

Love is the Foundation of Renewal

1 John 4:7-21

Loving your Creator (Father)
Loving your Savior (Son)
Loving your Companion (Holy Spirit)

Loving your unique design.
Loving your neighbor (as yourself).

In 15 verses love is used 27 times.

Will we experience the opportunity for renewal in this new year?

Jesus the Messiah, the one true God, has revealed himself to be - love incarnate.

Love in the flesh...

True of Jesus
True of his followers.

Love incarnate displays the character, ethics, obedience, and satisfaction of the Kingdom of God.

This is who we are because it is who our God is!

And yet...is this what you are experiencing?

Is this what the watching world is experiencing as they rub shoulders with the church?

Are we more filled with division, apathy, sub-culture allegiances, and self actualization than the fruit and gifts of the Spirit?

vs. 7-10, How is love in the flesh even a possibility?

Because love is from God. God revealed the precise reality of love in sending Jesus.

vs. 11, If God loved us in this way, we ought to love one another in the same way.

vs. 12, No one has ever seen God.

Wait, haven't we already heard these words from John?

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him.

John's point -> We don't really know who God is until we look at Jesus. The one and only Son has revealed him.

- People see God through his love cultivated and activated in us (believers).
- This cultivated activity is moving toward completion.
- Jesus unveiled the mystery and love of God to a surprised and unready world. This is the same mission Jesus has now given the church.

vs. 13, How are we reminded of this truth? The Holy Spirit!

Who enables us to bear witness.

Not just in word (what we say we believe) but in deed (genuine action motivated by love).

1 John 3:17-18 If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God's love reside in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.

****Following the example of Jesus, our love also must take shape in the flesh.****

vs. 20, Loving your church family, your brothers and sisters in Christ is God's love on display.

- If you are not loving your neighbor, you are not loving God.

Faith in Jesus is that simple and devastating!

-> So...what is it that gets us there?

1. The truth of the gospel (**vs. 14-15**).

John reminds us of his testimony.

2. God is love (**vs. 16**). Important detail: This isn't an ontological description of who God is in his essence. It is speaking of his essence in action.

The truth -> to live in God is to know love. God is the source of love.

John 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 15:12 "This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you.

3. Love is made complete (**vs. 17**).

4. There is no fear (**vs. 18**).

- We have been renewed! Even though we were not worthy we were not deemed worthless.
- And in that renewal there is no fear in love.
- We can be confident, bold, and courageous in judgement.
- God's love has been made complete in us. As we love others we become the "flesh and blood" of his love.

Once you learn to give yourself to others as God gave himself to us, there is nothing to be afraid of.

Back to **vs. 16**. The one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.

Abide / remains in / dwells / make one's home

In order for there to be genuine and lasting renewal, we must embrace mutual indwelling.

Together we do not have to succumb to the pull and drag of the world.

Love focuses our gaze at the cross! Will your gaze be focused at the cross in 2023?

Being loved and knowing that we are loved empowers us to love.