



THE GOD WHO IS LOVING

1 John 4:7-21 |

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RELATED SCRIPTURES

John 13:1-16 | Romans 5:1-5 | 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

SUMMARY

Read: Romans 5:1-5 aloud.

J.I. Packer writes,

"To know God's love is indeed heaven on earth. And the New Testament sets forth this knowledge, not as the privilege of a favored few, but as a normal part of ordinary Christian experience...knowledge of the love of God, having flooded our hearts, fills them now, just as a valley once flooded remains full of water".

We Christians are supposed to know God's love firsthand. Knowledge of the sort Paul is describing in Romans 5 isn't something meek and mild. No, it's knowledge that is like a dam breaking and sending a torrent of water crashing down to reshape the whole terrain. Personally, I like to picture the flood scene from *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* wherein Ulysses Everett McGill, played winsomely by George Clooney, is rescued by a deluge washing away his family's home and the lawmen who want to hang him.

It's a similar picture of what happens when God by his Spirit reshapes the topography of our hearts. We are washed clean, and set free in a wide, new country of grace that is now ours to explore, delight in, and learn how to live within. The Spirit has created a reservoir of God's love within us. Always ready to remind us that God really does love us. His grace really has made an indelible mark upon the landscape of our hearts. And so it will be for all eternity.

And yet, our world (even our own hearts) don't know what to do with this good thing. We remake and reshape God's love in our own image, according to our own ideas of what he "must be like!" **Trouble is: we have it the wrong way around!** C.S. sums up well how God's love is meant to reshape us.

"You asked for a loving God: you have one!... Not a senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, **not the cold philanthropy** of a conscientious magistrate, **nor the care of a host** who feels responsible for the comfort of his guests, **but the consuming fire Himself, the Love that made the worlds**, persistent as the artist's love for his work... provident and venerable as a father's love for a child... inexorable, exacting as love between the sexes... **To ask that God's love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God:** because He is what He is, His love must, in the nature of things, be impeded and repelled, by certain stains in our present character, and because He already loves us He must labor to make us lovable. We cannot even wish, in our better moments, that He could reconcile Himself to our present impurities."

– C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, Chapter 3

GROUP QUESTIONS

- From the sermon, or your direct reading of 1 John 4:7-21, share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you about the God's love.
- Romans 5:1-5 shows us how God intends to transform us by his love. Why do you suppose God "floods our hearts" with his love by His Spirit and not some other way?
- Ephesians tells us that it is love which makes us able to "comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love." How would you describe the lengths/width/height/depth to which God would go to demonstrate his love for his people?
- If there's one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of these portions of Scripture, what is that thing?