
PERFECT LOVE IS THE EVIDENCE OF A HOLY LOVE

A Sermon on 1 John 4:7-21

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There are many stories about love. Agrar Tajmahal in India is one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It has a great love story behind it. Emperor Shajahan loved his wife, Mamataj Mahal. He loved her so much that he wanted to build a memorial so that she could remember his love. He built this building and gave it his wife's name, "Mamataj Mahal." This building became a great symbol of the love between the emperor and his wife.

There are many examples perhaps in your mind, but all those love stories are not able to describe God's love. Look at this passage:

1. Love is the nature of God.

There are many attributes of God. God is holy, perfect, just and righteous. Love is also one of the attributes of God. God is love; John repeats this over and over again, for example, the end of the verse 8, "because God is love"; verse 16, "God is love" again. In the very beginning of the passage, "Love comes from God." All these verses are presenting the same thought. God is love.

John described God as love. He did not choose the attributes of justice, perfection, or holiness but he chose "love." He included all the attributes of God by saying "love."

Consider the Israelites' history. We can find that God certainly appeared to them through love. The people were slaves who had no food, no place to stay, when God Himself came down to them out of

His love. He made them free, He provided everything that they needed in the desert. God worked with Israel out of love. Love is God's nature.

The prophet Hosea experienced God's steadfast love. He was asked to marry a prostitute, who was disobedient to the Lord but the Lord never stopped loving them. Hosea turned back to his unfaithful wife because of God's love towards Israel. He experienced how great God's love was for the fallen people of Israel.

God is the same God today. He does not stop His love for us. Psalm 36: 7 says, "How priceless is your unfailing love." Again in verse 10, "and continue your love to those who know you." In our personal lives, we have experienced this continuous love. We may forget to ask God to carry our burdens, but He does not forget to remember His children. His comforting hands do not rest, but always take care of us. God is love.

God is the author of love. He first loved us. We cannot see Him but we can perceive Him and who is He through His attributes or nature. God is love. Now the question is: how do we know that God is love?

2. God revealed His love through His Son.

One of my friends kept saying that if you love someone it shows in your actions. You have to prove that you love. I can give anything in order to show my love. I can give my money to help my friends. I can give all my possessions if needed. But God gave His only Son to prove that He loved us. There is no higher example of love in the world. He offered His Son as a payment of our debt. Verse 9 says, "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." Verse 10 continues, "This is love: not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." This is the love of the Father that is revealed through Jesus Christ. This is the highest evidence that God is love. This is the fulfillment of the fact that God is love. What did Jesus do for us? He was the atoning sacrifice for our sins. God loved and

sent His Son, and the Son showed His love for us as well. Jesus became the payment for our sins. God loved us. That is why He does not want us to lose our life. He purchased us through His Son Jesus. The Scripture clearly says in verse 14 that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

Love began from God first so that we might know Him. The Scripture says in verse 19 that He first loved us.

3. Through Jesus Christ we become the children of God.

I want to call your attention to chapter 3:1. It says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God." It is an honor for us to be His children. As children of God, Christians must not keep on sinning. John says that if someone keeps sinning, he cannot be a child of God. The evidence is that children of God must not sin anymore because they are born of God. How do we demonstrate that we are the children of God?

4. Loving each other is the evidence that we are the children of God.

This is holiness today. We have seen God's love and it is manifestation among us. John had given more emphasis on this point. If you are His child, you should demonstrate it by being loving to your brother, and neighbor. We are asked to live in love. This is our holy living, and holiness today. How does it work out in our lives? Verse 20 very clearly says that if anyone says, "I love God yet hates his brother, he is a liar." If you are claiming to be God's child, but you hate your brother, the Scripture very clearly says, that you are a liar, not God's child.

God's children must have perfect love because God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. It is not partial, it is not just half but full, complete love. John Wesley, the father of modern holiness, said that holiness, sanctification, Christian perfection, all are demonstrating God's love.

Perfect love teaches us to forgive each other. It is easier to forgive someone from your family but hard to forgive someone from outside.

If someone does something wrong, we have to forgive him. I have seen that forgiveness is very hard for others but for us it must be in us, because God has forgiven all our sins through Jesus. We must forgive each other. By doing so we will be able to show that we are the children of God.

Service is another expression of perfect love. Have you helped someone who needs your help--without expecting anything back from the one you are serving? That is the real serving that God wants from us. Mother Theresa loved the street babies and brought them together and nurtured them. She served the babies who were dying and starving. What motivation did she have? There was nothing else except God's love. This is perfect love.

Perhaps you do not have that same opportunity to encourage someone to overcome his problems. There is a time when your neighbors need you to give moral support. Could you do that?

In Bangladesh, I was working for people's development in the area of finance, education, social awareness, and social justice. What was the motivation here? It was God's love. God loves us. As His children we have to love God and as well as our brothers. This is perfect love. We are not living for ourselves but for our neighbors. We extend our compassionate hearts without expecting anything back because we are taught to do so by God.

There is a leprosy hospital in Bangladesh where I was working. One of the missionary ladies who was a nurse came to us. She worked for a long time. She cleaned the wounds of lepers. Some had worms and some had a bad smell. She did this because of God's love. She believed that Jesus Himself was concerned for sick people. She was able to demonstrate God's perfect love through her service. This is what Christian service means, doing something for your friends without expecting anything back from them. Here is a prayer from St. Francis of Assisi. He said that to be perfect is to pray this prayer,

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace:
Where there is hatred, let me show love;
Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life!

The world may not know that we are the children of God. The only way the world may know is by our lives and service to the needy. People are crying. Who will wipe their tears? You and I are called to carry out this special mission. We will be recognized by our doing, not by our neighbors. People can see God in us through our needs.

Perfect love is demonstrated by holy living. God's holiness was revealed through His love to the world. We cannot live holy lives if we do not love each other. Pure hearts are the evidence of our holiness. Pure hearts only come from God. He is the one who started love. He loved us first. Our love is only a response to His love.

Conclusion

Loving God and loving each other are inseparable. Verse 21, "He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother." This is the challenge for us. Are people seeing God's presence in you? Does the Holy Spirit mold you to serve others? Would you be able to forgive your neighbors?

If there are some areas where you are still struggling and you need tremendously the presence of Holy Spirit, this is the time I ask you to invite the Holy Spirit to come and transform you. If you find that you are not doing His will, you are not serving Him through your deeds, or you failed to turn back from your hidden sin or pride, would you invite

Him to come now and cleanse you by the fire of the Holy Spirit? Are there any persons that you must ask forgiveness from? I ask you to ask God to change your heart so that He can establish peace among you.

We thank God whenever we see His presence in us. We believe we are His children. Are there any weaknesses that you can see in your life? This is the time for you to bring them to the Lord and ask Him, "Lord give me a perfect heart that the world can see your presence in me." The Holy Spirit is here to hear you, and to sanctify and perfect you. My friends, only the Holy Spirit can save us and mold us into what God wants us to be. Would you invite Him now into your hearts?