

# Why We Love One Another

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**Bible Text:** 1 John 4:7-12  
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We're going to look at the whole matter of Christian love this morning and it's quite ironic, quite providential maybe is a better way to say it, to realize that in the providence of God in the perfect timing of the way he unfolds his word for us, that we are going to be addressing the source of Christian love during the week of Valentine's Day. And I'm not against Valentine's Day, per se, Nancy and I aren't especially into all of these manufactured days of emotion; you might as well be against kittens and puppies if you're going to say anything bad about Valentine's Day. I'm glad that in a week where this is going to dominate the theme of the media and sometimes a little bit of our culture, that we're going to have an opportunity today before the hurricane of sentiment hits later this week to look at what real love is from the Scriptures and what real love looks like in the lives of believers, what real love looks like in our lives as a fellowship together. You know, it's clear and we've seen this already and through our teaching in 1 John, that true conversion leads to a true love for truth and righteousness. True Christians love the truth of God without exception. Someone who does not love the Bible is somebody who is not a Christian looking at it biblically speaking, and also the Bible tells us that true Christians love and pursue biblical righteousness. True Christians have a desire for holiness that flows from the fact that we have been given birth by a holy God; a holy God gave birth to us and therefore obviously those of us who have been born of his Spirit will have desires that are similar to his own righteous character. What we're going to see today is that that same principle of the continuity between the character of the God who gave birth to us, shows up in the manner in which we live our lives in this whole area of Christian love.

If you would turn in the book of 1 John 4, we're going to be looking at verses 7 through 12 as our text for this morning and we're going to see why it is absolutely necessary, it will necessarily happen that in some manner God's love will be produced in the lives of his children. This is not an optional accessory. This is not something that is born out of total self-effort that we work up on our own. No, it flows from the very nature of God and the very nature of Christ and the very nature of true conversion.

1 John 4:7-12. Let me read the passage as we come before it here this morning and come under the authority of God's word as it comes to bear upon our lives and thinking. 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 in us, 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.

As I so often like to do, I like to give you a little bit of a bird's eye view of a passage to kind of get a sense of the broad feel of it before we dive into the details and this morning is certainly no exception. Rather than just rushing through a quick reading of the word, I want to stop for just a moment and call something to your attention here. This passage is teaching about God-centered love. The word for God, God is referred to either explicitly or by pronoun 17 times, at least 17 times, in these six verses that I just read; 17 times, the person of God is mentioned directly in the passage. The Greek word for "love" appears 15 times in these same verses and so we have God-centered love, God-provoked love being the dominant theme of the passage that is in front of us and that helps us understand the direction and the source of the power of this passage. This passage takes us to personally transforming depths as we understand why it is that we must love other Christians as an intrinsic part of the Christian life. God's love for us is the source of our love for one another. We don't have relationships in the body of Christ in a vacuum. We don't interact with one another on a purely horizontal human level. When we come together as believers in Christ, there is a common vertical source from God that animates and determines the direction of the life of a biblically centered fellowship, of a Christ-centered fellowship, and we're going to see that in three points and what you're going to see is this, it's just very almost overwhelming to contemplate and to understand this: is that the entire nature of the Triune God is invoked in the spirit of Christian love. There is a theological depth to our relationships that takes it way beyond outward appearances and roots it in the very nature of an eternal God.

So with those things in mind, with those introductory comments in mind, point 1 if you're taking notes this morning is this: we love one another in response to God's nature. We love in response to God's nature; the first ground for our love for one another comes from the eternal nature of our heavenly Father. Look at verse 7 with me again where the Apostle John says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." Notice this, beloved, notice this very important point: when John says let us love one another, he isn't simply giving an exhortation that is designed to affect the way that we interact with one another, he gives the underlying reason, the underlying compulsion for that command. This is always so critical in living the Christian life is to understand the reason the Bible calls us to certain kinds of conduct, certain kinds of attitudes, and here John roots his call to love one another in the very nature of God himself.

He says love is from God. Look at the word, he says, "let us love one another, for," because. Here's why I tell you to love one another, it's because of this. And as we start to grasp this, I want you to notice something that we've pointed out over time in our exposition of 1 John. Look at how he addresses his readers. John himself is expressing the same loving demeanor in the way that he writes this letter when he calls them beloved. He says, "You're the objects of my own affection. As I write to you, I'm writing to people that I love, people that I care about." So the spirit of love even in John's own tone expresses the reality of true love. He wasn't a harsh, dogmatic, authoritarian apostle raining down God's commands upon a subject people, he was speaking to them as those who shared in the same love of God that he himself experienced. So the tone of an apostle to those in the church was flavored by this love, so how much more should it be reflected in our tones and attitudes toward one another? He calls us to love one another because, for this reason, it's because love finds its source in our heavenly Father. We love one another in response to God's character, not as an independent act of our own will.

So there is a theological background to this call to love one another that is rooted in one of the essential attributes of God himself. You can't properly live out life in the Christian church without some kind of fundamental understanding of theology. He says, "let us love one another, for love is from God," and he goes on to say, "everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." Is born of God. This speaks back to our past experience of regeneration. You know, we always need to remind ourselves of this. Well, you can never remind yourself of this too much. At salvation, salvation was so much more than a point in time past decision that you made to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone who comes to Christ comes to Christ because God the Father has drawn that person to Christ and God the Father has given new life to every true Christian. Every true Christian is animated by the spiritual life that comes from God. We are new creatures in Christ. We are not the old man. When you became a Christian, the old man of you died. There was a death that took place and new life animated you even though there was not any outward change that took place in your physical being. Your whole spirit was changed. A whole new nature came to you which the Bible calls being born of God. So as we live out the Christian life, as we respond to the biblical call to love one another, we come back to the reality that what enables us to do this is the fact that power from God on high has come to bear upon the inner workings of our heart. We are new people in Christ as believers in him and that is what gives us the power and the motivating ability to be able to carry out this command.

When we think about, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life," we come back to the very reality that at the very root of Christianity was a loving initiative from the Creator God who wanted to redeem some of fallen men for his own purposes and to accomplish his glory on earth. It came out of love. God was gracious to us. God was merciful to us. God was kind to us in our salvation. Where every one of us deserved nothing but judgment and wrath because of our sin, God instead of delivering the righteous judgment which he was entitled to do, which would have been perfectly consistent with his eternal character, instead intervened and displayed grace and love to you and that has a transforming impact on the way that you think. That new life that we have reflects the

loving nature of the God who gave it to us and true love for others who have also received that same new life is the inevitable consequence of being born by the Spirit of God. We know God. We understand him through his word. We perceive him in the world around us. We grasp something of his character. This is utterly transforming and that transforming effect just continues to grow and increase over time. So since all of those things are true that we enjoy this new life as a vertical gift from God, a gracious God who by his very nature is love itself, then obviously the call to love one another is a call that is done in response to God's nature. There is a prior motivating force that animates our entire response to this that was independent of you and me in our lives.

John having stated it in a positive way in verse 7, "let us love one another," states it in a negative way in verse 8. Look at verse 8 with me, he says, "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." He states it positively in verse 7, "let us love one another, love is from God," then he states it negatively and excludes the possibility that someone could be void of this characteristic in their life and still be a true Christian. He states it as plainly as possible, "The one who does not love in a manner of life like this does not know God." Look, one of the distinguishing marks of a Christian is that he is someone who loves like God loves and what does that love look like? Well, let's look back at 1 Corinthians 13, the famous love passage. 1 Corinthians 13. Turn back there with me just to kind of refresh our thinking about this and to remember the most critical thing especially in our culture, especially in this time of the coming week, to realize that love is not a prevailing emotional sentiment but that love goes to the very character of a man and is fleshed out in the way that he actually interacts with those about him.

1 Corinthians 13:4 says that "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered." Stop there for just a moment. If you think about the Lord Jesus Christ as he was on the verge of his crucifixion and the provocation that sinful, wicked men unleashed around him that rained down upon his physical body as they spat upon him and plucked out his beard and beat him with their fists and blindfolded him and thrust a crown of thorns upon his head, all receiving that without retaliating, without responding in kind. If you want to see the miraculous nature of Christ, that's a great place to look because that is not a natural human response to that kind of provocation and undeserved humiliation and physical abuse and our Lord, we get a picture of love in the way that our Lord responded to wrongs suffered on the verge of his crucifixion. He didn't take into account a wrong suffered. Look on at verse 6, 1 Corinthians 13:6, "Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Verse 8, "Love never fails."

Well, beloved, what I want you to think about, what the word calls us to deal with is this reality that love is not an emotional sentiment. I hope you enjoy Valentine's day to the fullest but don't mistake the sentiment of media marketing designed to get you to buy stuff with the reality of biblical love. Love shows itself in patient kindness and generosity. Love seeks the good of the other person. Love overlooks faults. Christian love overlooks the transgressions of others, things that are done personally and in the faults

that others have. Love is looking beyond that, not taking into account the wrongs suffered. And part of the reason that we do that, part of the reason that we are compelled to live that way and to cultivate that into our character is the realization that in our salvation God did not take into account the wrongs that we suffered against him. He does not deal with us, he doesn't deal with you in accordance with your sins. You are the recipient of mercy where you could have been the recipient of wrath and that has a transforming impact on the way that you interact not only with the world in general but particularly within the church. You have to respond differently to people when you understand this. How can we jump on people for their faults and incidental sins when God has been so gracious to us? So this becomes a defining spirit in the entire life of a true church is that we're marked by a willingness to overlook faults, to wait for God to work on people. That's not to say that we tolerate open flagrant sin by those who are just obviously transgressing God's law without any sense of repentance. We'll come to that and deal with that in future months, what you do in those situations, but what we're talking about is on a personal level, on a personal relational level. There is a glad patience that we extend to others who are still subject to the work of God just as you and I are.

So just in the context of this week, what we want to see, what we want to have bear down on our thought processes is that love for us as Christians is not motivated by an artificial day on a calendar, rather it's built on biblical reality of the nature and the character of God. And so we can say without fear of contradiction that a person who has – and this is so critical. You know, we've been talking about the Sermon the past couple of weeks and this is just part of it as well. A person who has no regard for other Christians is someone who is not a Christian no matter what else they say. A person who does not somehow manifest the loving character of God in the context of other believers is somebody who has no evidence of the fact that they have been born again, and the fact that they say that they, "I received Christ some time ago, you know, but I don't want anything to do with the church. I was wronged in times past and therefore I don't want anything to do with Christians." No. No. No. No. No. Christianity does not work like that. There is an utterly transforming effect. Those of us that have been truly forgiven by God understand and are glad to forgive those who have wronged us as well. It's all because it's a natural response. It's part of the nature that God has given us. God who is by nature has been forgiving to his people is going to have in his family children who are forgiving toward one another. It's a necessity and the absence of that forgiving, loving, gracious spirit is the mark of someone who does not know Christ. That's what John says. I'm not speaking beyond the force of God's word.

Look at verse 8 with me again, I want you to see this. In verse 7, in a call to love one another within the body of Christ, "Beloved, let us love one another," he says in verse 8, "The one who doesn't love that way does not know God, for God is love." The Bible doesn't give us room to negotiate on this most vital point and, beloved, that's why we should be skeptical of someone who claims to be a Christian but wants no part of the life in the church. Beloved, we should be skeptical of those who claim to know Christ but are marked by arrogance, wickedness, and rank manipulation in their relationships. This is just not seemly in the presence of God. This does not add up and so John gives us both the positive and the negative and we need to deal with it in balance. The positive is this is

going to mark the life of true Christians, the negative is when this is not present someone needs to seriously examine themselves. Rather than resting in a past decision that he says that he made, the present reality of his life is saying something different. And I've said many times and I'll say it many more times as long as the Lord allows me to stand in the pulpit of Truth Community Church, when someone's life contradicts the testimony of their lips, you listen to what their life is saying, not what their lips say. Someone says, "I am a Christian," but is unmarked by love for truth, a love for righteousness and a love for other Christians, that person has no legitimate basis to claim to know the Lord.

You know, we've defined it in terms of principle and I just encourage you to examine your own life in light of the things that we are saying here. You know, look, I'm overwhelmed and so very encouraged by the testimony of so many lives in this place. This is a special place already but I can't assume that every life in a group that is marked by that, we can't assume that every individual life is marked by that same reality. It's not association with Christians that prove this, it's the reality of it in your own life and we want to simply honor the authority of God's word that says this kind of loving nature is an essential mark of a true Christian and if it is absent, that person has no claim to really know Christ at all. It's searching. At the same time, beloved, I want you to see the affirming nature of it. When you see this kind of spontaneous love coming out of your life and you say, "Oh, but I do love the family of God. I do love Christians and I want to minister to them. I want to serve them. I enjoy the fellowship of true Christians," well, understand that that is one of the most distinguishing, affirming marks of the reality of your salvation that you could find. As we've seen earlier in 1 John, the world actually hates true Christians. There is hostility from the world against true Christians and so the fact that we have a love for one another is the mark of the true presence of the Spirit of God in our midst. So we come out of this challenged but we also come out of it greatly encouraged by seeing the fact that there is a living dynamic of love that marks our fellowship and one that gives us a confidence of the blessing of God on what we're doing here and it's a joy to share in that with you.

Well, we've talked about the essence of God, secondly, the thing that I want you to see from this passage is this: is that we love in response to Christ's sacrifice. We love in response to Christ's sacrifice and this is just equally powerful. We've seen the love of God the Father in the first two verses and now we see the love of Christ in verses 9 and 10. Look at it with me, "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 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." Oh, this is just marvelous for us to finally be at this magnificent passage. Let me help you have a permanent defining sense of the love of God that anchors your soul in a marvelous way. When you think about the love of God and try to think through what that attribute of his means, what you should immediately...you should always come back to this passage and say the love of God was shown by Christ dying on the cross; that the love of God is a redemptive love toward sinners; that the love of God sacrificed himself for the sake of my salvation. You define the love of God centrally at the cross of Calvary. You define it when the Son of God who was God himself, laying down his life for the salvation of sinners, pouring out his life blood so that you and I could be forgiven, so that

you and I could have true salvation. That is where the love of God was preeminently manifested in an undeniable way and the power of this is just amazing. God showed his love by sending his Son, the object of his own affections, to give us life. He didn't send an angel. He didn't create a proxy like the Jehovah's Witnesses would have you believe and send that proxy to do the work. Christ himself came as eternal God and manifested his selfless love with his sacrificial death on our behalf at the cross and he did it, look at verse 9, "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that," with this purpose, "we might live through Him." So that we might live through him.

Beloved, step back from that passage for just a moment and think with me. Those of us who once were rebels, those of us who were dead in our trespasses and sins, those of us who were not seeking for God, Romans 3, who did not know God, did not seek for him, whose tongues were filled with deceit, our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing fully the rebellious nature of our characters and the hostility that we had toward God and that we would be born into the world with and that we would manifest both in our hearts and in our actions, knowing all of that, our Lord Jesus Christ gladly stepped into the world with the specific purpose of going to Calvary in order to redeem us from all of that so that rather than receiving what we deserved, we might receive that grace which we do not deserve. That is a manifestation of love. You see love in the extent of the self-sacrifice that Christ was willing to make on our behalf.

In verse 10 it says, "He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." That word "propitiation" has the idea of satisfying the wrath of God; turning away the wrath of God. Christ himself in his very person becomes the one who turned away the wrath of God from coming down upon us. Slaughtered on a cross. Sacrificed like a lamb in order to bring about the removal of sin from your account so that his righteousness might be applied and you might have the legal standing to be before God in heaven. That is the measure of love and what I want you to see, beloved, is that this came at God's initiative, not ours. Look down at verse 19, chapter 4, verse 19. How is it that we can love Christians like this? How can we fulfill this command? Verse 19, "We love, because He first loved us." Salvation was God's idea. Salvation came at God's initiative. Salvation was not a reward to you for your good works. It wasn't a reward to you even because you initiated an act of faith toward God. This salvation came, we love, we are in this realm of love because God first loved us and therefore he gets all of the glory. We get none of it on our own.

This is utterly humbling. This totally grinds human pride into dust. We claim no credit for this. We're not better than someone else. God had mercy on us. He loved us at his own gracious initiative and it is thoroughly humbling. He loved us while we were still in sin. Look, and we're talking about how can we recognize the love of God. Stepping into the world to save sinners, at his own initiative, at his own desire. It came up from his own plan, came up from his own loving nature in order to deal with us like that. Utter self-sacrifice. Christ leaving the glories of heaven for the poverty of earth. Christ leaving the worship of angels for the spit of men upon his face. Christ leaving his glory in heaven for the nails and the cross of Calvary. If you want to know what love means, if you want to

know what love looks like, forget about all the human manifestations and all of the marketing that is going to take place to generate billions of dollars for people somewhere along the way. Forget all of that and look to our Lord Jesus Christ and see what true love is really like. Self-sacrificial love for the sake of unworthy objects, that is the measure of God's love.

Beloved, I want to tell you that for those of you that are walking through times of discouragement, those of you that are feeling the weight of earthly circumstances and the dark clouds of an unfavorable providence have intervened and it's hard for you to see light, so to speak, and to feel the questions of, "I'm not really too convinced right now about the nature of the love of God," let me tell you, I've been in those shoes. It's been a long time but I know what that's like. I know what the darkness is like that can sometimes come into Christian experience, the darkness of circumstances being so adverse and a heart being so broken that you don't even know what to do with it and the weight of the pain that that brings and the uncertainty of what the future holds and where is the love of God in all of this.

Well, I'll never forget, it was back when I was living in Chicago that this verse, verse 10, just came alive to me with such great power in the midst of the depths of that dark human experience, questioning the love of God, sitting at a Wendy's restaurant on Madison Street in Chicago. I looked at this verse, "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." If you are that discouraged Christian here this morning, you must understand this: that you cannot look for the love of God in your circumstances because your circumstances may not give you much evidence to support what you're longing for, what your heart is looking for, and your circumstances may not change, however that's not the measure of God's love at all. We have to take our minds, as it were, back to Calvary. If you're here and you're tempted to question the love of God because of adversity that you're facing and sorrow that's breaking your heart, you have got to set that aside and come back, as it were, to the cross and remember Christ on the cross. Remember the Son of God hanging on a cross to redeem you from your sins when you didn't even ask him to do so. Two thousand years before you were ever born, the Son of God was bearing your sins if you're a believer in Christ. He was bearing your sins before you were ever born knowing that you would be rebelling against him before you even came to faith in him. And look, as it were, mentally speaking, look at the cross, look at the cross and realize that you cannot question the love of God in light of the cross. That simply can't...you can't question it. The cross answers the question, "Is God a God of love?" The cross answer that question permanently and decisively for all of time.

There is no question. That settles the argument and while that may not change your circumstances, it gives you a context through which to view them to say, "How can I question the love of my God? How can I question the love of my Savior in light of the cross?" Would you really transport yourself back 2,000 years to the scene of the crucifixion with Christ with blood pouring down from his head, with nails in his hands, with a spike through his feet hanging there helpless, heaving, trying to breathe, just the physical dynamics of the crucifixion, hearing him say, "Father, forgive them for they



don't know what they're doing"; hearing him turn to the thief on the cross and say, "Today I say to you, you will be with me in paradise"; to hear Christ look at John and look at Mary and say, "Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother," caring for the earthly needs of his mother even while he was being crucified, would you really – honestly, I mean, I'm talking directly to each one of you – would you really transport yourself back 2,000 years in light of what we know to be true? Would you really go back and say, "I'm not sure you really love me. I'm not really sure you're a God of love"? In essence, beloved, when we question the love of God today in our own life, ultimately we have to understand that that's really what we're doing. We would go back to the cross and make that accusation while he was on the cross bearing our sins so that we could be forgiven and receive eternal life. That's unspeakable, isn't it, when you think about it that way? There is no questioning of the love of God. After the cross, that question has been settled and so whatever else we see happening in our earthly circumstances, we realize that it's not a lack of love of God, something else is going on and therefore we trust him. We rest in him even though we don't understand because as a believer in Christ, it is just unthinkable, it is utterly unthinkable, let our tongues be ripped from our mouths before we would ever question the love of God in light of Calvary.

Look at the verse with me again, verse 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." This silences those questions in your heart. It silenced the questions in mine back in that day in Chicago after some rough, dark years, and you just realize there comes a point where you have to set your questions aside, set the accusations aside and say, "The cross answers this even if I don't understand." And when you embrace the cross in that personal way that says, "I prefer the cross over my earthly circumstances. I'll question my own judgment before I'll question the love of God," then you've got an anchor and a peace for your soul that can withstand the fiercest storms of life. This isn't sentiment, beloved. You understand that, right? This isn't a statement that says, "Well, you need to try harder." And this isn't even a statement that says you don't ask the question. What this is saying is that the cross answers the question and that shapes your thinking and it shapes the way that you respond going forward and says, "I'll submit to a difficult discipline from the hand of God in my life. I'll submit to this suffering, I'll submit to this lack, I'll submit to this sorrow because I'm confident in the love of God expressed at the cross of Christ. And my mouth will be silenced. My tongue will not make accusations against my God anymore. I love him because he first loved me. I know his love is true because I believe the cross." And in this we know love because God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

With that in mind, beloved, look at verse 11 remembering that John is teaching us about loving one another; John is teaching us to love one another here and he comes back to that point in verse 11. He started out in verse 7, "Beloved, let us love one another." Verse 11 says, "Beloved, we ought to love one another." Understand that in the context there both before and after he was talking about the cross, he was illustrating, he was undergirding, he was promoting the reasons why we must love one another and so in verse 11 he says, "Beloved, if God so loved us," look, follow this, "if God so loved us." What "so"? What does "so" mean? What is he referring to, if he "so loved us"? He so loved us by sending Christ to be the propitiation for our sins at the cross. If that's the

measure of God's love, then it's obvious that those of us who know Christ would also love one another. It's just a natural consequence of being in the family of God.

So, beloved, I'll state it in a negative way, I guess; you can state it negatively and positively. You and I cannot receive Christ for salvation and continue to live selfishly. When we enter into the body of Christ at salvation, as you start to grow in your understanding, you realize that you are under glad responsibility, glad obligation to the people who have the same salvation that you do. You're under obligation to extend love to them. It's just a natural part. "Of course we would. You received the same salvation that I did? You received the same Christ that I did? Isn't that wonderful? How can I serve you? How can I lay my life down for you? You know, Christ laid down his life for me and he did that for you, well, then I just want to imitate Christ in my interactions with you. I want to lay down my life for you." And you start to, you know, a whole group of people, a whole fellowship of believers start to interact that way with one another because they are mindful of the vertical grace that they have received, the vertical love that they have received and they gladly say, "Oh, I want to manifest that to you, my brother. I want to manifest that to you, my sister. How can I love you like Christ has loved me?"

Look back at Ephesians if you're somehow thinking that, well, maybe he's making too much of this. No, the Bible makes this point over and over again, the ethical consequences of the cross of Christ on those who believe in him. Ephesians 5. The Apostle Paul makes the exact same point. Ephesians 5:1, he said, "be imitators of God, as beloved children," as those who share the character of the one who gave birth to you; as a child of God, manifest the character of God who gave birth to you. Verse 2, "and walk in love." Let your life be manifested by an ongoing manifestation of love, "just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." The Apostle Paul says, "Imitate the God who saved you by walking in love and the measure of love is shown by the self-sacrifice of Christ on the cross done for your sins."

So salvation means that we change and the good news as we go back to 1 John 4, is that God has given us the means by which to live this way which brings us to our third point. We said that we love in response to God's nature; we love in response to Christ's sacrifice; well, point 3: we love in response to God's Spirit. We love in response to God's Spirit. As lofty as the theme of the cross is and how it lifts us to this kind of self-sacrificial love, God hasn't left us to our own devices in order to attain to that kind of sacrificial living. In verse 12, he shows us that he has given us the Holy Spirit in order to live out this kind of life. Read verse 12 here with me. He says, "No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." And we know, he says in verse 13, "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." The indwelling Holy Spirit. The unseen God has placed his unseen Spirit in our lives and that gives us, the Spirit is given to us in part so that we would have the power to live out this manner of life. The unseen God is displayed when we love each other, when we serve each other. We make God evident by showing his kind of love.

Look back at John 13. Jesus said that this would be the case. How is it that you can recognize a true Christian fellowship? In part it's by what they believe. In part it's by the nature of their teaching. In part it's by their purity of life. But in John 13:34, Jesus brings this element of love to bear upon it as well. John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you." Even Christ set himself up as the pattern of this love. He says, "I have loved you, therefore you love one another." Verse 35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." It's a simple point that he is making there. It's simply saying that our love for one another shows forth, it displays, it makes visible the reality that God is abiding in us, that we have the indwelling Holy Spirit. Love is the proof of that. Love is the evidence of that. So we love not only because God by nature is love, not only because of the sacrifice of Christ, but we love because the Holy Spirit is dwelling within us and producing that fruit in us, motivating us in that direction and giving us the power to do so. This is a manifestation of the Trinity that takes place when we love one another. God the Father, his very essence; God the Son, his very sacrifice; God the Spirit, his very presence within us. All of that working, motivating, pushing, directing, helping, equipping us to have the spiritual power to reflect the love, the same love that sent Christ to the cross.

Look at the end of verse 12. John says, "in this God's love is perfected in us." His love is perfected in us. It has the idea that God's goal is accomplished. God saved us and redeemed us to be a loving people toward one another as one of the aspects of his purposes in our salvation. God saved us in part so that we would love one another. And sometimes, beloved, this whole theme, this whole reality of love becomes something that transforms the entire direction of your life. Sometimes you find objects of the potential objects of your love and you change the direction of life in order to serve and meet them. Don't be afraid of those times. Don't be afraid of those opportunities when an object of your love comes into your realm of understanding to say, "Oh, this could be it," that the whole spirit of self-sacrifice would motivate you to serve them. This is the defining motivation of the Christian life toward one another, that we would love each other and, beloved, that can only lead to one response, really. Think about the lives around you just right here. These relationships that we have here is the providential circle of our relationships if you're a part of Truth Community Fellowship. We are the objects, the intended objects of this love for one another. So we look around, you see a need, you meet a need. You see someone in need of encouragement, you go and you give it to them. This is just the way the life of the body lives itself out. Not because we're under some kind of external compulsion that is contrary to our nature. We love because he first so gloriously, magnanimously and self-sacrificially loved us.

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we thank you for the love that you have shown to us, love that flows from your very essence, love that was expressed to perfection on the cross, love that has now been planted in our hearts through the indwelling Holy Spirit. If we have been so loved by you, O God, then we can only agree and affirm with the Scripture that says we also ought to love one another. It's a glad conclusion that we reach, our Father. It's not one*

*that we resist. It's the one that we want to be true about our own lives individually and collectively. So, Father, make us, make me, make each one here, a true representative of that true sacrificial love that Christ showed on the cross as we go about and interact with one another. Give us the grace to love each other, to serve each other, to forgive each other and thereby manifest through the very character of our lives, the character of the one whom we love supremely, the one who gave himself for us. Yes, Father, give us that which is necessary for us to manifest the love of Christ. We pray these things in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*

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