

## Perfect Love 1 John 4:7-21

### Introduction

- “I love you”
  - Powerful words
  - Words we long to hear
  - Words that describe a profound emotion that is tested by our actions
  - Words often taken for granted
- Sermon Series, “What is Perfection?”
  - “Love” happens to be one example of perfection that we are given from the Bible
  - “God is love” (1 John 4:8)
  - “No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.” (1 John 4:12; ESV)
  - Today we are going to explore perfect love
- Parents describe “perfect love” holding a new born
  - Everything is right in the world
  - Baby sleeping; innocent; nestled in our arms
  - It’s a perfect moment, but it doesn’t last long; definitely not long enough!
- In our broken world, love has become distorted
  - Love becomes conditional
  - Love becomes a object of negotiation
  - Love loses it’s true meaning
  - Who would have thought that we would ever hear again the words: “Racist” and “Socialist” to describe our political landscape.
    - We have lost the ability, humility, and decency to communicate beyond our own desires and opinions.
    - If perfect love was ever needed; it is needed now as a testimony that God abides in us, and that perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18).

### God is Love

- Last week I used the illustration of an artist looking at something and then drawing or sculpting what they saw.
  - In much the same way, this is what is necessary for us to not only grow in our relationship with God, but to reflect who God is in our life.
  - It would be helpful for us to return to that illustration as we consider our basic desire of love and the point that John makes, “God is love” (1 John 4:8).
- The bookends of God’s love
  - Created us in his image
  - Redeems us out of his love through Jesus Christ
- 1 John 4:7-9
  - “manifest among us”

- God did not wait for us to fix ourselves
  - God did not write us off
  - God took it upon himself to redeem humanity through love
- “So that we might live through him”
  - It is out of God’s love that we have life
    - Breathed into our nostrils
    - Delivers us from the grave of sin
    - Fills us with his love through grace
  - It is through God’s love that we can love others with a perfect love
- This is the extent of God’s love: He not only created us out of his love, but he redeemed us out of his love.
  - If we are looking at God; we see perfect love manifested through grace
  - The Question: Will we allow God’s love to define our life, not just by receiving God’s love, but in the ways we express it to others?
- Revisit the definition of Christian Perfection- “Comes from giving God the reins, turning our lives over to Jesus, and allowing the Holy Spirit to upend our plans and explode our expectations.”<sup>1</sup>
  - Perfect love can only be restored in us as we turn our lives and expectations completely over to God.
  - To know God is to know love. What we do with the knowledge of God’s love will define us as Christians.

### A Testimony of the Spirit

- 1 John 4:13-14
  - For most of us, Receiving love is easy; Giving love is the hardest
  - The true test of our faith is not only receiving God’s love, but extending it to others
- We all understand how difficult that test can be
  - Loving someone who loves us, agrees with us, and lives up to our expectations is easy
  - Loving someone that we don’t agree with, who lives in a different way than we do, and may not express love toward us is challenging, especially when we consider what God calls us to—Love!
- Testimony of the Spirit
  - Chapter 4 begins with “testing the spirit”
    - 1 John 4:1
    - 1 John 4:6
  - The test of our love is whether we listen to what God has said and put it into action.
    - 1 John 4:16

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<sup>1</sup> Colleen Carol Campbell, *The Heart of Perfection: How the Saints Taught Me to Trade My Dream of Perfect For God’s*. New York: Howard Books, 2019. Kindle Location 119.

- The confession of Jesus as our Savior also requires a confession of sacrificial love towards others.
- One of the most difficult parts of love for Christians is the balance between Obedience and Love
  - The Bible is very clear about what God’s expectations are in terms of how we are to live.
    - Ten Commandments- “Thou shalt do...and...Thou shalt not”
    - Jesus is the Way, Truth, and Life, no one comes to the Father, but through him. (John 14:6)
    - Do not be ashamed of your faith, but be we a witness to the world, and make disciples (Romans 1:16; Matthew 28:19-20)
  - The Bible is also clear about loving
    - Love your enemies (Matthew 5:44)
    - Forgiving others (Matthew 6:14-15)
    - Respecting government officials (Matthew 22:21).
  - Righteous Anger vs. Love
    - Righteous Anger says to hate sin
    - Love tells me to express love to the extent of a sacrificial love
    - “Hate the sin; Love the sinner”, however we really struggle to put this into practice.
      - We convince ourselves that we are showing love through righteous anger
      - How can we show a sacrificial love when sin seems to rule, or when ideologies differ?
  - God is love-Reflect God’s love
    - **1 John 4:9**
    - Jesus never backed away from upholding God’s law or from holding others accountable to it, but he always did it in love
    - When others were quick to pass judgement he built relationships
    - When others mocked; Jesus forgave
    - When others exercised their authority for personal gain; Jesus humbled himself to the authority of the Father.
    - The Balance of obedience and love is reflected perfectly in Christ.
    - In order for us to love in the same way we have to offer ourselves to God
  - To know God is to know love. What we do with the knowledge of God’s love will define us as Christians.

### Obedience is Birthed Out of Love

- **1 John 4:17-21**
  - A part of being a perfectionist is the fear of not being perfect
    - Put that expectation of perfection upon ourselves
    - But also expect perfection from other people
  - Perfect love
    - Our perfection is in who God is; not in who we are

- Perfection is like an oversized shirt that we are growing into
- As long as we are growing in God's love, then there is a testimony of God working in our lives
- We can live in the peace, not fear, that whatever imperfections may exist within us- we can have confidence that God's salvation is secure for our lives.
- The peace we have with God must be the motivating factor in our lives for living in obedience to God's commands, and yet loving others even if there is conflict.
- We don't have to defend God!
  - **1 John 4:4**
  - Don't allow your righteous anger to prevail over God's love
  - Hold them in balance, and the testimony of your life will be enough not only for God, but for the world to see God in you!

### Conclusion

- The confession of Jesus as Savior also requires a confession of sacrificial love towards others
- Are you loving sacrificially without limitations?
  - A sacrificial love for God
  - A sacrificial love for others
- Begins with ""Comes from giving God the reins, turning our lives over to Jesus, and allowing the Holy Spirit to upend our plans and explode our expectations."²
- Even in your righteous anger— you can find Perfect Love not only for God, but for others if you are willing to surrender.
- What a testimony our lives would be, and what a testimony our world needs to see!

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<sup>2</sup> Colleen Carol Campbell, *The Heart of Perfection: How the Saints Taught Me to Trade My Dream of Perfect For God's*. New York: Howard Books, 2019. Kindle Location 119.