound to be loyal to you. So good-bye. Find yourself a friend or a relative." I had never seen these people before, but I knew the facts

and acted on them, and I believe that is agappe love! I did what anybody should do for anybody in such a situation. The Daily Bread puts it this way: Love is God's will in action. Well, that certainly cannot be based on feelings because we often do not feel like doing God's will.

Agappe love is based on reason which finds its direction in facts and truth. It is intelligent. It considers facts and makes decisions accordingly, regardless of emotions or inconvenience. When God saw man's condition and knew that His attribute of justice would require Him to send man to an everlasting hell, His mercy was aroused. His mercy is those feelings of compassion that were aroused at man's hopeless plight because he had been seduced by Satan. This aroused the love of God. Someone has said that love is giving oneself to someone else's legitimate need. God loved man. He reasoned out how He could justifiably and truthfully save man and He found a way. That is agappe love.

And so it is my conclusion that unconditional love is neither right, nor is it true, nor does it work in reality. Friendship or family love is conditional. There are plenty of examples of that right with regard to people who attend this church. For most who attend here, unconditional love has flown the coop in their families. Loyalty love is conditional. Many people exchange loyalties, given certain conditions. Even romantic love is conditional. Let one partner be unfaithful and you will find that out right pronto.

And last, agappe love is conditional. When the facts dictate otherwise, one will not do for another what one would if conditions had not changed. We will look at more of that in the next message.

CONCL: So, because I have taken so much time, let me conclude briefly. What is unconditional love? I think this definition sums up what most people think it is, and I quote from the article I mentioned earlier: "...it is the kind of love that expects nothing back, places no limits, and does not set any ideals or conditions on what it should be."

Second, how did we come to this view of unconditional love? In my understanding it began as a good thing in the day of DL Moody but from there it has morphed into what we have today which is unbiblical, and which fits into the NAM as a hand into a glove made for it.

Third, what is love? Well, when we talk about love we have only one word for it. When we are talking about unconditional love, we think are talking about biblical agappe love; but in fact we are not. From a Biblical point of view it is agappe love that is so very important and this is a love that is based on objective facts, or truth; not on the ever changing emotions of man. And this love is anything but unconditional.