

Love Came Down

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

Christmas is typically a time of love. We think of family, friends, loved ones.

But the Christian life is meant to be a life of love all the time.

- **1 John 4:11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
- **1 John 4:20-21** If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

Woah! That's a hard passage. In fact, it can bring condemnation to us if we look at it too long.

I've had trouble loving certain people this week in fact.

But according to Romans 8:1, there is no condemnation for believers, so what is happening here?

The Christmas message is that God sent Jesus to us. God came to the earth. We sometimes refer to this as Love Came Down. That's because of 2 verses. The first one we read

- **1 John 4:9** In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.
- And
- **1 John 4:16** And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Let's go through this entire passage together to see what God is saying about love.

1 John 4:7-11 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, 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.

- We see a few obvious things here:
 - Love comes from God
 - If we are born again, we love, if we have no love in us we are not of God
 - God showed us His love by sending Jesus
 - We should love others.
- But did you catch this part: In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us
 - Love does not start with us. It starts with God. Our love is not dependent on us, it is dependent on God loving us. And He showed us that He does love us by sending Jesus!

But what if I still struggle with loving others? Keep reading

1 John 4:13-16 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

- What this passage is saying is that if we abide in God, which we can because He gave us His Spirit, then the love of the Father will love others through us.
- Our faith in Jesus (whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God) is the key to abiding in God.
- Abiding in God will prove to us that God loves us (we have known and believed the love that God has for us)
- Now the love of God abides in us, enabling us to love as God loves.

It always goes back to God:

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

- That's freeing to me. I don't have to come up with love for God. I don't actually have to love God (whaaat? But what about the greatest commandment?). What I have to do is accept the love of God, and then

once I understand His love for me, then love for Him will come. (Hint – this is really the secret of Christianity that so many miss. There is almost nothing we have to do except receive).

So what does it look like to receive the love of God?

- Stop listening to the lie that you don't matter and believe that God loves you
 - **Luke 12:6-7** - "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.
- Stop listening to the lie that your past mistakes are too big for God to love you
 - **Romans 8:1** - *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.
 - **2 Corinthians 5:21** - For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
 - You don't have a sin nature. You may have a sin habit. That is fundamentally different.
- Stop believing the lie that God is looking for ways to punish you and believe that God is on your side
 - **1 John 3:1** - Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
 - **Romans 8:31-32** - What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?
- Stop believing the lie that your future mistakes will separate you from God's love
 - **Romans 8:38-39** - For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Stop believing you are unlovable and/or cannot do anything right

- **Ephesians 3:18-19** (NLT) And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.
- Now that you have received the love of God, one of the verses I read previously that I said is hard becomes different when read in this full context.
 - **1 John 4:21** And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.
 - It's really more like once we have received God's love, and this fills us so we in turn love God, then His love fills us so much that we must love our brother also – we are compelled by God's love to love our brother.

We can love because of God's love. Look again at what John wrote:

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

- If sending Jesus shows the love of God, then the purpose of Jesus coming must have something to do with love.

So what was the purpose of Jesus being born?

- To take away our sin?
- So He could experience life as a human so He could empathize with us?
- To destroy the works of the devil?
- Yes to all of these, but not the main purpose.

Galatians 4:4-7 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

- Jesus came to make us children of God.
- Your purpose is to be a child of God.

- The single greatest thing you can do in life is to receive the love of God by believing in Jesus and allowing Him to adopt you into His family.

Romans 8:14-17 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

1 John 3:1-2 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Love compelled God to send Jesus. God's desire to have you be in His family drove Him to give the greatest gift ever: Himself.

He had to:

- Put aside His divinity and take on humanity
- Face temptation
- Look towards the Crucifixion
- Tremble in the garden
- Die for us
- Take on our sin
- Go to the grave

His willingness to do whatever it took to bring you into the family should have an effect on you.

Christmas is a time to reflect on that. Because you are in His family you:

- Are not an orphan
 - **Galatians 3:26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
- Are never alone

- **Matthew 28:20** Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.
- Are made complete
 - **Colossians 2:9-10** For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.
- You matter.
 - **Luke 12:6-7** - "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.
- Your past mistakes are gone. They are not bigger than His sacrifice. They are not waiting for you. They are gone.
 - **Isaiah 1:18** "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.
- God is on your side
 - **Romans 8:31-32** - What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?
- You are loved.
 - **Romans 8:38-39** - For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Christmas story is this. God is love. He loves you so much He gave everything to be with us. To allow us to be in His family.

And receiving that love creates an overflow of love in us that will pour out as true love towards those in our lives.

1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.