

Reading: 1 John 4:7-5:1

Theme: God's Love Revealed.

John wrote amazing words in this letter, none more so that the last 3 words of v8 "*God is love*". This helps us see the essential nature of God – not simply that He is loving, can love or has love (*all of which are true*), but that God is love. In v7 and 8 John builds up to this pinnacle point and shows how we as believers are to give evidence of our being born of God and of knowing Him – that He is love and we show, evidence it by loving our brothers and sisters in Christ i.e. other believers. Yes, '*God is love*' is a tremendous statement, yet John does not stop there, but continues writing to apply this further. All I intend to do this evening is to look at v9 & 10 using 5 brief points to help us get to grips with, or at least get a handle, on these magnificent verses:

1. Recognition of This Love.

We are told '*God is love*', but how do we know if that is true? Is it because we want God to be like that as opposed to an ogre or a tyrant? Or because we have speculated, philosophised or discussed it? Some do, but on what to they base their claims? Vague, unspecific ideas and claims? How can we be sure God is love? There are 2 options - people's ideas, thoughts and claims - which change with changing fads and fashions; or we take God at His word and trust what He has said in the Bible - so "*Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so*" is a simple and yet profound thing to sing and say as is "*Wonderful things in the Bible I see, this is the dearest that Jesus loves me*".

The Bible says that God's love can be seen and be communicated. It has been revealed in the cross of Christ (v9-10) and it is to be seen in the lives of believers loving one another (v11-12). We are not to imagine we can know God's love in any way unless it is in accordance with God's word. If we want to truly know His love,

then we are to view and gaze upon what He has revealed to us in the Bible and not go by our imaginations, speculations or philosophies, but see what God has revealed and communicated to mankind in the word which He, Himself has written and preserved for us. We are to recognise this love told to us in the word of God, but also see:

2. The Reach of This Love.

This love was shown, manifested toward, among **us**. John doesn't simply write "*God is love*" and then move on to something else. He pauses and draws the attention of his 1st readers, and all since, to this amazing truth of God's essential nature and that it has been communicated, seen here on earth - as it has been shown, made manifest among us, toward us, even in us. In fact, this love reaches down to us. This is not some safe theory or philosophy, but has explosively been revealed here on earth.

His love is toward and reaches us. This gives us an insight into something of the enormous reach of the love of God as we see it in John 3:16 - that God so loved the world i.e. all kinds of people, irrespective of race, position, status or morality. Just pause and consider what we, the people of this world are like - we are shown we need to live through Him (v9b) for we are spiritually dead outside of Christ and outside the knowledge of God's love. This is said clearly in Ephesians 2:1-3 where we are shown that apart from the Lord Jesus we are in a state of spiritual death "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*". We were dead to God, to spiritual things, living

according to the way, course of this world. In Christ we are made alive, but outside of Him we are dead spiritually.

Not only are we naturally dead to God, but we have no time or love for God. We are incapable of loving God *“not that we loved God”* (v10a) ... People will never naturally seek God because they love sin. By nature, since Adam and Eve fell, we are enemies of God, rebels against God, we would rob God of all the good things He gives us and squander them on things He says “No” to. We are aliens, strangers and enemies to God. An old man of God said *“Unconverted men would kill God Himself if they could only get at Him.”*

Because of these things we deserve only God’s judgement and wrath. Yet to such ones God’s love has been made manifest, showed, revealed. We are to get rid of the idea, the notion that we deserved it. We did not - in no way did we deserve it. This then causes us to glimpse something of the awesomeness of the reach of the love of God as we read in Romans 5:8 & 10 *“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us... For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!”* Moving on we see:

3. The Height of This Love.

We have seen how the love of God has been shown **among us** as it reaches to us, but note again that it was not merely a love spoken and felt in heaven. It caused God to do something. God **sent** His only begotten, His one and only Son into the world. Jesus Christ was sent, pointing us to the truth that He existed before He was born. His birth at Bethlehem was not the start of His existence, but God’s unique Son came into this world and took real humanity

upon Himself. The eternal Son of God took flesh and dwelt among us.

People readily use terms of cost to express how much they love someone, of the distance they travelled, other things they endured to get there. Here's the heights of God's love - He sent the best He had for us. The Lord Jesus was His delight, His precious Son, a fellow member of the godhead and yet God sent Him into this world, this cesspit of a world. Many of us here know the love we have for our children, grandchildren; we know the concerns we've had for them as they went to school, to work or university. Many parents have known what it was to send their children away to war and probably to face certain death and awful suffering. Now multiply that love billions of times and you will still not get near to the love the Father has for the Son. Yet He sent His Son into this world, knowing He would die for the sins of those who would not have any time for Him, die under God's wrath and punishment. As Jesus did so He made known, manifest God's love among us and toward us.

We are not to doubt God's love for us is real and true. The Darling of heaven was sent from heaven as part of God manifesting, revealing, making known His love toward us. This is the highest love, this is love beyond understanding, measure or grasp. As we seen of the height, let's see:

4. The Depth of This Love.

The incarnate Son of God was sent into this cesspit, open sewer of a world. If we were trying to measure the love of God, how could we measure it? We would consider the height at which had started, the ones it reached, and also the depths to which that love would take Him. Yet with the love of God we find all 3 are unmeasurable on their own, let alone when all are linked together. The Son of

God took flesh and came into this sin infested world. He did not come with pomp and glory, all that was laid aside and out of sight. He was born into a poor peasant family, not even a room to be born in - we see the selfishness of people that no one would give up a room for a pregnant woman. There was no royal cot, but only an animal's eating trough. His very human life was threatened by Herod and He became a refugee. He then lived in a backwater, did a physical and tough job as a carpenter, lived in obscurity for 30 years. All the time living and mixing with ordinary people.

Can we imagine what this must have meant to the eternal son of God to see sin and sin's effects first-hand, and up close. He would have heard people take God's name in vain, seen them break God's law, seen the effects of sin being outworked in people's lives. How could He stand it, bear it at all, even to be in the world for a moment? Yet He did so for some 33 years and we do not think of the suffering that involved - *"It was a lonely path He trod, from every human soul apart, known only to Himself and God was all the grief that filled His heart: yet from the track He turned not back till where I lay in want and shame He found me – blessèd be His Name!"*

We know the Lord Jesus became obedient to death, even death on the cross. Yes, He ministered, taught, instructed, did miracles which declared who He was and did so with power, but in the love plan of God for us, this Glorious One was going to die and die in accord with the deliberate plan and with the foreknowledge of God. The Son of God, Jesus, did not deserve to die, in fact nothing in His person or Being deserved anything other than the infinite love of God. The reason the Son died is here before you and here before me. He died for our sins, for our iniquities as *"an atoning sacrifice for our sins"*.

John again uses this word *ἵλασμος* *hilasmos* (also used in 2:2) translated ‘propitiation’ (*a word coined by William Tyndale in his translation of the NT and used in KJV*). The NIV translates it as “*an atoning sacrifice for our sins*”, and gives the word picture it means in the footnote “*the one who would turn aside His wrath, taking away our sins*’. We deserve only God’s judgement and just wrath. Jesus deserves only God’s love. Jesus took our place and took the full wrath of God’s justice and punishment our sin deserved in our place. God’s holy and just wrath should have fallen on us, but it was turned away from all who trust the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and onto Him in all its full intensity and horror.

He has become the sin offering. He was made sin who knew no sin, so that we who are unclean, unrighteous and sinners, could be made the righteousness of God in Him. Calvary was no easy place for the Son of God to go to or to be – He literally went into the hellfire storm. He took the eternal punishment our sins deserved and was, for a time, unaware of the felt love of the Father and Holy Spirit, was separated, forsaken by them and was the object of the full justice and punishment of God for our sin.

This is how we can live in Him. Our sin, its guilt, condemnation, tyranny and captivity are all dealt with on the cross – as Jesus is the atoning sacrifice, the propitiation for our sins. Thankfully it did not end there – for although He died and was buried, yet He rose from the dead on the 3rd day, was seen by His disciples for 40 days (*even 500 on one occasion*). Then after 40 days He ascended back to heaven in glory, triumph and honour. These things declared His sacrifice was accepted totally as dealing with the sin of all who trust Him as their Saviour.

When we come to know, to trust the Lord Jesus as our own Saviour, we should see the love of God for us as an individual. We are to realise that we cannot recognise or understand the fulness of the love of God unless it is in the context of the cross and death of Christ and the depths to which this love took Him to save us and give us this eternal life. God sent His Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Eternal life is only possible in the Lord Jesus and all He accomplished on the cross; for by all that not only do we have new and eternal life, but pardon, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace with God, justification, the peace of God, sanctification, adoption, a certain hope and home in heaven, all the glory of heaven, of the resurrection – these and countless more blessings and pleasures forever more at God’s right hand. Such is something of the depth of this love that raises us up to the heights of glory.

5. The Origin of This Love.

We did not and could never love God left to ourselves. Don’t imagine God sitting in eternity and foresaw our response to the gospel or to the overtures of His love and He saying that we deserve His love. Not at all. God deliberately and sovereignly loved us; He chose to do so freely and because He wanted to. It is an unconditional love and nothing in us caused Him to love us. It is not deserved, merited, earned one little bit by us in any shape, way or form.

This love is from His own essential nature and Being – God is love. It is a self-generated love – that did not look at the worth or merit of us as individuals, nor as a species, but from out of His innermost Being comes this awesome love for His people.

If we find a love, however weak or small, toward God in our innermost being, then be sure it is a work of God and is a result of

God's work in us. We are told this in v19 (AV) "*We love Him, because He first loved us.*" God loved us with such an intensity of love we cannot begin to grasp it, so much so that it moved Him to send His Son to be the propitiation for our sins and that by believing on Jesus we can have eternal life.

Amazing love! How then can I, can we remain cold and indifferent? I can't understand the hardness of my own heart in the light, sight and experience of such love. I can't understand why I should be prone to wander, prone to leave the God I love and Who I know loves me with such an intensity of love. I fail to understand how I can handle and preach such glorious truths without my heart being broken and overwhelmed at the same time by floods of delights, joy and wonder. Nor can I understand how I can be hard, critical and indifferent to another believer who is also loved with the same intensity of love by my heavenly Father and lovely Saviour and They call on me to love these believers too.

This is the love we are to imitate, facilitate, let flow and share with, to and through one another. This love of God should possess and motivate us, for as Isaac Watts wrote "*love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all*" and he was right on that!