

The First Epistle of John

(Week 43 – 1John 4:12-16)

I. Review:

A. 1John 4:7-11

1. We ought to love because we are born of God
2. God's love is not natural (agape)
 - a. Natural love is attracted to those who are attractive and kind to those who are kind.
 - i. Agape love is supernatural, it is of God.
 - ii. In the past, we looked at love as *"a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved"*
 - iii. Love's virtues are found in 1Corinthians 13:4-8.
3. The fact that God is love does not negate that:
 - a. God is light (1John 1:5)
 - b. God is righteous (1John 2:29)
 - c. God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29)
 - d. The problem comes when people interpret *"God is love"* as saying *"love is God!"*
 - e. To such people, love is a fuzzy, "have-a-nice-day" kind of love that makes being "nice" more valuable than wanting what is really best for the other person.
4. We ought to love because God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (vv. 9-10)
 - a. God was the initiator:
 - i. He didn't respond to our love; While we were yet sinners, He loved us (cf. Romans 5:8; 1John 4:10a)
 - ii. God did not write a check nor sent a letter, but became intimately and personally involved in our predicament!
 - iii. He gave what was most precious to Him in order to save us from hell's fire!

II. John re-emphasizes the topic of love (Pt 2)

A. 1John 4:12 (ESV), *"No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us."*

1. **Question: What is this passage saying?**
 - a. One possible views of this verse:
 - i. No one has seen God, but when others see God's love in us, they see His reflection in us
 1. Jesus said to Philip in John 14:9, *"...Whoever has seen me has seen the Father..."*
 2. The same principle applies to Jesus' disciples: they are a reflection of Jesus.
 - The world sees Jesus by our love (cf. John 13:34-35)
 - ii. Loving one another causes God's love to reach completeness for all to see (cf. Mt 5:14-16).
 - iii. Let your prayer be: "Lord, let others not see me, but may they see you in me by the love that is exemplified in my life."

- B. The evidence of God's indwelling is stated three different ways:
1. The Spirit: 1John 4:13 (ESV), *"By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."*
 - a. Notice John did not say *"He has given us His Spirit,"* even though that is true (cf. Acts 2:38); He says *"He has given us OF His Spirit."*
 - b. OF HIS SPIRIT denotes God has imparted something to us:
 - i. **Question: What has He imparted that is OF the Spirit?**
 1. Love (Galatians 5:22)
 2. Other spiritual fruit include goodness, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control, etc. (Gal. 5:22-23)
 3. Life (John 6:63; Romans 8:23)
 - ii. Love is "of His Spirit!"
 - iii. It cannot be learned in a seminar or from a self-help book:
Agape love is not OF the flesh; it is OF the Spirit!
 - c. John then reminds the Christians that he, along with other witnesses, have seen Jesus...
 - i. 1John 4:14 (ESV), *"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world."*
 1. The pronoun "we" refers to those who have seen the physical Christ.
 2. This passage is a repetition of what John said earlier in 1John 1:1-2, (ESV), *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us"*
 2. The Confession: 1John 4:15 (ESV), *"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."*
 - a. Again, the Gnostics, who John called the antichrist, did not believe Jesus was the Son of the OT God, whom they deemed as being evil.
 - b. However, a true child of God acknowledges Jesus as the Son of the God of Israel!
 - c. This passage is a repetition of 1John 4:2, *"By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God"*
 - d. By the way, saying *"Jesus is the Son of God and that He came in the flesh"* doesn't necessarily prove one to be a Christian however, back then, this confession was the "litmus test" for true Christians.
 3. The Love: 1John 4:16 (ESV), *"So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."*
 - a. John summarizes verses 7-10:
 - i. God's love for us was shown by His sending His Son (vv. 9-10)
 - ii. God dwells in those who love (vv. 7-8).