

## Perfecting Love

1 John 4:16-21

June 24-25, 2017

John had a very special relationship to Jesus. He often referred to himself as the apostle whom Jesus loved. When John wrote this letter, love was the main thing he wanted to write about; it was the main thing he wanted the church to understand. That's because it's the most important part of our relationship to God and it's the theme of our message today.

God never intended to be your religion, it was His heart from the beginning to draw you into a relationship with Him. The way you see God has everything to do with how you approach Him, how you relate to Him. God loves us as a father loves his own son. He has given us the spirit of adoption by which we call Him, "Abba, father!"

My wife's dad was a chiropractor and when she got to be old enough, he gave her an opportunity to be a receptionist at his clinic. A patient would come in and say, "I'm here to see Dr. Dunn." She would then go back to one of the treatment rooms, stick her head in and say, "Your next appointment is here, Daddy." That's how she saw him, so that's what she called him.

How do you see God? What kind of relationship do you have with Him? There is a church in Mexico where the people walk there on their knees on an annual pilgrimage. The pastor has taught them that God is so ominous, so enthroned on high in the glory

of majesty, that they must completely humble themselves by coming on this pilgrimage on their knees, some of them crawling for miles.

God shows us a different relationship. He wants us to relate to Him as our Father. God most certainly does sit enthroned on high in the glory of majesty and He is the judge of all the earth, but He has invited you to such an intimate relationship that you can call Him “Abba, Father.”

My earliest memories of a pastor is from when I was only four or five years old. I don’t remember his name, or even the name of the church, but I do remember my brother and me playfully wrestling with him on the steps of the platform. He represented the heart of God to me and I saw Him as loving, gracious, approachable and kind.

You see Jesus having a special relationship to children also. In the Gospels, you read that children came up to Him that He might lay His hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

On the triumphant entry Jesus came into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey and cleansed the temple. Afterward, when the chief priests and the scribes saw all the wonderful things that He had done and the children who were calling out to Him, saying,

“Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant, and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes, and have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes you have prepared praise for yourself?’”

Jesus had a special place in His heart for children, could it be because that’s the type of relationship God wants to have with us?

<b>I. Believe God’s Love for You</b>
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- Verse 16 - We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us.
- God demonstrated His love in that Christ died for us while we were yet His enemies – Romans 5:8
- You know and believe in God’s love when you make it personal, when you believe it for yourself.

A. Faith is part of love

- You believe there is a God; wonderful, but there is much greater faith than that. You believe that God is loving? Wonderful, but there is greater faith than that.
- Believe that God’s love for you never fails; that nothing can separate you from God’s love which is found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 8:35, 37-39, Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

- Unfortunately, when many people experience tribulation or distress or persecution or difficulty, they doubt God’s love. They do not overwhelmingly conquer; their faith is defeated and they are overwhelmingly shipwrecked.
- Jesus said, “God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him would not perish, but would have everlasting life.” Notice that Jesus didn’t say, “God was so angry with the world that He sent His only begotten Son.”

**John 3:17, “For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”**

**Illus - In 1741, Jonathan Edwards gave perhaps his most famous sermon entitled, Sinners in the**

**Hands of an Angry God. In it, he represented God as being angry with sinners who were barely hanging by a thread over the fires of hell.**

- God is most certainly aware that people are sinners, but He also loves those sinners so much that He sent His Son to pay the penalty for their sin and to reconcile those sinners to Himself.
- He pursues them with His love that they might be reconciled to Him and love Him as a Father.

**Romans 2:4, Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?**

B. God is love; it's who He is

- God is love and this is what motivates His actions toward us. In other words, it defines His nature.
- In the Greek there are many different words for love, in Alaska, there are many different words for snow. In Oregon there are many different words for rain, and many different words for coffee.
- The word love in the Greek is agape - the kind of love that gives itself away. God loved

– agape – the world so much that He gave...His Son to die on the cross, to take our sins and burdens upon Himself, so that we might be free – and he whom the Son sets free is free indeed.

**John 15:13, “Greater love has no man than this; that one lay down his life for his friends.”**

- So much of what is called love in our culture is actually love of self. A young couple falls in love, what does that mean? He saw in her someone who he felt could meet his physical and emotional needs; and she found in him someone she felt could meet her physical and emotional needs.
- But they’re in the relationship for what they can receive from the other in order to fulfill their own needs.
- But there is a higher love that gives itself away; it’s born out of the nature of love itself within a person’s heart; it’s willing to sacrifice itself for the good of the other. That is agape love.

**Illus - In my statement to the jury last week I asked, “What is the value of life?” The value of life is found in the word love. I mentioned a time when our granddaughter, Aviah, asked, “Grandpa, do you love me so much that you would die for me?” ...**

## II. Love is a Transforming Power

- John is taking us somewhere with these verses. There is a point he wants us to apply to our lives.
- God is love, it's who He is; it defines His nature. But it doesn't define ours. We were born selfish, self-focused and self-centered. But so much of self is self-defeating and self-destructing. It's hurtful to us and those around us.
- It's God's love that moves us from what we were, self-focused and self-pleasing, to become more like Him, to have His nature in us – to love.

### A. God's love is perfecting you

- Verse 17 - By this, love is perfected with us. By what? By what he said in verse 16, God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.
- The word translated 'perfected,' here, does not carry the idea of being a perfect person. Rather, it carries the idea of accomplishing its purpose.
- God's purpose is to transform us from the defeated, self-focused and self-centered person of which we were born, into a person

that loves out of a transformed nature. We are all on a journey together of being transformed by God's love in us.

- Love is what makes us something. Paul says that without love, I am nothing.

**1 Corinthians 13:2, If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.**

- If we are not being transformed by God's love, we're stuck with the nature we inherited and we'll just become an irritable old cuss, or worse.
- The key is found in verse 16 – the one who abides in love, abides in God, and God abides in him.

**B. Be all in, love with all your heart**

- The greatest commandment, the highest and foremost of all that God has asked of us, Jesus said, is “to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”
- It doesn't work to say, “I love God,” if you don't go all in, if you don't love with all your heart.

**Jeremiah 29:11-13, “For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”**

- The point of prayer is not praying; the point of prayer is to be with the Lord with your heart.

**Illus - There’s a big difference between when your kids are being nice to you because they want something and when they just want to hang out because they love you. That’s a beautiful thing.**

**John 5:39-40, “These are the scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life.”**

**C. Perfect love casts out fear**

- Verse 18 – *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.*
- Fear is a terrible thing. Many are held captive by it. Many are afraid of what might happen; fear of the unknown.

- But if love is transforming you, then you may have confidence in the day of judgment. There is no need for fear.
- Can you imagine standing before the great judgment throne of God? For most people, if they imagined what would happen on the day of judgment, it's unsettling, it's disturbing... it's fearful.

**Revelation 6:15-17, And they hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of the wrath has come and who is able to stand?”**

- But if you truly believed in God's love for you; if you truly believed that God is your Abba, Father, then you would have confidence on that great day.
- If you had a really good dad, you know that two things are true; first, that you really respect him, second, that you can completely count on his love.
- One of the problems of describing our relationship to God in terms of Him being our Abba, Father, is that many people either

didn't have a father, or if they did, he wasn't a very good one.

- I know this one, I'm intimately acquainted with this one, I despised my father and carried a lot of anger against him. Therefore, I can tell you from personal experience that God is able to heal that wound,

**Illus - I remember being very angry on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. From my perspective, everyone had an advantage because they had a good father. But God began to speak to my heart and not just heal the wounds of my father wound, but He helped me to see that He would be my Father, like no father on earth could ever be.**

- If you could receive His love fully, you will be transformed by it. So much so that in the day of judgment you will have confidence because you will know that it was because of God's love that He sent His Son to die on the cross and pay the penalty for your sin so that you would be declared righteous and be reconciled to God as your Abba, Father.