

GOD'S LOVE AND MAN'S LOVE

1 John 4:7-21

Key Verse: 4:7

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”

As we know well, St. John was a politically ambitious person. He wanted to be Prime Minister of the earthly messianic kingdom he thought Jesus would establish. At that time, he was competitive, selfish and a man who was seeking self-glory. But John came to realize that God made his one and only Son, Jesus Christ, the atoning sacrifice for our sins. He realized the love of God. He realized the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who obeyed God's will unto death, death on the cross. Most importantly, his spiritual eyes were opened. When we read the book of Revelation, we see that he was full of heavenly vision and described God's glory and his majesty and his love for human beings; he also wrote that the new heavens and the new earth would come, the stormy sea would disappear and there is no tear in the kingdom of God. In today's passage, St. John describes those who are born of God and those who are not born of God. Finally, he urges us to grow in the love of God. When we study this part prayerfully, we learn that our substance or existence originated from God. Those who do not know that they originated from God do not know where they came from and where they are going back to. They also do not know what to do while on earth, except for hating others. May God bless us to know that we are born of God. In short, our original being is from God. Since God is love, we must grow in the love of God. We must love one another. That should be our lifestyle on earth.

First, the origin from God (7).

As we studied last time, men of wisdom and sagacity had searched for the First Cause (Prima Causa) for over 3,000 years. Their main purpose was to know the origin of the world. But they failed to grasp what the origin of the world is. One African-American, Alex Haley, wrote a novel, "Roots." He wanted to know his "roots," that is, where he came from. He found that his ancestors were all Africans. He found his origin in his own way. But he could not find the true origin of mankind, except for his being an African-American. He was so serious

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about his origin or the roots of mankind. But without God he could not find answers, just as those men of wisdom and sagacity in the past.

The Bible says God is our origin. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In this verse, the phrase, "In the beginning," has deep meaning. We can understand "at the beginning" easily. But "in the beginning" implies when there was no time and space, before the creation of the world. In short, "in the beginning" is God's right time. Genesis 1:1 says, "God created the heavens and the earth." This verse declares that God was the First Cause and God. Without him, they do not know God, nor do they know why they are existing or working hard.

Here we must know that we are born of God. The words, "born of God," have their deep philosophical meaning. "Born of God" explains the cause of origin, and that man came from God and goes back to God. Look at verse 7. "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." St. John clearly tells us that we are created by God in his image. Since the attribute of God is love, we also must love God as God loves man. On the other hand, whoever does not love does not know God.

Second, those who are not born of God (8).

Here we learn that there are two kinds of people. First is those who do not know God and hate one another. Second is those who know God and his attribute and love one another. Let's think about the first kind of people who do not know God and hate one another. There are many kinds of love. Sometimes people say, "I love you," when it is not love, but just physical gratification. Sometimes people say, "I love you," but man's love is nothing but romance and it is temporal. Basically, man's love is self-centered. We like Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." Romeo belonged to the Montague feudal territory. And Juliet belonged to the Capulet feudal territory. Their family feud developed to the brink of a war at any time. But by chance, Romeo and Juliet fell in love. Their romance was so tearful and tragic. Their romance was known to the world as love beyond death. But from the worldly point of view, men must be loyal to their king, next to their family, next to their friends. But Romeo only loved Juliet, and finally ended up committing

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suicide when his love was not fulfilled. We can say that Romeo's romance was not of God.

Among those who do not know God, who is love, many bridegrooms say to their new brides, "I love you. What can I say more than this?" But they were not born of God. They do not have God's love in their hearts as their substance. So when time passes by, many tragic events happen between bridegrooms and brides. One woman coped with impossible family survival in Siberia. She and her husband were medical doctors. Medical doctors' and teachers' pay was the same in the former U.S.S.R. The family immigrated to the U.S.A. The husband had been a medical doctor in the former U.S.S.R. But his license was not recognized in America. So he had to study medicine all over again. His beloved wife worked in the factory during the daytime. During the nighttime, she worked as a nurse's aide. In this way, she supported her husband's education until he graduated from an American medical school and finished residency training. Since his wife had been so sacrificial, the husband must love her dearly, so dearly. He must live a life of giving thanks. But a strange thing happened. The day the husband was accepted as a medical doctor in a certain hospital, he openly despised and rejected his sacrificial wife. Now the doctor lives all by himself, looking for a kind of American foxy woman. Here we can see one whose origin is not of God. Fallen man does as his origin and substance direct him. In short, he is directed by his sinful nature. We cannot condemn the doctor as wrong, because when he is compared with worse sinners of the world, whose origins are of the devil, he is a good man. But from God's point of view, he could not see his wife's sacrificial love and hard work, taking two jobs for ten years. We cannot but say he is really a selfish man and his origin is of the devil. Endless are the stories of those whose origin is not of God. Let's stop here.

Third, those who are born of God (7-9).

Let's think about those who are born of God. One Monday, Dr. Joseph Chung reported in his testimony that he was very poor in his medical school days. So Dr. John Jun invited him to his rented room, where his pretty much grown-up sister and older brother were also living. Dr. John Jun's family income source was his mother, who sold wine and noodles for laborers on the corner of the street. All of them lived

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together in a rented studio apartment for two years. The amazing thing is that Dr. John Jun's older brother never complained; instead, he always encouraged Dr. Joseph Chung to study well and to pass the AMA (American Medical Association) examination, which was his dream. It is indeed amazing. Such koinonia was there. Then God blessed Dr. John Jun's brother, and now he is a multi-millionaire who owns four companies. Because of Dr. John Jun's mother's good influence, Kwangju UBF members were greatly inspired to love one another.

It was October 9th, 1965. We studied John chapter 3. John 3:16 pierced our souls. So we decided to invite abandoned and lonely people and have a beautiful heavenly banquet. Finally we came to the conclusion that we should invite men with leprosy. And we prepared very delicious food and began to invite lepers. But no leper believed that he was invited. At first, our UBF koinonia members were afraid to touch them. We only tried to persuade them with the word of God to come to the heavenly banquet. They were so broken and abandoned and sick with loneliness, they never believed such an invitation was for them. Then the senior shepherd ordered all the members to go and grab them and bring them into the center by dragging them. So we went out and grabbed them and dragged them to the center. We gathered 65 lepers and we had a heavenly banquet. At first, the men with leprosy did not smile. But Dr. Joseph Chung and Shepherd Moses Kim and several others sang beautiful Korean folk songs. Then they felt that our activity was not a kind of social propaganda, but it was from our hearts. They began to smile. After dinner, they talked a long time with us. They mainly talked to us about their sickness of loneliness, more than leprosy. The senior shepherd was a little bit afraid of contracting leprosy, because we grabbed them and wrestled with them to bring them to the center. But the senior shepherd prayed that nothing would happen. Then the Holy Spirit helped us not to contract leprosy. It is easy for us to eat with beloved ones or superior ones. But it is not easy to eat with lepers. More than the lepers, Kwangju students received God's command, "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). From that time on, loving one another was really beautiful. They had no lustful desires. Young men called young women, "sister." Young women called young men, "brother." It is an unbelievable story. But it is a true story, nothing but a true story. Missionary Sarah is one of the witnesses.

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Fourth, the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God (10-12).

How do we know that God is love? Verse 10 says, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." The thought of this verse is repeated so many times in 1 John. We must review this verse one more time. Sometimes we become like Martin Luther, who said, "If I were God, I would destroy all mankind twice a day." But love is this: God sent his one and only Son as the atoning sacrifice. In this short sentence, we learn that God is love. Many of us have children. Sometimes we are uneasy to send them to babysitters. We wish our children would be okay. When we meet them again at night, if they are well, then we are very happy. If they are not well, then our hearts are so painful. From parents' point of view, it is very natural. But man's love is basically selfish. Two weeks ago, at our Monday fellowship leaders' meeting, the question was asked, "Can any of you give one of your children as a ransom sacrifice?" For a few minutes, no one said anything. Finally, each one was very frustrated in his soul. Especially, Missionary Wesley's big eyes blinked faster and faster. How can it be that we make one of our children a ransom sacrifice?

But God sent his one and only Son into the world. When God sent his one and only Son into the world, he had to deprive him of all his glory, power and honor of the kingdom of God. When God sent his one and only Son to this world, he did not send him to a rented apartment, but to a stable of an animal, and when he was born he was laid in a manger. It was the beginning of atoning sacrifice. The climax of atoning sacrifice was shedding his blood on the cross. But renouncing the glory and power of the kingdom of God was the same for Jesus as shedding his blood on the cross, because it required divine humbleness. One Ph.D. student studied 16 years for a Ph.D. But his advisor did not pass his dissertation. Then the student shot his advisor to death. How beautiful it is that the advisor bore with such a slow student for 16 years. It was indeed great that he did not dismiss him. But the student was not humble enough to honor his professor, who had long-suffering patience, and shot him to death. But Jesus, according to Philippians 2:7, "...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." We mourn that Admiral Boorda committed suicide

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when his pride was hurt. But Jesus, from the position of God, humbled himself and became a servant. In the beginning, Jesus was with God. This Jesus is the very God who created the heavens and the earth. John 1:3 says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." Not only so, he is the author of man's life. John 1:4 says, "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." Jesus gives his life to each of us and the precious meaning of life to each of us. Amen. But this great God humbled himself from God the Almighty to a menial servant. At that time, the nuance of "servant" was indeed terrible. Servants were considered as sub-human beings. The fact that God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice convinces us more than enough that God is love and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is higher than the sky and wider than the sea. Most importantly, he is a humble God.

Therefore, when we say we believe in God, the most important thing is the realization of God's being as love and acceptance of loving our brothers as ourselves, especially one's wife. Love requires tremendous life-giving sacrifice. Tremendous life-giving sacrifice does not stop with sacrifice itself. It convinces us that we are born of God, and we feel that God's love is growing in our hearts. Look at verse 12. "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." This verse sufficiently explains that we have never seen God, but we can believe that there is God. People want to see and then believe in God. So they make multi-millions of idols. Among them, Aaron was the representative who made a golden calf (Ex 32:4). But by looking at a sleepy Buddha idol, we cannot acknowledge God's presence and his love. By looking at icons our spiritual eyes are not opened. We only try to find out which icon's eyes are well drawn.

Fifth, grow in the love of God (12, 17-18).

Here, St. John asserts that God's love must be made complete in us. Look at verse 12 again. "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." Again, verse 17 says, "In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him." St. John also used the words, "perfect in love" (18).

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This tells us that we must grow in the love of God. When we are born of God and we acknowledge the love of God, naturally we want to love others. But the attempt to love others is like a baby in diapers wanting to love his toys. There are many more people who are born of the world, not of God. They hate the children of God, who are born of God, intensely, day and night. It is not easy to love these people. The only solution is that we must grow in love. Then we can embrace any kind of people. There is a story. One boy was beaten up and used as a babysitter and cook for eight years by his step-mother. His step-mother did not allow him to study during the night. One night, he was discovered burning kerosene oil in order to study English. His step-mother came in and stopped him from studying English. She said, "You have no hope by studying English like that. I have been an English teacher at a high school for 20 years, and I don't understand English well. But you are a kind of bum. For you, trying to study English is in vain." The step-mother's intention was to stop him from burning too much kerosene oil. He put out the kerosene lamp and pretended to sleep. After 40 minutes, he again lighted the kerosene lamp and began to study English. Then his step-mother came in and kicked his left eye with her feet, until blood flowed out from the eye. From then on, the boy's left eye was blinded. At that time, he said to his step-mother, "Who knows a young man's future? Who knows but that God would help me to study English and someday teach American students?" His cry was from his soul. Since then, his tragic moment motivated him to study English harder than before. God had mercy on him and introduced Jesus as his personal Savior through English John's gospel study. The point is not this sad story. The boy became a servant of God. He wanted to forgive his step-mother. But it did not work as he wished. He struggled to forgive his step-mother every night for 13 years. Finally, he read the scene of Jesus Christ becoming the atoning sacrifice on the cross. He learned that he was a selfish and revengeful Christian. He accepted Jesus' love. Since then, he became a student evangelist, giving up his pastorate. To grow in love is a great battle, maybe the hardest battle. But we must complete the love of God in our soul. We must perfect the love of God in our soul.

Sixth, he loved us first (8-21).

Sometimes we wonder why we must love God and our brothers. Rather,

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it seems better to punish those who do wrong and hate them until they repent. But love involves forgiveness; whether he repented or not, we must love God's flock. Again, let's ask the same question, "Why must we love God and others?" Look at verse 8. "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." God loved us. So we must love God and our brothers. This is the key point of the entire teaching of Christianity. Sometimes hatred comes into our hearts when we see unthankful people. But we should not hate them. We must love them.

Read verse 9. "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him." Love is victory without fighting. In short, love has its divine initiative. One strict father never forgave his second son for stealing money from his wallet one time. When his second son came and begged forgiveness with many tears, his father said, "Well, I will see whether you do such a thing again during the next three years." This is not love. This is legalistic hypocrisy. God loved us first. This one fact shows us that God is God, and God is love. In John's gospel, the story about Jesus and the Samaritan woman is indeed inspiring and unforgettable. For the last 35 years, we have used this story as our main lecture several hundred times during conferences, both winter conferences and summer conferences. It is because Jesus loved the Samaritan woman first. Jesus wanted to visit Galilee. If Jesus walked from Judea to Galilee on a straight course, it took only three days. But bigoted Jews wanted to avoid walking through the land of Samaria, thinking that the Samaritans were the lost 10 tribes who mixed blood with the Assyrians. So in order to avoid Samaritan territory, they took six days to go around Samaria to Galilee. But Jesus did not mind passing through Samaria. Jesus and his disciples walked from early morning until noontime. They had no food. So the disciples went into a village to beg some food. Jesus was sitting by the well which was called Jacob's well or the well of romance, because Jacob saw Rachel at a well and kissed her and wept with a loud voice (Ge 29:11). The well was situated in the valley between the mountain of blessing, Gerizim, and the mountain of curse, Ebal. When Jesus was in deep meditation, a woman came to draw water. Jesus first spoke to her, "Would you please give me a drink?" (Jn 4:7) The woman answered, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan." At that time, the Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Also, it was traditional that men not talk to women in public. But

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Jesus spoke to her first in order to give her living water welling up to eternal life. Jesus knew her past. Jesus knew how lonely she was. Jesus knew she was lost. But Jesus wanted her to come to know the love of God and receive eternal life and the kingdom of God as her inheritance. The problem was that she was so wounded and hurt; she was totally unlikely to accept Jesus' word. Rather, she could have said, "What do you mean by that, 'Give me a drink'?" But the woman was melted by Jesus' love, which took the initiative to speak to her first and she was fully evangelized and became a missionary to her own village people. It is indeed an amazing story that the Son of the Holy God spoke with the most smelly woman at the well of Jacob. We call this God's initiative. Jesus loved us first. So we must practice God's initiative and we must put ourselves in divine discipline to learn God's initiative. This is the first step of learning the love of God.

Look at verse 21. "And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother." Here we must know that God's word is absolute and it is imperative. It is not at all an encouragement or psychological manipulation. God's love and worldly love are different. Worldly love depends on each individual's decision. But God's love is a commandment. When we keep this commandment we will come to know the truth and the truth sets us free (Jn 8:31,32).

May God richly bless you to practice God's love. May God move your heart to remember that our origin is of God. May God erase all the hatred toward others in your soul so that you may be happy all the time. May God help you practice the love of God.