

1 John 4:7-21

Verse 7 – The **flavor** of this section is **reflexive** of the past section.

The prophecies of Paul to the leaders of Ephesian Leaders in Acts 20:29-30 and to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:3-4 have come to pass – **The Savage wolves have come**. The Ephesian Church? Why point this out? Because the context in which John wrote the letter is important to understanding why he wrote the letter (It was to the Church at Ephesus and to be circulated through Asia Minor)

Paul's primary intention is not to attack false teachers, but to protect His readers.

(*Sheep. Arm them or Protect them from "wolves"?*) This 1st letter of John can be broken into an introduction, then three testings – three shields to protect the people. 1) Sound Obedience to Christ, 2) Sound Belief in Christ, 3) Sound Love of Christ. These are three shields we need TODAY to protect ourselves.

You will royally fail the first two if they aren't saturated with the third. For obedience and Belief to be sound, they must be soaked in the Love that is the Genesis of the Gospel – God's Love.

Love...again?

Paul sings the same tune, but to a different degree this time. There are three sections dealing with Love in 1st John

1 John 2:7-11 dealing with Love in reference to the Light

1 John 3:11-18 dealing with Love in reference to Eternal Life

1 John 4:7-21 deals with Love that is **the very Nature of God**. Love that is the Genesis of the Gospel broken into 4 sections:

- **Life**
- **Occupy**
- **Volume**
- **Engage**

Section 1 – Life (Vs 7-11)

False Teachers – Gnostics (God as Light and Spirit) they **never** taught God as Love – They couldn't.

Verses 7-8 – John hammers this point home because of the overwhelming moral obligation that accompanies this Love that is God's nature. **If** God is Love, and it is impossible to know God without loving, **then** the moral disregard for the actions of the flesh in light of the purification of one's spirit (Gnosticism) CANNOT HOLD FIRM, because Love is characterized and proven in deed.

Grounded in Verses 9-10 – Verse 8 shows us that God is love, but verses 9-10 reveal that Jesus is the physical manifestation of that Love. Therefore, the nature

of God's love is not self-seeking, but soul-seeking and self-sacrificing in that it would do "anything short of sin" to translate the love of God from one soul to another, one person to another – FOREVER changing the trajectory of that person's life. Within this is revealed the reality that the love that gives us life is not our love for God, but His love for us. This was physically displayed in the sending of His Son. With this in mind, what love are we instructed to love with?

"Agape" The Self-Sacrificing Love of God.

But what if we don't love?

Verse 11 – We don't look at God's love as an example to follow, but an experience to enjoy. #Consumer. (Gift>Giver mentality)

The reality is that the joy that comes from God's love is exponentially multiplied when we turn the experience into an example and live out his love.

We have an inaccurate understanding of the implications of Christ as our propitiation, our substitutionary atonement, our advocate, our Savior.

Grounded – When our lives are not characterized by Love, we cannot claim life in Christ. *But I serve....But I tithe....But I prayed a prayer....It doesn't matter.* The absence of God's love in someone's life is proof of an inaccurate understanding of the Gospel and evidence of the absence of Christ's life in someone.

What if we do love? If we love with this self-sacrificial, passionate love that is the Genesis of the Gospel, then we can claim **to not only know God, but to be known by God.** This is the sweetest life of all – John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

God created and made life for his Glory, and in doing so, our pursuit of true, abundant life is found in Him and Him alone. Because he is personified by Love, loving and knowing love are some primary means by which we know God, we know His life, and by which we bring Him Glory. His Love gives us true Life.

Section 2 – Occupy (Vs 12-16)

Verse 12 – Wait, I thought people had seen God? None of the tremendous examples of people "seeing" God were ever the fullness of God's perfection and presence. It was always His back, or His side, or His hand, or some form in which He intentionally held the fullness of Himself back for the sake of the people. BUT this fullness of His presence and nature is shown when His **Love** is perfected. The invisible God releases and reveals his love to the world through the visible love of His followers. It had been manifested in Christ, but after Christ ascended it was the responsibility of His followers – US.

This does not mean that God abides in us as a result of us loving, but rather our self-sacrificing love is evidence of HIM occupying US. Because He is Love and because He Loves us, God's love occupies us when we Love one another **and** God's love that grants us life is perfected when it is reproduced in us. (Received -> Reproduce. • As Christ Followers, we can only reproduce what occupies us.

Verse 13 – The Holy Spirit is the means of God's occupation of His people. "By this" – By what? LOVE We know we abide in Him, and He occupies us! HOW? By his Spirit. (Triunal and Trinitarian in nature) In essence the character of the Spirit should be evident in our lives if the Spirit of God is occupying us. (Galatians 5:23-24 – Fruit – Love sets the context) The Spirit of God is love, in that He leads people towards God, and leads us towards people who God desires His perfect love to be made known to. (GRAVITY) This enables us to live out one of the most self-sacrificing, loving things we can do – TESTIFY (Verse 14).

Verse 15 – This in turn leads to a Multiplication of God's Occupation. How? Well...Love. (Verse 16) The Genesis of the Gospel
Three UNDERSTANDINGS: Understanding of God's Love for us, understanding that God is Love, Understanding of our life in Him, and His occupation of us – by His Spirit. This is third point is CRUCIAL. Knowing WHERE we abide, lets us know WHO'S we are. (*Illus – Children in our Father's House*) Love enables us to occupy the gaping hole that is our identity with an understanding that we are God's and we are in God.

Knowing WHO abides in us sets an eternal context for our existence.

4 Truths

- 1) I'm never alone.
- 2) Loneliness can never hinder nor pollute my love, because God's Spirit and His love occupy me. (Self-Seeking)
- 3) I'm never unloved.
- 4) This reality destroys depression and magnifies the truth that my joy is unshakeable because of the eternal presence of His love in me.

I'm never off mission. If his love within me is perfected when I follow the command to "love one another" then in being led by the Spirit, I should do EVERYTHING with a mentality of seeing God's love perfected – especially in imperfect people and testifies to the love of God (Rom 5:8).

Multiplication of Occupation

I'll never have to doubt the assurance of my salvation.

1 John 5:13 "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life"

Verse 16a “known and believed” IF GOD IS LOVE, AND I ABIDE IN HIM, then HE OCCUPIES ME. #Assurance

Section 3 – Volume

Verses 17-18

*Illustration – When witnessing a Lady said “no one can really know if they’re going to heaven.” **THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE!***

Verse 17 Love is perfected in us when we have assurance of salvation. This can be related to Verse 12. When we are sure of our salvation, we will reproduce the Love that occupies us! As a result, such assurance should cause us to raise the volume of love in our lives, and TURN UP our relationship with God – there is no shakey – there is only assurance! We can pray more confidently. Preach more passionately. (You don’t need a pulpit) Provide more generously.

The Assurance that accompanies perfect Love removes fear of condemnation. Therefore it demolishes shame. (2 Tim 1:7-8; Romans 10:11) Assurance that comes from this love grants us greater access to God.

Love is the foundation of Life in God. Love is seen in and through us when God occupies us. Such a life and occupation results in assurance which turns up the volume of our relationship with God.

Section 4 – Engage

Verses 19-21

There are three levels of engagement as a result of God’s love.

Verse 19a - God engages us with His love. He initiates the relationship through the self-sacrificing action of the Gospel. (Primary – all of our ability to love is rooted in this reality).

Verse 19b – This enables us to love God in response to His initiated engagement. Romans 3:10-18 “as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

That’s the A-B relationship which is God and us. But what about the C relationship? What about others? We’re instructed out the gate of this passage to love others, right?

His initiation and our response to his love drive us to see "C", know God's love – His engagement with us causes us to engage Him and OTHERS.

Another example - Matthew 22:37-39 – The greatest commandment.
His love drives us to Love Him, and to love others.

Verses 20-21 – Must Love. Must. (Seen – Unseen -> Simple)
2 BIG reasons we must love others. Love for my brother encourages him to love. Greater ASSURANCE will come with his greater love. Self-Sacrificing love is the number one way you can intentionally, or unintentionally disciple those around you. (What Discipleship isn't: Easy)

PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS WATCHING. God's perfected love shared between imperfect people is impossible to ignore.

Colossians 4:5-6 "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

Conversely - When those outside see those inside devoid of love, why would they desire to enter such an atmosphere?
When God's un-ignorable, perfect love is witnessed; it becomes a catalyst for a multiplication of occupation.

Can we agree that God's love is important and to love one another is important? Awesome.
But let us practice this before we preach it. I was afraid to preach this message.
Romans 11:22a – Let us consider the goodness and severity of God.

Church History – Ephesus

51 AD - Acts 18 – Paul shows up, plants the church, and promises to return

54 AD - Acts 19 – Extreme economic disruption due to the spread of Christianity (Demitrius, Diana Idol, Silver makers guild)

57 AD - Acts 20:17 – Paul returns to the area, sends for the Ephesus leaders to come to Miletus. He warns them not to depart from his teachings, and to be obedient to the way and tells them that he would never see them again.

62 AD – Paul writes his letter to the Ephesian people. It is chocked full of rich theological doctrine and sound teaching.

63 AD and 67 AD - 1st and 2nd Timothy, again, repeating the mantras of "Do not depart" "Be obedient" and giving sound doctrine.

90 AD – The letter of 1st John is written and he is teaching them; do not depart, be obedient, but John goes so deep into the richness of God's love being practiced and lived out (Light, Eternal life, nature of God)

1/9th of Acts, 1 General Epistle, 2 Pastoral Epistles, and the context for 1st John were written with regard to Ephesus.

- Three things were imparted: (Our Three Shields)
- BE OBEDIENT! (That you might not depart)
- SOUND DOCTRINE!
- LOVE!

We see the continuity of 1st John in regards to the History of the Ephesian Church.

Then we see what scares me. After ALL THIS, we see the last mention made of Ephesus, after Paul, Timothy, and John have influenced the church, we see the FINAL mention in Revelation.

Ephesus is one of the seven lampstands, one of the seven churches that Jesus directly addresses.

Revelation 2:1-5: To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."'

Obedience and morality? Check...Belief and Sound Doctrine? Check But what is the issue? You have left the love you had at first. Then God says if not corrected, the church will be removed. Then Ephesus goes dark in about 135AD.

Do we now understand how predominant love is? You can have perfect morality and doctrine and still fall off/still go to hell/still be questioned for removal. Why? Because while moral obedience and doctrine allow us to know ABOUT God, it is LOVE that enables us to KNOW GOD and the LIFE He has for us in His love, and the OCCUPATION of Himself in us by His Spirit, It is LOVE that leads us to TURN UP the VOLUME of our relationship with God and IT IS THE ENGAGEMENT OF HIS INITIAL LOVE THAT ENABLES US TO HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT LOVE ACTUALLY IS. MIGHT we return to the first love. MIGHT we take John's

writings seriously. MIGHT we TRULY love God passionately and love others intentionally. MIGHT we be the body of believers God has designed and desires for us to be....