Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Love of God, Part 6
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-82

When I originally began to plan to preach a series on the love of God, I thought through all of the various things that I wanted to share with you and say, and last Sunday I told you it would be the last in the series, message number 5, but on Monday as I arose early and began some time in my study to think about the subject that I had finished, it really was heavy on my heart that I hadn't finished it at all, that there was one other issue that needed to be addressed to bring the subject of the love of God to some kind of completion. And so, this morning, I want to bring you message number 6 in our brief series on the love of God.

One issue remained after last week that must be addressed, it is a critical issue, and it is the issue of response. We went deep and high and far and wide in our discussion of God's love. And we tried to wrap our arms around the height, the depth, the length and breadth of the love that passes knowledge. And when we got our arms as wide as we could get them and we were finally left in silence, unable to unscrew the unscrutable, we weren't done because there needed to be one other discussion and that is the one this morning on how do we respond to that love? What is required of us? We can't just put that great understanding of the love of God out there and walk away from it, it has immense and it has specific and clear implications for us. What is the appropriate response to being so greatly loved by God as He loves us? What is the proper reaction for believers to having received this surpassing love, this perfect love? And the answer is very, very clear in Scripture. Our response is to manifest that same love to others. That's it in one statement. Our response is to manifest that same love to others. How God has loved us is exactly how we are to love. And this then is really the capstone of everything.

In Ephesians chapter 5 let me just read you very briefly what Paul says at the beginning of the chapter. Just listen. "Therefore be imitators of God and walk in love." You are God's beloved children, imitate Him. How? By walking in love. That's our response to God's love is to walk in that same kind of love.

But I want to take you to Matthew chapter 5 for a moment because I think this responsibility, this duty, this implication of God's love is so crystal clear in Matthew 5. Verse 43 and I'll read down to verse 48, "You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." Now Jesus is simply saying common knowledge, or if you want to use the contemporary parlance, conventional wisdom says that you are to love your neighbor and hate your enemy. In other words, they were not a lot unlike our society today, they wanted to give room for hate. They thought it was not only

reasonable and acceptable but it was even religious to hate people who gave you trouble. Conventional wisdom said love your neighbor and hate your enemy. "But I say to you, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you." Why? Verse 45, "In order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." Why? He loves His enemies.

The question is, does God love the world? Yes. Does He love those who hate Him? Yes. He loves His enemies and it is on that premise that we are commanded to love our enemies. There it is. We are to love the ungodly just like God loves the ungodly. And how does He love them? Through common grace, verse 45, "He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." There is a love which demonstrates itself commonly to everybody regardless of their spiritual condition or whether they are God's own beloved or not. There's nothing commendable about just loving the people that are in your group. If you love, verse 46 says, those who love you, what reward have you? I mean, that's not noble. Even tax collectors do that. Tax collectors are, in the New Testament, synonymous with the scum of the earth because not because of their profession itself but because they were Jews who sold out to exorbitant illegal taxation on the part of Rome and so they were seen as traitors of their own people.

Verse 47, "If you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? How different is that? Everybody does that, even the pagans do the same." You need to love as God loves and He says it this way in verse 48, "You're to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Nothing more demonstrates the perfection of God then the fact that He loves those who hate Him. Nothing more demonstrates the perfection of God more than that He loves the enemies who set their life against Him. And you are to be perfect as your Father is perfect. You see, that verse Matthew 5:48 is in the context of loving people who hate you.

So how are we...how are we to respond to God's love? We're to mimic it. We're to imitate it. We're to copy it. Ephesians 5, he used the word mimetesfrom which we get mimic. We are to reproduce the same kind of love. And that starts with loving the ungodly the way God loves them. And we shared with you God loves the world in an unlimited sense, God loves all sinners. And it manifests itself in common grace or goodness, kindness and secondly in compassion, pity, tender-heartedness, sympathy. Thirdly warning, warning about judgment, warning about hell. Fourthly, calling them to repentance or giving them an invitation to believe the gospel. That's how we are to love, just the way God loves His enemies. We are to treat them with kindness and tenderness and sympathy and pity. We are to warn them and we are to give them the gospel. That's to demonstrate, as verse 45 says, that we are the sons of our Father who is in heaven.

You see, we started out by saying the first proposition in this series was God's love to the world is unlimited in extent. That is, He loves the world, John 3:16, "God so loved the

world..." Titus 3:4 speaks of His love for mankind. And as I said, it is demonstrated in common grace, compassion, warnings and a gospel call. It was His love for the world that motivated Him to send His Son to be the Savior of the world, as Scripture calls Him. And so we are to love the world in the same way that God loves them, that is to say we are to love them with kindness. That's why Galatians 6:10 says do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith, but do good to all men. Or 1 Corinthians 16:14 says, "Let all that you do be done in love." Love them with kindness, love them with goodness. Help to make the sunshine them on a little bit and the rain fall, bring a little joy into their life, treat them with courtesy and tenderness.

Then we remember that the Lord loved also in a way that made Him speak about judgment. Our tenderness cannot mitigate against a warning. We are to love the world and warn them. We are to say to them that God has commanded all men everywhere to repent, Acts 17:30, and He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world by that man whom He has ordained, whom He raised from the dead, even the Lord Jesus Christ. We're to warn them, and warn them, and warn them about impending doom and judgment and hell.

And then as Mark 16:15 says we are to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. So just like God loves in those same four ways, we are to love. We are to reproduce His love in the world with kindness and compassion and warnings and invitations to believe.

Secondly, the second great proposition we said was that God's love to the world is limited in degree. It is unlimited in extent but it is limited in degree. God does not love the world the way He loves His own. He loves the world in a temporal temporary way, He loves them in a limited way. He doesn't love them like He loves the elect, He doesn't love them like He loves those He has designed to save. He loves His own, it says in John 13:1, He loves His own unto perfection. He loves His own eistelos, to the max, to the end, to the limit, forever. And we saw that God loves His own, that is believers, those who belong to Him with a lavish forgiving, generous, merciful, gracious, inseparable, unbreakable, unconquerable, unwavering, unfading, sanctifying, cleansing, purifying, nourishing, cherishing love. And He loves them as much as He has a capacity to love because He loves them unto perfection...to the max, to the end, totally. And that's how we're to love them. That's how we're to love the brothers. We're to love them the same way He loves us.

In John 13 in that upper room the night of Jesus' betrayal, He demonstrated His love and an example of how the disciples were to love by washing their feet. And you remember they had come in from a day in the dusty roads and their feet would have been dirty, significantly dirty and it was a custom to have the most menial slave available to do the foot washing because it was the dirtiest and lowest task on the...on the responsibility chart. But Jesus who was King of Kings and Lord of Lords stooped and did it. And in John 13:12 it says He washed their feet and then putting back on His garment He reclined at the table again and He said to them, "Do you know what I've done to you? You call Me teacher and you call Me Lord and you're right for so I am, and you're wondering in your minds why is

the Lord doing this, why is the teacher doing this, why is the master doing this?" And He said, "If I then the Lord, the master, the teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet for I have given you an example that you should do as I did to you. Truly, truly I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, neither is one who has sent greater than the one who sent him." I'm telling you if I did it you need to do it.

And then down in verse 34, "A new commandment I give you that you love one another even as I have loved you that you also love one another." There is that lavish, unselfish, humble, sacrificial bowing of the knee to do the dirty task that benefits a brother or a sister. That's how we're to love. It is a magnanimous love, it is a far-reaching love, it is a lavish love. It is a love, as John...1 John 3:16 and 17 says, it is a love that opens up our feelings of compassion toward one another. We are to love other believers to perfection. We have a love for the world but it's not to the extent that we love the brotherhood. We love the brotherhood like God does, to perfection, to the max, to the limit, with a limitless unbounded love. Peter says, "Love one another with an ektenes love," it's the word fervent, ektenesis used of the stretching of a muscle to its absolute limit. We are to love believers to perfection. That's how we are perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

To understand that let's turn to 1 John chapter 4 and this is the text the Lord really laid on my heart...1 John chapter 4. And here we are given a tremendous call to perfect love. If we are to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, then we have to manifest love for love is that perfection of God. And if we are to be godlike we have to love like God loves...with a perfect love. Perfect meaning, again, to the max, to the end, complete, thorough, whole, carried out to the full, permanent, supreme, all of that.

And John is writing here to believers calling them to this kind of love, verse 12, at the end of the verse he talks about His love being perfected in us. Verse 17, "By this love is perfected with us." Verse 18, at the end of the verse, "Perfected in love." John is not writing about some small component of love or some diminished amount of love or some lesser degree of love, he is writing about perfect love so that we can be like our Father...perfect. We are to love supremely, we are to love to the max.

That's John's theme in verses 7 to 21, I want you to look at it with me and we're going to go through it just briefly. It starts in verse 7, here is the opening statement that sets it all in motion, "Beloved, let us love one another." Yes we learn from Matthew 5 that we are to love our enemies, we are to love the world, as we said, with common grace, compassion, judgment and warnings and gospel invitations, but we are also to love the brotherhood. And this love here is commanded of us...beloved...and again he emphasizes we are the loved, that's why he calls us beloved, and so we are to love one another. We are to demonstrate the perfect love that will make us the perfect children of our perfect heavenly Father.

So verse 7 gives the exhortation, "let us love one another." Then there are six reasons why we are to obey it...six reasons. And they do overlap. John overlaps himself all the time. In fact, if you read the gospel of John you have the feeling you are going in circles...I should say if you read the epistle of John you have the feeling you're going in circles. He cycles back through the same things, interweaving, overlapping and rehearsing. But you will see here six reasons why the believer manifests self-sacrificing love that is like his Father's love to him.

Reason number one, because love is the essence of God...because love is the essence of God. In other words, if we are going to say we are the children of God as Ephesians 5 puts it, then we better walk in love because that's the character of God. Look at it, verse 7, "Let us love one another...why?...for love is from God." That's why. Love is from God. And we who are God's children will reproduce His nature.

Clement of Alexandria long ago wrote something that some might think borders on blasphemy, but this is what he said, "The true Christian practices being God." Do you think like that? When you come to the moments and days and issues of your life do you say to yourself, "I want to do what God would do? I want to think like God would think and say what God would say and feel what God would feel and do what God would do. I want to play God in the best sense of the word."

Alexander had a soldier in his army, Alexander the Great, who had his name, same name. The soldier was caught in some kind of unfaithfulness to the task at hand. And Alexander simply said to him, "Change your behavior or change your name." If you're going to say that you belong to God then you ought to behave in a way that is consistent with the nature of the one whose nature you possess.

So back to verse 7, "Love one another for love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God and the one who doesn't love, doesn't know God for God is love." And so we would expect His children to walk in...what...in love...in love. God's people bear His reflection. Everyone who habitually loves gives evidence of being born of God. Since love has God as its source, those who show that love give evidence that they are the children of God. Their life and their love is derived from Him.

You know, there were people in the church, the assembly to which John wrote this epistle, who were being influenced by mystical teaching that later became known as Gnosticism. And that mystical teaching said that we've elevated ourselves to the higher planes of human consciousness in which we have come to know God. And they looked down on humble Christians, demeaning, denigrating them, looking them as if they were low life, as if they were wallowing around in the muck of earth and these people by virtue of their transcendence, by virtue of their mystical experiences had ascended from the mud and were floating in the clouds of the true knowledge of God. That's why they were called Gnostics, from the word gnosis, they were the people who thought they were in the know. And

to them John writes these words, "The one who goes around saying he knows God but does not demonstrate love for the brothers is not one who knows God because God is love and whoever is born of God and knows God, loves like God loves."

So, he says, first of all, we love because it is the very essence of God's nature to love. And we who belong to God will share that nature. Is God really love? Yes. You look at that little phrase at the end of verse 8, "God is love," and as we've been going through the series somebody might say, "I question that. Look at the world around us." You say history has this long tale of man's inhumanity to man, history is one long massacre. Spain had its Inquisition, Britain its Atlantic Slave Trade, Germany had its gas chambers, Russia its Siberian labor camps, United States its own abuses. The world is still swept by fear and lust and greed and it seems to me escalating racial tension and hatred. Nature too seems as twisted if not more twisted in our time than ever. Babies are born depraved. They inherent diseases and tendencies toward all kinds of trouble. Ours is a world of preying animals, parasites, viruses, deadly bacteria. And when you read the Bible you certainly don't read about Utopia. You open your Bible and you find tyranny, cruelty, mutilation, people having their eyes gouged out, their hands lopped off. God opens the ground and swallows them up. And the Bible is full of the stories of deceit and licentiousness and wickedness and immorality and homosexuality and war. And not only war but war that God starts. And Assyria, one of the most pagan, wretched, ungodly, cruel nations in the history of the world is called "the rod of God's anger." And then you read God is love? Easy answers can't possibly be right. You must realize that we are children, that we are fools, that we are self-conceited, stiff-necked rebels who will get everything wrong unless we are willing to give up telling God what He has to do and what He has to be like.

And we're right back where we were last week and we stand firmly in Romans 9 and we hear Paul say, "Who are you, O man, to answer God, close your mouth." God is love because it says He is. But His love is never unmixed or untouched by His other attributes. But God is love and in spite of how it might look, He wants this world to know He's love. And He puts it on display through His children. We who are His children will manifest His perfect love, that's why we're to walk in love. So, we are the offspring of God and His essence is love so let's love one another.

Secondly, we are to have perfect love for one another because love was manifest by Christ. Not only is it the essence of God's nature, it was manifest by Christ. Look at verse 9, "By this the love of God was manifest to us, or in us," literally in our case, "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 love God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Beloved, if God so loved us enough to send His Son, we also ought to love one another. Hey, we're supposed to manifest godlike love. God's love was manifest in sending His Son. That's Paul...that's John's second argument here as it's Paul's thought in Romans 5:8, while we were yet sinners God commended His love toward us in sending Christ. John is saying, "Look, you need to love like God loves the world and the believers, first because it's God's nature to love and you're His children. And secondly, not only based on God's eternal nature but on

God's historical gift. God gave Christ."

The God who is love expressed His love by sending His Son for us. The origin of love is in the nature of God, the manifestation of love is in the coming of Christ. We are to love one another because we see the essence of that love manifest in Jesus Christ.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. Jesus gives us the classic, the all-time, the perfect, the glorious illustration of what loving one another means when He gave His life. That's how we're to love. We're to love by sacrifice. John says if you see somebody in need and you close up your compassion, how in the world can we say the love of God dwells in you, where is the sacrifice? Where is the sacrifice? God's free, spontaneous love is revealed in the sacrifice of Christ whom He gave...it says in verse 10...to be the propitiation, hilasmos. That's a wonderful word. You find it in pagan literature, pagan religious literature. And it is used to speak of appeasing an angry god. Pagan religions are always trying to appease God. They're always trying to get God off, whatever deity they worship, off their back. They're trying to remove the fear factor, the judgment aspect. And so they try to appease or assuage God, or to satisfy God. That's what the word means. Jesus Christ came and appeased an angry God. Jesus Christ came and assuaged a hostile God, a holy God sitting in heaven who was angry with the sinners every day. And Jesus appeased His anger with His sacrifice. And God wanted it that way because He sent Him. God bears a just and holy wrath against sin. God has a holy antagonism against evil and iniquity. And so He had to send His own Son to die on a cross to satisfy His own anger, to satisfy His own vengeance.

A related word to hilasmos, from the similar root is used in Hebrews 9:5 and translated there "mercy seat." The mercy seat was the place where the blood was sprinkled to satisfy God, the blood was sprinkled to make the atonement and God was satisfied, Exodus 25:22 says. Christ was that mercy seat, He's the satisfier of an angry God. Now remember, beloved, it is not the incarnation that is the preeminent manifestation of God's love, it is not Bethlehem that is the preeminent manifestation of God's love, it is Calvary, it is the atonement that is the preeminent manifestation of God's love. And that's what he says here, He sent Him to be the propitiation for our sins. God loved us so much that He wanted His own wrath assuaged and appeased, so He sent His own Son to satisfy His own wrath. No one who has ever been to the cross and seen God's love displayed can go back to a life of selfishness. God was so unselfish that He sent His own Son. And he showed us how to love, not just by washing feet, that's humble, but by giving our lives.

So we are to love one another because God is the source of love and we're His children. We are to love one another because Christ is the manifestation of love and we're to follow His example. Thirdly, we are to love because it is our testimony. Love is our testimony. Look at verse 12, "No one has beheld God at any time." Let me stop you right there.

Now the point that John is making here isn't very subtle, you have to think about it a moment but it's pretty clear. What he is saying is nobody has seen God. And we understand that. Exodus 33 says nobody could see God and live. Nobody has seen God. Now the point that John wants to make here is how is anybody going to know about Him if they can't see Him, right? God is going to reveal Himself to the world, He wants to put Himself on display, He wants people to come to know Him, He wants them to bow...why?, you say...because John 4 says the Father seeks true worshipers who worship Him in spirit and in truth. So God is seeking true worshipers. He wants men to see Him, know Him, fall down before Him and honor Him and glorify Him and praise Him. But John says nobody has seen Him. How they going to know Him?

Verse 12, "If we love one another God abides in us and His love is perfected in us." You know what the key is? If we love one another they'll see God...see that? That's our testimony. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have...what?...love one for another, John 13:35. God puts Himself on display through the love of His people. And you know what, all of those philosophical questions, all of those grandiose theological questions that grapple in our minds with our feeble brains to try to sort out why God lets happen what He does let happen and all those queries about is God really a God of love...they all just wash away in the flood of Christian love. You can have people who are philosophical and analytical and they say, "Well I just can't accept God because I can't figure out..." they can literally be drowned in the power of Christian love. And what they see is a dimension of love the likes of which they know nothing about. And it is apparent to them that it is not an earthly love. No man sees God at any time, he says, that hasn't happened. Well the pure in heart shall see the Lord in the future, we'll talk about that tonight. But no man has seen God, you can't see Him and live. But if we love one another then God is in us making Himself visible through this perfect love, this love to the max, this limitless love, loving believers the way God loves them, lavishly, generously, graciously, forgivingly, cleansingly.

God wants us to love like He loves so the world can see Him. "Oh, I see what your God is like, He's a God of immense, forgiving, sacrificial love." So we are to love because God is love, because God sent Jesus Christ to love us and to show us the example of how to love and because love is our testimony. Number four, we are to love one another because love is our assurance, love is our assurance. Lots of people wonder whether they're saved. Oh, that's pretty common. They worry about whether they'll go to heaven if they die. They struggle, perhaps, with confidence and assurance. Let me help you, look at verse 13. Here's a wonderful little flow here...I wish we had time

to deal with it in detail. Verse 13, "By this we know we abide in Him and He in us."

How do you know God is in you? How do you know you're a believer? How do you know you're in Him, He's in you? That's the question. "By this we know." By what? "Because...verse 13...He has given us...what?...His Spirit." The indwelling Spirit, Paul says, is the down payment, the arrabon, the guarantee, the engagement ring, the promise of an eternal glorious future. So we know we're believers because He gave us the Spirit. You say, "Well that's great." Follow this one, verse 14, "And...here's another way we know we're Christians...we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

You know how we know we're Christians? Because we understand the gospel. That's right. We have come to see and to understand that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. And then he adds to that verse 15, "And we know that whosoever confesses Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God." How do you know you're a Christian? You know you're a Christian because you have the Holy Spirit within you, you understand the gospel and you've confessed Jesus as Lord, right? You say, "I know I'm a Christian, I know I'm a Christian, why God gave me His Holy Spirit, I know I'm a Christian, I understand the gospel, I heard it, I saw it, I comprehended it, He came into the world to be the Savior and I confess with my mouth Jesus as Lord and Son of God, I'm a Christian." And that's all true. But all that is preliminary to the real issue in verse 16, here's the real kicker, "And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us."

When you become a Christian, you above all things are grasping the infinity of God's love for you, while you're a sinner He loved you, He loved you so much He sent His Son to die for you. He loved you so much He planted His Spirit within you. You have come to grasp God's love. And listen, God is love, he says again, and the one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him. And there's the ultimate. You know how you know you're a Christian? You say, "I know I'm a Christian because I have the Holy Spirit." That's right. But how do you know you have the Holy Spirit? "Well, by His work in me." Oh, what is it? The fruit of the Spirit is...what's the first one...love. It's one thing to confess Jesus as Lord, it's necessary. It's crucial that you see and bear witness to the truth that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world which indicates you understand your sin, you understand your need for a Savior, you've confessed Jesus as deity, you've affirmed Him as Lord, you understand God's immense and infinite love for you, and all of that in a sense is...all of that in a sense is fact, theological truth, but where you really come to grips with the reality of the fact that you are a believer is when you see the flow of God's love in your life. That's it. The Holy Spirit, Romans 5:5, has shed abroad the love of God in us. It's a tremendous truth.

His love is poured into us and manifest through us. Do you love believers? Do you love to be with Christians? Does your heart rejoice when somebody becomes a believer? Do you care when believers suffer? Do you feel their pain? Do you have any inclination to pray and to intercede on behalf of any other believers? Those are evidences of love. Do you want to help somebody who is

confused about truth? Do you have some kind of desire in your heart to show somebody a straighter path in their Christian walk so they can walk away from debilitating temptation? That's love.

When you see somebody who has need, does your heart ache? Do you feel like you want to reach in your pocket and meet the need? Do you want to throw your arms around somebody who is struggling in their Christian life and try to hold them up? That's love.

I mean, how else am I going to know the Spirit is in me if I can't see the fruit of it? And the first fruit that's listed is love. If you're wandering around wondering whether you're a Christian, don't go back and say, "Well I must be, I remember the day I signed the card. I remember the day I stuck the hand in the air, walked the aisle, sat down, stood up, genuflected," or whatever you did. "Oh I remember the day I was baptized," or "I must have been cause I prayed the prayer, I..." You could even say, "Well I must be cause I certainly understand the gospel. I know Jesus came into the world to die for sinners, I know I'm one and I..." But until you see the fruit, you see, you really don't have anything tangible. Oh you can take God at His word, absolutely, but not without the affirmation of the evidence.

We're to love one another because God is love, it's His nature, because Christ manifests the standard of love which is our example, because love is our testimony and it's the way the world is going to see God, and love is our assurance of salvation. Number five, because love is our confidence in judgment...love is our confidence in judgment. This is really an extension of the last one, it has to do with assurance or confidence, but let's take it separately. Look at verse 17, "By this love is perfected with us that we may have confidence in the day of judgment."

Boy, what he is saying is when your life is characterized by love and you're manifesting love everywhere, you're going to have confidence in the day of judgment. And verse 18 says, "There's no fear in love, perfect love casts out fear." The fear of what? The fear of judgment because fear involves punishment, and listen to me, if you're living in fear that Jesus might come or fear that you might face the Lord...hey, there's something wrong in your life and what's wrong is you're not manifesting love because if you were manifesting perfect love you wouldn't have any fear.

I've had Christians say to me, "I don't want the Lord to come right now, I don't want Him to find me like I am, I'm afraid of what might happen. I might not even get through, I might get cast out into outer darkness. I have anxiety." And it's because there's not the manifestation of love. When I look at my life and I say, "Is John MacArthur a Christian?" And there are times when I rehearse that in my own mind. I don't say, "Well he must be, he's preached thousands of sermons. Well he must be, he's a pastor of a church. Well he must be, he has all this theology in his head." No, he must be because he has a heart for God's people and he wants to love the flock like Jesus loved His flock. I fall short but the desire is there.

And when I think about judgment, I don't fear...I don't...I'm not concerned that I'm going to stand ashamed and get cast out because the Spirit of God has produced the fruit of love in my life. It's not love as it should be and it's certainly not perfected yet and that's why we have those little breaches in our confidence because the love isn't perfect as it should be, but it can be perfect in the sense of mature. Love is our confidence in judgment, it casts out all the fear. And we know as back in 2:28 it says we're not going to be ashamed when He appears.

There's a little phrase in there that's interesting at the end of verse 17, "As He is so also are we in this world," did you see that? "As He is," capital "H", that's Christ, so are we. As Jesus is so are we in this world. What does that mean? Well, Jesus in this world pleased God and God said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," and He said it many times. Jesus is God's beloved Son in whom He is well pleased, and so are we. We please God, we please God. We don't have anything to fear. We please Him when His love is manifest through us and we can share the very confidence of Christ who looked at the cross and saw the joy, said, "Pass the cross," cause He knew He pleased His Father.

Well last point, we are to love one another with a perfect love because love is of God, because love is manifest by Christ, because love is our testimony, because love is the assurance of our salvation, love is confidence in judgment, and finally, because love is reasonable. That's the only thing that makes any kind of sense. This is really kind of a review. Verse 19, "We love because He first loved us." Does that sound reasonable? It's just the most obvious thing to do. We love. It doesn't say we love Him, that's not in the manuscripts. We love others because He loved us. And if someone says, verse 20, "I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar, for the one who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen can't love God whom he's not seen. And this commandment we have from him that the one who loves God should love his brother also." It's just reasonable, it's just normal, it's just logical.

How you going to love a visible man when you can't love an invisible God? It's easy to love a visible man, it's difficult to love an invisible God. But if you've learned to love the invisible God, the visible man is easy. Every claim to love God is a delusion if isn't accompanied by unselfish perfect love for others.

Now listen. What is our response then? One, we're to love the world the way God loves them. How does He love them? With common grace, with compassion, and with warnings and with a call to the gospel. We're to love the brotherhood the way He loves and that is we're to love them to perfection, perfect love.

I just want to say one other thing. There's one other aspect of God's love we have to copy and it is this, most supremely beyond God's love for sinners which is limited, beyond God's love for saints which is unlimited is God's love for His Son which is from all eternity. This is My...what?...Son?

Beloved Son. This is My beloved Son. He said it over and over in the gospels. In John chapter 15 Jesus knew He was loved, John 15:9, "Just as the Father has loved Me I have also loved you. Would you please abide in that love? Would you do the same?" John 17 verse 24, "Father, I desire that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am in order that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me, for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world." Verse 26, "The love where with Thou didst love Me," Jesus knew He was loved by the Father. That's why on the cross it was so horrendous when He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Because He knew He was loved, He knew He was the beloved.

The Father loves the Son eternally and supremely, and so must we. We must love the ungodly with the same kind of love God loves them. We must love the godly, the saints, with the same kind of love God loves them. And we must love the Son as God loves the Son, supremely. Loving the Lord Jesus Christ is crucial in our lives. It's everything. Peter said, "Whom having not seen you love," 1 Peter 1:8. We are to love the Lord Jesus Christ. He is to be the object of our affection. It is He for whom we make the constant sacrifice joyfully.

Ephesians ends with these words, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible." We're to love Jesus with an unwavering and undying love.

You say, "What does that mean, John? Is that an emotion? Do we sort of sing songs until we feel it?" No, no, here's how it works. Listen to this, John 14:15, "If you love Me you will obey My...what?...commandments." Verse 21, "He who has My commandments and obeys them, he it is who loves Me." Verse 23, "If anyone loves Me he will obey My Word."

"Peter, or Jonas, do you love Me?" Yes, Lord, You know I love You. "Then feed My sheep." Do what I tell you. "Jonas, Simon, son of Jonas, I mean...Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Yes I love You. "Feed My lambs." "Simon, do you really love Me?" Lord, You know everything, You know I love You. "Then feed My sheep. Do what I tell you."

And there you are, right, in 1 John 4 at the end of the fourth chapter, but not at the end of the discussion. Look at chapter 5 verses 1 and 2, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and whoever loves the Father loves the one born of Him," so if you're going to love God you're going to love Christ. "And by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe His...what?...His commandments." The whole things ends up there. Verse 3, "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not a burden."

So we love the world with goodness, compassion, warning and gospel calls. We love believers with lavish, generous, sanctifying, purifying, forgiving love. And we love Christ with obedient love. And when we do that we are responding in the only appropriate manner to the love of God for us.

Father, we thank You this morning for the truth, the power of Your Word, for the exhortation to our hearts. O God, how grateful we are that the vast reality of an infinite plan can come down to such a simple, simple directive...do what I tell you, do what I tell you. Make us obedient children, that's it, that's the issue, who keep Your commands, never considering them a burden, always a joy. We want to love the way You love. We couldn't do it with all of our human love, it would fall short. So we thank You that You shed the love of Christ abroad in our hearts by Your Spirit and may it flow through us to those who are lost, to those who are found and most of all to our Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

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