

1 John

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1 John 4:7-10

- God is love. John is not writing a systematic argument, building his argument piece by piece toward a final conclusion. He keeps circling back around to the key points he wants to hammer into his readers, chief among these points being this – God is love. Too often today’s false teachers want to turn it around in English and say, “Love is God”, seeking to justify whatever love there may be, and also to somewhat redefine God and control His message. But in John’s Greek writing the absence of the definite article before “love” and its presence before “God” prevents that kind of hijacking of John’s statement. The singular defining quality of the Father is the unconditional, sacrificing, infinitely generous *agape* love we find in His Son, Jesus Christ.
- Of primary importance to us is the understanding that our Christianity is defined not by how moral we are, nor how faithful to our church, but in our relationship to God and to others. Paul was certainly frustrated when he wrote 1 Corinthians 13 and maybe a little angry, because the people of that church prided themselves on just how spiritual they were...but they lacked love. Their elegant sermons had no love, so they were nothing more than noisy gongs and clanging cymbals. It has been said that the cross is the ideal symbol for the Christian church because it perfectly represents the vertical relationship we have with our Heavenly Father as well as the horizontal relationship we have with other people. And it’s all about the love of Christ.
- So what does this teach us? 1) That love’s headwaters flow out of God, “for love is from God.” We are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and the image of God is love. This begins to get at the startling statement of Jesus in the Sermon of the Mount, for when we love as God loves, as Christ loves, as the Holy Spirit empowers us to us to love, we become perfect as our Father

in Heaven is perfect. We become a true reflection of our Father. One of the early church fathers, Clement of Alexandria, once said that the true Christian “practices being God” as he or she loves as God loves. 2) There is two-way traffic on God’s river of love. It is only by knowing God that the can know how to love and it is only by love that we can know God. “...everyone who loves God is born of God and knows God.” William Barclay points out that, “Love comes from God and love leads to God.”

- In verse 9 John essentially restates what he wrote in 3:14 of his gospel. God’s love for us is made tangible and real by sending His only begotten Son into the world that we might be saved, that we might live through Him. here we see at least two more things about God’s love and how we can better know the love that we are to show. 1) This love is a love that holds nothing back. If God is willing to sacrifice His only Son, then there is nothing He will not give (Romans 8:32). 2) It is a love overflowing with grace. Romans 5:8 tells us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The world that Jesus Christ came into was a terrible world, a brutal world, a world virtually devoid of love and kindness. Yet this is the world that God so loved. And we ourselves were wretched and sinful when Christ came to us. The salvation that comes to us via the love of Christ, comes to us when are at our worst, and so we too are to love others even when they are at their worst.
- In those three little words, God is Love, we find the key that unlocks the Scriptures and the most pressing of all of life’s questions. 1) Here we better understand the purpose of Creation. Why DID God create the world? Because God is love. He does not desire to live in isolation. Deep calls unto deep. Angels who serve Him are not like Him. So God creates us unlike the angels, in His own image, so that we are able to love as He loves and thus able to love Him as He loves us. Therefore we are created to be in a love relationship with God. Here is the meaning and purpose the non-theistic world longs for and cannot see. 2) Here we better understand the need for free will in Creation. You can almost here the angels whispering in the early days of Creation that free will was going to be a bad idea. But love compelled is not really love. Love must be freely given. My car is a machine.

It serves me. When I crank it up, put it into gear, it will take me where I want to go. There is a relationship there of sorts. If I take care of the car, it will serve me as I require, but it cannot love me, it lacks the ability to choose to do so. God in creation limits Himself to allow people to choose either to love Him or not. 3) Here we better understand the providence of God. It is often said that America's Founding Father's were not Christian but deists, in that they believed in God, but that God, once Creation was completed, left humanity to its own devices to work out its life. This of course is a false generalization. The Founding Father's hardly agreed on anything, let alone belief in God. But there is a clear streak of deism in Thomas Jefferson and America as a whole. Where that fails is in a misunderstanding of the nature of God. God is love. He created out of love and He surely was not going to abandon His Creation nor the penultimate aspect of Creation the people He created in His own image. The Old Testament and the New Testament alike are nothing if not the story of God's interaction with and in and through His Creation. John 3:16 and verse 9 here blows deism out of the water. 4) Here we better understand the why and how of God's redemption. With free choice, it was inevitable sin, choosing against God, would enter into His Creation. And if law and the justice the world clamors for were the defining qualities of God, then He would simply leave us to the consequences of our sin and rebellion. But God is love. His love is why He sent Jesus to be "the propitiation for our sins" (vs. 10), the One who takes away the wrath of God. 5) Here we better understand the why and how Christ has prepared a place for us, that where He is, we may be also. If God created simply for the sake of creating, then we would be nothing more than corn in a farmer's field. Once we are done, we are cut down and destroyed to make way for the next crop. But God through His love ensures that death and the grave do not have the last word. By His love He makes a way for us to live with Him and through Him for eternity (vs. 9).