



**“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another,”**  
I John 4:11.

## **The Love of God**

**Lesson Aim:** To note that as God loved us, we are always to love one another.

**L284. Date:** September 1971. **Text:** I John 4:9-21.

**Topic:** God: Love of; Love: Of God.

INTRODUCTION—One of the most profound statements in the Bible is, “God is love,” I John 4:8. What does it mean? The statement is not that God is **in** love, nor that He **shows** love, nor that he **receives** love, but that God **is** love. What is love that it could be equated to God?

John is known as the Apostle of Love. He seems to have comprehended this concept best of all New Testament writers. In the Greek language, in which he wrote the Gospel and three Epistles, he had a choice of three, words for “love” which he may have used. These words are **eros** (lust), **philia** (pure, human affection), and **agapa** (self-giving devotion). Which word did he use to declare, “God is love”? He used **agapa**. **“God is agapa!”**

What, then, is **agapa**? This word introduces a new concept of love. It is a love which is wholly unselfish. It loves for the sake of the beloved, nor for the satisfaction of the lover. It is not dependent on the worth of the one loved and so is extended to the low and sinful as well as the high and holy. It loves for the purpose of lifting.

In every New Testament reference to God's love, **agapa** is used. It is God's attitude toward a sinful world, John 3:16. It is the affection put in our heart by the Holy Spirit, Romans 5:5. It is the word which describes the attitude of Christian to Christian, John 13:35. Agapa is distinctively a divine attribute manifest in Christian attitude.

One who stands near the fire will have the smell of smoke in his

garments. One who stays near to God will live with the mark of self-giving love which delights to serve others. The aim of this study is “to note that as God loved us, we are to love one another.” As you study, therefore, evaluate the nature and extent of your love to God and your fellow man.

## EXPOSITION

### I. GOD LOVES US!

Suppose you were hearing it for the very first time and I told you, “God loves you!” What an amazing word that would be to your ears. Imagine God loving a man. When the Bible says “God so loved the world” it does not refer to a world of soil, rocks, trees and clouds, but to a world of men. The love of God is the heart of the Christian religion.

1. God shows us that He loves us, verse 9. How did God reveal His love to men? By giving them the finest gift which heaven had to give: His only begotten Son. When God's Son, the Creator of all, came to His creation the people He had made refused to receive Him. Only a divine quality of self-giving for the sake of others prompted God to go further. But man's sin did not quench the love of God. It gave opportunity for a greater manifestation of His love.

It has been observed that the Old Testament message in the law was, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.” The New Testament message given in Jesus Christ reverses the words, “The Lord thy God loves thee.” How do we know the love of God? **“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world. . .”** verse 9.

2. God's love is redemptive in its design, verses 9-10. God did not cease to love men when their sins were manifest. On the contrary, He moved in love to save men from their sins. But men did not want to be saved. They wanted God to leave them alone. They rebelled against His designs every step of the way. But God kept on loving them and perfecting the way of redemption. The reason why Jesus came was to be our Savior.

Man's redemption was perfected by God's sacrifice. Jesus actually bore the guilt of sin for all men. The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Romans 1:18. The wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience, Ephesians 5:6 and Colossians 3:6. By death Jesus made propitiation for the sins of the whole world and thus turned God's wrath aside, I John 2:2. God loves to lift. **“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the**

world,” I John 4:14.

3. God's love dwells in us, verse 12. God's love is unending. His love was manifest most wonderfully when Jesus died and rose again for our redemption. But His love did not stop there.

When one becomes a Christian the Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence in him. He produces in the believer the “fruit of the Spirit” the first of which is “love,” Galatians 5:22. The Apostle Paul states, “. . . **the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,**” Romans 5:5

The indwelling Spirit keeps the believer oriented in a God-ward direction. But how can it be said that God's love is “perfected” in us. Can we add anything to God's love making it more complete? No. On the other hand, as God's love is shared with us and manifest through us to others, it is “brought on to its goal” and thus perfected. Men do not naturally love one another. But God's love, put in them by the Holy Spirit, creates the affection and magnifies God.

God loves the whole world, not believers only. He wants each person to know of His love and respond by faith in Jesus Christ. He could have announced it to all men through angels; He could have written it in the skies; He could have made it a natural part of man's constitution. But He did none of these. He broadcast His love in the hearts of believing men and gave this opportunity to be witnesses to Him. As believers live the life of love and share the gospel of grace and love, the love of God is brought on to its goal (perfected) in them. This is why He put His love within us.

4. God's love creates assurance in those who experience it, verse 18. Where there is perfect love there is perfect trust and no fear. Why should a believer be fearful? God's love is sure; redemption is accomplished; communion with God is sweet; and love is experienced daily. Why should the believer fear? Perfect love casts out all fear.

A young husband sought counsel because of marital problems. He was extremely jealous of his wife, though she gave him no reason to be. Of course, he was miserable and was making her miserable. He feared lest her love would cease or she would be untrue. He was helped to see the problem was not her faithfulness but his willingness to trust her love. Peace came to the household when he rested in assurance of her devotion.

Don't doubt the love of God. Life will be miserable if you do. His love is everlasting and will never fail, Jeremiah 31:3. Stop worrying and start trusting. You will soon know by experience that “there is no fear in love,” I John 4:18.

## II. WE SHOULD LOVE OTHERS

The believer is to live a life of love. This love is not mere human affection, but divine love shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Since God loves all people, and since His love is perfected in believers, we will love all whom God loves. It is not we who love but God who loves others through us.

1. We are obligated to love others, verse 11. **“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”** It is human to love those who love us. It is divine to love those who do not merit our love. But as God loved us even when we were undeserving of His love, so we must love others without consideration of their merit.

Love for others is proof that we know God. People will take note of us that we have been with Jesus when love compels us to go out in selfless service to others. This is not a choice; it is an obligation. John writes, **“If God so loved us, we OUGHT also to love one, another.”** We simply follow His example walking in the steps of Jesus.

The Bible makes it clear that we are obligated of God to love one another. **“And this is his commandment . . . love one another, as he gave us commandment,”** I John 3:23. Jesus said, **“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,”** John 13:34-35. No one can be an obedient Christian and not love others.

2. Love to others is expressed by deeds of helpfulness, verse 10. Words of love are encouraging. Emotions of love are honorable. But deeds of love are what God expects from His children. The beloved Apostle writes, **“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth,”** I John 3:18.

The love of God for men is expressed in efforts to lead them to personal faith in Jesus Christ. He who never yearns for sinners to know Jesus does not truly love sinners. But this love also expresses itself in supplying men's physical needs. **“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”** I John 3:17.

3. Love to others should be without limit, **“ . . . We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,”** I John 3:16. This was the extent God loved us. True love knows no sacrifice too great to make for the beloved one.

If believers truly loved one another thus, what a radical change would come. Church factions and divisions would be at an end. Benevolent and

educational projects would be supported. A tremendous evangelistic, missionary, and benevolent ministry would be inspired. The world would take note that believers are truly what they claim to be.

4. Love to others is but the reflection of God's love to us, verse 19. **“We love him, because he first loved us.”** We love with His love. We love whom He loves. We love as long as He loves. We love because He loved. His love initiated; our love responded. His love designed; our love imitated. And so was it meant to be.

CONCLUSION — “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

“But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away . . . “

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity,” I Corinthians 13:1-10, 13.

## QUESTIONS

1. What is love?
2. What is meant by, “God is love”?
3. How did God reveal His love to men?
4. How does the Spirit prove God's love to us?
5. How does real love bring assurance?

6. How can believers show love one to another?
7. How is God's love “perfected” in us?
8. Why is love essential to all Christian service?
9. How does I Corinthians 13 relate to this study?