

The Power of Love

1 John 4:11-16

Introduction

1. The Bible says if love is real you will be able to see it. You will be able to see it work, and work in the hard places like your marriage and family. You see love is an action word not an abstract idea. Love moves, it does things. It also asks some penetrating questions that speak to everyday life.
2. Bob Reccord is the president of the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. In a *Baptist Press* article (March 19, 2002) he asks his readers, “Are you experiencing God’s kind of love in your marriage?” To answer that question he asks us to answer several others:
 - When you’re on time but your spouse isn’t, are you patient?
 - When your spouse needs attention, but you’re focused on a task, are you understanding?
 - When your spouse succeeds in his or her own sphere of strength, are you their enthusiastic cheerleader?
 - Do you mention how much you’ve done in the past when you’re trying to get the upper hand during a disagreement in the present?
 - Do you ever use your spouse as the butt of your jokes or the target of your one-liners?
 - Do you ever leave the impression with your mate that it’s your way or the highway?
 - When you’re watching your favorite show or reading your favorite book, but your mate wants to talk, are you willing to stop and listen?
 - Do you keep short accounts or detailed records of hurts from the past?
 - When your mate happens to be wrong does your heart want to scream, “Gotcha! I knew I was right!”
 - Are you willing to look for the best and overlook the worst?
 - Are you willing to hang in there when the easier response would be to hang it up?
3. The Bible teaches us there is great power in love. Love for one another conforms us to the example of Jesus and makes us look more and more like our perfect heavenly Father. John is convinced that loving God and loving others cannot be divorced. As he penned 1 John 4:7-21, I believe he had ringing in His ears the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:37-39 when Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Transition

Why is love, God’s kind of love, so powerful? John gives us 3 reasons in verses 11-16.

I. God’s love is satisfying. 4:11-12

Beloved (*agapetoi*, “dear friends,” *NIV*) – 6th and final use of this tender, compassionate and affectionate term. John is not so much introducing a new subject here as he is adding to his previous discussion in verses 7-10.

1. You have a motivation to love. 4:11

- John argues from the greater to the lesser. “If,” and he does, God so loved us [looks back to verses 9-10], we ought to love one another. “Ought” involves an inner compulsion and a moral obligation. “Look at how He has loved me, how can I do any less?”
- The act and example of God’s love in sending and sacrificing His Son teaches me, requires me, and inspires me to love others. God’s love for me is my motivation to love others.

2. You experience maturity through love. 4:12

- This verse is striking and unexpected in its beginning. Lit. “God no one ever has beheld.” The word seen (*NKJV* is *tetheatai* (we get “theater” from it) implies a careful observing or a close scrutiny or examination. No person has seen God “up close and personal” in His unveiled essence, glory and majesty. To do so would certainly be our death.
- Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 33:22-23) and Isaiah in the temple (Isa. 6) saw theophanies, visions, or revelations of God they could see and handle without being consumed.
- John’s argument, however, takes a beautiful turn. No one can see God in His essence, but we can see God through the lives of those who demonstrate His love to others. Stott says it well, mutual Christian love is the evidence that “the unseen God, who was once revealed in His Son, is now revealed in His people...when they love one another” (Stott, 164).
- John makes his point by stating that when we love one another (1) it is proof God abides (5x in vs. 12-16) continually in us and (2) His love (God’s love for us/His kind of love) is perfected (W.A.R.), brought to complete maturity. It reaches its intended goal.
- John’s point: 1) I can love others like God loves me because He lives in me and 2) His love will reach its intended goal which is that I will love others like He loves me. It is a wonderful circle of theological truth that cannot be broken.

Illustration

When the Al Qaeda terrorists murdered thousands of Americans on September 11, 2001, *Newsweek* carried a story (Oct. 22, 2001; p. 59) in which they said of the hijacking terrorists, “All that is known for certain is that the hijackers had holes in their souls that many Americans cannot begin to fathom but that Bin Laden and his minions knew how to fill.” Actually there is no great mystery here. It is the difference between someone who knows God’s love in Christ and someone who doesn’t; between someone who has seen God in Christ and someone who hasn’t; between someone who has God abiding in them and someone who doesn’t; between someone in whom God’s love is being perfected and someone in whom Satanic hatred is being perfected. It is the difference between someone in love with an Osama Bin Laden and someone in love with the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. God's love is spiritual. 4:13-14

John wants to make clear the evidence that demonstrates that we do indeed know and abide in God. Verses 13ff do this, and verses 13-14 do so with a distinctively Trinitarian component. Note the reference to the Spirit in verse 13, the Son in verse 14 and the Father in both verses 13 and 14.

1. The Spirit is a gift of love. 4:13

- God sent His Son to die for us.
God sent His Spirit to live in us.
- By this we know looks forward to what follows. By this we know we abide in Him (in God), and He in us. (It is a reciprocal relationship.)
God sent His Spirit to live in us.
- He has given (W.A.R.) us of His Spirit. Believers can and should have an ongoing awareness, an intimate personal knowledge that they are in God and He is in us. John's theology complements that of Paul at this point.
 - **Romans 5:5**, "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
 - **Romans 8:16**, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."
 - **1 Corinthians 6:19**, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"
- At regeneration/conversion God gave us His Spirit as a permanent, abiding gift of love. His presence in our lives is proof we belong to God and proof that God's love is spiritual.

2. The Son was sent in love. 4:14

- Third time John speaks of God sending His Son (cf. 4:9, 10).
- We is emphatic "We ourselves..."
- Seen (W.A.R.) and testify (cont.) – apostolic authority/testimony.
- Father sent – no one has seen God (Father), but we have seen the Son He sent. And why did He come?
- To be the Savior of the world. In the New Testament this designation occurs only here and on the lips of the Samaritan woman in John 4:42. This was His purpose, this was His goal. The Father had sinners in mind when He sent His Son. He thought of me, you, the lost world, above all.
- You want to see the power of love: then look at the cross.

III. God's love is secure. 4:15-16

- Love and truth are mutually inclusive, they go together. If you love God you will confess His Son (as world Savior). If you love others you will confess His Son (as world Savior).

1. **Because of Jesus I know God lives in me. 4:15**

- Confesses (*homologese*) Jesus as Son of God – entails incarnation, all of His life and ministry. Rob Jesus of His deity and decisive work of salvation and you rob God of the glory of His love.
- If we love one another God abides in us. (v. 12)
If we have the Spirit God abides in us. (v. 13)
If we confess the Son God abides in us. (v. 15)
They all hang/go together.
The reverse is also true too.
- “Jesus is the Son of God, God become flesh. I believe in Him. I trust Him, not only as Savior of the world, but as my Savior. I personally trust in Him and only Him as my Lord, Master, King and Sovereign.”

2. **Because of Jesus I know God loves me. 4:16**

- We is emphatic.
- Known (W.A.R.) and believed (W.A.R.) the love God has (cont.) for us.
The order is important. “Keep the faith” is nonsensical. Faith demands an object, it requires a minimal amount of knowledge.
- The love God has (cont.) for us. How do we know God’s love?
 - × He sent His Son.
 - × He gave us His Spirit.
 - × He enables us to love others like He has loved us.
 - × He is love. (v. 16)
 - × Abiding in love I abide in God and God in me. (v. 16)
- “Faith and love are at the same time fruit and evidence of one who is indwelt by God.” (Akin, 185).
- Abide is actually in the text 3 times in verse 16. This is the key.

Conclusion

- There is power in love.
Power for God to send His Son.
Power for the Son to come.
Power for God to give us His Spirit.
Power for us to love others, even when they are not lovely. Spurgeon said it well:
Ye poor sinners, ye think that there must be something in you before God can love you. Our testimony is, that God hath loved us; we are sure of this and we do not speak half-heartedly, when we declare that we are equally sure that there never was anything in us by nature that he could love. We have known and have believed that the love of God towards us is free, sovereign, undeserved, and springs entirely from the overflowing love of his own heart, and is not caused by anything in us.

May 22, 1859

Music Hall – Royal Surrey Gardens

- If God can so love us, can we not also love one another? There is indeed great power in love.