

The Love of God; the love for each Other (Captivated by God's Love, Compelled to Love) 1 John 4: 7 – 21

Introduction: Dear friends, on October 21, a brother-in-law of Dori and I lost his mother at the age of 97. She and her late husband were devout followers of Jesus. At her funeral in Elmhurst, Illinois, our brother-in-law, in giving a few personal remarks, mentioned that his mother had said that when she and her husband got married, they were not in love. They knew that God wanted them together, so they were married, and then **they grew in love** "with all the joys and sorrows of life together."

Friends, the Spirit of God draws us to God where we hear the good news, respond to it, and grow in the knowledge that God loves us through Jesus. Then, we, as members of the Church, bride of Christ, grow in our understanding of God's love for us, we grow in our knowledge of God and we mature in our desire to love one another, our neighbors and even our enemies "with all the joys and sorrows of life together." John goes on to say that our love for one another is a witness to the truth of Jesus' incarnation.

- I. In verses 7 – 10 we are told that God's love is the foundation of Christian love
 - A. (4:7) "Let us love one another for love comes from God." Our love for one another is based on God's love for us.
 1. (7) "Everyone who loves has been **born** of God." The verb tense for "born" is the perfect tense; that means our being born of God was completed in the past but is continuing to bear fruit in the present. Believers have been born of God but living with and in the spiritual life of God continues after that birth occurs. An example of this occurs when a child is conceived; immediately he or she begins life as a human being. The child is already a child of its father and mother. And from that initial moment of conception forward, that child continues to grow in his or her knowledge of love, whether from birth parents, foster care parents or adoptive parents. The once completed action of conception continues to bear life in the present.
 2. John continues to say, "Whoever loves has been born of God **and knows** God." The verb "knows" is in the present tense. Everyone who loves, knows God at this moment and in every moment. Knowing God is an ever-present event. Knowing God is not something in our past; we are always knowing God and advancing in that knowledge. We do that through our Bible reading, through praying with him, through listening to him, through learning about him with others, and many other ways.
 3. Knowing that God our Father loves us so much that he would give us spiritual birth and call us his children creates in us a desire to know God our Father more.
 4. Pablo Casals, the famous Spanish cellist who lived to be 97 years of age, was asked late in his life, "Mr. Casals, you are 95 years old and the greatest cellist that ever lived. Why do you still practice six hours a day?" And Mr. Casals answered, "**Because I think I'm making progress.**"
 - B. Dear friends, as I said earlier, the foundation of Christian love is God's love. In both verses 8 & 16 we read that "God is love".
 1. Love is the very essence of God's being; love defines His character and all of what God does flows from his love.
 2. Coming to know that "God is love" is a part of that lifelong endeavor to come to know God. When we catch a glimpse of God's love, we are reminded how little we really know, so we dive back in to know more. Being born of God compels us to want to know more of his immeasurable love.

- C. John finds it impossible to give a precise definition of God's love. He and we know that to say that God is love means so much more than how Dictionary.com defines loves: "a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person."
1. In the absence of a definition of love, John gives several word pictures of God's love. (John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, learned this teaching method from his rabbi, Jesus.)
 2. (1 John 3: 16) "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us." (The "us" refers to the apostles, to the believers to whom John is writing, and to all those who would subsequently believe that Jesus sacrificed his life on our behalf.) If you want to know what love is, remember Jesus the Anointed King crucified and buried for you. (Remember John 3: 16)
 3. 1 John 4: 10, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."
 4. (1 John 4: 9) "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him." Ah, God's love does not end with Jesus in the tomb; Jesus rose victoriously over death to life, and that life he gives to those who are recipients of God's love. We live through Jesus because of God's love; we live for eternity because Jesus came to this world.
 5. If someone were to ask you what it means that God is love, the foundation of all love, you can now begin your answer with Spirit led confidence and say, "God's love means that he sent Jesus, his one and only son who gave his life as a sacrifice for us, so that we might have life. That is God's love!"
- II. Verse 11 includes John's compassionate term of greeting, "Dear friends". He wants us to perk up and listen. "**Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**" (11)
- A. "Since" God so loved us, we are to love one another.
1. This echoes what Jesus had said to the disciples, recorded in John 13: 34, 35, "'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'
 2. We are under the command of Jesus to love one another. We are left with no other option than to love one another, apart from denying the purpose of God's love and denying the sacrifice of Jesus' death for us.
 3. Those who have been born of God and who know God, will give evidence of their rebirth by paying forward God's love in Jesus to one another, to others, and even to enemies. As we read in 1 John 3:18, "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."
 4. This is what is meant by the Covenant Church mission tag line on our doors: "Captivated by God's Grace; Compelled to Love." Another way to say it is, "Saved by God's grace, to love one another."
- B. Verse 12 continues, ". . . if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us." Did you hear that, dear friends? When we love one another, as Jesus loved us, God's love is completed, or made perfect, in us."
1. With God living in us, physically seeing God or having an image of God, is unnecessary and impossible. God is a spirit and cannot be subjected to an object visible to our physical senses.

2. So how does God become visible in the world? God's love becomes visible in and through our love for one another.
 3. Loving one another reveals the glory of God and the heart of God, and is a witness that God loves the world through Jesus. When the world sees or hears us really loving one another, as Jesus loved us, they will take notice.
- III. We can know that by loving one another God lives in us:
- A. (13) God gives us his Spirit to assure us and to affirm to us that God live in us and we in him.
 1. We do not need any outside funky experiences in the worldly realms.
 2. We do not have to offer our bodies to pagan gods or agree with pagan myths. We do not have to check with an astrologist to plan our day.
 - B. In verse 14 we are told that we will give verbal testimony to the truth that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. We will confidently tell this good news. When you know something to be true, you will let others know.
 - C. And the third proof of knowing God lives in us and we in him is that we will have confidence facing the day of judgment. By living and loving as Jesus lived and loved and by living with God inside us, let's us know that we have life eternal. Having been made right with God, we have peace with God. And having the peace of God drives out any fear we might have about our eternal destiny.

To conclude I want to reflect with you on five questions that are on the weekly Discipleship Guide.

1. How do you come to know God? How do you develop your knowledge and understanding of God?
2. How would you define love? How would you define God's love? How do these compare?
3. In what ways do you go about loving other people around you?
4. Where do you have the greatest trouble loving people: at church? At work? At home? At school?
5. If someone came into Covenant Church and observed us, what would they conclude about God's love? What if they observed us outside of the Covenant Church building?

Prayer: Our Father in heaven, holy is your name. Thank you for your love for us, flowing from your very being through Jesus the Christ. Jesus, thank you for coming to this earth, for the purpose of loving others so that by faith we might live in God and God might live in us. There is nothing better. Forgive us for the times when we have not loved others with our fellowship, let alone neighbors and enemies. For the sake of Jesus remove our guilt. By your Spirit may we be confident in living lives of love, confident in telling others about your love, and may we have confidence as we move closer and closer to the day of judgment. We ask these thing for the glory due your name, and all God's people said, AMEN