

## Conquering Love – 1 John 4:7-13

**Introduction** – There is a simple way to understand this passage: God has loved us and so we should love one another. Tyndale says, “*John singeth his old song again.*” And yet, there is something far more profound going on here. These tests (ethical, familial, doctrinal) are far more interdependent than we might at first realize, similar to the dimensions of space (height, length, width). In addition, the interrelationships of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit become more and more apparent in this epistle. And all of this has application for how we live out what God is working in.

**Outline of the Passage** (vv7-13) – Because we are “*the beloved*” we are to love one another. “*The beloved*” are those who have been conquered by love, and they become like the One who has conquered them (vv7-8). While no man has ever seen God nor His love, He and His love are manifest to us in the sending of His Son to be a propitiation for our sins (vv9-10), and it necessarily follows that we would love one another (v11). Again, no man has ever seen God, yet we know He is abiding in us when we are transformed to love one another, which only occurs because His Spirit has been given to us (vv12-13).

**Doctrinal Love** – We must believe in the Son of God and we must love one another (3:23) and while these are distinct aspects of keeping His commandment, they cannot be separated. The kind of love John is writing about always manifests itself in self-sacrificing action for the sake of the beloved (v9). We want to define love as an emotional state, a certain syrupy feeling which does not necessarily require any action. But this is not the love of John 3:16: God so loved that He gave. (Big Side Note - This lie is exactly why we are battling the legitimacy of corporal punishment as a faithful means of love towards our children. The battle goes on even within the church because of a wrongheaded view of love).

**Manifest Love** – God’s love cannot remain “deep down in the heart.” God’s love must have an outworking. We see God’s love by seeing Jesus being sent by the Father, being given as a propitiation for our sins. If we do not say God did this (the doctrinal test) we have misdefined and twisted love (the familial test). It’s not love if it’s not true, and it’s not true if it’s not love.

**Trinitarian Love** – If “God is love” and this love requires manifest action, then how could God have been God before He created anything? Put another way, if self-sacrificing love is an essential characteristic of God, it cannot be anything new. And it’s not. The Father and the Son have, from all eternity, had a relationship of love. God the Father has always had a perfect living image of Himself in the Son (for no one has seen the Father). And the Father and the Son have always had an infinite living Spirit of love between them. The Holy Spirit is the personal love proceeding from the Father to the Son and from the Son back again to the Father. So, when God the Father communicates His love to the Son at His baptism, He rends the heavens, declares His love, and pours out the Spirit, the gift of His love (Luke 3:21-22). Paul tells us that God does the same for us, “*...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*” (Rom 5:5).

**Perfect Love** (vv12-13) – We see the same thing in these verses. God, who cannot be seen, abides in us and His love is perfected in us (v12). Verse 13 says that God abides in us and has given us of His own Spirit. These are two ways of saying the same thing. If this Personal Love, the Holy Spirit, abides in us, then His perfection is manifest not in our hearts alone, but in our own self-sacrificial love for the benefit of the beloved around us – our brothers and sisters in this Trinitarian love. Love has conquered you. Love has transformed you. Love makes you into the Image of the Lover and the One who is Loved.

**We Ought to Love** – And so we are told that if God so loved us, and God Himself is love, then we ought to love one another. Do not be saddled with this as a “tag-your-it” burden. Remember first that John is correcting false teaching – the kind that taught you did not have to believe on Jesus as having come in the flesh to be a propitiation for our sins as proof of His love for us. Second, those who believe this turn to Christ, not themselves, to get clean, to keep clean, to grow in a love which is not our own. “*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.*” And if you have received that love, He is a Person who, at work through you, will love others with the Love of the Father and the Son.