

OWNING UP TO LOVE | 1 John 4:7-21 | Pastor Mark Bofill | 1/22/2023

I. Love Known (7-11) | II. Love Shown (12-16) | III. Love Grown (17-21)

INTRO: Everyone wants to know love! Let's face it, so many people are looking for genuine love, yet never seem to find it. In our search we write poems about it and we even sing songs about it: *"Looking for Love"* by Johnnie Lee *'I was lookin' for love In all the wrong places Lookin' for love in too many faces, Searchin' their eyes, lookin' for traces Of what I'm dreamin' of, Hopin' to find a friend and a lover, I'll bless the day I discover Another heart lookin' for love....* This poor old cowboy has mistaken companionship for love. So many people fall into the same trap, and settle for far less than the genuine Love that God so freely offers. **But how will they ever know genuine love if the Church of God never "Owns Up" to it!** I've entitled this sermon: **OWNING UP TO LOVE: 1 John 4:7-21**

I. LOVE KNOWN (4:7-11) The Comprehension of Love – As the Church, we must first know what Love is and what it looks like before we can practice it effectively.

A. Directions for Love (7-8a) – *"Beloved, let us love one another..."* Love is to be manifested among believers! It should be an intentional practice, as **it reveals that we are born of God**.

1. (John 13:34-35) *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.**"* (Jesus demonstrated what perfect love looks like! He commands us to the same)

2. (2 Pet 1:4) says that we are partakers of the *"Divine Nature."* When we love one another, it proves that we have the genuine nature that comes from the Father. (If you don't have love, then you DO NOT know the Father!)

B. Description of Love (8b) – The definition of love is simply **GOD**. *"God is Love, and Love is of God!"* Love is the nature of God, and a core aspect of His Person. Everything God does is loving, just, and right. He is the perfect example of true love, as described in (1 Cor 13:1-8). **Read and expound:** These characteristics describe the essence of God's nature...LOVE!

C. Demonstration of Love (9-10) – Love Initiated! God was first to demonstrate what real Love looks...**Sacrifice!** This is the ultimate ACT of Love ...He sacrificed what He valued the most...His Begotten Son, so that we might live! (John 3:16) *For God so LOVED the world that He GAVE His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (This blows my mind, because Jesus is the One who uttered this verse! He fully understood the greatness of God's love for us, and willingly obeyed His Father's plan so that we might live!)

Propitiation: Hilasmos, only found in (1 John 2:2; 4:10). **Hilasmos indicates not only the benefit of reconciliation, but the manner whereby sinners are made friends of God.** **Hilasmos refers to Christ as the One who propitiates, and offers himself as the propitiation.** (In other words, He is both the sacrifice and the High Priest sacrificing Himself! **THAT IS LOVE!**)

D. Distribution of Love (11) – It's imperative that we Love! Because of such a great sacrifice we "ought" to love others as he loved us, which implies **obligation**. Christian love must be self-sacrificing like God's love! If we have come to know the Love of God...that **God is Love,** then we are to make His great **"Love Known"** to others!

CLOSING THOUGHTS: Love that is "Known," should result in a Love that is "Shown..."

II. LOVE SHOWN (4:12-16) The Communication of Love! - **Love is an effective witness** that must be shown to all. One is not only to believe in God's love, but **"Abide"** in God's Love also. When this process is accomplished, the outflow of God's Perfect love is manifested and evident in His Body of believers. The **"Work of Love"** began with the Divine Godhead....

A. The Work of the Father (12) – God's Love Among us! **It is a perfecting process!** Once again, we live in a world that is dying (lit.) to find **REAL LOVE!** Even though no one has ever seen God, **His love will be shown** through our example of love. In a sense, you are an extension of God's Love, *i.e., God's love is in you as your reach out and physically show His love to others.* **This is the Perfecting Process!** (*Illus: Cyborgs – you have been Assimilated... Resistance is futile!* | *My wife Mary, "D" Word...I am going to love you no matter what!*)

B. The Seal of Spirit (13) – God's Love Within us! The Holy Spirit in our lives is proof of a genuine relationship with Him. **(Rom 8:16)** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

1. It's interesting that the **Fruit of the Spirit** mentioned in **(Gal 5:22-23)** begins with **Love**, from which the others fruits stem. When God's love is in us, it will bear fruits of love.

2. Do you have God's Spirit? **(Rom 8:9b)** says, "...Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

C. The Testimony of the Son (14) – God's Love Validated by us! John bore witness to the work of Jesus Christ in this world **(1 John 1:1-4)**. He testified to the fact the Jesus Christ came to die on the Cross, and save us from our sin! - Likewise, **we are to testify to the work of our Savior**, who has shown the greatest act of Love the history of this world. **(John 15:13)** **Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.** (*Reject, Refute, or Receive it*)

D. The Abiding Presence of God's Love (15-16) – God's Love Forever with us! John tells us that God's Love can be confidently known and believed upon. **Jesus Christ should be our Unwavering Confession in life!** - John also encourages believers to **remain in this love**, which is proof a mutual relationship. **(John 15:9)** **As the Father loved me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.**

CLOSING THOUGHTS: Do you communicate God's love? I encourage you to be a living epistle who shows that Love originated with God, manifested in His Son, and is demonstrated by His Church, of which you are part. **Love that is "Shown," is obviously a Love that has "Grown!..."**

III. LOVE GROWN (4:17-21) The Consummation of Love! Because of God's Perfect Love, the love that He is working in us can be **perfected**. The goal is for it to be **"Fully Grown/Mature"**

A. Perfect Love is Attainable (17a) – The presence of sin and suffering in the world often causes us to **fear**. When we fall short of God's standard of love we often feel unworthy of His love. But, this doesn't change His love for us! (1 John 5:4-5) Says, For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? Our faith is what saves us, but we have to yield all of our hearts to Him being truthful about everything. (*Sanctification*)

B. Perfect Love Provides Confidence (17b) – God's abiding love within us produces a **bold assurance** for us. Confidence is a sign that our love is mature! "As He is, so are we." When we love God and love one another, we don't have to worry about where we stand on the **Day of Judgment**, because we have already be judged righteous in Jesus!

1. In (1 Thess 1:10b) Paul informs us: **"...Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come."**

2. **God delights in making you His own** - (1 John 3:1a) Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! (*No need to freak out?*)

C. Perfect Love has No Fear (18) – Love that is **complete** is a love that can exert its proper influence in our hearts and minds. When we have God's Perfect Love within us, it **Casts out All fear and dread in regard to the future.** (2 Tim 1:7) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

1. **Fear Involves Torment:** The absence of God's Perfect Love in our hearts involves **TORMENT:** painful and distressing emotions. Many people (*even Christians*) suffer from the fear of poverty, of losses, of bereavement, of sickness, of death, and of future woe. Though genuine, these are distressing apprehensions that we can be delivered from.

2. **I have found that a fearful Christian is one who is NOT enjoying their salvation,** WHY? Because FEAR is overshadowing their JOY! The Bible says, "the Joy of the Lord is your strength!" Joy stems from Love (Gal 5:22). (*Love has NOT Grown... NOT yet made perfect in Love!*)

3. **Relationship with God "Frees Us" of all fear.** (Rom 8:15 NIV) The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

D. Perfect Love is Authentic (19-21) – Because God loved us first, ALL of our responses should be with love (19). However (20), informs us that it is easy for anyone to just “claim” that he or she “Loves God.” When actions towards a known brother or sister are **HATEFUL**, something is obviously wrong: *“for he who does not love his brother who he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”* In order for your love to be perfect, you need to **“Own Up to Your Love.”** Ask God to reveal the areas you fall short in. Because His Love is authentic, He will see you through the struggles:

GOD SAID NO!

- I asked God to take away my habit. God said, **No**. It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up.
- I asked God to spare me pain. God said, **No**. Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me.
- I asked God to make my spirit grow. God said, **No**. You must grow on your own! I will prune you to make you fruitful.
- I asked God to grant me patience. God said, **No**. Patience is a byproduct of tribulations; it isn't granted, it is learned!
- I asked God to help me LOVE others, as much as He loves me. God said...**Ahhh, finally you have the right idea!**

1. Love perfected will overcome Hate (Titus 3:3): *For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.*

2. (Eph 4:1-3) *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

3. God is so passionate about us loving one another (21), that He makes it a COMMANDMENT!

CLOSING THOUGHTS: The goal for **“Your OWN Love,”** should be a **“Perfectly Grown Love.”**

Are you Owning up to Love?

Are you Falling Short in Love?