

The Power of Love To Forgive

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2023

Preacher: Bill Story

[0 : 00] If you've got your Bibles with me, please, and turn to 1 John chapter 4.

1 John chapter 4. In John's letter, this is the third time he comes to the subject of love. Third time he's going to remind us and urge us to love one another. The first time he told us was in chapter 2. He simply said, this is an old commandment, and it's also a new commandment that we love our brother.

There, he simply not only calls us to love, but reminds us that you either are a love, someone who loves, or one who hates.

There's no in between. And then in chapter 3, he told us to love again. Now he talks about loving one another. This time he describes what it looks like.

[1 : 04] Now he says it's, this is love that Christ laid down his life for us. So he defines it as sacrifice. And then he puts it in simple application terms for us.

He says, what that means is, if you have the world's resources and you see your brother in need, yet close your heart against him, then where is the love?

How can the love of God abide in you? So laying down your life can be as simple as seeing the need in a brother and having the ability and meeting that need. That is laying down your life.

Now, this time in chapter 4, he's going to say love again, but he's going to go much deeper. Now he's going to go to not only the source of where that love comes from, but the extent to which that love goes.

And the power to love. In fact, the power to forgive. That's where he goes today. So that's what we're going to read.

[2 : 05] So if you're able, please stand. I will read from 1 John 4, 7 through 12. 1 John 4, 7 through 12.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him.

In this is love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

[3 : 12] No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

So it reads. Let us pray for understanding. Father, help us in these moments as we look at this word. Once again, John takes us, Lord, to heart.

He shows us who you are and then how who you are defines who we are. And so, Father, help us to grasp and connect what John brings to us today.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. So it's New Year. Did you make resolutions? No? No?

No? Nobody made resolutions? Is that a thing of the past? No more resolutions? You met a resolution? No more resolution? Yeah, I'm with you, brother.

[4 : 15] I was thinking about it. And I remembered that some time ago I read Jonathan Edwards.

If you don't know who Jonathan Edwards is, he lived from 1704 to 1758. He lived a whole of 54 years. All the great ones seem to die around 54, 55 years of age.

Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, Edwards. I've lived beyond that, so I'm not one of them. But Edwards was a very, very impressive man.

He was part of the second great awakening. God has, he's one of those, you know, where the sower sows on good seed and it bears fruit, some 30, some 60, some 100.

He's one of those hundred ones, right? He's one of those unique, God just uses very powerfully.

One of those kind of guys. He was a tremendous thinker. He's a tremendous thinker.

[5 : 24] Thought much about the works of the Spirit. Helped us understand that. Some of his best known writings are on the Spirit. But this is what I thought about.

I remembered reading his diary. Which he did not mean for public consumption. But after his death, it was, how did this man think? And in his diary, his personal diary, when he was 19 years of old.

Keep that in mind, he's 19. He's just 19. He wrote resolutions in preparation for ministry. He wrote 70 resolutions.

He wrote 21 in the first setting. He wrote another 13 in the next setting. And before he was 20 years old, he had written 70. These were just in his diary.

They were just for himself. This was just to guard his heart and his life. I want you to hear. I'm not going to read 70. Especially back in those days. These guys were windy, you know, and long, you know.

[6 : 31] His titles would be like a page long. He's the guy that read his manuscript. And what was the famous? Sinners in the hands of an angry God. Remember? You ever hear that sermon?

That was Edwards. And people were literally holding the pew in front, fearing that they would slip into hell. That's how descriptive he was. Here's what he wrote.

19 years old. Resolved. Resolved. That I will do whatsoever I think to be most to the glory of God and my own good, profit, and pleasure in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of the time, whether now or never, so many myriads of ages hence.

Resolved. Resolved. To do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general. Resolved.

To so do good whatever difficulties I meet with. How many so ever. And how great so ever. Resolved.

[7 : 33] Resolved. To be continually endeavoring to find out some new contrivance and invention to promote the forementioned things. Resolved. If I ever shall fall and grow dull, so as to neglect to keep any part of these resolutions.

To repent of all I can remember when I come to myself again. Resolved. Never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body, less or more, but that tends to the glory of God.

Resolved. Never to lose one moment of time. But to improve in it the most profitable way I possibly can. Resolved.

To live with all my might while I do live. Resolved. Resolved.

To act in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I. and as if I had committed the same sins or had the same infirmities or failings as others and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in myself and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God.

[9 : 05] 19 years old. Thinking like that. And this last resolution, this whatever infirmities, failings, sins of others, he resolved that he would think of himself as most vile so that he might not judge them, right?

To see them rightly. And that really relates to what we're doing. 19. Okay, I don't know. This guy's over my head.

That it's one of the reasons God chose him and used him, a most humble man, but a most brilliant man, to advance the work of God's glory.

Today, I have a resolution for us. Well, John has a resolution for us. I'm just the messenger, so don't shoot me. Today we look at, once again at love, but at love's greatest power.

And that is to forgive. See, to forgive, to love by forgiving someone else is when we're most like God.

[10 : 17] when we demonstrate a kind of love that God demonstrated to us to meet our greatest need.

So forgiveness, that's hard, okay? It's probably one of the hardest things to ever do. And whether we're forgiving a parent or someone who's abandoned us, someone who's betrayed us, someone who's broken our trust, somebody, you know, that lied to us, someone that, oh, whatever, used us, hurt us deeply with their words and actions, or much worse.

How do you forgive? How do you forgive? And then compound that with what John is talking about here.

What if it's a Christian that has so hurt you, so offended you, so betrayed you, so abandoned you, so lied to you, I've been there.

I've experienced it in two churches. I've experienced betrayal, lie, abandonment by those who say, I got your back.

[11 : 49] How do you forgive and let go? So, this is what John calls us to do, to resolve to love in the same way God loves us.

Let's start with this, because he mentions that God is love. Remember how John started the whole gospel, his whole book. In the first, in John 1, 5, he talked about from the beginning was this word, the word that was eternal.

We saw with our eyes, we touched with our hands, we handled, right, we saw, we heard, we heard with our ears. This invisible one, this life, this eternal one came to be visible so that we saw him and touched him and handled him and were eyewitnesses of this.

And then he says, here's the message. The message that we bring is this, God is what? That's what we're, that's chapter four.

Back to chapter one. Light. Thank you, Jimmy. He learned in Sunday school first because we, you know, yeah, yeah. I got to get through it. Yeah.

[13 : 03] Not wrong at all to say God is love. But John began with God is light. That's where he began. He didn't get to God is love until chapter four because now he's going to really dig into what love is.

Okay? It's not just a command, not just a duty. It's who God is. And who God is defines who we are. We don't get to define ourselves. We don't, we don't get to say this, this is who I am.

We can do that, but it's not true. Who I am is reflected by who God is. So God is light. So, his light reveals, exposes, right?

And he started the whole book with, we walk in light or we hide in darkness. There's two kinds of people. You walk in light or you hide in darkness. Those who walk in light are actually cleansed by that light.

They're not hiding in the darkness. They're not hiding their sins. They're walking openly and genuinely. And by walking openly and genuinely before God, that light, which exposes all that, also cleanses all of that.

[14 : 08] But those who hate the light will hide from the light, will walk in darkness, right? So there's two kinds of people. So he talks about that. Light. So what is light? So the Old Testament doesn't talk about, it talks about Christ being the light, it talks about God being light, but not defining God as light.

It defines God differently. It talks about God as holy, holy, holy. Well, that's what light is. Light is pure, right?

Light is righteous. So that's what God is. He's holy, pure, without any darkness. When his light shines upon us, when his light shines in this world, it reveals what is true, what is real.

It reveals who we really are. So now in chapter 4 he comes to God as love. That's different. God is light, shows his purity, his holiness, his righteousness, his justice, right?

It's just what's right, what's real. Now God is love. That's different. And yet it's related in God. God is love.

[15 : 17] Everything he does is out of love. Even the hard things he does is out of love. Again, he defines love, we don't. His love moves him to rescue sinners.

That means he confronts sinners. That means he shines his light on sinners. He shows sinners their need. But because he's holy, he also has a holy standard.

So how does a God that's holy, righteous, and good also be forgiving, loving, and kind? How did he, if he just forgives everybody their sin, then he loses his holiness and righteousness.

Then he's not just and whole. So how does he do both? How does that meet? That's the gospel. That's the cross. Justice and love meet at the cross.

God is both just and justifier in the cross. That's the secret of the gospel, not the secret. So let's get to this. So God is light, God is love, loving as he loves.

[16 : 26] Now John's going to go there. He's told us in chapter 2, the command love. In chapter 3, he shows us what it looks like. It's laying down your life, laying down your soul, sacrificing for the

need of another.

Now he's going to go a little bit step further. God is love. He's the source of love. He's the proof of love. He's the power of love. So, how do genuine Christians love?

Again, God defines that. And I want to ask this question another way. I think this text is going a different way because not only in 7 through 10 is he going to talk about the love of God, but then in verses 11 and 12 he's going to say, now you.

This is God, now you. Now you. This is you. But he's going to say it in a way that, verse 11, he uses that ought word.

If you've been abused by legalism, you hate this word. If you've been under, you know, that kind of thing, then that's a no-no word. Don't should on me.

[17 : 34] Right? Don't owe anybody. But here he says we also ought to love.

We owe. So, I want to use another word because that word can be misunderstood as a legalistic word and it's certainly not meant that way by any means.

but I like the word compel. His love for us compels us to love like him. So, that's what I want to explore.

How is God's love for sinners compelling us to love other sinners? And by the way, he's talking about love for one another, so he's not talking about our love for the world, not talking about our love for sinners.

Of course, we love sinners and we love, right? He's talking about, okay, now we're just going to talk about here, just us. How do we love one another? Mutual love. How do we love each other?

[18 : 34] How do we do that? So, how does his love compel us to love? Because sometimes it would be easier to love people outside the church than inside church, wouldn't it? Just to be honest. No?

We love it. We like everybody here, right? Well, today, let me see. Oh, wait, somebody's here. Wait. Anybody here you avoid? Okay.

You ever been in a church where you avoid somebody? Okay, just be honest. That's what he's talking about. So, two things, two ways that God's love compels us to love others.

One, by his own example, his pattern of love, right? And that's what he's going to talk about in verses seven through ten. the way he loves compels us because we've experienced that love.

And then secondly, it compels us by his power to love because he's in us. We're empowered. We're enabled to love in an impossible way. The way we can't do naturally.

[19 : 42] To actually love like he does in a supernatural, incredibly unnatural way. Okay, so let's look at that.

So, first he shows us the pattern. Verse seven, he tells us, calls us, urges, let us love one another. Let us love each other. Let us have a mutual love for one another.

Why? Because love is from God. Love is from God. So, here's the pattern. Love willingly bears with and covers sins of one another.

He describes love in verse nine. Love, in this is love that God was made, that the love of God was made manifest visible among us that God sent his son into the world so that we might have life through him.

So, he starts with, he lays down his life. He gives us life. What kind of life? Verse 10, he defines it again. He clarifies what he means by this love. Verse 10, in this is love, not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son.

[20 : 48] Well, he just said he sent his son but for what reason? That we might have life but how do we get life? So, the end of verse 10 that he loved us and sent his son to be what? Propitiation for what?

For our sins. Oh, why do you have to bring sins into this? And then he's going to say if God loved you like that then you love others like that. In other words, forgiving sins.

Propitiating sins. Letting go of sins. Letting go of grudges. Letting go of those that have hurt you, those that have betrayed you, those that have, okay?

So, here's the pattern. Love not just lays down my life. Love is not just a sacrifice. It is absolutely sacrificial. But here's the extent of it. Love willingly bears with and covers sins of each other.

But I want to say what he did. Love covers it. He heard me. I want everybody to know. Love covers it.

[21 : 54] Bears it. Like Jesus bore it. Okay? So, first of all, verse 7, it's proof of rebirth.

Man, I'm having trouble enunciating. Proof of rebirth. Being born again. Verse 7. Let us love one another. Why? Because love is from God.

So, if you know God, then you're going to love. It's from God. It just comes through God. Love one another for love is one another. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. So, it's proof. How do I know if I'm born again?

Here's one of the proofs. Do I love? Do I love not just, you know, in general, do I love one another? You know, the kind where Jesus said, by this, they'll know you're my disciples because how you love each other.

Not your love for the world, but how you love each other. And remember, Jesus had some knuckleheads in his group. Right? They had a little, some arguments and a little competition. Right? [22 : 56] Sons of Thunder. Right? Remember? They weren't just happy guys all the time. So, Jesus said, yeah, you get to wash each other's feet and forgive each other.

Yeah, right? And Peter says, how many times? How many times? Well, I got to cut it off at some point, right? Just seven times. I'm going to forgive James, but only seven times. Got to get something on my nerves.

Right? So, that's evidence of regeneration. It's evidence that you got something from God. It's evidence that you've been transformed, that you've been changed, that you love one another like God loves.

Those, and then verse eight, the opposite is true. Those who withhold love, those who do not love, right? Which John defines as withholding love is the same thing as hate and murder. It comes from the same motivations.

Those who withhold love show they have no relationship with God because he's love. How can you say you know God and you don't love? If God is love and everything he does is love and you say you know him and that doesn't rub off, you've got to wonder.

[24 : 15] love. So, if you're a Christian, it doesn't mean you're not a Christian if you're withholding love. It means something's wrong.

Something's big time wrong. If you're withholding love, that's a sign that you don't know God but if you really know God then, okay, get that right. Right?

Because if you keep doing that, then it's going to really show that you don't know him. Right? So, verse 9. He defines this love which we just read.

Verse 9. What is love? Here's love. And love's made manifest which means it's visible. It's shining. Next week, we begin the series of the worship season of Epiphany.

Anybody know what Epiphany means? Not James? Epiphany. When the wise men and... Nope. Awakening. Huh?

[25 : 19] Awakening. Awakening. That's close. Fani means fanos means shine, reveal, manifest. Epi, upon, so to shine upon.

So, the season of Epiphany is showing how Christ's light dawned in darkness. Right? came a light to dawn in darkness. To shine in darkness.

So, we don't call it Epiphany because nobody knows what that means. We call it the light of Christ. Season. How did he share his light? Boom, boom, boom. So, that's what this word means. He's manifested.

He's shining. How did God reveal his love to the world? How did he expose it to the world? How did he demonstrate it? How did he make it visible?

He made it visible by sending his son. He showed it plain and simple. This is what love looks like. Sending his son. But to do what?

[26 : 17] He sent his son into the world. Okay? Not a friendly place. so that he, so that we might live through him.

Right? That we might have life. So, he's defined love similarly to that in chapter three. Laying down our life for us. So, it's sacrificial. Right?

It's a deliberate act of sacrificial giving to meet a need. To, to, to give life, he says. So, in chapter three, that meant if I see my brother in need.

Right? I have the world's goods. So, that means I have, and the word for, for world's goods there is actually the word life. I have life. I've made a living in this world.

So, I have resources that I can give to a brother who needs those resources. So, that's a way of giving life. Because I'm giving something to help their life.

[27 : 14] I'm helping fill a need. It's not, and John says, that's laying down my life. It's a very small way, but it's very, but it's very real. Because it's really giving life to somebody.

And I'm sacrificing for it. I'm giving it away. So, Jesus gives us life. He meets our need. He brings us comfort.

So, so, so we might fulfill a physical need. We might fulfill an emotional need. We might come around somebody's suffering and we, we give comfort. lots of ways.

But the greatest way we manifest love is, is forgiveness. If they have sinned against us and they're held captive by that, they're in shame and guilt, or maybe they've suppressed it, but still, they're, they're not free.

I give them life by forgiveness. I set them free. like Jesus set us free. He removed our shame and guilt.

[28 : 26] He removed all the wounds that I threw at him. Right? All the times I betrayed him. All the times I lied to him. All the times that I said hurtful words to him.

All the times all the times I made promises and didn't keep them. He forgave me that. How can I not forgive someone else the same?

So then he says the price of love. So the pattern is again the same sacrifice to me, to give a gift.

But what's the gift? Verse 10, the gift. What is it that God gave so that we might live? To live how? What kind of life are we talking about? We're talking about a life free of shame and guilt.

So he sends his son to be a propitiation for our sins. That's the love. That's the specific life that he brings. That's the ultimate way of setting someone free is forgiving them.

[29 : 35] And particularly forgiving the unforgivable. So propitiation is one of those words it's a big word has a lot of letters in it.

Sorry, I don't get it. That worked in Sunday school. It didn't work. Propitiation means to satisfy God's wrath, to appease his wrath. It's satisfy his holiness.

You know, why did Christ have to die? Because God's law sets the demand. It sets perfection. It says, you shall be this. And in the Old Testament, how many did that?

None. Okay, none, right? None. That's why they kept losing it. They could never do it. They could never, ever do it.

And Paul tells us that was the purpose of the law, to show us we can't. To show us we can't. Show us that we have a huge need. A huge gap.

[30 : 38] So, he's a propitiator. He satisfies the holiness of God. He bears our sins. He removes our sins and forgives our debt so that we might live through him.

I was thinking about this. What is live through him? Not that we have life. Oh, you know, God has set me free so now I can just live. I can have my best life now.

I can just live for myself. No, he says I live through him. That's a different kind of living. It's not life on my own.

It's living through him. What does that mean? So, I looked it up. I looked up this life, right, in connection with Christ. And it drew me to the Gospel of John, which is, you know, no coincidence.

And in John, John has, he writes different than in the other Gospel writers. He writes about the seven signs of Jesus, right, the seven great miracles of Jesus that point to him as the Messiah.

[31 : 41] And then he writes about seven I am statements. Are you familiar with those? The great I am's. So, when Jesus said I am, he's saying, he's saying what God said in the desert in Sinai.

I am who I am. Tell them I am sent you. Who? I am. Who's I am? I am.

How do you define God, right? He's eternally existent. He's bigger than I can package him. So, Jesus says that same phrase.

I am. Before Abraham, hey, before Abraham, I am. And the Jews knew exactly what he said. He picked up stones to kill him because he's claiming to be God.

So, he said, I am several times in John. So, he said, John 6, I am the living bread. I am the bread from heaven. I am the bread that came down from heaven.

[32 : 44] If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live. Bread that gives life. Well, that's one picture. One picture. Bread, life.

How is his, how is he bread? How is he our living bread? How do I, right? He says, I'm the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in the darkness.

So, I am light that gives life. They will have the light of life. John 10, I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved to go in and out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they might have life and have it abundantly living through him. He's the door. And he goes on, I am the good shepherd. I'm the bread. I'm the light. I'm the door. I'm the good shepherd. I'm the resurrection and life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, shall live. And whoever lives in me will never die.
[33 : 47] Oh, I am the way and the truth and the life. I am, I am, I am. How do I live through him? Well, Jesus gives us a bunch of pictures. I'm bread. Just like you eat bread to get strength and nourish.

I'm that. I'm the door. I'm the access. I'm the way in to find pasture. I'm the way when you're thirsty. I'm the way into that life that gives you thirst that quenches your thirst that fills you up. I'm the good shepherd that leads you in the way you should go. I'm the light that shows you the right path, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. How do I live through him? Well, you got a week? I just want to learn a little bit of that. Okay, start with, start with bread. How's bread feed you? Okay, now connect that to Jesus. We're going to take, which one's bread? We're going to take bread today. A picture of that life. And just as we, when we do that physically, it's just as we take that cracker and it absorbs into our system.
[34 : 54] That's how we, by faith, have Christ enter into us, have Christ sustain us, have Christ strengthen us. How do I do that?

Well, prayer. I say, Lord, I need strength. Lord, I'm weak. Lord, I'm tired. I'm dry. I live in him. We live through him. From this life. So he comes to give us life and through this life, I'm compelled to love others. So how do I love? And particularly, how do I forgive? Well, I can, a Christian can do it, one, because he's experienced this kind of love. He's experienced it. He knows what it's like to be on the other side of love and forgiveness.
[35 : 52] And so that gives him a heart of compassion to let go of those sins against us. How do I forgive? Because I've been forgiven. I'm the unworthy one.

I'm the one that has, that has caused immeasurable wounds upon my Lord, both before and after my salvation. I've let him down. I've never disappointed him because, you know, he knows. Can't disappoint God. I've never made him angry, but I've grieved him and saddened him. So when I remember what I have done to not earn his forgiveness, it makes it a little easier to let go of what someone else has done to me. So here's the power. How do I forgive? Not only because I've experienced his forgiveness because he shows me what that kind of loving forgiveness looks like, but secondly, because he gives me the power to do it. He enables me. See, we are transformed to forgive by his empowering presence. And if we think, and I get it, there are times we think I can't forgive that person.
[37 : 16] There are times I have thought I can't, I cannot believe what they did and I cannot, I cannot let that go. And you know, you think you let it go and then, you know, some months later you're really, and it comes back.

It's like, right? Well, remember, even Jesus had to pray three times, right? For the cup to pass, right? And so, but if you think you can't forgive, right? If, if, if you resolved to that, not momentarily, not for a period of time, not for a season, I get it, for a season, I can't, I can't, I can't get there yet, I can't get there yet. Understand. But if it's perpetual, if you can't forgive, if you can't ever get to that point of being under this cross and recognizing what I did and what he did and then still can't forgive, then you don't know him. you don't know him. You can have temporary amnesia and get it.
[38 : 30] But to never be able to forgive, to never, I mean, how can I not go back to the cross and not get that power? I'm not saying it's easy.

But the hard part is, you know, the humility, the humility thing, that's the hard part. But they, yeah, I know, yeah, look in the mirror. So, what difference does all this make? First of all, verse 11, he says, this love compels us. It's compelling love since he loves us. Verse 11, beloved, if God so, excuse me, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. It's compelling. I ought to do this. It's my duty to love. But I want you to notice a word that goes by in that verse that we all miss. Beloved, if God something loved us.

