

**Theme:** Faith in Exile

**Title:** The Reason for Love

**Aim:** To recognize that God is love & love is from God.

**Intro:** According to the dictionary, “The source of something is **the person, place, or thing from which it comes into being, is derived, or is obtained**. The source can also refer to the origin or cause of something, such as a source of energy, light, inspiration, or information. The source can be used to trace the history, development, or influence of something.” Have you ever wondered about the source of something? We know the source of the CT River, which flows very near to us, just to our east & is the largest river in New England at 410 miles long. Its source is “a beaver pond high on a mountainside in northern NH (Pittsfield), right on the Canadian line. The pond is known as Fourth Connecticut Lake.” It’s hard to fathom that such a river could come from such a small source. We know that the source of maple syrup is the sap of sugar maple trees. It takes a lot of sap to make a little syrup, but aren’t we glad the sap keeps flowing year by year! It’s easy to discover the source of some things while others are hidden deeper. But both easily discoverable & deeply hidden is the source of love, the reason for love. Theme: Faith in exile. We who are in Christ are exiles in a world not our home, placed here to represent Christ in the world, influencing others for Christ. Love is the foundation for all we do (or should be). But what is the source of/reason for love? 1 John 4:7-21 [READ]. The simple but profound answer to the question of the source of/reason for love is 1) **God is the reason for love**. John repeated himself in this epistle, perhaps because he was old & senile when he wrote it, or more likely, because he wanted to emphasize the message. He had said throughout that we are to love one another. It’s part of “walking in the light,” being children of God. If we’re of God/born of God, & know God by experience, then love will flow from us because love is from God. John

reiterates that message here & exhorts his readers/us again. “Beloved, let us love one another.” That phrase could be translated, “As those who are loved, let us love.” We don’t earn love from God or become worthy of God by loving others but we love others because God loves us. Paul tells us in Romans 5:5 that **“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”** So, if we do not love others, it is an indication that we don’t know God or are not being who we are in Christ, because, John wrote, “God is love.” Commentator David Gudzik wrote, “Love describes the character & heart of God. He is so rich in love & compassion, that it can be used to describe His very being.” There are only a few things that the Bible says God is. It doesn’t say He is holiness (tho God is infinitely holy). It doesn’t say God is justice (tho He is righteously just). It does say that God is spirit (John 4:24) & God is light (I John 1:5) & that God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). Ponder those truths. Here John wrote, “God is love.” Again, Gudzik: “Great problems come when we try to say ‘love is God.’ This is because love does not define everything in the character of God & because when most people use the term love, they are not thinking of true love, the God-kind of love. Instead, they are thinking of a squishy, namby-pamby, have a nice day kind of love, that values being ‘nice’ more than what is really best for the other person” – like truth, correction, discipline, etc. I would venture to say that just as all truth (genuine truth) is God’s truth, so all love (genuine love) is God’s love & flows from God. If you witness any genuine love (not just a feeling & not misconstrued) it comes from the One who is love – the eternal God. He is the reason for love. John also reiterates II) **The way we recognize love**. He’s said it before: God’s love is manifested – plainly recognized, thoroughly understood in one primary way – He “sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.” John certainly had in his heart the verse he wrote in his gospel which has become known as “the

gospel in a nutshell,” or the gospel simplified, capsulized – John 3:16. ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*** And here, John wrote, ***“He loved us & sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*** God didn’t just send Jesus into the world. That would have been amazing enough – God among us, God w/us. But Jesus had a work to do: to offer Himself on the cross as a sacrifice for us in order to appease the Father’s wrath. The Father sent the Son, & the Son gave Himself because of love. John makes it clear, “It’s not that we loved God.” Love never has & never will start w/you or me. We’re not capable of it. Not only is no one good, & no one seeks for God but no one loves God unless they receive by faith God’s love & the expression of that love in the atoning work of Christ. Life in Christ comes from the Spirit of God working in us & giving us the gift of faith. For those who believe, God has put His Holy Spirit w/in us. We confess Jesus as Savior/Lord & God abides in us. By faith we believe God loves us, because we see/experience what He has done for us in Christ. John wrote, “This is love perfected w/us.” The literal translation of “perfected” is “perfectly perfected” or “completely complete,” w/a double use of the Greek word “teleioo” - finished/perfected. Believing God loves us, “we have confidence for the day of judgment.” This is where you/I want to be – confident of God’s love as evidenced in the work of Christ. His wrath being poured out & appeased by the sacrifice of Christ; we need not fear God’s judgment when Jesus comes again & all stand before His judgment seat. We need not fear the day of judgment because “as He is so are we in this world.” What does that mean? It means that as Jesus is perfect, righteous, glorified at the right hand of the Father, so is our standing before the Father now – we are justified, forgiven, accepted by Him, assured of eternity – as sure as Jesus shall reign as Lord over all & as King of kings. “There is no fear in love.” Assured of God’s love, there

is no need to fear, not only God's judgment, but anything. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Surely there are things in life that are very hard & scary – death being one, or the process of dying. Life brings hard times in various ways & we naturally fear what might hurt us or those we love. But ultimately, we need not fear anything. We have the abiding presence of God here & the sure hope of eternity when Jesus comes. Rest in God's love. We skipped vs11-12; now let's go back to them. As we experience the love of God, the God who is love, what should our response be? Besides reflecting God's love back to Him, III) **We are to love one another.** "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." It's only reasonable. This is just like Paul's argument in Romans 12:1 – "***I appeal to you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God*** (in view of God's mercy) ***to present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God, holy & acceptable, which is your reasonable worship***" – your rational service. It only makes sense to give ourselves to God in response to God's mercy which has touched our lives. Even so, it is only reasonable to love one another in response to God's love for us. The way that others see God in us is by the love we show our bro/sis in Christ. It becomes evident that God abides in us. His love comes full circle in our lives as we receive His love, rest in His love & are channels of His love to others. Again, we are to love bro/sis in Christ but also others – those w/out Christ as well. This love is not an acceptance of sinful lifestyle but self-giving love in spite of it. As we love others they see God in us, they see the reality of Him. As they look closer, they can discover what God has done for all who believe. They see God's love, the God who is love & are drawn to Him. The love we show to others flows from the source. John put it this way: "***We love because He 1<sup>st</sup> loved us.***" It's a tale-tell sign of the truth. We love because He loved (& still does). Again, if we don't love we are exposed as not knowing Him, or not living out who we are in Christ. The flow of God's love is

somehow blocked. The reason for love is hidden. But if it's there, it really can't be hidden. If we say we love God & yet hate a bro/sis, we're lying. Not that everyone – even another believer - is easy to love. But if God is in us, love must always win out. That means we have work to do. Dying to self; putting others before ourselves; maintaining the unity of the Spirit; acting in love toward those around us, even those w/whom we disagree. We may need to confess & repent our lack of love. It starts w/faith in God & daily communion w/God, confidence in His love, assurance of His unfailing love, & nurture of His love poured into our hearts by the Spirit who is w/in. Then we aim to be His instrument, a channel of His love. Think w/His love, live out His love. It certainly takes faith – faith in exile.