

1 John 4:7-8

“Love one another: What God is”

I. Intro

II. Vs. 7-8 What God is

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Reading this general letter of John's, you begin to understand that John developed TESTS by which the reader could determine if they were a maturing child of God:

1. The moral test: Righteousness
2. The social test: Love
3. The doctrinal test: Truth

In the verses before us today the Apostle John for the third time takes up the subject of “LOVE”:

1. In 2:7-11 John revealed love was the proof of fellowship with God
2. In 3:10-14 John revealed that love was the proof of being a child of God
3. Now in 4:7-16 John will show that love is the proof of our spiritual maturity

It is interesting to note the repeated words and phrases that the Apostle uses throughout his writing. Reading through John's letters and gospel always reminds me of the repeated chorus in a song as they are repeated for emphasis and drive home what is important. For instance, look at:

3:24 “By this we know that **He abides in us**, by the Spirit whom He has given us”

4:13 “By this we know that **we abide in Him**, and he in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”

Between this repeated chorus of the Holy Spirits song is **two proofs of the indwelling Holy Spirit.**

- **The FIRST**, as noted last week, was *the acceptance of the truth of the Incarnation through obedience which grants us LIFE and fellowship with God.*
- **The SECOND**, that we are about to study today is, *the manifestation of true life*, which is seen in the fact of love. John will tell his readers that this love proves our transformation as we take on His likeness which is LOVE. It is this love along with God's holiness that reveal our transformation into God's nature and why we are exhorted to LOVE as John is only exhorting us to do what we have NOW been transformed through our relationship with God through His only Son Jesus to do.

The entirety of this section from verse 7-21 breaks apart in a simple outline:

1. Vs. 7-12 The exhortation to love one another
2. Vs. 13-16 The connection between Love and sound doctrine
3. Vs. 17-21 The perfection of love seen in the confidence of the believer before God at the judgement

Another repeated chorus of the Holy Spirits song in 1st John is in the phrase seen **three times in this section**. Notice carefully what remains the same and what is different in this chorus. **LOVE ONE ANOTHER**, is the constant command. What changes is the threefold reason for why the command is issued seen in the words of **LET US**, **WE ALSO OUGHT TO** and **IF WE**:

- Vs. 7-10 "**Let us love one another**": The point of revelation in this section is that since we have been born again and LOVE is God's own nature we must if we are born again exhibit that nature to each other.
- Vs. 11 "**We also ought to love one another**": Since LOVE is God's gift to His children than we ought to be sharing that gift with their brother and sisters.
- Vs. 12 "**If we love one another**": Since God's LOVE is God's current activity in and

through His children than it must naturally be our activity as well.

It is clear to the reader that God is not asking us He is commanding us to love one another, and He can do so confidently for the three reasons given we won't be able to get to these all today, but we are heading in the direction over the next weeks.

II. Vs. 7-8 Let us

The first reason John sates for the command to love one another is since we have been born again and LOVE is God's own nature we must if we are born again exhibit that nature to each other. Simply put those that have experienced the love of God that has transformed them must naturally be loving those who also have been transformed by this same love of God. The Love John describes here is a specific type of love that we are told is the exact same type of love that He has given to us agape “unconditional love”. It is this love that is God's nature, and it is this love that is only produced by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the child of God that yields to its influence. It was this love that was seen in action at the cross and it is this love that its elements are broken down in 1 Corinth 13. What is also pointed out in in this phrase “Let us” in the Greek is that the exhortation is continuous in action as it is “**Let us be HABITUALLY loving one another.**” The words “one another” in the Greek suggest “reciprocity” which is defined as “The practice of exchanging things (LOVE) with others for mutual benefit. In other words, God has given His love us with the expectation that we will give it away as well to benefit others. The phrase “**for love is of God**” and verse 8 “**God is love**” need clarification which the Greek provides but the English translation does not.

John sates both truths here that:

1. Vs. 7 “**For love is of God**”: Love comes from God, that is to say that He is the definition and source of that love. John will further define this love for his readers in verses 9-10.

The first definition of this kind of love is that its “source” originates in the Divine nature. Second John reveals for us that this Love of God is transformative is to come into contact with this love causes a NEW BIRTH that transforms us to the naturally unattainable degree of ushering us into fellowship with God who gifted us with this Love. John says that because of God’s love towards us we now KNOW. The absence of love is the absence of the knowledge of God as John writes in verse 8 “*He who does not love does not know God.*” The words in the Greek in verse 8 “*does not know God*” are “*The person who does not love with this kind of love has never known God.*” What this reveals to the reader is that our faith is transformative because it has come into contact with the love of God that changes the person causing them to exhibit that which they have come into contact with, GOD, with others. *Faith is* appropriating to ourselves what applies to all. *Love is* the extension to ALL of what applies to self.

2. Vs. 8 “*God is love*”: This does not mean that “LOVE IS GOD” as love does NOT define GOD, but God defines LOVE! God can never be defined by an abstraction and the Greek here places the article on the word God and not on the word love which means that these two words are NOT INTERCHANGEABLE. A good translation of this phrase would be that “*God, as to His nature is love. It is His nature to be loving.*” *Furthermore, you cannot separate His nature from other aspects of His nature and as we have already discovered in the words of the apostle that God is also Holy which means that God’s love is a Holy Love and that His Holiness is loving!* Much of what in the world that is called love bears no resemblance to God’s love and this phrase has been placed into the world to support the world’s version of LOVE. The fact that John links this to the nature of God further supports the trinity as in verses 7-8 the reference to Love is from the

vantage point of God the Father. Where the Love of God is from the vantage point of God the Son in verses 9-11. Finally, the Love of God is from the perspective of the Holy Spirit in verse 12. Love is a valid test for a true relationship with God since God is to His nature love and since we claim a relationship with God in necessitates that we live in this same love towards others, and it reveals the nature of God indwelling us.