

In This is Love

I John 4:16-21

6/24/07

Intro

What is God like? How do describe God who even in His Word says that He is indescribable? Many people are convinced that He is an angry God eagerly waiting for the day of destruction. Many people believe that God doesn't like them.

But there is a theme that runs through this letter that describes God terms of how great is His love and that He invites us to draw near and abide in His love.

It is that love that we have found to be transforming. In the sixties, the hippie movement began because that generation didn't see genuine love in society and thought to make a new society based on love. But it wasn't love at all, it was selfishness wrapped in tie-dyed T-shirts. But when they discovered the love of Christ, the Jesus Movement was born.

**These are the insights and applications
of understanding God's love for us.**

I. Believe the Love God Has For Us

A. Faith is essential to love

- Vs 16 – we have come to know and believe the love which God has for us.

- “How great the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure,” go the words of a worship song we love so much.
- God's love is indeed vast beyond all measure, but we must believe its vastness and that He extends that love to us.

I John 5:4, For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.

- But many people do not have the faith to see the vastness of God's love, but see God as an angry God and are locked into that mindset.

Illus – In 1741 Jonathan Edwards preached what was probably his most famous sermon, which was called, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”

This has come represent hell-fire and brimstone sermons with such lines as, “you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours.”

- In contrast, this Psalm of David captures the heart of God beautifully.

Psalm 36:7-9, How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.

Romans 2:4, Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Illus – We believe in God and God believes in us.

B. God is love

- This is who God is and this is what motivates His actions toward us.

Illus – When our kids were young we used to play a game to show how much we loved each other. “I love you as big as the whole world.”

- While these are great expressions of love, they don’t come close to expressing God’s love because it is who He is.
- These are the themes that John is emphasizing, that this is who God is; God is love and God is light.

John 3:16-21 – Light and love of God

Illus – Cockroaches are a perfect illustration of something that is of the darkness.

- But God’s love is so powerful that he can change a cockroach into a butterfly – that is true metamorphosis.

1 John 4:8-9, for God is love. 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.

- Not all light is of God...

Illus – False doctrines are like bug zappers, it’s light, but it’s not good.

1 John 4:1, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

II. There is No Fear in Love

A. Perfect love casts out all fear

- At the end of every life comes an accounting, a face to face meeting with the Lord Himself.
- But love is perfected in us that we may have confidence in the day of judgment.
- It means that love has accomplished what God meant for it to do; it has given us confidence that we will still be abiding in God’s love when the day of reckoning comes to each of us.

1 John 2:28, Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

- John says that perfect love casts out all fear.
- What that means is that if love fills the heart, there is no room for fear.

- “Fear involves punishment” is not quite accurate, it is better to say, fear torments or fear imprisons.
- There is eternal application and a present application. We are confident in the day of judgment and we are confident now to the point that we are freed from the prison that fear brings.

App – Fear often involves the unknown. There is fear of darkness or fear of swimming because of what might lurk in the water, of fear about what might happen in the future. But if God’s love is accomplished, it casts out fear.

Illus – I remember when I was a child and had a very vivid dream of a dark presence coming to attack. As it approached from shadow to shadow, I kept trying to say the name Jesus, finally when I did, all fear was gone!

B. We love because He first loved us

- We know what love is because God has demonstrated it without question.

Romans 5:8, but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

I John 4:10-11, 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

- It’s not just that we love Him, but we can love others because we have received it, we know what love is.

App – When we were lost and destroying our lives, God loved us until we were changed; that is truly love.

When I was making destructive decisions, there were those who loved me until I was changed.

There are so many who are lost and destroying their lives and what they need is to be loved into changing direction in their lives.

Illus – When I was in the fraternity, there was a guy who was bent on worldliness, there were several nights I had to hold him through the worst of it. How could I judge him when I had been there myself?

C. Keep yourselves free from idols

- As we near the end of this book, we can’t leave it without picking up the last verse of chapter five.
- “Little children, keep yourselves free from idols,” John wrote.
- The reason John wrote that is because idols were a big part of their lives before they became Christians and some wanted to drag that with them when they came to faith in Christ.

II Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

- People have continued that ever since.

- Even in the Reformation, as people were coming out of the Catholic Church, they were bringing certain doctrines and practices with them.
- We need to discern that there may be things in our lives that we brought with us from our past that God wants us to let go of.
- And then move toward that which God is desiring to build in our lives.