

# All in the Family

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**Bible Text:** 1 John 4:7-21  
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Uh, 1 John 4 beginning in verse 7 and we'll go down through verse 21. I know you think that's absolutely impossible but I was actually gonna say this is gonna be brief tonight and, um, I, I, I'm, there are so many wonderful truths you could unpack and spend hours and hours, I'm gonna purpose to bring out four main truths.

Verse 7,

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested [and you could say in our case], that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19 We love, because He first loved us. 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Interesting, in verse 21 you have that word "commandment" again, and again I, I would say to you that's not used in the sense of another absolute commandment like the 10

Commandments but of, of a, of biblical or a theological religious principle that now is the guiding principle for us as Christians.

I call this "All in the Family" because it truly is family stuff. This is family business and, uh, this is only family business. Only those in the family have this, can grasp this, can experience this love, this special kind of love. It's simply all in the family.

Now I., the nature of our love is seen in God the Father. The very nature, the essence of the kind of love we as Christians have, treasure and share one to another came from – now listen to me – came from God himself. We don't whip this love out of our old fallen man, the old fallen unredeemed humanity. We don't whip it up and grit our teeth and try to get it in shape and then try to love one another. I've seen so many people in so many church or Christian settings try to live biblical love without God in their lives and it's not an attractive thing. It's an ugly thing.

The Bible says here in verse 8, God is love, that is, he gives love its true essence. He, himself, is the nature of love. Now let's remind ourselves tonight that the Bible does not say love is God. God is love but love is not God. Now the liberals began to say that some decades ago, uh, that is professing Christians and professing theologians and pastors who would veer from the Bible and begin to say, "Well, wherever people just really love and care, there God is manifested, there God is realized because of their love." That's radically and completely false. That is not true because love doesn't define God, God defines love.

Now love is not a complete revelation of God but God gives love a complete definition. For example, the Bible says God is light but you can't say light is God. He's more than just light though he is light. The Bible says God is spirit but he's not just spirit, that's one of his many many attributes. He's more than just that. Love is defined or love defined by God is the only true and only lasting love.

So right quick three things love is not as we're talking about this nature or essence of our love. Love, first of all, is not a feeling. Now feelings flow with it, emotions flow with it but the foundation is not a feeling. It's deeper than that. Again, I would caution you not to say affections are not involved, they're just not the foundation. Love is that capacity in me to want to strive to do toward you or strive to do for you what the Bible says I should do whether or not at that moment my emotions feel like it or not. I, I lash my emotions to the truth of God's word and here's what you'll find out: if you'll love because it's right, you'll begin to feel love later on.

It doesn't happen to us in this church but counselors will have people come to them sometimes and say, "You know, I, I'm gonna leave my husband, I'm gonna leave my wife. You know, I just, it's been some time I just don't love them." And here's what I say, "So? Big deal. Then you learn to love them." "Well, you don't understand. They are terribly difficult or a terribly difficult person and, and, and, and I mean, they work against me. I mean, I mean, she or he is even my enemy." Well, the Bible says love your enemies. You see, that's not a feeling.

Now feelings for, isn't it true here at Grace Life Church, we, we are committed and devoted out of duty to love one another but don't you feel like loving one another too? But you never just base it on that. Sometimes you may not feel like loving me but I hope you still love me. I'll just let you in on a secret: I don't always feel like loving some of you but I still prepare this text and preach to you with all of my heart because that's the greatest love I can show you. I can't just preach to my room and preach to me. Well, I can. I do it every week when I prepare your... Do you understand I hear these sermons twice and I have to repent twice every time I hear them.

Well, love is not a feeling. You know, 1 Corinthians is that what we call that great chapter on love, and it is but the context is spiritual gifts, and the point of that chapter is that when you're mature in love, the spiritual gifts just take care of themselves because people die to themselves, they're not about pride, they're not about showing off, they're not about saying, "I've got this gift. Well, no, I've got that gift." People don't do that when they're mature in love because they're not, when you're mature in love, you're not thinking about you. You're thinking about the word of God and the good of others and these things just kinda take care of themselves. Love is kind. Love is patient. Love is longsuffering. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. On and on and on we could go. It doesn't say anything about feeling, they attend the commitment of love but they're not the base of love. Love is not a feeling.

Secondly, um, love is not a desire or, amplify that, a lust. James 1:15 says, "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." You can have a deep desire and a, a passionate emotion in your heart but that don't mean anything about love. Overwhelmingly today, uh, people call sexual lust love. It just simply is not. It's not love. You know, a, a culture has shown its depraved and debased nature when everything is defined now by whatever sexual lust you had lately. I mean, seriously. That's the way you define what kind of person you are now. A schoolteacher told me the other day that, a, a little Grace school girl came up and she began to describe to the schoolteacher, "Well, I found out I'm trans and I'm this and I'm that," and, well, how, how in the world does that mean that's what you are just because you had these thoughts float across your fallen and depraved heart and mind? Doesn't define, that doesn't define love. Love – listen – love always agrees with the author of love and that is his truth and that is his word. When you contradict his word, you left out love. Doesn't have anything to do with love.

Love's not a lust or a desire, love's not a feeling, and love's not something you fall into like falling into a ditch. You may fall into lust, you may fall into deep emotional feelings about something but that is not love. Sometimes you've gotta lasso your feeling, "I just so feel this. I just so want this." Sometimes you have to lasso it and say, "Get in line with the word of God." You have your will to take over and command your emotions to get in place.

Since God is love, God's love reveals God's character which means all true love harmonizes with the truth of Scripture. If one clear scriptural truth is violated, it isn't

love. That's the nature. You and I as Christians, those born again of God, those who've believed on Jesus Christ, I've told both sides of the equation there, God has to birth you into his kingdom but you believe on Christ, but you wouldn't believe on Christ if he didn't birth you. They are simultaneous as if they're one but they are two separate things, in a sense, but nevertheless, God birthed you into his kingdom, you believe on Christ, and from there you carry this nature of love, that's the very nature of God himself.

Now certainly we need to grow in it, we need to mature in it, we need to live it out more, but you can't deny it's there once you're saved. It's just there. It's, it's the nature of the love that is in us. Like verse 7 says, "everyone who loves is born of God." Love is a virtue produced in the new birth, that is, this love is. And I'll be honest, when we watch the news today and we see what's happening in our schools, in our universities, in, in companies and all these warped perverse concepts today of what a person is, of what a gender is, of who can love one another, and they throw these words around, I'm so very glad that we know the nature of true love and that is our God, by the way, who is holy and who is true.

Well, not only the nature of our love is God the Father but notice, secondly, the example of our love is God the Son. The example of love for us is God the Son, Jesus Christ. Uh, we'll just look at a few verses here. Notice it in verse 9, "By this the love of God was manifested," and I like what the scholars say, you can amplify the next two words not just manifested "in us but in our case or on our behalf, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." So first of all, that speaks of the condescension of the Son. He sent him into the world and sometimes we just say that and we, we throw that around but, folks, that is a glorious and marvelous and incomparable thing that God put on human flesh and came into this world. That's a condescension beyond comprehension. That's love. He came for us. He demonstrated his love for us on our behalf, in our case, you could say, by coming to us.

Uh, cross reference here, Philippians 2:6-7, "who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form," now notice this, "of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." The condescension, his willingness to lower himself. Do you have trouble sometimes in lowering yourself to show love to somebody when they don't deserve it? You, you, you don't, you're not even in the league with Jesus. He lowered himself to reach you and you are radically the opposite, you are wholly offensive. You were fully deprived in his eyes but yet he chose and loved you.

A condescension, notice next not only the condescension of his coming to our earth but notice the crucifixion of his Son. The condescension is one thing but it's not to be compared with the crucifixion of the Son. Look at verse 10, "In this is love, not that we loved God," we didn't initiate this thing, "but that He loved us," notice the love toward us, notice these are, these are personal pronouns and it's talking to a particular group, personal pronouns about a particular group here, his children. He loved us, last part of verse 10, "and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Or you could say the expiation for our sins he took on himself on the cross. The Father looked upon him on the

cross as if he were sinful like you, as if he were the sinner like I am, and then he took on himself not only our sins but he took on himself the just consequence of being a sinner like us, and he, the infinite one, the eternal one, the Son of God hangs on a cross and there hanging on the cross in his very human flesh he put on, yet without sin, became sin and absorbed, expiated the full righteous and just wrath that you and I should deserve or do deserve, I should say, and he takes it completely out of the way. Jesus didn't die to get you 78% or 88% or 95 or 98 or 99% all the way to a good standing before God. Jesus finished the task. When he died, your sin was propitiated, it was expiated. The wrath of God has been appeased in the death of Christ on our behalf. John writes, Christian friend, local church members, that's the love that was demonstrated. Now here's the powerful thing: that's the love that's now in you. You may keep it bottled up too much but it's there if you're his. He planted it in you.

The crucifixion of the Son is another example of his love. Philippians 2:8 says, "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." I pulled out this old hymn. I'm just gonna read it.

"I stand amazed in the presence  
Of Jesus the Nazarene  
And wonder how He could love me  
A sinner condemned, unclean

For me it was in the garden,  
He prayed: "Not my will, but Thine."  
He had no tears for His own griefs,  
But sweat-drops of blood for mine.

In pity angels beheld Him,  
And came from the world of light  
To strengthen Him in the sorrows  
He bore for my soul that night.

He took my sins and my sorrows,  
He made them His very own;  
He bore the burden to Calv'ry,  
And suffered, and died alone.

When with the ransomed in glory  
His face I at last shall see,  
'Twill be my joy through the ages  
To sing of His love for me.

O how marvelous! O how wonderful!  
And my song shall ever be:  
O how marvelous! O how wonderful!  
Is my Savior's love for me!"

He's the example of our love, God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Not only do we see the nature of love in God the Father, the example of love in God the Son, Jesus Christ, thirdly, let's notice the object of our love, God's people or our local church. Remind yourself that this is read by local churches and in this kind of context, uh, historically speaking, they couldn't think in terms of just bumping into Christians everywhere. Most of them didn't travel very far and they only knew the Christians in their community and there was only a church in a community, there wasn't like many churches around. So it was natural to them to think about each other in their local church and that's the object of our love.

Notice how it's worded here. Look at verse 7 again, "Beloved, let us love," who? "One another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." It's one another, that means your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, i.e., that means the folks in your local church. Now, of course, how many times have I said this, of course, we love all men. Of course, when we're converted there's a new love for all mankind. But there is that unique.... church, for his children because in, I'm convinced, accurate theology, his death on the cross wasn't just one blanket universal thing. Are you Universalist? Well, Jesus died, he died absolutely absolutely completely the same for everybody. Then you love, lose the intent of the unique special preciousness of his special love for his church. You see, if your theology's wrong on, on, on the atonement, it, you start losing everything. Love your wives like Christ loved the church. How, how does, what does that mean love your wives like Christ loved the church? Christ made the church his one and only. She's his special one. All Christian men love all ladies but they only won one lady in that special way. Yes, Jesus died and I believe the Bible would bear out he had great love for all mankind but in addition to that there was that special, covenant, elect love for his bride, the church. All of a sudden the Scriptures come alive with meaning when you grasp that.

So as he died for us, the church, so we see the direction of our love. You can't have his love in you and not love one another. Let me ask you, just stop right where you are. Don't, don't think about anything else. Is there somebody in the church that you've got a problem with? I've got two, three words: get over it. You're not allowed to not love them. Period. Exclamation point. "Well, I don't think it's right." Well, when you die on the cross for them, call me up and I'll say you've gone far enough. Is that clear enough? Now the Bible gives us guidelines to resolve issues in the church, amen? Sometimes we'll have to go to somebody and get them but we can always get it worked out if we love each other and always look to ourselves first.

The objects of our love is one another and he keeps on and on. Look at verse 11 here, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." That's Christians. That's not love for mankind in general. Of course, we do but not like we love one another. I would, I, because I told you I'd be short, I'm not gonna go to Matthew 25 but Matthew 25 is that text where Jesus separates the sheep from the goats. You remember it very well, it's a very familiar text. And he says to those on his right, he said, "Man, when

I was sick, you, you visit, you helped Me, when I was in prison you visited Me, when I was hungry you gave Me something to eat, thirsty you gave Me something to drink." They said, "Lord, when did we see all that?" He said, "Whenever you did it unto the least of these brothers of Mine," other Christians. The point is there are gonna be eras of great worldly persecution against the church and then you'll find out who the true Christians are. Those who are not really God's will fall away and go with the world. They want, they, they don't want the persecution of the church, but those who are truly God's will hang in there and care for each other and love each other and take the blow because they can't get over the love they have one for another.

It's loving, that's the object of this new love that's been put in us, one another, and then, uh, verse 20, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; and the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." Listen to me, now you may have a moment, you may have a spat, you may have a difficult time or two, but if you're abiding with a heart of hatred for toward somebody who, who's a Christian in Jesus Christ, I'm telling you, God says you're not his. That is more the acid truth than any of the hoop jump tricks every Evangelist ever showed you. Check your heart. Can you abide in hate toward someone who claims to be a child of God? John says there's just no way. Now again, there might be a spat, there might be a troubled spot in the road, but you'll humble yourself and you'll get through it if you both really belong to God. Can't do it. Can't do it.

Well, here, there's another option: you just get over it. You just say, "You know what? I'm a sinner too. You know what? I've done some things wrong to people. Didn't really mean to but it happened and I'm still responsible. Do you know what? I'm just gonna put that on this shelf up here and every time I look at it, I'm gonna say, 'God, I forgive them and it's over.' And I'm gonna command my emotions to get in line with that truth." Quit telling me, "Well, I feel..." I don't care how you feel. Well, I do but I don't. Do you know how many Baptist churches are in absolute continual turmoil because people are functioning on how they feel? You know how many different feelings we got in here right now? It would be absolute chaotic insanity if we started running the church by the way everybody felt.

I remember I was visiting W Baptist Church in Memphis 35-37 years ago, and they were about to build this brand new complex out in East Memphis and Dr. Rogers said, "Alright, how many of you want red carpet or red pews?" About half raised their hand. "How many of y'all want blue carpet or blue pews?" About the other half raised their hand. He said, "That's what I thought. That's why we're gonna have the color I want them to be." My, his point was it's just endless. This is how we feel. This is how... Look, the point is love overcomes that stuff that doesn't matter.

If we're talking about somebody teaching errant doctrine, I, I, I'm going to be loving with a rod. You're not, you're not gonna come in this church and teach false doctrine. You can teach things on, on minor points different than one another. That's fine. But you're not gonna come in here and talk, talk about some of this radical nonsense that I hear floating around in Baptist and Evangelical churches. It's just not gonna happen. Not on my watch.

So there's a time to deal with things. I'm not saying you just roll over about things that matters but when it comes to us personally, we can die to ourselves and love one another just like our Lord died to himself and hung up his crown of glory and condescended to walk among us and went to the cross and now we have this love in us that enables us to love one another. One more verse on this loving one another, this object of our love being the church and this commandment we have from him that the one who loves God should love his brother also. There John goes again, he just keeps hitting it and hitting it and hitting it.

Alright, number 4. Not only the nature of our love, God the Father. Not only the example of our love was Jesus the Son, God the Son. Not only the object of our love is God's people or the local church. But the source of our love is God the Holy Spirit. It comes from the Holy Spirit who now abides in God's true children. Look at it there in, uh, verses 12 and 13. "No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." I'll say more about that in just second. But verse 13, "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." All of a sudden he's talking about love, love, love, love, love. You sense this love. There's this capacity to love the church that is unique and new. I remember that so clearly in my life when I was converted, how I began to love people who loved God and loved the Scriptures and loved the things of God. It just a total change for me.

So he's just talking about that, talking, and then he all of a sudden, he says, "Now here's how you'll know, here's how you'll know because He's given you the Spirit." Well, wait, wait, John, time out. We're talking about love. Here's what John means: it's the same thing. Love came in through the Spirit. When the Spirit came in, love came in for God's people. When the Spirit came in, God's agape, that special capacity of love one for another came into your life. The Holy Spirit came in and he brought this unique special love with him. Romans 5:5, "the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." I don't expect you to be all that loving but I do expect you to get out of the way and let the Holy Spirit love through you, let him guide that love.

Um, now verse 14. We'll go down to verse 18 and I'll camp there for just a moment. "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." Verse 16, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us." Boy, think on that just a moment, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us." That's what you need to focus on. You don't need to focus on what you do for God, you need to focus on the love God has for you. "God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." Verse 17, "By this, love is perfected," in other words, you've come to a mature relationship with this love. "By this the love of God is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world." He says when you come to a mature relationship with this new love God put in you at the new birth, then you'll have no fear in judgment. That's pretty good stuff. The only reason – listen- the only, if you're

a child of God the only reason you fear facing Jesus is because you don't have a mature relationship with the love he has for you yet. You don't get his love fully yet.

And can I say this? It's just old fashioned, regular, run of the mill, stinking pride because if you're thinking you're not gonna face Jesus in good standing it's because you're thinking about you, you're thinking about what you've done, what you haven't done, what you've performed, what you haven't performed, and no matter what you're thinking, putting yourself up or putting yourself down, you are thinking about you and that's pride. You need to have a more mature relationship with the love of God and you'll rest and say, "Phew, it's done for me. I welcome His return."

Notice how he words it there in verse 18, he amplifies this and the context, I've heard so many people talk about this verse and they really lose the context, the context, of course, is verse 17. He's talking about facing God in judgment, then he says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love." If you're fearing and you're, you're afraid punishment is coming upon you by God, then you don't really grasp God's love for you yet. You haven't come to a mature place, a mature relationship with the wonder, the glory, the power, the dimension of this great great love. You cannot begin to grasp the doctrines of sovereign grace that saves you, including all this great love, all that motivated God in this great love to bring his Son to the earth to die specifically personally for you, his children. You can't grasp the glories of that. Why do you think I preach on that and try to elaborate on that and struggle to articulate that? Because you've got to get that so you'll rest in that and joy in that and glory in that, and know that when death comes, you're good. No fear because I've grasped something of the love he has for me.

Isn't that wonderful? It ain't got nothing to do with you. It's all him. It's all him. Bring your rottenness to him. Bring your bankrupt, depraved, fallen, weak, proud, arrogant, self-consumed self to him and say, "O Christ, would You save me?" And Christ will say, "You're just exactly the kind of people I save because you're honest. You've come honest." We confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. What a joy.

The Holy Spirit in us is trying to teach us from the word of God and he is the interpreter of the Scriptures so that we begin to have this mature relationship with this love. You see, fear is that which abides in a slave. Our relationship to God is not master/slave, it's father and beloved child. It's that kind of love. When you understand and grasp something of his love, then it drives out that fear. The arrogant man is not the Christian who knows the word and loves the Lord and says, "I have no fear of God. I know He loves me." That's not arrogance. The arrogant man is the one who's striving and working and trembling and acting humble all the time and slaving and hoping somehow he'll, he'll somehow please this God. That's pride and arrogance and you will never never never appease or please God with your efforts. Only his effort on the cross pleased God and appeased the wrath that is righteously against you.

Perfect love. You see, again, it's like a relationship. Have you ever gotten an impression about someone? "Well, I know a little bit about them, and I'll tell you what, I don't know about them. I, I see this and I see this and I see this." You see, what you're doing is, is you saw some other people or you knew some other people in your past and you saw those three or four things and they turned out to be really bad people, and now you've concluded if they've got 1, 2, 3 and 4 going wrong, then they've got 5, 6, and 7 too. "Like I've already been through people that had all 7 and I, I don't know about them." And then finally you learn more, you, you mature in your knowledge of them and find out, "Well, they're not like that at all. I was completely wrong." Isn't that a good feeling? I thought that way about some of you. I got 1, 2, 3, 4 and you weren't doing good and we kept coming to church together and I got to 5, 6 and 7 and thought, "Phew, they're okay. They're not gonna burn my house down. I'm okay. They're gonna love me. We're okay." Here's what I'm saying: you've got to mature in your relationship before you come to that final conclusion. That's what he's saying here. That's the picture he's painting here. You've got to mature in your relationship with this love of God so that you know of how comprehensive and complete and final it is for you.

Perfect love, that's what John calls it, a mature relationship with love. If you're a Christian and you have that, you do not look with fear facing the Lord. If you do look with fear, then you're either lost or you need to mature in grasping and embracing this love. I'm telling you, are you listening to me? If your faith is in Jesus Christ, you are so radically secure nothing can take you out of that standing before God. You know why? God put you there. God died for you in his, his Son Jesus Christ. He sealed you in the Spirit, God the Spirit. And the Father rejoices in all of that work because he set it all up to start with and pointed his heart toward you to start with. If he loses you, he failed in his purpose and God cannot fail. So don't you accuse God of failure by you somehow not making it to heaven. If you know Christ, you're secure. But that's the question: are you a Baptist? Have you walked an aisle? Have you repeated a prayer? Have you gone to the ordinance of baptism? The Bible didn't say anything about that. The Bible says have you believed on Christ? Have you believed on Christ? Have you come to him saying, "I repent. I turn from looking to anything and everything and I look only now to Jesus and His expiring death for me on that cross. That alone is my hope." I think I'm gonna write out for the staff a little statement that every person that goes to that baptistery has got to say and that simple statement is, "I want the church to know that today my only hope, my only hope is in Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection on my behalf. That's my confidence." And obviously you can parrot that and not mean it, but that needs to be said and it needs to be understood. "That's my only hope."

Well, that's the kind of love, now by the way, don't go out there in the world and try to share this. They don't get it. It's a family secret. It's just all in the family. Only those born of God that are his children can grasp anything of this love.