

How He Loves Us

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 4. Does God's love have any practical use, practical purpose?

We are talking about looking at God's love, and I hope that it is encouraging, and I hope that it's like water on your soul.

I hope that it even makes you happy. But is there a practical use to it? Does it help you live the Christian life?

And my answer to that question is, there isn't anything more practical than beholding the love of God for you. And if you are in a hurry to get past this into practical Christian living, so if you're in a hurry to get past it and into the Christian living, I'm not going to say necessarily it is so, but I wouldn't be surprised if pretty soon you are burned out.

And it wouldn't surprise me if pretty soon you were even bitter, possibly angry at God. And it wouldn't surprise me if pretty soon you got slogged down into fear, paralysis.

[1 : 56] So full of this fear or that fear that you don't do anything. And I'm sure we've all been there where we know the right thing to do, but for whatever reason, whatever fear is keeping us back, we don't do anything.

And fear does have a way of cutting the life out of our Christian life, doesn't it? Of taking us out of doing what we ought to do and should do, and we know we ought to do that.

And we don't do anything because the fear is too great. The Bible talks a lot about people who were afraid and who had trouble obeying because they were afraid.

Well, the Bible does talk about the human spirit when it's disconnected from the love of God. And when it does, two words come up again and again.

The first word is slave and the second word is fear. And here in our passage, John says in verse 16, and we know and rely on the love God has for us.

[3 : 10] That's the Christian life like it was meant to be lived, knowing and then relying on the love of God.

But pretty soon in our passage, knowing and relying on God's love is contrasted with something. And so what does verse 18 say?

There's 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.

And I think what John is saying is there is this fundamental contrast, two different ways of living. It's you know and rely on God's love or you live in this fear.

And John's not talking about the good kind of fear. We talked about the fear of the Lord in Sunday school. He's not talking about that fear. Instead, it's a fear of punishment.

[4 : 13] I need to obey because there is a whip and it's going to come down on my naked back if I don't obey. And so the motive for obedience there, the motive for living that kind of life is not really love for God.

But still, it's a love for self. I don't want this concern only for myself. Romans 8 15 says, we have not received the spirit that makes us slave again to fear.

That is the natural condition of man. When it comes to a real relationship with God, they are afraid of having a real relationship with the real God.

And so they make God look like themselves. They bring down God. They'll have a pretend relationship with the pretend God. But as far as having a real relationship with the God of the Bible, that is something that they are enslaved to their fear.

So slave and fear, we're going to sing at the end of this time, oh, great God. And in that hymn, we sing, we did not know your love within.

[5 : 32] We had no taste for heaven's joys. Then your spirit gave me life, opened up your word to me through the gospel of your son, gave me endless hope and peace.

So love drove out the fear and sonship replaced the slavery. Our sister Jean in the Sunday school talked about one reason we don't pray is I don't feel sometimes like a real daughter, a real son of God.

And so in the Christian life, that sonship needs to replace the slavery that once held us. And then we begin to obey. We're no longer bound by our fears, no longer enslaved to this terror of God and of punishment.

And now we know and rely on the love God has for us. And with that, we have wings and we obey. And with love, we soar into new acts of obedience, greater acts of faith.

And so now it's not fear for ourselves that dominates us. And so we're now free to give ourselves to God and to others because that love has driven out that fear.

[6 : 46] And so there is nothing more practical, more fruitful, more beneficial than the meditating upon the love of God.

And sometimes we can fruitlessly and even pointlessly tell others, this is what you need to do. Now go do it.

And it might be good. And it might be good. And it might be right. And it might be the exact thing that they need to do. But if they're still living out of fear. And if fear is holding on to their lives, causing them to hold on to their sin, if they still have chains, the chains of fear upon them, then nothing will happen.

Obedience will hit a roadblock. And we will not, and they will not obey. So think about why won't that teenager leave her bad friends behind?

She knows they're bad for her. She knows they aren't good friends, but she's afraid to leave them. She's afraid to lose them.

[7 : 58] They are her security. They're the thing that keeps her safe. They're her protection against that fear. The fear of being exposed. The fear of being alone. The fear of being ashamed.

The fear of being nothing. But what will break that girl free? It's the love of God for her. God's love will drive out fear.

And so now you can apply this to your life. I'm trying to tell you this is why this is so important to us practically. And so apply it to your own life.

Think about where are you bound up? Where are you enslaved to others other than God? Or enslaved to things other than God?

Where are you afraid to do what is right? And so bring your slavery and bring your struggles and bring your fears to God's love.

[8 : 58] And so in a way, let love and that fear get into the ring together. And watch that fear fly before the love of God.

It's not just our happiness that depends on knowing and relying on God's love for us. It is our obedience. It's our spiritual strength.

Without it, we don't have any strength. Without it, our motives are extremely suppressed and lowered. Without it, we have no resources.

For the joy of the Lord is our strength. And what gives us joy? But to know that he loves me. And that's why this is so important.

And so that's why we can't be in a hurry to get past this very fundamental subject of the love of God for us. It's where the Christian life began.

[9 : 59] It is the ABCs. But William Shakespeare never got over the ABCs. The greatest authors, the greatest poets, they never got over the ABCs.

No matter how far you go down the road. No matter how mature you are in Christ. And there are some here that are very mature. You've been Christian for years and years. And yet, you know. I still need to know that God loves me. I still need to remember that. I still need to behold his love. And so, with that, let's dive back in into that question that we were asking last week.

And the question is, how does God love you? Christian, how does God love you? And remember, we didn't want to just say, this is what the love of God is like.

And sort of look at it theologically. Although there's nothing wrong with that. But we don't in any way want to keep God's love at arm's length. We're not studying it like a scientist studies a mollusk or something.

[11 : 09] No, this is studying how God loves you. His attitude, his affection, his heart toward you in particular.

And so, in some way, this isn't systematic theology. This is more poetry. This is more relationship. This is how a girl studies a boy's love letter.

So, how does God love you? What's his love like that's directed toward you? We saw five things last week.

He loves you perfectly. He couldn't love you any better than he does. His love for you is perfect. Flawless. Spotless. He loves you infinitely. He'll never say, I'll do anything for love, but I won't do that. We go to the cross to see that.

[12 : 10] And there we see that Christ's love is without borders. It's without boundaries. It's without limits. It's beyond any human measurement. That he who was so great would stoop so low and suffer so much.

That he denied his enemies nothing. He let them do to him what they willed. And he let God. God punished his son. And so, that love, it's this infinite love. Boundless love. We sang it this morning. And so, you could sooner gather the whole ocean into your arms than gather his love for you and measure it.

Then we saw his love for you as self-kindled. He doesn't love you because you were lovely. As if you coaxed his love out from him.

Now, his love came out from him all on its own. He loved you while you were still a sinner. He didn't love you because you were good.

[13 : 20] He loved you to make you good. Then he loved you wisely. Or he loves you wisely. He's never caught scratching his head saying, I love him, I love her, but I don't know what to do.

I don't know what they need. I don't know how to get them to where they need to be. And that is an expression that we all, or that's a feeling that we know. Where we love this person and we want to help them.

We want to do good for them, but we just don't know what to do. We don't know how to do it. We don't know the best way. But God in his love is not like that.

He understands you to the very bottom of you. His word divides the motives of our thoughts. And our feelings and our emotions. It goes right down to the depths of us. So he understands where you are. He understands what you need.

[14 : 20] And he understands perfectly how to get you to the place that you need to go. He loves you graciously and mercifully. We saw this grace as the love of God in the face of guilt.

In the face of sin. And mercy is the love of God in the face of weakness. And pain. And sorrow. And need. And God's love is full of both.

And so here we are. We're sinners with real sin. And he loves us. And here we are with real weaknesses. Real needs. Real brokenness.

Real ruin. And he loves us. In those things. And again. Think of it. More than mere.

Systematic truth. But apply it to yourself personally. When you sin. Christian. Christian. When you say those things.

[15 : 22] That you shouldn't say. When you lie. When you lose it with your children. When you steal time at work. When you look at things you shouldn't look at.

When you do things you shouldn't do. God's love is full of grace. He loves you still. He doesn't accept you and say.

Oh that's okay. That's not it. But the point is. Is through those things. And despite those things. He's still committed to you. Committed to doing you good. Well those are the first five ways.

That God loves you. And tonight we're going to look at three more. So how does God love you?

Well he loves you sovereignly. His love for you is sovereign.

And when I say sovereign. Think of a king on a throne. And that's where I want you to put his love. His love is on that throne.

[16 : 26] And so there's the throne room with the king. And let's say you're the courtier. You might say to the king. My sovereign. My lord. My king. My sovereign.

So a sovereign. So a sovereign. Is someone who can do what he wants. Who's royal. Who has the right to command. And whose wish is a command. So a sovereign.

Governs. And orchestrates. All things according to his own wisdom. Or her own wisdom. And will. And so the sovereign moves people around. The sovereign appoints people.

And appoints situations. So think of Pharaoh. In Egypt. Yeah. Pharaoh in Egypt. And there is Joseph. Joseph.

Begins his life in Egypt. As a slave. And Pharaoh takes Joseph. From the prison. From being a slave.

[17 : 24] To the second highest person. In the land. Why did he go from this low. To that high. Pharaoh wanted it. And so think about how many people.

In the Egyptian government. Were passed over. Who saw. This upstart. This nobody. Go from being a slave. To right past them.

And way past them. To now he's the second highest person. In the land. Only Pharaoh is above him. But no one could say.

Pharaoh. You can't do that. No one could say. Pharaoh that's not fair. That's not right. You don't have the right to do that. You know. Here I am.

I've been working all this time. And. No. Pharaoh is the sovereign. Sovereign. And the Lord is sovereign. He rules.

[18 : 21] He orchestrates. He governs. All things according to his will. And that's what I mean. When I say that God's love. Therefore. Is sovereign.

And. It's not just. It's partially in the sense of meaning. He can love who he wants to love. And I mean that. And no one can make God love. Or do anything he doesn't want to do.

That's part of it. But. What I want you to think of here. Is that God's love. Is actually on the throne. Of your life. God's love.

Is the all powerful ruler. So to speak. Of your life. He. In love. Decided where you would be born. And who your parents would be. And when you would come to know.

Jesus Christ. In love. He called you. And in love. He gave you all the gifts. That he has given you. And in love. He appointed you a place. And a position. That you are now presently.

[19 : 21] Sitting in. And exercising. That job. That being a mom. That being a dad. Having those children. Living here. All of that.

Was God's love. Orchestrating. And organizing. Your life. It's the truly governing power.

In your life. And that's what Romans 8.28 teaches. Because all things work together. For the good of those who love God. And are called in. According to his purpose. Because God's love is sovereign.

All powerful. Can do what it wants. God works all things together. For your good. His love orchestrates.

His love controls. His love brings in. And his love pushes out. His love limits. His love. Orchestrates it all.

[20 : 25] And so there's. There's no one. And there's nothing. That can stop. God. From loving you. God's love rules over the trouble.

And the hardship. And the nakedness. And the dangers. And God's love rules over death. And life. And angels. And demons.

And the past. And the present. And the future. And the height. And the depth. And all of creation. Those are all the courtiers.

Of God's love. They're all God's love. They're all God's love servants. They all bow and say. My sovereign.

Death has to say that to you. Or say that to love. For your sake. And so Christian. This is our comfort. In the Heidelberg Catechism.

[21 : 24] The first question. Asks what is our only comfort in life. And in death. And it's a long answer. But part of that answer. Is that. Jesus so preserves me.

That without the will of my heavenly father. Not a hair can fall from my head. Yea. That all things. Must. Be subservient.

To my salvation. Let me read that again. That all things. Must be subservient. To my salvation. All things.

Must get down. And bow. Before God's love. For me. God's love for you. Is sovereign. Because of Jesus.

Death for you. Because we are justified. There's nothing in heaven. Or hell. Or in all of creation. That can tell God's love. You can't do that.

[22 : 24] You can't do that for him. You can't do that for her. Love. Has taken. The throne. Love. And so love. Is swaying the scepter.

And love. Is moving all the pieces. In your life. And it's infinite love. And it's perfect love. And it's wise. And gracious.

And merciful. Love. Love. So where is fear? Where are those chains?

Well they're all shattered. And so we rise up. And we go forth. And we obey. And the confidence. That my life. Not in part. But the whole.

Is upheld. By God's love. And is ruled. And controlled. By. The one who loves us. So God's love. Is sovereign. Secondly.

[23 : 20] God's love. Is holy. Holy. It's undefiled. It's pure. It's spotless. It's love. Without any sin. And we can't say that.

About our love. Because our love. So often. Is. Shot through. With sin. With selfishness. And so we love. And yet. At the same time.

We're. Always looking for. Angle for ourselves. But. That is not God's love at all. God will not sin. To love us. God will not sin. In order to love us.

That's not true of us. Sometimes. In order to. Maintain good relations. With someone. Sometimes. We will. We will be willing.

To sin. To win someone. To. Appease someone. To. Win their affection. To stay their friends. We will sin.

[24 : 15] But God will not do that. He loves us. But he will not sin. For us. And sometimes. We will sin. To supposedly. Love someone.

And people will want us. To sin. If we want to stay. In their good graces. God will never do that. And God will not.

Indulge sin. In our lives. Out of some sort of. Misguided affection. For us. There are probably. Grandpas. And grandmas. And moms.

And dads. There. That wink their eye. At sin. Sin. But God never. Winks his eyes. At our sin. John says. In this book.

That God is love. But before that. He said God is light. And in him. There is no. Darkness. All of God is love.

[25 : 08] And all of God is light. So our love has shadows. Our love has. Spots. Even the sun. And the sky. Has dark spots.

But God's love for us. Has no darkness. And that. Believe it or not. Is good for us. It's good for us. For so many reasons. Because he's never going to. Sinfully. Disappoint us. He's never going to. Sinfully. Come up short.

In loving us. He's never going to. Sinfully. Lose patience. Gets with us. Or fail to act. Kindly. There's no sin. In him.

And it's good for us. For another reason. We might say. And think. Well if God is. God's love is holy. And I'm not. How is that.

[26 : 05] Good news. That sounds like. Bad news. But I just want to say. That's not how it works. In Jesus Christ. When you're in. Christ.

In Jesus Christ. God comes to us. Emmanuel. And he comes close. Jesus came close. To sinners. And he got right down.

In their world. And he lived in a town. Called Nazareth. And Nazareth. Was a town full of sinners. And Jesus was the. Was Jesus of Nazareth. That was his hometown.

That's where he lived. And he rubbed shoulders. And he rubbed elbows. With sinners. And yet. Their sin never defiled him. Instead.

What do we see happening. In the gospels. Is that when Jesus touched. The untouchable. The defiled. They became clean.

[27 : 04] There was. Just all. In Old Testament. The Old Testament religion.

There was the idea that sin is contagious. Sin defiles. And that is so true. And that is why it was so amazing.

What Jesus did. When he came. Instead of. Contagious sin. It was contagious holiness. And so. He came to the unholy. And they did not defile him. And instead. In love. He cleansed them. The book of Hebrews. Calls Jesus. The one who makes men holy. He gets into their lives.

And he makes them holy. And that's God's love. It's a holy love. It's a love that makes us. Holy. Too. So C.S. Lewis said this.

[28 : 04] The Christian does not think. God will love us. Because we are good. But that God will make us good. Because he loves us. And so. In love.

He makes us holy. And so the question is. Why will you be sanctified? Why will you go from glory to glory.

In this life. And perfect holiness. In the next life. Why is the Christian life. It's an up and down roller coaster ride. But there is nevertheless. This growing Christ likeness.

And why though. Despite how hard it is. And how difficult it is. And how slogged down. And ground down. We feel sometimes. Why is our pursuit.

And our battle for sanctification. Not hopeless. It's because. God loves you. And his love is holy. And he's going to make you holy.

[29 : 01] And so that is. Sort of the prevailing wind. That blows in our sails. God loves you. And he will make you holy. And his love for you is holy.

Now third and last. God's love is unchangeable. It's unchangeable. Unchangeable. The theological word is immutable. It just simply means.

It doesn't change. It doesn't mutate. It doesn't change. So. Just think of all the things. That we have said. About God's love. In the last two days.

Two Sundays. Last Sunday. And this Sunday. All those things could be true. God's love for you.

Could be infinite. And wise. And perfect. And merciful. And gracious.

And everything else. But if it could change. Then none of it. Would be good for our faith. None of it would be solid enough.

[29 : 59] For us to rest on. But. What does the Bible say. Again and again. What do the psalmist say. And as you read. First and second kings. And first and second chronicles. And you see it lived out.

In the people's lives. When they came together. They sang a song. And it was always this song. The steadfast love. Of the Lord. Endures forever.

It endures forever. It's good now. But will it be good later? Will it be good tomorrow? It was like that then. God loved like that then.

Will he love like that now? God loved like that. Two thousand years ago. Does he love like that now? The steadfast love. Love of the Lord. Endures forever.

But sometimes men go through. And we know this. Sometimes men go through terrible things. Hard things. They go to war. They go through something traumatic.

[31 : 02] And they're changed. Their relationships are changed. They're hurt. And something has happened.

And they aren't the same. We change like that. And I just want you to think. In this world of. Where we understand.

Post traumatic stress disorder. Where we understand the damage. That people can do. And with that in mind. I just want you to think. Of what Jesus went through.

He went through a trauma. Greater than any man ever had. He went through the cross. He went through the injustice.

And he went through the agony. And the darkness. And the loneliness. But John 13 says. Having loved his own. He loved them to the end.

[32 : 07] After the cross. Had he lost his love? Did he lose his love? Did he become this damaged. Ruin thing? Did he come out on the other side of the cross.

Jaded. And withered. Saying. I've got to protect myself. I've got to protect myself. I can't let myself love.

Like that again. I don't want to be hurt again. He appeared. And he said to the women. Go tell my brothers.

I'm going before them. To Galilee. Go. Tell my brothers. They left him. They denied him.

They abandoned him. They slept. While he wept. They ran. As he was dragged off. They didn't bury his body.

[33 : 09] There weren't 12 disciples. Around his cross. And then there was the pain of God. Cutting him off. From the land of the living.

Why? For them. For their sakes. For their sins. So I don't know about you.

But, I could be jaded. I could be saying, I've got to protect myself. I would have a hard time loving them.

But it's. Go and tell my brothers. Go and tell my brothers. We're brothers still. We're still family. We're still friends. I still love them. That.

Is love. Unchangeable. That is love. Unconquerable. That is love. With a diamond edge. That won't be dulled. No matter what. And so what I'm saying is.

[34 : 07] Is if Jesus could go through the cross. And still keep his love. For his people. What then will. Change God's heart. What will change his heart.

The answer is nothing. That's how Jesus loves you. And so we could put away the fear. Put away that fear. Put away that fear.

That's keeping you in bonds. Put away that hateful rebellion. That says, I want to do it my way. How can we. Say my way. In the face of. That kind of love.

It's perfect. It's infinite. It's wise. It's gracious. It's holy. It's sovereign. It's unchanging. And that's how. God loves you. That's how God the father.

Loves you. That's how God the son. Loves you. And that's how God the spirit. Loves you. That's the white hot flame.

[35 : 04] In his heart. That's the love that each person. In the trinity has for one another. And that's the love that Jesus Christ. Has brought us into Christian. That's our fellowship.

That's where we live. Now that's God's love. Now I have some questions. Let me ask you.

What is your love like? God is love. Is love defining more and more of your life?

And your actions? How much of your time do you spend loving people? You know the two greatest commandments. Of loving God and loving others.

They're not part time things are they? If we were to love God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength. What are we going to be doing of every minute of every day? What will define all of our actions?

[36 : 09] If that was the case. If that's the command. We would be loving all of the time. And if we were to love others like we loved ourselves. What would we be doing all of the time?

We would be loving others. And so my question for you is. Is that. Is love defining. More and more of your life.

So every moment of God's life. So to speak. It is love. He's always loving. He's always loving someone. And in some way.

And so is your life more and more defined by love. If I were to parachute into your day. And I would ask. What you doing? What you doing? Could you say. I'm loving right now. I'm loving God.

I'm loving this person. I'm loving that person. What I'm doing. Right in this moment. Whatever it is. Is about love. You know.

[37 : 11] If we could parachute into God's day. So to speak. And to ask him. What are you doing? How. He would say. I'm loving. I'm loving.

Everything I do is about love. And that's the way it's going to be in heaven. And you know what? That's righteousness and obedience here on earth. If we were to do that. We would keep those two commandments.

Which all the law and the prophets hang on. So that's my first question. Is love. More and more defining your life. And your actions. Not that you're perfect.

But is it more and more. Becoming that. Second question. Is your love growing in wisdom. Like God's love. Men. Have you learned to love your wives better.

Than you loved them two or three years ago. Or wives. Have you learned to love. That husband. That God has given you. Better than you. Than you loved them two or three years ago.

[38 : 13] Is your love. For the people in your life. Children. Neighbors. Friends. Church members. Is that love.

Abounding more and more. In knowledge. And depth of insight. So that you're understanding people better. You're understanding what love. Would do. And looks like.

In this particular. Situation. Are you loving. Less selfishly. And more generously. And more graciously. With more insight.

With more understanding. Understanding them. Understanding what they need. That's the second question. So is your love. Abounding more and more. In knowledge. And depth of insight.

The third question is. Are you learning to love. With more mercy. And kindness. And gentleness. And this one is a hard one. Do people have to be lovable.

[39 : 11] And worthy. And doing everything right. Before they earn your love. Love. Or are you learning to love people.

In their imperfection. And in their mess. In the hurt. You know. God loved you.

In your imperfection. In your mess. In your hurt. He loved you. When you were sitting. In your run down. Messed up house. With your life.

All messed up. That's when he came. And he loved you. And so are you loving more and more. In mercy and grace. The fourth question. Does. You know.

God's love has grit. And stick to it. To it. Stick to it-ness. Are you loving. God's people that way. With some resolution.

[40 : 06] With some grit. With some determination. Or do your feelings get hurt. And you just say. I'm done. Is your love willing.

To do the hard thing. And stay. With the people. With those persons. Or are you always looking. For the exits. Are you looking.

For the exits. In all the relationships. Where you say. This is it. I'm getting off the road here. I'm not going anymore. That way. It hurts too much. Or.

Do you find yourself. Always. Coming back home. So to speak. Sticking with it. God sticks with it. With us. So I'm saying. Are you always looking to leave. Wash your hands of it. Or are you doing the hard thing. The painful thing even.

[41 : 03] And staying with people. Where they are. And. Now. Just. One last thing. You know what.

Of course we aren't. Loving perfectly. Of course we're not loving. As wisely as we ought. And as often as we ought. And like we ought to. And.

I'm not just saying. Now go get to work. Do it all by yourself. In this passage. Right here in first. John. It says. He's given us of a spirit. And through his spirit. We live with God.

We live. We. God is not at arm's length. He is in us. By his spirit. And we have his strength. We have his life. We live in his life.

We live in his love. We're. Fully plugged in. To the God of love. And so. As we know. That love. And we rely on that love.

[42 : 02] We will begin to more and more. Live a life of love. We will begin more and more. To love like him. So this is where I'll end.

Are you living in fear? Or are you living in God's love? Are you beholding God's love? We've seen it. Rejoice in it. Behold it.

But do more than that. As you know it. Rely on it. Venture on it. Live on it. And then go out and love. More and more like God loves.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father. We were once. Just so blinded. And self-consumed.

We brought everyone. Into the orbit of our world. And we thought everything was all about us. And thank you. That you are more and more. Becoming the center.

[43 : 03] You are the center. And you are teaching us to love. Like you have loved. Thank you. That you've broken us free. From the chains of ourselves. And I pray then.

That we would run. In the way of your commands. We would run. To love you. And run. To love others.

Because we are wrapped around. With the love of God. An infinite. Perfect. We know.

God. That we're just beginning to scratch it. The depths. And the heights of that love. And we would only ask. That you would take us.

Further up. And further in. Into that love. That we might know it more. And there are some here. Who are still bound. In that slavery.

[43 : 59] To fear. Pray that you would set them free. And. Step into their lives. And step into their hearts.

Open the doors. Open the blinds. And shine into their lives. And rescue them. And save them.

Thank you that you are this God. Of aggressive.

Love. This God. Of seeking love. And merciful love. And that there are none here. That have gone too far. And so we ask. That in grace. That you would.

That you would go out to them. And bring them home. Pray that we would. Learn to love each other. Cheerfully. This week. May that love.

Not be a burden. But a delight. Because we have been so loved. By you. We ask these things. For Jesus sake. That he would be glorified in us.
[44 : 56] Amen. Amen.