

## **This is love (Part 2)**

**1Jn 4:7-12**

**March 12, 2017**

1Jn 4:8-12 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

### **I. Review:**

#### **What God Is: "for God is love"**

This is the third of three expressions in John's writings that help us understand the nature of God. Of course, none of these in themselves, are a complete revelation of God; it is incorrect to separate them.

1. "God is spirit" (Jn 4:24);

This refers to His essence and to His spirit nature. Jesus Christ is now in heaven, He has a glorified body and is not flesh and blood. He is spirit and isn't limited by time and space the way we are.

2. "God is light" (1Jn 1:5); "God is light," and therefore He must uphold His holy Law.

This refers to His holy nature. In the Bible, light is a symbol of holiness and darkness is a symbol of sin (Jn 3:18-21; 1 Jn 1:5-10). God cannot sin because He is holy. Because we have been born into His family, we also have received His holy nature (1Pt 1:14-16; 2Pt 1:4).

3. "God is love." (1Jn 4:8) "God is love," and therefore He wants to forgive and save sinners.

This does not mean that "love is God."

It has been said that "love does not define God, but God defines love." God is love and God is light; therefore, His love is a holy love, and His holiness is expressed in love.

Even His judgments are measured out in love and mercy (Lam 3:22-23).

One of the best ways to contrast God's love and God's wrath is to compare Deut 5:9 with 5:10 and 7:9.

### **II. Word and phrase study of 1Jn 4:9-12**

#### **4:9 "By this the love of God was manifested in us"**

God has clearly shown that He loves us by sending His only Son to die in our place. Love is an action, not just a feeling.

God demonstrated his love by sending his Son to die for our sins (1Jn 4:9-10, 14; Jn 3:16).

We can demonstrate love in return by our concern and care for fellow believers (1Jn 4:11-12).

Christian love has been defined as unselfish concern for the welfare of another. We can love even those we don't like.

#### **"that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world"**

The term "only begotten" is *monogenēs*, which implies "unique," "one of a kind," not begotten as in procreation.

Jesus is God's Son in a unique sense. Believers are God's children only in a derived sense.

#### **"so that we might live through Him"**

The greek grammar implies that this (we might live) is a contingency. A faith response is necessary on our part to live through Him. The purpose of the incarnation was eternal and abundant life (Jn 10:10).

#### **4:10 "In this is love,"**

**1Jn 4:10** may be translated: "In this way is seen the true love."

There is a false love, and this kind of love God must reject. Love that is born out of the very essence of God must be spiritual and holy, because “God is spirit” and “God is light.” This true love is “poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom 5:5).

God’s love is clearly demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus (Rom 5:6, 8).

To know Jesus is to know God.

### **“not that we loved God”**

The NT is unique among the world religions. Typically religion is mankind seeking God, but Christianity is God seeking fallen mankind! The wonderful truth is not our love for God, but His love for us. He has sought us through our sin and self, our rebellion and pride. The glorious truth of Christianity is that God loves fallen mankind and has initiated and maintains a life-changing contact.

### **“but that He loved us”**

Eph 2:4-5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ ... (Rom 8:37; Gal 2:20; 1Jn 4:10-11, 19)

### **“and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”**

#### **What God Did: “He Sent His Son” (1Jn 4:9-11)**

Because God is love, He must communicate not only in words but in deeds.

True love is never static or inactive. God reveals His love to mankind in many ways. He has geared all of creation to meet man’s needs. Until man’s sin brought creation under bondage, man had on earth a perfect home in which to love and serve God.

God’s love was revealed in the way He dealt with the nation of Israel.

“The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you ... has the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand” (Deut 7:7-8).

The greatest expression of God’s love is in the death of His Son.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

The word **manifested** means “to come out in the open, to be made public.”

It is the opposite of “to hide, to make secret.” Under the Old Covenant, God was hidden behind the shadows of ritual and ceremony (Heb 10:1); but in Jesus Christ “the life was manifested” (1Jn 1:2). “He that has seen Me,” said Jesus, “has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9).

Why was Jesus Christ manifested?

“And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins” (1Jn 3:5).

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1Jn 3:8).

Where did Jesus take away our sins and destroy (render inoperative) the works of the devil? At the cross! God manifested His love at the cross when He gave His Son as a sacrifice there for our sins.

Jesus is called God’s **only-begotten Son**.

The title is used in John’s Gospel (Jn 1:14). It means “unique, the only one of its kind.” The fact that God sent His Son into the world is one evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ. Babies are not sent into the world from some other place; they are born into the world. As the perfect Man, Jesus was born into the world, but as the eternal Son, He was sent into the world. (Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Ac 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; 11:17; 1Jn 4:9)

But the sending of Christ into the world, and His death on the cross, were not prompted by man’s love for God. They were prompted by His love for man. The world’s attitude toward God is anything but love!

**Two purposes are given for Christ’s death on the cross:**

that we might live through Him (1Jn 4:9)

that He might be the propitiation for our sins (1Jn 4:10).

**Jesus Christ died that we might:**

live “through Him” (1Jn 4:9)

“for Him” (2Cor 5:15)

“with Him” (1Thes 5:9-10).

**His death was not an accident; it was an appointment.** He did not die as a weak martyr, but as a mighty conqueror. A sinner's desperate need is for life, because he is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). It is something of a paradox that Christ had to die so that we may live! We can never probe the mystery of His death, but this we know - He died for us (Gal. 2:20).

**The death of Christ is described as a "propitiation."**

John has used this word before (1Jn 2:2).

We should remember that propitiation does not mean that men must do something to appease God or to placate His anger. Propitiation is something God does to make it possible for men to be forgiven.

**How can God forgive sinners and still be consistent with His holy nature?**

The answer is the cross. There Jesus Christ bore the punishment for sin and met the just demands of the holy Law. But there, also, God reveals His love and makes it possible for men to be saved by faith.

**It is important to note that the emphasis is on the death of Christ, not on His birth.**

The fact that Jesus was "made flesh" (Jn 1:14) is certainly an evidence of God's grace and love, but the fact that He was "made sin" (2Cor 5:21) is underscored for us. The example of Christ, the teachings of Christ, the whole earthly life of Christ, find their true meaning and fulfillment in the cross.

#### **4:11 "Beloved, if God so loved us,"**

"if" = God loves you is assumed to be true from the perspective of John.

**"God so loved us"**

God does love us (Rom 8:31)! This should be understood as "in such a manner," as in John 3:16.

#### **"we also ought to love one another."**

Because He has loved us we must love one another (1Jn 2:6; 3:16; 4:1).

For the second time, believers are exhorted to "love one another" (1Jn 4:11).

This exhortation is a commandment (1Jn 4:7), and its basis is the nature of God. "God is love; we know God; therefore, we should love one another." But the exhortation to love one another is presented as a privilege as well as a responsibility: "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1Jn 4:11). We are not saved by loving Christ; we are saved by believing on Christ (Jn 3:16). But after we realize what He did for us on the cross, our normal response ought to be to love Him and to love one another.

It is important that Christians progress in their understanding of love.

To love one another simply out of a sense of duty is good, but to love out of appreciation (rather than obligation) is even better.

This may be one reason why Jesus established **the Lord's Supper**, (the Communion service).

When we break the bread and share the cup, we remember His death. Few men, if any, want their deaths remembered! In fact, we remember the life of a loved one and try to forget the sadness of his death. Not so with Christ. He commands us to remember His death: "This do in remembrance of Me!"

We should remember our Lord's death in a spiritual way, not merely sentimentally.

Someone has defined sentiment as "feeling without responsibility." It is easy to experience solemn emotions at a church service and yet go out to live the same defeated life. True spiritual experience involves the whole man. The mind must understand spiritual truth; the heart must love and appreciate it; and the will must act on it. The deeper we go into the meaning of the Cross, the greater will be our love for Christ and the greater our active concern for one another.

### **III. Greek Words Study: (from Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words)**

#### **Only begotten Son**

##### **Key Verses:**

Jn 3:16-18 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

1Jn 4:9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

### **Explanation:**

People have a mistaken idea about the term “only-begotten” because the English term “begotten” connotes a birth. By contrast, the Greek word *monogenēs* denotes a “one and only son”; it does not convey the idea of a birth. *Monogenēs* appears nine times in the New Testament; in five of these occurrences, it makes references to Jesus. Three of the other occurrences refer to an only son or daughter (Lk 7:12; 8:42; 9:38). Because of the word’s frequent use for referring to an “only child,” it often conveys the idea of something especially favored or precious. In Heb 11:17, *monogenēs* is used to refer to Isaac as Abraham’s “favored” or “unique” son. Isaac was not Abraham’s “only-begotten” son since he had other children, but Isaac was his favored and unique son—the son that fulfilled God’s promise.

Where *monogenēs* is used to refer to Jesus, its meaning is likewise not “only-begotten,” but “only” or “unique.” The word is used with “son” and should be understood as “God’s only Son,” indicating both God’s favor toward Him and His uniqueness (Jn 3:16, 18; 1Jn 4:9). The statement at the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, “This is my beloved son,” expresses virtually the same idea. In Jn 1:14, the word “only” is used by itself to stress that the incarnate Word comes as a unique One from the Father.

The Son of God was the Father’s “one and only” unique Son. Although the Father has “begotten” many sons (Jn 1:12, 13), none of these sons are exactly like Jesus Christ, who is the unique Son of God. His role and title as “Son” is from eternity. As the unique Son of God, He has had a special glory and an unrivaled place of honor. Because of the confusion related to the idea of the “Son of God” being “begotten,” the early Christians had many debates. The issue was finally solved by the beginning of the fourth century and formalized in the creed from the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325). This creed speaks of the Son of God as “begotten not made, of one substance with the Father.” This wording of the creed completely rejected the heresy that the Son of God was the first created being. It unambiguously proclaimed that Jesus was fully God and fully man - the only One who could truly take our sins on Himself on the cross, the only One who can invite us in God’s kingdom to live with Him forever.

### **Propitiate:**

#### **Key Verses:**

1Jn 2:2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

1Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Heb 2:17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

### **Explanation:**

“Propitiate” and “propitiation” are not commonly used in the English language. We must look to an age long gone in order to discern their meaning. In ancient times, many polytheists thought of their gods as unpredictable beings, liable to become angry with their worshipers for any trifle. When any misfortune occurred, it was believed that a god was angry and was therefore punishing his worshipers. The remedy was to offer the god a sacrifice to appease his anger. This process was called “propitiation.”

A few of the New Testament writers used exactly the same word, but the meaning was slightly different. Instead of seeing God as one whose mood needs to be appeased, “propitiation” focuses on the sacrifice of Jesus by death on the cross which brought the resultant peace between God and sinful humanity. The Greek term for “propitiation,” *hilasmos*, occurs in some important passages: (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1Jn 2:2; 4:10). The message we get from these passages is that propitiation (also called “expiation”) pertains to Christ’s sacrifice for sins in order to bring about a peaceful relationship between God and humanity.

Whenever God’s children sin, they provoke His anger. Of course, His anger is not an irrational lack of self-control, as it so often is with humans. His anger is the settled opposition of His holy nature to everything that is evil. Such opposition to sin cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand. It requires something much more substantial, and the Bible states that it was only the cross that did this. Jesus is “the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1Jn 2:2). This is not the only way of looking at the cross, but it is an important way. If God’s anger is real, then it must be taken into account in the way that sin, which caused that wrath, is dealt with. When the New Testament speaks of “propitiation,” it means that Jesus’ death on the cross for the sins of mankind appeased God’s wrath against His people once and for all. 1Jn 4:10 states that God demonstrated His love to us by sending His Son to become “the propitiation for our sins.” Just as in the Old Testament God met with His people when the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled on the altar, so Christ’s death brings us into fellowship with God.

# Sin

## Key Verses:

Rom 8:2-3 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

1Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1Jn 1:7, 9; 2:2; 3:4, 9; 5:16)

## Explanation:

As defined by the Bible, sin is a violation of God's standard for human behavior. The most frequent biblical words for "sin" speak of violating that standard in some fashion. The Greek equivalent, *hamartia* meant, originally, "to miss the mark, fail in duty" (Rom. 3:23). As Lawgiver, God sets limits to humanity's freedom; another frequent term (Greek *parabasis*) describes "sin" as "transgression," which means overstepping those set limits. A similar term is *paraptoma* (Greek); it denotes "a false step" or "a trespass on forbidden ground." Two other New Testament words are *anomia*, which means "lawlessness," and *paranomia*, which means "lawbreaking."

Jesus said little about the origin of "sin," except to trace it to the human heart and will (Mt 6:22-23; 7:17-19; 18:7; Mk 7:20-23; Lk 13:34), but He significantly redefined sin's scope. Where the Law could assess only people's actions, Jesus showed that anger, contempt, lust, hardness of heart, and deceitfulness are also sinful. He also spoke of sins of neglect, good deeds left undone, the barren tree, the unused talent, the priest ignoring the injured, and love never shown (Mt 25:41-46). He especially condemned sins of unkindness, implacable hostility, selfishness, and insensitivity (Lk 12:16-21; 16:19-31).

Paul argued strongly from observation and from Scripture that "all have sinned" (Rom 1-3; 3:23). To him, sin is a force, a power, a "law" ruling within people (Rom 7:23; 8:2). Sin produces all kinds of evil behavior, the hardening of the conscience (Rom 7:21-24), alienation from God, and subjection to death (Rom 5:10; 6:23; Eph 2:1-5). And, humans are helpless to reform themselves (Rom 7:24). The solution to sin is through the believer's death with Christ—death to sin, self, and the world. Concurrently, new life is given through the invasive, effusive Spirit which transforms one's life from within, making each person a new creation by sanctifying their personality into the likeness of Christ (Rom 5:6-9; 8:1-4, 28-29).

The apostle John, in his first epistle, also deals with sin. 1 John affirms 15 reasons why sin cannot be tolerated in the Christian life and emphasizes again that sin is both ignorance of the truth and lack of love (1Jn 3:3-10). Yet, God forgives those who confess their sins, and Christ makes atonement for their sins and intercedes for them (1Jn 1:7 - 2:2).

## References used in this Study:

Willmington's Bible Handbook  
Study Guide Commentary Series  
The NKJV Study Bible  
The Bible Exposition Commentary (by W.W. Wiersbe)