



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Amazing Love, How Can It Be? (1 John 4:7-12)

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, February 18, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, February 18, 8:30 PM in Office #225**
(Sen. Wayne Wallingford's office)

In the early 1700s, Charles Wesley penned:

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
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That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

He left His Father's throne above
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.
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And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

INTRODUCTION

1 John 4:7-12 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

This is not the first time in the letter that John has addressed the issue of love in the life of the believer. Love is a definitive sign that a person is a child of God (2:5, 9-10; 3:10-11, 14-17, 23). The one who does not know love cannot claim to know God—more on this topic in the next study.

In this passage, the Apostle John made the incredible statement that “God is love”. In our previous study, we discussed the meaning of this comment.¹ We noted that God’s love is His “...self-sacrificing desire for and delight in the welfare of the one love.”² God is known by this trait; it is His nature to love. And He is the source of true love (4:7). When combined with His other attributes, His great love is magnified and adorned. His love is exhibited in many ways throughout Scripture and history.

In this study, we want to examine John’s illustration of how one can know that God is love. Since God’s love truly is His “...self-sacrificing desire for and delight in the welfare of the one love”, it should be quite visible—and it is. It is seen in His gift of His own Son, Jesus Christ, the forgiveness offered to people and in the love of His own people to others.

GOD’S LOVE IN THE GIFT OF HIS SON

One songwriter wrote, “I want to know what love is; I want you to show me.” The Apostle John would have answered, “By this...” we know what love is: God sent His one and only, His unique, Son into the world.

John is again repeating things he wrote in His gospel. Verse 9 sounds so much like John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only

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PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

God was under no compulsion, other than His great love to send Jesus to earth. In fact, John brings this up in verse 10, “not that we loved God, but that He loved us...” Make no mistake, it was not our love for God which compelled Him to send Christ. Romans 3 and Psalm 14 make it quite clear that no one loves God, no one seeks after Him. All have turned aside and none do what is good. Later in Romans, Paul reminded His readers that it was while we were still helpless, sinners and enemies, Christ came for us (Romans 5:6-10).

And it was not just any gift. God sent the gift of His Son. The second member of the Trinity. God sent Himself in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ to dwell among men.

*Matthew 1:23b AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME
IMMANUEL, " which translated means, "GOD WITH US."*

No greater gift could God have given to anyone than His own Son. Especially, to those whom He knew would reject the gift. What person would give their most precious possession to someone knowing they would simply turn around and destroy it? No one. But God would and did. This is why His love is so amazing.

GOD'S LOVE IN THE DEATH OF HIS SON

But what was the point of sending His Son to be among rebellious sinful people? God sent Jesus to die. This would be an unbelievable plan or even considered a “Plan B”, if it were not for the prophecies concerning the death of the Christ. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah wrote:

*Isaiah 53:5, 7, 9 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our
well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are
healed. 7He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did
not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did
not open His mouth. 9His grave was assigned with wicked
men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death...*

Even Jesus recognized this as His mission:

*Mark 9:31 (cf. Mark 8:31) For He was teaching His disciples and
telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the
hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been
killed, He will rise three days later."*

*Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but
to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

While Jesus was on earth, He did much good to those around Him. He healed the lame, opened blind eyes and deaf ears, cast out demons, and raised the dead. He preached many sermons and gave words of encouragement, hope, rebuke and challenge. His life was an exemplary example of love and holiness. But His primary mission was to die—to show the Father's love for people by giving up His life upon an old rugged cross.

GOD'S LOVE IN THE ATONEMENT THROUGH HIS SON

But there was purpose in His death. John wrote that God sent His Son to be the “propitiation for our sins” (4:10). The NIV translation uses the phrase “atoning sacrifice.” The Greek word simply refers to the means by which sin is removed. The Apostle Paul used the same word:

*Romans 3:24-25b ...being justified as a gift by His grace through the
redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed
publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.*

“To ‘propitiate’ somebody means to appease or pacify their anger.”³ In primitive animistic religions, people would offer up different types of sacrifices to placate or appease the wrath of the gods whom they had upset. But one may think that surely we cannot understand God to have such a disposition toward men that they need to give offerings in which they can soothe over His anger and regain His pleasure. It seems beneath the God as revealed in Scripture that He would need His anger appeased.

“Propitiation”, though, is the correct term and appeasement is the proper understanding. One must disregard the crude ideas and concepts of man-made religions. Instead, “what is revealed to us in Scripture is a pure doctrine (from which all pagan vulgarities have been expunged) of God's

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holy wrath, his loving self-sacrifice in Christ and his initiative to avert his own anger.”⁴

The biblical understanding is that a holy God has been personally offended by the sins, disobedience and rebellion of mankind. His anger and wrath are rightfully grounded in these offences. But it is impossible for those who have rebelled, which includes all people of all times, to appease the anger of God. Therefore, God, who has been offended, sent His only unique Son to be the appeasement of His own anger. Thus, the sins, guilt and punishment due the children of God have been removed and God’s blessing can once again flow to those who belong to Him.

And this is the point of Paul in Romans:

Romans 3:23-26 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Notice Paul’s progression:

- a. All have sinned (3:23)
- b. God showed His love through His gift and grace (3:24)
- c. The sacrifice of Jesus was the appeasement of His wrath (3:25)
- d. And for those who have faith, God shows that He is still just—a punishment for sin must take place— and the One who provides for that justice (3:26).

If “love” is defined as the “...self-sacrificing desire for and delight in the welfare of the one love”, what better illustration of this love can be found?

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

GOD’S LOVE IN THE LOVE OF HIS CHILDREN

While no greater example of self-sacrificing love can be found, the story is not complete. For John finished this thought with the obligation of His children that they are to be people of love (4:11)—again being a reflection of the Father.

And the importance of this is because no one has seen God (4:12). Now, some have visibly seen different aspects of God: Moses saw His back side (Exodus 33), the children of Israel saw His glory descend upon the Temple (2 Chronicles 5). Others in Scripture have seen theophanies of God, but no one has seen God face-to-face or in His entirety. So how is one to see God?

“The reply to this verse is almost breathtaking, for it is John’s clear statement that although God cannot be seen in himself, he can be seen in those in whom he abides and in whom his love is perfected. How are men and women who do not yet know God to know him? he seems to ask. The answer is this: When we who do know him love one another.”⁵

More on this in the next study of 1 John 4:13-21.

CONCLUSION

“The love of God is one of the great realities of the universe, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rests. But it is a personal, intimate thing, too. God does not love populations, He loves people. He loves not masses, but men. He loves us all with a mighty love that has no beginning and can have no end.”
--A.W. Tozer

God, in His love, through His Son Jesus Christ, can forgive a person of his or her sins—are you interested?

¹ Last week’s study and other previous studies for Capitol Commission Missouri can be found at www.capitolcom.org/missouri/studies.

² R.A. Torrey, *The God of the Bible* (New Kensington, Penn.: Whitaker House, 1999), 169.

³ John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 169.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ James M. Boice, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004), 116.