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A Letter To Dear Children, Part 16

A Four-Letter Family

Text: 1 John 4:7-21

God *is* love. - One of three definitions of God, all penned by John (John 4:24; 1 John 1:5; 1 John 4:8). God is not here described as a being who simply shows love or has loving ways. No, John articulates God’s essence. God *is* love! There is, in our world, both a holy and an unholy love. Warren Wiersbe, in his Bible Exposition Commentary writes,

*Much that is called “love” in modern society bears no resemblance or relationship to the holy, spiritual love of God. Yet we see banners saying, “God is love!” displayed at* *many festivals, particularly where young people are “doing their own thing”—as if one could dignify immorality by calling it “love.”*

If *we* are to show our love by loving God and others, a fair question would be, how does *God* show *His* love to humanity? The text answers that question in verses 9-10. John speaks of God as the One who initiated love. He did not wait for us to respond to Him. Rather God reached out to *us* in Christ. God is both the source of love (7) and the quintessential practitioner of love.

Clement of Alexandria wrote, “The soul, having received lordly power, practices being God” (James Drummond. Studies in Christian Doctrine, p. 303).

Again, as he has done in previous passage in this epistle, John argues that love is *the* mark of whether or not one has taken God seriously. If we say we love God, we will love others as well.

John R.W. Stott, in his commentary on the letters of John, quotes 16th century writer William Tyndale, who says, “John singeth his old song again” (Vol.26 of the Library of Christian Classics [SCM/Westminster, 1966])

John 13:34-35:

***34****A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.* ***35****By this all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another.”*

John will say that love is *the* test of a person’s discipleship (2:7-11; 3:11-18).

John reasons, that it is not possible to *love* God and *hate* people (v.20-21).

That little four-letter word, *love*, is to drive everything we do. We walk in love, we operate out of love. We do our giving based on love. We serve others because we love them. ALL is done in love and with love being our motivator.

Love functions, practically, in at least two ways.

1. Love serves as a visible sign that we are God’s children (12a; John 13:34-35- “by this ALL will know...).
2. Love serves as a perfecting tool in the hand of God. It is a reminder that we are still being fashioned, corrected, polished, perfected by God(12b,17a,18). William Barclay said, “When love comes, fear goes”. God’s perfect love is at work in us and that perfect love perfects the lovers of God.

**Illus.**

William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) served as Prime Minister of Great Britain, four times, covering a period of twelve years. He had the responsibility of announcing the death of Princess Alice. The little daughter of the Princess was seriously ill with diphtheria. The doctors told the princess not to kiss her little daughter and endanger her life by breathing the child's breath. Once when the child was struggling to breathe, the mother, forgetting herself entirely, took the little one into her arms to keep her from choking to death. Rasping and struggling for her life, the child said, "Momma, kiss me!" Without thinking of herself the mother tenderly kissed her daughter. She got diphtheria and some days thereafter she went to be forever with the Lord. Real love forgets self. Real love knows no danger. Real love doesn't count the cost. The Bible says, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” (Song of Solomon 8:7).

Amen