

1 John 4:7-12 Answers God Is Love: Love One Another

Introduction: Earlier in his letter, John warned of the importance of testing the spirits since there were many false prophets animated by the spirit of antichrist. John said the Spirit of the true Christ is known by doctrine. Today we see the Spirit of Truth is also known by love.

******What command are we given twice in 4:7-12?** We are commanded to love one another, (4:7, 11).

— 4:7a —

What in 4:7 suggests love is not fundamentally a feeling? The fact we are commanded to love one another suggests love is more of an action, an attitude, a commitment than it is a feeling. It is hard to be commanded to have a feeling.

According to 4:7a, why should we love one another? We should love one another because love is from God. Love must be coupled with faith:

ESV **1 John 3:23** And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

Either one (belief/love) without the other is problematic. The world loves its own, but has not faith in Christ. The devil believes in Jesus, but he has no love.

— 4:7b-8 —

What proof for being born of God did John offer in 4:7b-8? Whoever is born of God lives a life of love. It is very simple: those who do not love do not know God.

ESV **John 13:35** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Based on the logic of 4:8, why is it impossible to be born of God and not love? It is impossible because God is love.

Abusing God's Love: John's declaration, "God is love" (4:8) is very famous. It is also much abused. Those who advocate homosexuality trumpet, "God is love." Couples living together out of wedlock proclaim, "God is love." Sinners liable to church discipline protest, "God is love" (along with "Judge not!"). Unitarian Universalists who deny the existence of Hell teach, "God is love." God is love, but He is also holy. The four living creatures in heaven surrounding the throne do not say "Love, love, love." They say, "Holy, holy, holy."

ESV **Revelation 4:8** And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty . . ."

The flip side of God's love is His wrath against sin (for violated holiness). This same letter from John declaring God to be love also declares that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and that all who practice unrighteousness are children of the devil (3:8). John also declared "no murderer has eternal life abiding in him (3:15); despite the truth that God is love, not everyone is going to heaven.

— 4:9-10 —

According to 4:9-10, how did God manifest His love? He manifested His love in that He sent His Son so that we might live through Him.

NAS Romans 5:8 . . . God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Parallel: 1 John 4:9 reads a lot like John 3:16 (God/love/only Son/world/life).

In what sense is Jesus God's "only" Son (4:9)? (The KJV reads, "only begotten"). The Greek is *monogenés* and here it means unique, one of a kind. The NIV renders this "one and only." For instance, Abraham's son Isaac was described as being *monogenés*:

ESV Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only (*monogenés*) son . . .

Yet Isaac was not literally Abraham's only son. Abraham also had a son named Ishmael (from Hagar). However, Isaac was Abraham's unique son of by way of God's promise that Abraham would have a miracle son with Sarah.

Similarly, Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, is the only member of the God head who became a man, who was incarnate. Jesus is the one and only Son of God. He is peculiar and unique, but not created.

According to 4:9, why did God send Jesus into the world? It was so that we might live.

ESV John 11:49-52 . . . Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ". . . it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

And Can It Be? "Died he for me who caused His pain! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?"

— 4:10 —

In 4:10, why did John add "not that we have loved God"? Our love for God is the result of His love for us. His love is the cause, our love is the effect. John evidently wanted his readers to realize any love in us springs from God's love for us.

ESV **1 John 4:19** We love because he first loved us.

Review: According to 4:10, Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. What does propitiation mean? See also 2:2. The NIV renders this as “atoning sacrifice”. Atonement is “at one-ment”. The idea is of placating the wrath of God, in this case with respect to our sins (Rienecker, p. 786). It means “satisfaction.”

What is the difference between propitiation and expiation? Propitiation is the turning away of wrath by the offering of a sacrifice. Expiation is similar but does not involve God’s wrath; expiation is a payment made for sin, a neutralizing sin. In light of the many texts about God’s wrath, it would seem that propitiation is the better word choice.

ESV **Ephesians 5:6** . . . the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

ESV **Romans 1:18** . . . the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . .

ESV **Romans 5:9** Since . . . we have . . . been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Balance: The truth that God is love is not at odds with the truth that God has wrath toward sin. Love for some, wrath for others.

Harmony Within The Trinity: There is no difference in disposition between God the Father (wrath for sin) and Jesus (dying to save us from wrath). God is not an unwilling judge from whom Jesus had to wrestle a pardon. The Bible says God so loved the world, not God so hated the world. God simultaneously has both love for man and wrath toward sin. When it comes to salvation, all three Persons of the Trinity are involved: we are selected by the Father, saved by the Son and sealed by the Spirit. Here in 4:10 God the Father’s love is clearly shown:

ESV **1 John 4:10** 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.

Antichrist Twist: The spirit of antichrist denies that Jesus’ death was propitiatory. Theological liberals do not believe Jesus died “for” sins; they say instead He died simply because of human sin but not to pay for sin. Muslims on the other hand typically deny Jesus died on the cross at all.

— 4:11 —

What appeal did John repeat in 4:11? In view of God’s love for us, we ought to love one another. “Shall we refuse to love those whom the eternal God hath loved?” (Henry, p. 874).

ESV **1 Peter 4:8** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

How would true love for others in our church manifest itself? True love becomes evident as we spend time doing things to benefit other people or give of resources to help other people. Time spent might include counseling, coaching, making a meal, baby sitting, grass cutting, encouraging, or discipling.

— 4:12 —

Even though no one has ever seen God, what about God can you see (4:12)? I can't see the wind, but I can see when the wind blows things around. Neither can we see God, but we can see God's love active in a church as we love one another.

Side Issue: People saw Jesus and Jesus is God in human form, so how can it be true that no one has ever seen God? Jesus is all God, but Jesus is not all there is of God; God is Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Jesus is not the Father and Jesus is not the Spirit. No one has ever seen God in His eternal essence.

ESV John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Paragraph Overview: Why ought we to love one another (4:7-12)? We ought to love one another because:

- 1) We are encouraged to do so, 4:7
- 2) Love is from God, 4:7
- 3) God is love, 4:8
- 4) God so loved us He sent His Son into the world, 4:10-11.

So What?

How did God show His love for us? He sent his Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins (4:9-10).

Theological Truth: God is love. Applied theology suggests this truth impacts our lives how? Since God is love we also are to love both God and one another.

Jumping Ahead:

******Who can have confidence on judgment day and not fear punishment (4:13-21)?** Those who **1)** believe in Jesus as the Son of God and **2)** love the brethren can have confidence, 4:15-16. John used the word love 43 times in his letter; it is an important aspect of true Christianity (Coleman & Peace, p. 46).

What evidence does 4:16 offer that God abides in someone? That a person abides in love is evidence God abides in that person.

ESV 1 John 3:24a Whoever **keeps his commandments** abides in him, and he in them.

According to 4:20, how can you tell if someone is lying who says he loves God? It is very simple: anyone who does not love the brethren does not love God either.

John Stott: To claim to be a Christian without living a life of love “is like claiming to be intimate with a foreigner whose language we cannot speak, or to have been born of parents whom we do not in any way resemble” (Coleman & Peace, p. 46). Love is God’s language and the mark of His parentage.

What commandment do we have in 4:21? Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF.

Stephen E. Atkerson
www.NTRF.org
10/11/15