

## GOD IS LOVE

### **TEXT: I JOHN 4:7-21**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. I recently saw a video on the Internet. Brother Rachid is a Christian who was raised as a Muslim in Morocco, the son of an imam. He has posted this video called "A Message to President Obama From a Former Muslim" in which he informs the president that the president is wrong when he said that ISIS is not Muslim. The former Muslim-turned-Christian explains that terrorism begins in the schools and mosques and must be cut off at the root.
2. In the video, he said he left Islam and become a Christian because, unlike Allah, the God of the Christian Bible is a God of love.
3. In I John 2:7-11, John says that love is one of the signs of our fellowship with God.
4. First John 2:10 says, "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."
5. Then in I John 3:14, John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."
6. Now here in chapter 4, John teaches that love is related to the very nature of God Himself. "God is love" (4:8, 16). God is not only loving; God is love.
7. Verse 7 is an exhortation – "let us love one another" (4:7).
8. This is our duty as children of God – "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (4:11).

### **I. LOVE IS EVIDENCE OF THE NEW BIRTH**

### **II. LOVE IS EVIDENCE OF THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT**

### **III. OUR LOVE IS TO BE PERFECTED**

#### **I. LOVE IS EVIDENCE OF THE NEW BIRTH**

1. John is called the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 21:20). Here in this little epistle he uses the word *love* or *loveth* or *beloved* some 29 times.
2. In this epistle, John has declared that to love is a commandment from God (2:7, 8), and that love is evidence that one is truly saved (3:14, 15).
3. You can mark it down if a church is unfriendly and unloving, then it is not a very spiritual church.

4. When John says, "For love is of God" (4:7), he is not talking about that love which is common to all men. He is speaking of that love which has been implanted in those who have been born again (cf. 3:14).
5. "Love is of God" (4:7) and "God is love" (4:8) means that love originated with God. God is the source and origin of love and all true love derives from Him.
6. One day Charles Haddon Spurgeon noticed a weather vane that a farmer had on his barn. On this weather vane, it the farmer had inscribed the words, "GOD IS LOVE."
7. Spurgeon asked the farmer, "Do you mean by this that God's love is as changeable as the wind?" The farmer shook his head. "No, I do not mean that God's love changes like that. I mean that whichever way the wind blows, God is love."
8. Another great preacher from the past, Harry Ironside, was trying to witness one time to a proud woman who said to him, "I have no use for the Bible, or for Christian superstition, or for religious dogma. It is enough for me to know that God is love."
9. "Well," Ironside replied, "do you know it?" "Why, of course I do," she said; "we all know that, and that is religion enough for me. I do not need the dogmas of the Bible."
10. "How did you find out that God is love?" Ironside asked.
11. "Why," she said, "everybody knows that."
12. "Do they know it yonder in India?" he asked. "That poor mother in her distress throwing her little baby into the Ganges River to be eaten alive by filthy and repulsive crocodiles as a sacrifice for her sins – does she know that God is love?"
13. "Oh, well, she is ignorant and superstitious," she replied.
14. "Those poor heathens in the jungles of Africa, bowing down to idols of wood and stone, and in constant fear of their fetishes, the poor idolatrous pagans in other countries, do they know that God is love?"
15. "Perhaps not," she said, "but in a civilized land we all know it."
16. Ironside then asked her: "But how is it that we know it? Who told us so? Where did we find it out?"
17. "I do not understand what you mean," she said, "for I've always known it."
18. "Let me tell you this," Ironside answered; "no one in the world ever knew it until it was revealed from heaven and recorded in the Word of God. It is here and nowhere else. It is not found in all the literature of the ancients."

19. Ironside had a good point – the precious truth that God is love is not revealed in any other religion. Most heathen people worship a god of hatred and fear and war, but the true God is love. Allah has many names and one of them is "the Master Deceiver." What a contrast between the God of love and the god of deception. As a matter of fact, according to the Bible, the master deceiver is none other than the devil himself!
20. The Hindu god Shiva is known as "the Destroyer."
21. Shiva has a consort, the goddess Kali, pictured with several arms. One arm holds a sword, another a severed head. Another arm holds a cup to catch the blood from the severed head. Another arm holds a trident (like Satan).
22. The name *Kali* comes from *kāla*, which means "black, death, lord of death."
23. The Bible says that "every one that loveth is born of God (born again) and knoweth God" (4:7). Do you *know* God or do you just know *about* God?
24. God's love was supremely manifested by Jesus dying on the cross for our sins (4:9, 10).
25. John uses some important doctrinal words that are being left out of most of these new Bible translations:
  - "His only begotten Son" (4:9) – this describes the unique relationship in which no other Son could share. Jesus Christ revealed God the Father to mankind and is the only mediator of salvation.
  - John 1:18 says, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (cf. John 3:16; I John 4:9).
  - "Propitiation" (4:10) – this means God is satisfied with Christ's death on the cross as a just payment for the sins of mankind. God's wrath has been averted – God is propitiated.
26. God's love was not shown to us because we first loved Him. First John 4:19 says, "We love him, because he first loved us."
27. God loved us in spite of our lack of love and our opposition to Him. Romans 5:6-8 says, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

28. Romans 5:10 says that "when we were (His) enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

## **II. LOVE IS EVIDENCE OF THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT**

1. This is evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit – "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us" (4:12).
2. Galatians 5:22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love..."
3. Love is evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and evidence that we are truly saved because the Holy Spirit only dwells within Christians.
4. Our Lord told His disciples, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16, 17).
5. Romans 8:9 says, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

## **III. OUR LOVE IS TO BE PERFECTED**

1. Our love is made perfect, and God's love is made perfect in us (4:17, cf. 4:12).
2. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (4:11). This is our duty as children of God.
3. "No man hath seen God at any time" (4:12). John 1:18 says, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."
4. When John says, "no man hath seen God at any time," he is saying that God is manifested through His people. In other words, we reveal God to a lost and dying world by demonstrating the love of God – "and His love is perfected in us" (4:12b).
5. This means that God's love to us has achieved its goal.
6. Years ago, there was a poor Indian woman in Arizona who was thrown out by her own people and they tossed her behind a clump of brush to die. She was old and very sick and it was mid-August, which in Arizona means extremely hot days and very cold nights. There she lay for three or four days without food or drink, suffering terribly when along came a missionary doctor who discovered her and brought her immediately to the hospital. There he did every thing possible to bring her back to health. With Christian love and his medical skills and with God's help, she began to recover.

7. And as she lay there for nine weeks in the hospital she began to wonder and said to her nurse, "I can't understand it. Why did this doctor do all of this for me? He is a white man and I am an Indian. My own people threw me out by the side of the road and a total stranger rescued me. I can't understand it. I have never heard of anything like this before." The nurse herself was a Navaho Indian and was a Christian and said to her, "You know, it is the love of Christ that made him do that." "What do you mean by the love of Christ? Who is this Christ? Tell me more about Him." The nurse tried her best and then called for a missionary and then the missionary sat down and told her the Gospel story. Every day he would visit her and after a few weeks he felt she understood enough to get saved. Several Christians gathered around her hospital bed and prayed that God would open her blinded eyes and save her soul.
8. Again they explained to her the Gospel and then said, "Can't you trust Jesus Christ as your Saviour, turn from the idols that you have worshipped and receive Christ?" She sat there quietly for some time and then her door opened and in walked the doctor who rescued her and brought her back to health. Her face lit up and she said, "If Jesus is anything like the doctor, I can trust Him forever," and she got saved.
9. This is what John is saying in I John 4:12. Jesus *is* like that doctor – He is the Great Physician. And if we want to see more souls saved, then we need to demonstrate this kind of love.
10. I read that when Chiang Kai-shek was ruling China (before he was chased out by the communists and fled to Taiwan) he converted to Christianity. His wife was saved way before he was, and he said to her one day, "I cannot understand these Christians; why, they have been treated most abominably here, they have been robbed, beaten, many of them killed, they have been persecuted fearfully, and yet I never find one of them retaliating, and any time they can do anything for China, for our people, they are ready to do it; I do not understand them." Chiang Kai-shek's wife said, "Well, that, you see, is the very essence of Christianity. They do that because they are Christians."
11. God loves us past, present and future. Past -- He sent His only begotten Son (4:9). Present -- He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us (4:12, 13). And future, He will give us boldness in the day of judgment (4:17).

12. "As He is, so are we in this world" (4:17b) – the sin question has been dealt with. God does not see our sin – it is covered by the blood of Jesus.
13. In contrast to the "boldness" God will give believers in the day of judgment (4:17), unbelievers are tormented by fear (4:18).
14. I heard a preacher say that "insecurity is the secular term for fear." There is a healthy fear that keeps us out of trouble, and there is the fear of God which leads to wisdom, but the fear which John speaks of here is not from God. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (cf. II Tim. 1:7).
15. I went to the online Bible concordance, and I typed in these two words, "Fear not," and saw these words appear 63 times.
16. The first reference is Genesis 15:1, "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."
17. Our Lord said to His disciples, "Fear not, little flock" (Luke 12:32).
18. The last reference is Revelation 1:17, "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last."
19. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear..." (I John 4:18).
20. "Because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (4:18b). The unsaved man fears death and what will follow death. "Fear hath torment" (4:18). Fear anticipates and makes real the future torment it worries about.
21. At the head of the list of the occupants of hell, John places "the fearful" (Rev. 21:8). Abraham said to the rich man in hell, "Remember...thou art tormented" (Luke 16:25).
22. Torment in hell involves remembering all the opportunities one had to hear the Gospel and receive Christ, all the Gospel tracts left unread, all the Christians laughed at and rejected, all the warnings ignored.
23. "Every sin, every iniquity, every transgression, every disobedience, will come up some day, and will remain throughout all the ages to come. Men will remember the follies of this life and how foolishly they treated God's offer of mercy" (H.A.I.).
24. It is ridiculous for some one to say that he loves God but hates his brother – "he is a liar" according to the Bible (4:19). One preacher said, "As spokes get nearer to the center of the wheel, so they get closer to one another. Thus, as we get closer to the Lord, the more we will love our fellow believers" (William MacDonald).

25. Love proves the reality of our profession. John summarizes it for us in 4:21 (cf. I John 3:23).

26. Our Lord said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

**CONCLUSION:**

The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen could ever tell;  
It goes beyond the highest star,  
And reaches to the lowest hell;

The guilty pair bowed down with care,  
God gave His Son to win;  
His erring child He reconciled,  
And pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the oceans fill,  
And were the skies a parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade,

To write the love of God above,  
Would drain the oceans dry.  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure  
The saints' and angels' song.

Frederick M. Lehman