

Love Because We're Loved (1 John 4:7-21)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 December 2024

Preacher: Albert Tang

[0 : 00] Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us. He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.

This is love. Not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved the world, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testified that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in Him and He in God.

[1 : 10] And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in Him.

In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence in the day of judgment. Because in this world, we are like Him. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear.

Because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because He loved us first.

If anyone says, I love God, yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God who he has not seen.

And He has given us this command. Whoever loves God must also love his brother. Let's see. I got to preach the last sermon, 2024.

[2 : 22] Thank you, Pastor William, for allowing me to do this. I think something that I've written down, what Fran has just suggested us just before. Something for 2025 to work on.

Will be to experience the deeper love of God for myself. And then the past year, I think something I was struggling a little bit was how to actually express that love to somebody who I feel does not deserve that.

You know? I think many of us actually struggle with that as well, if we're honest enough. Okay? Now, if I don't have that love or that something, then I cannot share it.

All right? But if I truly experience it, and then I will express it and I share it, it's very natural. But if I have that and I do not share or I cannot express it, there must be something wrong.

Okay? Now, I see outside different cars. I don't know what sort of cars you drive. Maybe a nice, a hiff, or fifth, or fifth, whatever.

[3 : 46] Okay? Whatever cars, you need to fill that up. Whether it's with gas, with charging up, with battery. And if it is filled up, and you can put your foot down and go.

All right? And this is exactly what John was saying. It's like the love of God. If we truly, I mean, a car itself without gas, even though it's 20,000, I mean, 200,000 cars, expensive cars, no gas, no battery, you just stand there and do nothing.

Right? So no matter what sort of people we are, if we do not have the love of God in us, we can't do anything.

But if the love of God fills our lives, we can do amazing things. But I think that's what John was saying.

Look, let us love one another. Let us put our foot down and go somewhere and do something. Because the love of God has filled our lives.

[5 : 03] And everyone who has been born of God and knows God can have their love. Right? And it goes in verse 8, it goes that whoever does not love does not know God because God is love.

Now, I think in this passage we've just read before, John was not speaking like, if those non-Christians, they cannot love.

Okay? Of course, non-Christians, actually a lot of us brought up in non-Christian homes. All right? And dad was not a Christian, but he loved you all. Right? He gave a lot to love, to sacrifice for the family.

He's not saying that only Christians can love, but he is saying that if Christians, we cannot love the way that God loves us, there must be something wrong.

If we claim we believe in God and we cannot express that love, something must be wrong. So let us have a look at this passage.

[6 : 08] The author was actually exhorting his hearers to love others the way that God loves us. It's a very natural and a very appropriate reflection and expression.

Just think, reflect, at the end of the year. In the past year, if I ever claim, I'm a church leader, I'm 30 years Christian, all right?

I know a lot about God's love, but do people, especially in my home, see that? Although they just hear a lot of talks, but no walks.

So let this passage speak to us today. It is indicative of Christians to love absolutely no choice.

As simple as that, finished. Sermon finished. Right? If you forget the rest, I'm going to say, just that.

[7 : 18] Just imagine, this is what old Apostle John, he was saying, Dear friends, love one another. For love is from God.

If you guys claim you have love, you know God, you've been born of God, love one another, children. Imagine his hearer receiving this letter.

You know, reading John, the epistles of John, is different from reading Paul's epistles, letters, all right?

Paul is very kind of intellectual, very structural, and was attacking a lot of this Gnosticism, and all these heresies at the time.

He explained it well. But for John, it somehow is like a very wise, aged, old guy was talking to his children, grandchildren.

[8 : 29] Now imagine, 20 years down the road, if I'm still around, I'll be like this. Gary. Maybe I was speaking to your children, who all don't know whatever his name is.

Little children, just love one another. And then somehow, he or she will lose the direction of what I was saying.

It's not that I was, I don't have the purpose in saying that. It's just that older, wiser guy, he will be thinking of something, and then he will just catch that, and then he will just speak it.

It's in Chinese, I'm not sure if you heard a phrase called, ■■■■, okay? It's like, oh, with his heart and his passion, like a grandmother, old grandmother, was speaking to grandchildren.

Oh, grandchildren, be careful, otherwise you'll trip. Be careful, don't hurt yourself. You know, sometimes you'll feel, why, Granny, you're talking so repetitively.

[9 : 36] It's like that. This is what the nature of the epistle of John, okay? It's like, he mentioned a lot of these themes, start off with the word of God, the living word.

And then he mentioned something a lot about love, and hate, joy, and, yeah, and, and, and, and, and light, and darkness, truth, and falsehood, and it's a lot of contrast.

And all the time you mention, suddenly you feel, he mentioned something in the first chapter, and then in the third chapter, it appeared again. So it's like an old man talking. It's not, it's not without structure, but it's the structure of a spiral.

You know? So that's why when you read the epistles of John, you feel, oh, what was he trying to say? You know, how come he said it before, and he's trying to say it again?

That, that is the nature of epistle of John, okay? But it's not without structure. Now, his main purpose in the, in the letter, is just, yeah, love one another.

[10 : 46] Now in this, in this, verses 7 to 12, there is a structure called, a chiasmic structure. It's like, you know, chi, chi, alright?

So, you see, verse 7a to 12b and c, it was echoing one another. Love one another? And, and 7b to 12a, love is from God.

Verse 8, and verse 11, second part of 11, love demonstrates, knowing God, and love demonstrates God's love, alright? And the main thing, in 9 to 11, what he was saying that, God is love, therefore we love.

That was, what he wanted to drive it, right through, his letter. He didn't, impossibly he did not write it, because it was so old. He could have, one of, one of his students, wrote it for him, and, and poor, poor, that guy, you know, must be, writing what he was trying to say, and, and, and he was, whenever, whenever he thought about that, and he just, dictated, his student, to write it. The main thing, God is love, therefore, we love. I hope by now, you, you hear, the, the purpose, for this message.

[12 : 05] Love one another. Love one another, because, love is from God. So, we have four C's today. Commanded to love, completed with love, confident in love, and committed to love.

Let's have a look at the first one. Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God. Now, this is a command, alright?

It's not something, do you want to love? Do you wish to love? You know, in a wedding, we'll, we'll ask the couple, will you? We won't ask, do you feel like to?

Alright? Entering into a marriage, it's a matter of the will. So, loving one another, it's a command, it's a matter of our will, not whether we like it or not.

You know, if we run through, and our emotions, the ups and downs, and then, if our love is like that, poor, poor guy, you know, your spouses, your children, they're going to have a hard time, you know, family in jeopardy, right?

[13 : 12] But, if we know, loving God, and loving other, is a command, then, what are we to do?

We have no choice, but to comply, right? Now, if we, realize that, Lord, if I cannot, why do you command me, to do so?

I believe that, when God commands us, that we're able to, do that. Because, if God knows, we cannot, do it, and he still commands us, I mean, he will put us in a, put us in a very, difficult situation.

Now, use that, use the, analogy again, okay? If our, if our, tank, our car, is empty, or, our battery, is flat, no matter how, hard, we put, on the pedal, it won't go, right?

But, even, if it was under 56, or even, it was a slight, it might be a liter, or two, in a, in a few, tank, we put our foot down, it will go, all right?

[14 : 38] If we have the love of God in us, if we allow God, to, fill our lives, there is, love from God, I don't, I don't produce, that love, all right?

It's, it's not production, more, it's a reception. The love of God, I receive, the love of God, into my life, and, and I have love, and if I have that love, and God said, you love one another, it's very natural, all right?

So, you see this command, it's a theological command, it's not, nothing to do with Christian virtue, or it's, it's not, it's not an ethical kind of a teaching. You see, what John was saying, love one another, because love comes from God.

If you claim, you love, and been born of God, you will love. As simple as that. So, and then it goes in verse 8, if you do not know God, if you, and, and whoever does not love, does not know God.

So, if I claim, I'm a Christian, but I cannot love one another, cannot love others, check, something might have gone wrong.

[15 : 56] Not totally saying that you're not, you have not given your life to Christ, but something must have gone wrong. Maybe a hole in the petrol tank.

You know, the love of God fill us up, and then we leak. Must have something, let's check. So, this is the command, right?

And, and, John was saying a lot of knowing, dwelling, understanding, believing, you know, these are all kind of relational, so we, we know God, we, we believe in God, it's not just head knowledge. It's more like a husband and wife, with a deep, intimate relationship. So, if we have that, we truly, know, and truly experience the love of God, it's very natural.

Even without God's command, we can love one another. Second C, completed. Yes, because the love of God, is completed, by him, not me.

[17 : 14] All right? And, and you see there is a Trinitarian kind of a formation here. In verse 9, this is how God showed his love, all right?

That he sent Jesus. And in verse 10, and his son, came, he must be willing, he has to be willing, otherwise, God will not drag him down, right?

He came, and he was willing to, to, to act as an atoning sacrifice, for our sins. Now, what's that atoning sacrifice?

that means, that means, I was supposed to, because I'm a sinful person, I'm supposed to be the object of the wrath of God, and, and the punishment was the eternal separation from him, and that would be dreadful.

And God, and God, and his love, and his loving nature, he dare not see us, eternally, separating from him. Therefore, he sent his son to come, and Jesus, who's willing to come, and act as, at that atoning sacrifice, and to replace, me, as, as the punishment.

[18 : 30] And in verse 13, the spirit, he sent the Holy Spirit, the counselor, to come, to, to enlighten us, to inspire us, to open our hearts, to respond, to the love of God.

You see, that completion, that perfection, it was done by God. It's not me. That's why in verse 16, John said, And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in them. And in verse 17, this is how love is made complete among us.

This is how. How? Verse 16. God's doing. I don't produce love. I cannot. An empty fuel tank cannot produce fuel.

It has to go into a petrol station. You put that in also and fill it up. \$20, \$30, \$40, right?

[19 : 44] This has to be an external source. But, in verse 12, we see another perspective. No one has seen God.

But if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. Eh? Didn't you say already complete by God?

Why here another condition? That we need to love one another to make that perfect. I don't think both are contradicting one another.

But it actually implementing one another. Because when we say love, when we say we love God, and we have the love of God in us, how is it going to show?

It's a very natural expression. Very natural manifestation. I show it by loving others.

[20 : 44] Right? It's a vertical loving relationship. How do I know? Well, John said, if you can love the brothers and sisters you can see, and then we know you love the God we cannot see.

Right? If someone would tell you, oh, I love God so much, but he has a real difficult relationship with others, and you really question, what is that love of God like?

Right? Right? So, it's completion or perfection. It's very tangible. Yes, God has given, perfected the love in Christ, but for us, it's a lifelong Holy Spirit in us, transforming us so that we can work on that, and to make that as a completion in our lives.

And thirdly, when we do that, we have confidence in our lives. In verse 17, 18, this is how love is made complete among us, so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment.

In this world, we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment, and the one who fears is not made perfect in love.

[22 : 22] Now, he'll carry on to say, receiving the love of God, and manifesting the love of God to others, this is the love, the process of receiving and sharing love.

This is the genuine kind of a process. It's a lifelong thing. And if we do that, if we're exercising, practicing this love, continually let the fuel add into my car, and continually drive and go somewhere, and this is something that carries on in our whole life.

And honestly, we don't have to wait to judgment. I mean, we enjoy the peace. We have no fear, even right here on earth, in this life. And when we face that judgment in the future, there is no fear, because we're continuously experiencing the love of God, and continuously expressing the love of God in our lives.

We have the confidence. But if we do not do that, we may be a little bit anxious before the judgment.

Now, we won't be judged in the great white throne, okay? We're already saved, redeemed. But we'll be judged by how we act, how we live our lives, and one day we'll be coming to our Lord and be accountable.

[23 : 56] How do I love, right? Now, anyone actually have fear going to exams? Anyone? Oli?

Now, you? I mean, you're all working now. You don't have no fears, all right? Now, I remember when I was studying lay law, because at the time, I don't know what uni is like now.

At the time, it was kind of a UK-British system, because theology is like social sciences, right? So, exams played a big part.

So, three hours, five questions, write it. If even I knew it, I didn't have time to write it. I would get cramped with my hands and fingers, right?

But when I went to Hong Kong, and I studied in a Baptist seminary there, because it's Southern Baptist, so they use American system. Do they use, is the system change nowadays, here in New Zealand?

[24 : 57] Still writing? If you're doing social sciences, you still, three hours, five questions, do that, right? In Hong Kong, when I was in that seminary, go against the odds, right?

The Hong Kong system was, you know, education system was remembering stuff, right? If you can't remember things, you just drop out, right? But in that seminary, ow, I was like entering into heaven, because exams was only 10% of the marks, and they even allowed you to have open books.

Wow! But the thing is, on the beginning of the semester, and these lecturers and professors laid out the course outline, and we said, we're never going to finish all these requirements.

Is it insane? You know? And with all this, it was about 10 essays, and reading 50 books. How can we do this in the six months' time? We could never do that.

But we actually, we did, every time we finished. And that coursework, actually, occupied 90% of the marks. So by the end of the, of the semester, when we entered into the exams hall, piece of cake.

[26 : 21] Only, firstly, it was only 10% of the marks. And then, because I've, I know, the things we have studied, all right through the six months. So we have no fear.

Same thing. If we exercise, experiencing the love of God, exercising the love of God in our lives, and before the judgment throne, no fear. Don't have to wait to judgment throne.

Even on earth, everyday life, we can be confident in God. We have no fear. All right? I remember that song.

Was that, what's that, what's the song name? No longer, we're no long, how do you sing that? No longer a slave of fear. I'm a, I am a child of God.

I got it right this time. Now that song says something a lot, about God's love to me. All right? I do not deserve it. And God's love just fill me. Yes. But it, it actually forgotten about, how we need to express that love as well.

[27 : 28] So to make that, complete. And in doing so, we can be confident. No fear.

And lastly, committed to love. We love because, he first loved us. We claim, to love God, but we hate our brother or sister, as a liar.

Whoever does not love their brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they cannot see. They have not seen. And he has given us this command, anyone who loves God, must also love their brother and sisters.

And, John said, if you love, you say, you love God, but you hate your brother, that's the opposite. I mean, he said, you are lying.

And that word, as sisters, that, that is, became, the English word, pseudo. What is pseudo? Fake. Right?

[28 : 40] Fake. Counterfeit. If you claim, you are a loving, Christian, who receive, experiencing the love of God, and you cannot, love your brothers and sisters.

Now, don't even mention about hate. I don't think many of us, really hate the guts, of our brothers and sisters. Or, really hate, many, I think, at the most, in your whole, entire life.

You might, just hate, one or two. All right? That may be, exaggerating. But, let's not, talking about hate.

But, I think a lot of us, has a lot of, indifferences, in us. All right? When we, somebody in this room, we just neglect them.

And, we know there's needs. We know there's troubles, in their lives. And, we pretend, we do not see them. All right? And, oh, let's, I'll just pray for you.

[29 : 42] Use that as, bye bye. You know? Use that as a, as a phrase, well, see you later. Now, I did not say that, James said that.

James, in this time, he said that, look, if you see somebody, in need, had no food, had no clothes, and you say, go in peace. Same thing today.

How, would that love, of God, be manifesting, in us? And, and James said, you are, you are, yeah, I mean, in, in that, you are, you're not, it's not, inappropriate, expression.

I think, for us, it's a lifelong, lifelong, um, exercising, of loving, one another.

Because, if we said, in, in, 316, 1st John 316, says, how we are to love, Jesus Christ, lays down, his love, for us.

[30 : 50] and we ought to lay down, lays down his life, for us. And we ought to lay down, our lives, for our brothers, and sisters. Of course, we are not Jesus.

We cannot, truly lay down, everything. But, we are to, to, imitate, Christ. when we love, let us be a little bit more genuine.

We cannot, we're not like Jesus, we can't, we, you know, we can't do everything, right? But at least, a little bit, a little bit more genuine.

And ask God to, in our limitation, let us, give a little bit more. Time, effort, money, let us, genuinely, love.

Maybe one of, our new year, that's for me anyway, a deeper love, experiencing, God's deeper love, and, and expressing, deeper love, from God, to others.

[31 : 57] I'll be, I'll be, um, learning, and teaching, uh, family, in the, in the, um, Sunday school, from February, to March.

As I was preparing the materials, um, it came, something, came across that really stuck, in my mind. It's, uh, one of the, president in one of the seminary, in Hong Kong, he was, uh, uh, pretty passionate about families.

In his, in his book, he says something like, marriage, a family, is lifelong, but it's not eternal. And I ponder on that, and wonder, what it, what did it mean?

Now, just think, your marriage, your family, whom we love dearly, right? We're trying to protect, without, without feeble efforts, trying to make it good.

Yes, yes, it will be lifelong, but it does not, go, carry on to eternity, because Jesus said, in heaven, there is no marriage, neither get married, or no one married, alright?

[33 : 09] And, and he said, whoever, is my brother, whoever, obey my word, will be my brothers, and sisters, my mothers, and parents, and so. So, in Christ, what is eternal?

It's the family, in Christ, it's you and I, in church, as a brotherly, and sisterly relationship, here, in this church, and in other churches, right?

So, and also, I think in family, in this, our own earthly family, we try to love, we give our best, and somehow, we can be very exclusive, you know, and, and time, I give mine, to here, to my family, and then they will exclude, our other brothers, and sisters, or our friends, or relatives, right?

But, if the truth is, the marriage, our family, and here on earth, is, is only, only to the end of our lives, and the eternal relationship, is amongst, brothers and sisters, in Christ, perhaps, we need to, work a little bit more, onto, this relationship, this blood relationship, in Jesus.

Now, imagine, if we have someone, we don't go, get along well, but you have to, be with him, or her, eternally. What are we going to do?

[34 : 48] We don't wait, until we get to heaven, oh, no, you are here. No, we better, we better work on it, right now, you know, let's, let's, let's work it out, Isaac, something, you know, got onto my, got onto my, my nerve, but, pain in the neck, but we're, we're going to work it out, in Christ, right?

Let's, let's, let's, let's, let's, let the love of God, to, to, to change us, and then we buddy, buddies and go into heaven. I pray, the end of the year, the last sermon, the last service, when we take a hard look at ourselves, ask God, to give me the courage, to look at myself.

As I prepare, I prayed, I prayed, Lord, am I speaking, speaking this, am I actually, doing it? Have I been, have I been, critical?

Have I been judgmental? Have I always kind of, just, said stuff, but not doing enough, and loving others, in my family, in church, in church.

Lord, fill me, with your love. And Lord, if there is someone in my life, that I need to improve that relationship, to restore that relationship, Lord, help me.

[36 : 21] Let's pray. Father, may your word, speak to us. as a final, message, for this year, Lord, let's not, let's not, just, just to hear it, and then, we lost it.

Lord, just, just, penetrate that truth, into my heart. And Holy Spirit, convict us, and change us, and motivate us, because we believe, your love has filled our lives, and it will continue to fill, so that Lord, we can, obey your command, to go and love, like you have loved us.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.