

Relying on God's Love

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[0:00] 1 John 4, we'll read verses 7 through the first part of verse 16. Please stand together with me for this reading from God's Word.

! 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 us, 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.

[1:03] 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 Savior of the world.

If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in Him and He in God. So we know and rely on the love God has for us. Well, the Apostle John loved to speak and write about the love of God.

And that's because he had known it, personally experienced it himself. And in the fourth chapter here of his first epistle, John has been talking about God's love for us.

A love seen in sending His Son into the world that we might live through Him. And he tells of that love, how that He died for our sins, to turn God's wrath away from us by bearing it Himself.

And then he comes to this brief conclusion in verse 16. And so, we know and rely on the love that God has for us.

[2:16] Now, John's saying two things about God's love for us. First, we know it. Secondly, we rely on it. We know it. We know the love God has for us.

Many people claim to know God's love. They know all about it. They could quote many Bible verses about God's love. Perhaps John 3.16. They could tell you many things that are true about that love. Maybe the seven things that we've studied about God's love. But it does nothing to change them and the way that they live. It's all head knowledge and nothing more.

Nothing wrong with head knowledge. We must have that. But they have nothing more than that.

They've not experienced that love. The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know.

It's one thing to read about love. It is another thing to know and to experience love. Actually, being loved by another seems so scarce today that many seem to be satisfied to just read about it in romance novels and so to experience it vicariously through someone else.

[3:33] And so they can read all about it and they can fantasize all about it while they know nothing of it personally. John doesn't just mean that we know about God's love in the sense that we've heard about it.

Yes, that is true. But it means that we know it. We know it personally. In our life experience, we can say with Paul, he loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2.20 We've tasted his love. The love of God in a crucified Savior and in thousands of other expressions.

So to be loved by God and to know it, to have that love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He's given to us. This is a heaven on earth. And that's what John is claiming.

For all believers, we know the love that God has for us. But the second thing John says, and it's with this that we want to spend our time this morning, is that we rely on the love that God has for us.

[4:40] Knowing His love, we rely on it too. Knowing that His love is self-initiating and sovereign and holy and unchangeable and eternal and infinite and costly love, we now trust in it.

We have confidence in it. We lean on it. We depend upon it. We rely upon it. What a way to live.

Relying upon the love God has for us. There's a house fire at night and everyone is safely out except a six-year-old boy up in his bedroom.

He doesn't have much time before his room too will be in flames and he comes to the window and looks down and sees his father who's pleading with him to jump. Jump and I'll catch you, he says. The son has every reason to believe, to trust, to rely on his father's love. This is the one who's often played with him.

[5:47] This is the one who has bought him presents. This is the one who hugged him and kissed him many times, who's taken care of him. And from these lesser expressions of love from his father, he reasons to the greater, that he will catch me if I jump to him.

He'll not let me fall to the ground. So knowing the love that his father has for him, he now relies on his love and falls into his arms.

We know and rely on the love that God has for us. Children of God, we reason the other way around.

We reason from the greater to the lesser. Romans 8, 32. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all.

How will he not also along with him graciously give us all things? You're in need. You're in some trouble.

[6:54] You have a need. You're able to go to the greatest expression of love. And you look and you remember that he didn't spare his own son, but he gave him up for you.

Gave him up to the hellish cross to bear God's wrath in your place. You were needy. You needed a substitute to die in your place. And he gave you his own son.

And we go to that greatest expression of love and we reason from it to the lesser. If he's not withheld his own son, will he withhold what I need in this trial?

No, he will not. We know and we rely on the love that God has for us. What will he not do for those he loves with his special love?

What will he not give to those he has given his son for? If God is for us in his love, who can be against us? Such is the reasoning of the child of God.

[7:53] So whatever the trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or danger or sword, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

And there is nothing in all creation that will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And so we, in our present trial, rely on the love that God has for us.

And we lean hard on his love with great confidence. Now, the Bible speaks a lot about this relying upon God's love.

It uses different terms throughout the Bible to trust in his love, to lean on his love, to rest in his love. But it's speaking about the same thing.

to rely on God's love and what a difference it makes in our lives. So we're going to be drawing out the difference that it makes in our lives when we rely on God's love.

[8:56] In all of our troubles, then, here is solid ground to rest on, the love that God has for us. If my boss is upset with me, God loves me.

If my wife is upset with me, God loves me. If my children are angry with me, God loves me.

If my friends turn against me, God loves me. Does the world hate me? God loves me still. If nothing seems to be going my way, God loves me.

And so we know and rely on the love that God has for us. Now this means a lack of love from others, then, does not derail me because I know that Jesus loves me.

And that is enough. His love is better than life. It's a continual feast for the soul. It's the table spread before us, even in the presence of our enemies. The love God has for me.

[10:01] Now here's the answer for all of our insecurities, then, with people. Insecurities with people. We're so nervous about whether other people will like us or not, that we're not free to be ourselves.

We're in bondage. Will she like me? Will he like me? What do I need to do to make sure he likes me? And we're in bondage to their love.

When our focus is on ourselves, whether or not people will like us, we're not free to be ourselves, and neither are we free to serve others.

We're not free to ask, as we come into the situation, what do they need that I can provide? How can I minister to her? How can I minister? Because I'm looking at myself, oh, will they like me?

And we're crippled from loving and serving. But what a freeing thing it is to know and rely on the love that God has for me. God loves me. And so I'm free to forget about myself and to serve you. [11:07] I'm free to forget about myself and to be who I am. I am loved. I am loved. I can risk loving you because the one who knows me best loves me most.

There's a lot of truth in that little couplet, a lot of biblical psychology, if you will. But when I am loved, when I know and rely on the love God has for me, I can risk loving you.

Are there risks in love? You bet. Without that security in God, I won't risk it with you. But knowing He loves me, I can risk loving you.

He sets me free from that self-centered preoccupation, from being a people pleaser, from pretending to be something that I'm not. And then relying on God's love enables me to be transparent with God Himself.

Not just not trying to uphold an image before you, but it enables me to be open and honest before the living God because the one who knows me best loves me most.

[12:27] So I rely on that love and I don't have to try to keep up images with Him. I know He loves me. He knows all about me, all about my failures, my sins of this week, my sins of this morning.

He knows every one of them. My thoughts, my actions, my secrets, and He loves me. I can rely on that. And so His love frees me to openly confess what I am to Him.

Confess my sin, confess my fears, confess my need of Him. Why? Because I'm assured that nothing I tell Him will make Him love me less. His love is unchanging love.

He already knows and loves me in spite of myself. He never loved me in the first place because of something good about me. His love is self-initiating. His love is sovereign, unchanging. So I don't have to try to keep up an image with Him or anyone else.

Knowing and relying on God's love frees me from all such pretending. So we come to Psalm 51 and verse 1.

[13:38] David's got some big sins to confess. He's committed adultery with another man's wife. And then he had him killed so that he could marry her.

And he's tried to cover up the whole thing with deceitful scheming. And now he's coming free before the Lord. What gives him courage to open up and to own everything that he's done and been and that he is?

Well, he knows and relies on the love God has for him. Notice verse 1 in his confession. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love.

According to your great compassion, blot out my transgression. It's like David is willing to hang his whole confession on this attribute of God's great love, his unfailing love.

And so he tells him all. He's assured that the one who knows him best loves him most. And it won't change that. He's relying upon that love.

[14:49] And I wonder how much of our own slowness to confess specific sins to the Lord, to just come and tell him what we've done, is due to a lack of assurance and security and in knowing and relying on the love that God has for us.

If we relied more on his love, we would come more often. We would come sooner and we would confess more fully and freely. We'd cast ourselves upon that unfailing love.

that's the way Moses, the great intercessor, prayed for the rebellious Israelites. There they are on the threshold of the promised land, come through 40 years in the wilderness.

Excuse me, this is before the wilderness wanderings. They've come right up to the promised land and they send the spies in and oh, they've got giants in the land and through unbelief they say, let's come up with another leader who will take us back to Egypt.

and God was so angry with them, he's ready to destroy the whole lot and start over with Moses and come up with another people greater than them. And Moses intercedes and listened to his prayer and how he relies on the love God has for them.

[16:08] In accordance with your great love, forgive the sins of these people just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now. Numbers 14, 19.

He hangs his confession upon God's unfailing love. Brothers and sisters in Christ, that's your privilege. To rely on his love.

Oh, it should make us free in our confession of sin. We don't have anything to hide anyway. He knows it all. But knowing he loves us and relying on it, we're free to be transparent and open in our confession of sin.

It's the way Nehemiah prayed, show mercy to me according to your great love. So if we know and rely on God's love, we make it the ground of our plea in prayer.

Now there is a solid ground. God's love for us in Christ is solid ground on which to make your plea in prayer. Whether it's for forgiveness, for deliverance, or for any other kind of help.

[17:11] To make God's love for you in Christ the ground of your plea. David in Psalm 17, 7, show the wonder of your great love.

Go ahead, just show off your love by saving me. You who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes. Psalm 69, 16, answer me out of the goodness of your love.

Psalm 6 and verse 5, save me because of your unfailing love. He prays that way nearly dozens of times throughout the Psalms. Save me because of your unfailing love.

He's hanging his petition upon this attribute of God's love. He's relying on the love God has for him. Therefore, for God to appear for him in deliverance of one kind or another.

Do you pray that way? Do I pray that way? Lord, because you love me, help me. Lord, because of the greatness of your love, come and do this for me.

[18:12] Lord, because your love is unfailing, deliver me. Do you lean hard on his love in your prayers? We see it in the request of Mary and Martha when their brother Lazarus was sick.

Luke, or John 11, 3, the sister sent word to Jesus, Lord, the one you love is sick. Isn't that interesting?

The message would have sufficed to have said, Lord, Lazarus is sick. But no, it's Lord, the one you love is sick. They appealed to Jesus' love.

And so should we in our praying. Lord, the one you love is sick. Remember your love for our brother.

And come and help him. Remember the love for our sister and come and help her. The one you love is in need. What a wonderful thing is the love of God to rely upon when we pray.

[19:22] I've seen pictures from China of Buddhist prayer wheels lined up in a row with little pieces of paper pinned to the wheels. and then whenever people walk by they spin the wheels and the more they spin the more the prayers are heard.

We pin our request not to some superstitious prayer wheel but we pin our petitions directly to God's love for us in Christ. because of your unfailing love pardon my iniquity because of your unfailing love extend the gospel because of your unfailing love heal this one that you love that is sick.

We're considering you see the difference that God's love makes in our lives when we know it and when we rely upon it. Consider how it comforts us in the midst of a thousand things that would cause us to worry and fear.

David was often in danger he was often fearful he told us what he did when he was afraid in Psalm 32 10 David said many are the woes of the wicked but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.

His unfailing love you know what the unfailing love of God is it's his unchangeable commitment to do us good. The unfailing love of God is his unchanging commitment to do us good.

[20:59] And he says that this love this unfailing love of the Lord surrounds the man who trusts in him. David knew there were many who were committed to doing him harm but he knew that there was one greater who was committed to do him committed to doing him good.

And his love surrounded him. Now usually it's bad to be surrounded in military if you're in the city you don't want to be surrounded by your enemies but David says I'm surrounded by the unfailing love of God.

So here he is and he's surrounded by God's love like the huge strong walls of a city. and so whoever is seeking him harm whatever is threatening him he knows that nothing can reach him unless it makes it through.

That unfailing love that commitment of God that unchanging commitment of God to do him good can't touch him. He's surrounded by God's unchanging love.

And the same is true of you believers. There are things in people that would do us harm that would cause us worry. There's the threatened loss of life itself. The loss of job the loss of money the loss of health the loss of loved ones.

[22:19] There's Satan's malice and his temptations there's mistreatment from the world in many forms but the moat around the castle is filled with God's unfailing love and nothing can get through.

But what he deems is good for me and I can rest in his love. It's a love that drives out all sorts of fears safe and secure from all alarm leaning on the everlasting arms of love.

So what's threatening? Your joy your peace your safety here is your security the love God has for you it's real it's as real as that moat around the castle it's as real as those high walls around the city so rest in it rely upon it Deuteronomy 33 12 let the beloved of the Lord that's the ones the Lord loves let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him for he shields him all day long and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders this is what it means to be loved by God is to be able to just rest secure because his love shields you between you and whatever threatens you is a shield and it says on it the unfailing love of the Lord nothing can get to you he his love shields you all day long the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders do you see yourself there positioned on on his breast that's where you are in those arms of love see yourself there

Zechariah 3 17 he will quiet you with his love like a fearful child awakened by a thunderstorm at night is hugged and held and quieted by the love of a parent he will quiet you with his love and so we can sleep we need not lay awake and worry worry in vain Psalm 127 2 in vain you rise early and stay up late toiling for food to eat for he grants sleep to those he loves here's another benefit of being the loved ones of the savior he grants sleep to those he loves and none sleep so hard as those who know and rely upon his love what a pillow to put your head on at night God loves me if I should die before I wake I know this God who loved me and Jesus on the cross will come and take me to be with him and then it's

God's love for us that keeps us hopeful in any trial turn to Psalm 130 and verse 7 Psalm 130 God's love for us keeps us hopeful in any trial David had been through many trials as the people of God had and they had come to see the unfailing love of God in action for their redemption and so we have this word to the people of God Psalm 130 verse 7 oh Israel put your hope in the Lord and we might say well that's easy for you to say you don't understand what I'm going through it's pretty hopeless put your hope in the Lord why for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption there is enough for hope if you have the unfailing love of the

[26 : 16] Lord now hope is the confident expectation of future good that's what hope is it's not an iffy thing well I hope so we really aren't sure the hope of the Bible is a sure!

it's a confident expectation of future good it's a forward looking thing it's future good and it's a confident thing we expect good in the future now why do we expect good well the love that God has for us his unfailing love is the ground of our hope we can rely on this when we see no reason for hope he loves us and he's committed to do us good Christians therefore should be the most hopeful of people that in every circumstance they're confident of future good because God loves them whatever else is happening around me the most important thing is always God loves me in Jesus Christ and that love is unfailing love turn back to Psalm 13 and find David in a very low time in his life he paints a very gloomy landscape there are dark clouds everywhere there enemies triumphing over him he's got heart sorrow every day can't shake those worrisome thoughts feeling like the Lord's forgot about him and was hiding his face from him it looks hopeless! how long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart how long will my enemy triumph over me look on me and answer oh Lord my God give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death my enemy will say I have overcome him and my foes will rejoice when I fall now there's nothing but gloom and doom!

verse 5 and it's like a beam of sunlight on an overcast day but I trust in your unfailing love now that's simply John's statement in 1st John 4 16 that I we rely on the love God has for us I trust in your unfailing love my heart rejoices in your salvation I will sing to the Lord for he has been good to me you always have this to rely on whatever your circumstance the unfailing love of God for you not your love for him but his love for you not the quality of your trust and your faith but the quality of his love it's unfailing in the furnace God may prove the fence to bring thee forth more bright but can never cease to love you you're precious in his sight he can't his love cannot fail you it cannot fail any more than

God can fail Octavius Winslow tells believers that the Lord Jesus Christ loves you so much that he would die all over for you if that was necessary and his point is it's unfailing love the same love that was in the heart of Jesus as he hung on the cross in those three dark hours he loved you there he loved you on Calvary and he loves you today just as much as he did when he died for you it's unfailing love what a comfort in all our afflictions that whatever is happening to me Jesus loves me and then in all your confusion rely on his love in all your confusion yes the bible talks about children

of light walking in the dark Isaiah chapter 50 true believers true children of light can sometimes be bewildered and perplexed and not have a clue what God is doing with them God if you're speaking to me in this providence

[30 : 31] I'm not hearing if you're pointing in this situation I'm not seeing anything it's all dark I don't know what you're doing in my life I'm just getting up and going to work day after day with no sense of purpose in it all well this much you know if you're Christ he loves you he loves you and that makes all the difference even in your emotional reaction to life when you're perplexed Psalm 138 8 the Lord will fulfill his purpose for me your love oh Lord endures forever do not abandon the work of your hands there were a lot of times David didn't have a clue what was going on in his life I thought I was supposed to be king of Israel and I've spent the best of my years 12 of them running like a partridge from a bunch of hunters what's this all about where are you leading

God where is this going to end but he says the Lord will fulfill his purpose for me how does he know that because your love oh Lord endures forever you will not abandon the works of your hands so I don't understand his purpose for me but he does and he will fulfill!

and I know it's a loving purpose for his love so let him who walks in the dark who has no light trust in the name of the Lord his God and rely on his God rely on the Lord's love for you so what we've seen this morning is the difference that relying on God's love makes in our life but we've been looking at it from our perspective before we close let's consider it from God's perspective if relying on your comfort and encouragement consider how it's much to God's pleasure and delight Psalm 147 and verse 11 here the psalmist says the Lord delights in those who fear him who put their hope in his unfailing love so what delights this awesome

God of heaven what gives him pleasure it's to see not the strength of a man not the strength of a horse it's not the self sufficiency of a Christian that has all that he needs in himself no what delights the Lord is to see us putting our confidence in his unfailing love so there you are in your trial and there's everything to discourage and to depress there's nothing but darkness perhaps but because of God's unfailing love for you you're hopeful you're expecting good from him you're relying on his love in your troubles what does that do for God's love well it speaks well of it doesn't it can you believe it this woman she's not under love and dragging why not because she's she's she's got hope what's the reason for the hope within her God loves her and that's enough for her to be hopeful and when

God sees one of his children walking in darkness walking in trouble and yet hoping in him oh what a compliment to his love what that says to the world you ought to know the love of this God it's so great that it holds us up when there's nothing else to encourage us the love of Jesus what it is none but his loved ones know and so the Lord takes pleasure the Lord he delights have you seen my servant there the one who's being sorely try have you seen them hoping in my love the Lord delights in those who put their hope in his unfailing love so what a difference God love God's love should make in our lives as we rely upon it as we know it and rely upon it so so whatever you're facing whatever's threatening you whatever's causing worry and fear and doubt and disappointing and confusion in the moment of your fear and insecurity run to this

[35 : 07] Lord Jesus and rest rely upon his love that he has for you now that's no small thing what John just summarizes here we know and love know and rely on the love God has for us that's a huge thing to the Christian it's critical to our spiritual health as a believer it's something that we are to do every day just to be relying on the love God has for us we're to live upon his love and we're no more healthy spiritually than we are aware of God's love for us in Jesus Christ so do you know God's love well enough to rest and rely upon it you say I can't rest and I can't rely on it oh the need is to so know that love that we will rely will trust will believe will place our faith upon it so what's the remedy well let's go back to last week and meditate on his love let's keep his love before us all the day let's thank him for his love let's sing of his love let's rejoice and be glad in his love let's tell others of his love let's know it better that we might rely on it more think of it this way

Christian have you relied on God's love for you in Christ enough to expect him to take away your sin forever and to give you eternal life then can you not rely upon his love if he's done that for you can you not rely upon his love to help you through your present trial friend you don't know Christ John says we know and rely on the love God has for us and he's pointing to that love demonstrated in giving his son to bear his wrath against sinners are you relying on that love of God in Christ is that your reliance is that your trust your hope your confidence I invite you to do so this morning to put all your weight upon God's love for you in Christ all your hopes for heaven and if you do you'll never be

put to shame but you know you're you're never relying on
God's love for you in Christ as long as you're relying on yourself as long as you have any weight on
your own goodness any weight on who you are as a good person it is that much weight that you are
not putting upon Christ and so you're not relying on God's love for you in Christ you're relying on
who you are and what you've done no you must forsake all other reliance and you must hang the
whole of your weight upon Christ you must not have anything in yourself you must not have any
hope in anything that you've done or that you are and you must rely on God's love for you in Christ
and if you do that then you will never be disappointed for whoever puts their trust in him will never
be put to shame you'll never come to a time when you say boy you know the love of
God in Christ isn't all it was cracked up to be no you'll come to the day of judgment and and you will
see people who maybe had part of their weight on Christ and part of their weight on their own good
deeds and you'll find them those who relied at all upon themselves you'll see them lost forever but
you'll also find yourself if you relied all together on Christ you will find that you're welcomed into
heaven there to adore this wondrous love and to bask in it for all eternity so I invite you today come
cast your reliance upon this Savior taste and see that it is indeed as good as his word says our
father we are humbled at your love if your love was as fickle as man's then we would understand
ourselves why it is that we are not always relying upon it but
Lord when we have been taken to the cross and there shown the depth of your love and when
we've walked with you and witnessed your actions with men for many many years and found that
your love is unfailing love we're we're a mystery to ourselves why we do not trust your love more
and it shuts us up to you to see that our very reliance upon you must be given by you you must
open our eyes that we might have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is this love
of Christ you must come and shed abroad this love in our hearts or will not know it as we ought and
will not rely upon it as we ought forgive us for our sin and oh help us to honor your love before a
world by resting in it come and help us Lord we're weak we're poor we're needy but oh you're so
rich you know us this morning you see us through and through and we thank you that we can have
confidence in your love if you've died for us that you will not withhold your blessing from us so come
and minister your love to each heart we ask in Jesus name amen