

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

Message Ten

**The Practice of the Divine Love**

Scripture Reading: 1 John 2:3-11; 3:14-18;  
4:7-12, 16-19; 2 John 5-6

**I. The love of God is God Himself; love is the inward essence of God and the heart of God—1 John 4:8, 16:**

- A. God's predestination of us unto the divine sonship was motivated by the divine love—Eph. 1:4-5.
- B. God's giving of His only begotten Son to us so that we may be saved from perdition judicially through His death and have the eternal life organically in His resurrection was motivated by the divine love—John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10:
  - 1. In the love of God, the Son of God saves us not only from our sins by His blood but also from our death by His life—Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5; Rom. 5:10.
  - 2. God loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins in His judicial redemption with the intention that we might have life and live through Him in His organic salvation—1 John 2:1-2; 4:9-10; John 6:57; 14:19; Gal. 2:20.
  - 3. God's excelling love is seen in His becoming a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins and the propitiation place for us to meet and be infused with God; God as love meets with us and speaks to us in the propitiating, redeeming, and shining Christ so that we can be infused with Him as love, mercy, and grace for His effulgent and radiant glory—Rom. 3:24-25; Heb. 4:16; Exo. 25:17, 22.
- C. "I drew them with cords of a man, / With bands of love"—Hosea 11:4:
  - 1. The phrase *with cords of a man, with bands of love* indicates that God loves us with His divine love not on the level of divinity but on the level of humanity; God's love is divine, but it reaches us in the cords of a man, that is, through Christ's humanity.
  - 2. The cords through which God draws us include Christ's incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension; it is by all these steps of Christ in His humanity that God's love in His salvation reaches us—Rom. 5:8.

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3. Apart from Christ, God's everlasting love, His unchanging, subduing love, could not be prevailing in relation to us; God's unchanging love is prevailing because it is a love in Christ, with Christ, by Christ, and for Christ—vv. 5, 8; 8:35-39.

**II. The practice of the divine love is the outcome of our enjoyment of the Triune God as the all-inclusive Spirit, the One who is moving and working within us as the anointing in the fellowship of the divine life to saturate us with all that the Triune God is, with all that He has done, and with all that He has obtained and attained—1 John 1:3; 2:3-11, 27:**

- A. If we would experience and enjoy the divine love and have it become the love by which we love others, we need to know God experientially by continuously living in the divine life—vv. 3-6; Phil. 3:10a.
- B. God first loved us in that He infused us with His love and generated within us the love with which we love Him and the brothers—1 John 4:19-21.
- C. The life which we have received from God is a life of love; Christ lived in this world a life of God as love, and He is now our life so that we may live the same life of love in this world and be the same as He is—3:14; 5:1; 2:6; 4:17.
- D. Our natural love must be put on the cross; one difference between God's love and our natural love is that it is very easy for our natural love to be offended.
- E. We must be persons who are flooded with and carried away by the love of Christ; the divine love should be like the rushing tide of great waters toward us, impelling us to live to Him beyond our own control—2 Cor. 5:14.
- F. The commandment regarding brotherly love is both old and new; old, because the believers have had it from the beginning of their Christian life; new, because in their Christian walk it dawns with new light and shines with new enlightenment and fresh power again and again—1 John 2:7-8; 3:11, 23; cf. John 13:34:
  1. The commandments of the Lord are not merely injunctions; they are His words, which are spirit and life as a supply to us—6:63.

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2. God's love is His inward essence, and the Lord's words supply us with His divine essence, with which we love Him and love the brothers.
  3. We should love God and His children with the divine love that is conveyed to us through the words of the Lord to become our experience and enjoyment.
- G. Our living in which we love one another in the love of God is the perfection and completion of this love in its manifestation in us—1 John 4:11-12; 2:5.

### **III. The church life is a life of brotherly love—4:7-8; 2 John 5-6; John 15:12, 17; Rev. 3:7; Eph. 5:2; cf. Jude 12a:**

- A. The Body builds itself up in love—Eph. 4:16.
- B. Our God-given, regenerated spirit is a spirit of love; we need a burning spirit of love to conquer the degradation of today's church—2 Tim. 1:7.
- C. The one who loves God and the brothers is enjoying the divine life; the one who does not love is abiding in the satanic death—1 John 3:14; cf. 2 Cor. 11:2-3.
- D. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"—1 Cor. 8:1b; cf. 2 Cor. 3:6.
- E. Loving one another is a sign that we belong to Christ—John 13:34-35.
- F. Loving to be first in the church is versus loving all the brothers—3 John 9.
- G. Just as the Lord Jesus laid down His soul-life so that we might have the divine life, we need to lose our soul-life and deny the self to love the brothers and minister life to them in the practice of the Body life—1 John 3:16; John 10:11, 17-18; 15:13; Eph. 4:29—5:2; 2 Cor. 12:15; Rom. 12:9-13.
- H. We need to lose our soul-life by not loving the world with its pleasure; instead, taking in God and expressing God as love in the church life of brotherly love should be our joy, amusement, entertainment, and happiness—1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 16:25-26; Psa. 36:8-9; cf. 2 Tim. 3:4.
- I. Brotherly love in the church life is expressed practically in our caring for the necessities of the needy saints without any self-serving purpose or outward self-display; in the sharing of material things with the needy saints, the

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grace of the Lord's life with His love flows among the members of the Body of Christ and is infused into them—  
1 John 3:17-18; Matt. 6:1-4; Rom. 12:13; 2 Cor. 8:1-7.

**IV. First John 4 tells the secret of how to stand boldly before the judgment seat of Christ—abide in love—vv. 16-18; 2 Cor. 5:10, 14:**

- A. To abide in love is to live a life in which we love others habitually with the love that is God Himself so that He may be expressed in us—1 John 4:16.
- B. Perfect love is the love that has been perfected in us by our loving others with the love of God; such love casts out fear and has no fear of being punished by the Lord at His coming back—vv. 17-18; cf. Luke 12:46-47.
- C. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything or do anything for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:31b—13:8a.