

Let Us Love One Another
1 John 4:7-21

“If I were to say, ‘Turn to the ‘love chapter’ in the New Testament,’ most people would probably flip straight 1 Cor. 13. That ‘ode of charity’ has earned the honorific honor ‘Love Chapter’ for a reason. Its thirteen verses mention agape eight times...

However, without detracting from the beauty and power of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians, let me suggest that a far stronger case can be made for a different passage of Scripture earning the title ‘Love Chapter’—the fourth chapter of 1 John. The noun ‘love’ (agape) and the verb ‘to love’ (agapao) appear a combined twenty-seven times in 1 John 4:7-21 alone. No other chapter in the Bible comes close to such a direct and sustained emphasis on love.” Swindoll

“We remember that John was writing to those who had resisted the Gnostic errors and excesses. They had not abandoned the truth, nor had they fallen into loose living. But did they love? Did they really love one another?

In seeing why John presses the point as he does, particularly in this section of the letter, we also see why the point must be pressed today precisely among the most orthodox and moral sectors of the Christen church. For we recognize that it is possible for a group of Christians to be very orthodox in theology and moral in outward behavior and yet have very little love for one another.” Boice

- In 1 John, John gives us three test to show if someone is truly a follower of Jesus Christ. The theological test centers on acknowledging the deity and personhood Jesus Christ in light of the gospel. The moral test centers on the proof of living in the light of Christ’s holiness and the social test centers on the evidence of knowing and living God’s love toward others, especially toward those in the body of Christ.

Gal. 5:6b *The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*

4:7-8 *“The first reason Christians must love other Christians is that the very nature of God is love and that this demands it.” Boice*

Beloved, let us love: The ancient Greek sentence begins in a striking way — agapetoi agapomen, “those who are loved, let us love.” Guzik

- John has given us three statements of the nature of God: God is light, in him is no darkness at all (1:5), God is Spirit, no one has seen God (4:24), God is Love, which describes the character and heart of God (4:8).
- John addressed the test of love two other times in his letter. In **2:7-11** it is shown by the evidence of “walking in the light” by being careful not to sin against others, and in **3:11-18** it is a mark of being born again, which is shown in how we meet the needs of those in need.
- The third time John emphasizes the test of love he speaks of the source of love, which is God himself. It is part of His nature. It’s one of his communicable attributes given to all who are born of God. So, if one claims to be a child of God, then evidence of that is seen in their desire to love others in the body of Christ.

“Of course, this love is not perfected in the life of a Christian on this side of eternity. Though it may not be perfected, it must be present — and it should be growing. You can’t truly grow in your experience of God without also growing love for one another. John can boldly say, He who does not love does not know God. If there isn’t real love for God’s people in your life, then your claim to know God and experience God isn’t true.” Guzik

Phil. 1:9-11 *9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, **with knowledge and all discernment**, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

4:9-11 *A **second reason** we are to love one another is because “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

“If we know God’s nature, we will love. If we know God’s Son, we will love.” Boice

- To love His body the church is to show God our appreciation for the gift of our salvation.
- John lists three aspects of the gift of His Son for those who wish to receive Him as their Lord and Savior.

1st, God gave His Son (**Vs.9**). Out of love, He gave the best He had to offer for the benefit of mankind.

2 Cor. 9:15 *Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*

2nd, God gave His Son to die (**vs. 10**). Jesus primary purpose in coming as God incarnate was to die as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

Rom. 5:17 *17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!*

Rom. 8:31-32 *31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?... 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

3rd, God gave His Son to die as an atoning sacrifice [propitiation] for our sins (**Vs. 10**). He gave His Son to appease/satisfy His wrath against sin.

Propitiation: akin to hileos ("merciful, propitious"), signifies "an expiation [punishment, amends] , a means whereby sin is covered and remitted." It is used in the NT of Christ Himself as "the propitiation," in 1Jo 2:2; 4:10, signifying that He Himself, through the expiatory sacrifice of His Death, is the Personal means by whom God shows mercy to the sinner who believes on Christ as the One thus provided... In 1Jo 4:10, the fact that God "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins," is shown to be the great expression of God's love toward man, and the reason why Christians should love one another. Vine Dictionary

Propitiation has the idea of a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God. God rightly regarded us, apart from Him, as worthy targets of His judgment. We were rebels and enemies of Him, even if we didn't know it. But on the cross, Jesus took the punishment our sin deserved — His sacrifice turned away the judgment we would have received. We easily think how this shows the love of Jesus, but John wants us to understand it also shows the love of God the Father: Guzik

A theologian by the name of **Charles Hodge** said this: *The great difficulty with many Christians is that they cannot persuade themselves that Christ (or God) loves them; and the reason why they cannot feel confident of the love of God, is, that they know they do not deserve his love, or the contrary, that they are in the highest degree unlovely. How can an infinitely pure God love those who are defiled with sin, who are proud, selfish, discontented, ungrateful, disobedient? This, indeed is hard to believe.*

4:12 The **third reason** we are to love one another is because it is one way God reveals himself to us. His love expressed through us enables others to see God's nature of love. His love properly expressed makes a church a good, safe, and trusting place to be, it also makes the gospel attractive to the unbeliever.

John 4:24 *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

Perfected uses the Greek word teleioo, which doesn't mean "perfect" as much as "mature" and "complete." If we love one another, then the love of God is "mature" and "complete" in us. Guzik

4:13-16 The third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, is the one who enables us to live God's love before others. John emphasizes God the Spirit's indwelling presence in believers three times in verses 13-16.

Vs. 13 The Holy Spirit's indwelling presence in our lives assures us of our salvation. He does that by expressing His love through us. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit, which makes love one of the most important evidences of the presence of God in our lives.

1 Cor. 2:12 *We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

Vv. 14-15 Verse 14 gives us the reason God sent His Son. The world needed a Savior. Out of love, God took the initiative to offer salvation to anyone who came to understand their need for a Savior. Those who take God's gift are immediately indwelt with God's presence.

"The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the action by which God takes up permanent residence in the body of a believer in Jesus Christ." Boice

John 14:17 *the Helper is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him; but you know Him because He remains with you and will be in you.*

1 Cor. 16:19 *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,*

4:16 *“This is the Christian’s proper response to who God is, and how He loves us. We are called to take the love and grace God gives, to know it by experience and to believe it. This is what fellowship with God is all about.”* Guzik

- To rely on God’s love means to trust that His love for us will always be there. A believer’s spiritual wellbeing in many ways, rises or falls on the assurance of His love for us.

“To feel God’s love is very precious, but to believe it when you do not feel it, is the noblest.”
(Spurgeon)

Eph. 3:16-19 *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

4:17 God expects His love to become more complete or mature in believers as the Holy Spirit does the work of progressive sanctification in our lives. To be conformed into the likeness of Christ means that His love is to be seen in increasing measure as we mature in Christ.

- To mature in God’s love enables us to stand confident before Him. He wants us to stand confident before Him when we are judged at the Bema Seat of Christ.

2 Cor. 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

- This is the second time John mentions having confidence before Him. In **2:28** John exhorts us to continue in him so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed. In **4:17**, it is being confident before Him because of how we represented His love before the world.

4:18 Fear is a powerful force used by Satan to fulfill his evil will. Unfortunately, many believers give in to fear thinking that God does not love or accept them. If that is the case, then they fail to wholly understand what salvation means for them. Consequently, God’s love fails to mature or be perfected in them.

Romans 8:1-4 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

4:19-21 *“The devil is the one who disrupts. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who draws together. Moreover, in the drawing together into fellowship, love is the key factor. Little surprise then that we have this commandment from him: ‘Whoever loves God must also love his brother.’” “it is by practicing a real and self-sacrificing love for one another that we learn to love the one who sacrificed himself for us.”* Boice