

**March 5, 2017
Perfect Love
1 John 4:7-19**

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

9 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.

¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.

¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.

¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.

¹⁸ There is 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.

19 We love because he first loved us.

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends. When you woke up this morning did you **in some way acknowledge**, “God Loves Me”? Did you **think** about the lyrics to “Oh, How I Love Jesus”? Or a similar song? Did you **ask** God, “How are you going to use me today for your glory? Chances are pretty good that you might have done something to acknowledge the goodness of God. But chances are equally good that you hit the snooze; tried to catch another ten minutes; and got up bleary eyed; tired, and maybe even annoyed that it was time to get up. Some of us need that first sip of caffeine, the first nicotine fix, to hear our favorite news/sports caster before we can really be called human.

I have been married for over 40 years and in the early years we said, “good morning” and “I love you” before getting out of bed. That ended after 13 months and the morning began with “it’s your turn to get up first and take care of her” but before going our separate ways there was something that said, “I love you”. A look, a kiss, a hug. Now, we live such different lives and on such different schedules that we get up quietly and are often out of the house before the other awakes. The greetings of “good morning” and “I love you” are not spoken. An outsider might say we take each other for granted.

But I wonder what does God say when we don’t speak to Him either?

I spent the month of February providing questions to help you assess your life and lifestyle. Now in March we will look at four lessons that will show God’s love for us as being primary and as the source of all love. First and third Sunday we will look at the writing of John, the beloved disciple as recorded in 1 John and the gospel of John; on second Sunday, we will consider Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus and we will end the month with a Word from Joel. In each lesson, we will be searching to learn how God loves us and what he expects from us because of this love.

Please pray with me and for me as I work with this theme:

God’s Love Is Perfect

Shall we pray?

God of heaven and earth we have stopped this morning to say we love you. We may not say it enough and for that we are sorry. We may say it so much that it has lost its meaning in our lives. We are sorry about that, too. But we come this morning asking for a fresh start, a clean slate, a new page in the book in order that we might begin again and claim for ourselves the relationship that you offer with your perfect love. Abba, thank you for resources and words and your Spirit that assists me every week to prepare and preach your Word. Abba, grant me your peace this day. Amen and Amen.

God's Love Is Perfect

¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Now if you are in the sanctuary I want to believe it is because **you believe, you know for yourself** that God loves you. But there may be someone here that has done one thing or even many things that leads them to believe that God no longer loves them. Let me help you with that, God is love and so God can't not, will not, just not, going to stop loving you. God may be grieved by your actions, God may punish because of your thoughts, God may be disappointed in you. But God does not stop loving you because **God is Love**.

The first audience to hear this from John would have been amazed. For the word "agape" that we translate as "love" was not a part of their normal conversation. For a people that believed and served multiple gods (small g) the concept of love of god (again small g) had been either a broaden expression of family love or often included a sexual aspect (remember there were prostitutes who lived at the temple in the OT and there were male and female prostitutes during the time that John is writing). So, when John speaks to this Greek influenced society he was saying that God is the very essence of what love is. God is agape.

Because there is only one word in English to express love we need to think about the fact that in the Greek there were at least three words to express love and the meaning here is not sexual love or even family love it is **agape love**.

Agape love

Agape love does not come naturally to us. Because of our fallen nature, we are incapable of producing such a love. If we are to love as God loves, that love—that *agape*—can only come from its Source. This is the love that “has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” when we became His children (Romans 5:5; cf. Galatians 5:22). “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16). Because of God’s love toward us, we are able to love one another.¹

When I talk to young women who thought they might die from a broken heart I could always count on hearing “but, he said he loved me.” At that point I often found myself asking uncomfortable questions:

- How did he show his love?
- How did he ask you to prove that you loved him?
- Does love make you disobey the teaching of your family, your church, your community?

And then I would gently explain what real love looks like, acts like, speaks like.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails.

The first part of verse 11 is the teaching point #1 **GOD LOVES US**, and the application in our lives is that **we are to love one another**.

Let us now consider v18

¹⁸There is 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.

Some scholars would argue that John’s reference to fear refers to the fear of eternity. And I believe that to be true, but I also think it extends beyond that and finds application in our daily lives. Consider that Paul tells Timothy

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/agape-love.html>

*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power,
and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)*

This was written to encourage Timothy to do what he was called to do by God.

Teaching point #2 tells us **there is no fear in love**. I believe that are several places where we can exercise this concept in our daily lives.

- We should not stay in relationships in which we are afraid
- We should not use fear in the form of threats or bullying to get our point across or get our own way
- We should not withhold the love of God from one another in anger
- No believer should have to live in fear of the actions of another believer

Teaching Point #3

¹⁷This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: **In this world we are like Jesus**.

I was teaching an adult Sunday School class and I said something like "our desire should be to be like Jesus." After class, a woman close to me in age asked if I meant what I said. I said yes! As closely as we possibly can we are to do what Jesus did and love like Jesus loved. She looked sad as she said, "I don't know if I can." But 20 plus years after that conversation she is still active in the church, helping young people who are away in college and recording the history of the church in photos.

I think sometimes we make up our minds that living like Jesus lived and doing what Jesus did in the 21st century is impossible and I would agree with you. We cannot have agape love without the help of the Holy Spirit. The kind of love we are to have for all of God's people and creation requires divine intervention.

Teaching point #1 **GOD LOVES US**, and
The application in our lives is that **we are to love one another**.

Teaching point #2 tells us **there is no fear in love** and

The application includes both fear of life after this AND fear about doing the things God has called us to do

Teaching point #3 **In this world we are like Jesus.**

What did Jesus Do?

Saw the invisible – the immigrant, the mentally ill, the unclean

Fed the hungry – without vetting them/asking had they been looking for work

Healed the sick – the rich, the poor, those with contacts and those w/out

Spoke words of comfort

Touched the untouchable

Loved the unloved

He **held His peace** until God told Him to speak

He **did not engage in debate** with those who sought to trick him or blame him

He had 12 close friends and with them He shared His secrets

He did not tell John what he wanted Peter to know

He went to Peter

When Peter was out of order He corrected Him

But He did not ignore Peter or stop loving Peter

God's Love Is Perfect

How is your Love?