



## Sermon Notes

**Term** – Spring 2019

**Series** – Wholeness (1 John 4)

**Gathering & Date** – the 5, 3 February

**Title** – God's initiative, God's desire

**Preacher** – Paul Langham

**Reading** – 1 John 4:7-21

**Main message of this talk in one sentence** – God's initiative towards you reveals his desire for you

**Main points** – a reminder that wholeness is an invitation ... *to be more fully loved that we may more fully love*

**1. God's initiative** – see how many times in this short passage John emphasises that God has taken the initiative in moving towards us, in saving us ...

- 7 Beloved / agape'd ones
- 7 agape comes from God
- 8 God is agape
- 9 God showed his agape by sending his one and only Son
- 10 not that we agape'd him but that he agape'd us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice (explain later)
- 11 Beloved / agape'd ones since God so agape'd us
- 13 he has given us of his Spirit
- 14 the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world (kosmos)
- 16 the agape God has for us
- 19 we agape because he first agape'd us

Initiative reveals desire – God acts because he desires to act. God saves because he desires to save. God offers to live within us by his Spirit (vv 12, 15) because he desires to do so.

**2. fear (17 – 18)**

<sup>17</sup> This is how love (agape) is made **complete** among us so that we will have **confidence** [lit. freedom of speech, boldness] on the day of **judgment**: in this world we are like Jesus. <sup>18</sup> There is no **fear** in love (agape). But perfect love (agape) drives out **fear**, because **fear** has to do with **punishment** [Greek *kolasis* = punishment, torment, living in the dread of what is to come]. The one who **fears** is not made **perfect** in love (agape).

John is talking about a particular fear – the fear that we may not escape judgment, that we may not be secure in our hope of eternity. This fear is explicitly linked to the day of judgment and the dread of being punished.

The question we have to address is whether who we are and what we have done can ever overwhelm the power of the Cross and the blood of Jesus shed for us. The bible is clear that it is the other way round – the Cross and the blood of Jesus overwhelms all sin and guilt; and that his perfect love drives out all fear.

Interestingly, the Greek word John uses here for complete (17) and perfect (18) – highlighted in red above – is *teleioo*, the word Jesus cries from the Cross in John 19:30: 'It is finished'

**For further thought and prayer –**

Spend some time thinking through the idea that God's initiative reveals his desire. List the things he has done for you – salvation, mercy, grace, forgiveness, redemption, taking up residence within you by his Spirit: how easy do you find it to accept that this reveals his desire towards you? If you find it hard, ask the Holy Spirit to change your heart and mind, and make it easier day by day to accept that God loves YOU and desires your thriving and flourishing.

Do you have any fear of eternal punishment rather than expectation of eternal life? Can you think of any scriptures which can help overcome this, and replace fear with confidence? Here's a starter for 10:

*... if you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9*