

22. The Epistle of 1 John—4:12-21

(12/4/19)

1 John 4:7-16 (NKJV)

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love [agape] is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ **By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.** ¹⁴ **And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.** ¹⁵ **Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.** ¹⁶ **And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.**

As we have already pointed out numerous times in our study of 1John—the key concept that John keeps driving home is that God is love and those who truly know Him abide in His love.

In fact, John uses the word *meno* (abide) 6 times in 1John 4:12-16.

Warren Wiersbe—

“That important little word abide...refers to our personal fellowship with Jesus Christ. To abide in Christ means to remain in spiritual oneness with Him, so that no sin comes between us. Because we are “born of God,” we have union with Christ; but it is only as we trust Him and obey His commandments that we have communion with Him. Much as a faithful husband and wife “abide in love” though they may be separated by miles, so a believer abides in God’s love. This abiding is made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:13).”

And again, the thought that John keeps coming back to is that—only the true children of God have His nature in them (thru the indwelling Holy Spirit—v.13), and as such only they can manifest and demonstrate His love to this world.

Anyone claiming to know Jesus (saved) and yet doesn't abide in God's love by demonstrating it to those around them—at very least is out of fellowship with Him (backslidden), and at worst isn't a child of God at all!

Now, throughout the course of his epistle, John wants us to know that agape love isn't just words—it is actions:

1 John 3:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷...whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

John wants us to know that words and actions are inseparably linked together when it comes to defining the love of God.

He makes it a point to say that not only did God *tell* us He loves us, but He *demonstrated* that love by sending His Son to die for us on Calvary's Cross. (Romans 5:8)

This he says is the kind of love we must show the people of this world (especially other Christians)—sacrificial love that combines words and actions.

1 John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ **By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.**

One author has rightly said—

“The world will not believe that God loves sinners until they see His love at work in His children's lives.”

This author then went on to relate this true story:

‘A Salvation Army worker found a derelict woman alone on the street and invited her to come into the chapel for help, but the woman refused to move. The worker assured her: “We love you and want to help you. God loves you. Jesus died for you.” But the woman did not budge.

As if on divine impulse, the Army lassie leaned over and kissed the woman on the cheek, taking her into her arms. The woman began to sob, and like a child was led into the chapel, where she ultimately trusted Christ.

“You told me that God loved me,” she said later, “but it wasn’t till you showed me that God loved me that I wanted to be saved.”

Jesus did not simply preach the love of God; He proved it by giving His life on the cross. He expects His followers to do likewise. If we abide in Christ, we will abide in His love. If we abide in His love, we must share this love with others. Whenever we share this love, it is proof in our own hearts that we are abiding in Christ. In other words, there is no separation between a Christian’s inner life and his outer life.”

1 John 4:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Be careful here—any unbeliever (including the devil and his demons) can ‘mouth the words’, “*Jesus is the Son of God*” and still not be saved.

Years ago, we had a couple coming to the church who had been involved in the Word of Faith Movement.

One of their favorite Word of Faith preachers used to end his T.V. and radio shows with the words, “*Jesus is Lord!*”

However, based on the overall doctrine he taught, I accused him of being a false teacher.

They took me to 1Corinthians 12:3 to ‘prove’ that he was a genuine man of God—

1 Corinthians 12:3 (NKJV)

³ Therefore I make known to you that no one...can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

To which I responded, “*Anyone can mouth words—God is talking about a confession that comes from the heart declaring that Jesus is Lord, rooted in the truth of God and manifested by a changed life.*”

And that is what John is talking about here in chapter 4 verse 15—he goes on:

1 John 4:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides [remains, continues] in [God's] love abides in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

As we have said many times in our studies of the N.T.—Satan can't rob you of your *salvation*—but thru legalism he can rob you of the *assurance* of your salvation.

This will produce in a believer a tremendous amount of fear and torment—

1 John 4:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Now it's true that John could have in mind people who consider themselves Christians but demonstrate that they don't have true saving faith because they constantly live in fear and torment of going to hell because—they're "unworthy" and not "good enough" to get to heaven.

Someone who refuses to believe what the Word of God clearly says, that they're saved by grace apart from any works or 'goodness' on their part—in my mind is demonstrating they're a 'church-going unbeliever'.

Or it could be (and I lean towards this) that John has in mind true Christians that lack maturity in their faith and walk with God—the kind of maturity that comes from understanding the promises of God in His Word about the eternal security of their salvation, and the nature of His unconditional love for them in Christ.

There have been more than a few Christians that have committed suicide because of fear and torment rooted in feelings of guilt and condemnation because they were not "**perfected**" in their walk with the Lord and after a while they just couldn't live with the guilt any longer—

1 John 3:18-20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹ And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. ²⁰ For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

This is the very issue John is addressing here—the key word(s) being ‘**perfected**’ or ‘**perfect**.’

1 John 4:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Love [God’s love] has been perfected among us...¹⁸ There is no fear in love [the love of God in Christ]; but perfect love casts out fear...

“Perfect” or “perfected” love is the love of God *in* a person’s life that has accomplished the perfect will of God *for* that person’s life—by saving them and making them as perfect as Jesus in His eyes—

1 John 4:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

Romans 8:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Jude 1:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

To fully understand what John is saying, we need to start with a very familiar verse—

John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Here’s the problem—love *presented* is not automatically love *perfected*—what do I mean?

God has presented His love to the people of this world (the gospel)—but only those who receive it are perfected by it.

In other words, just because God loves all the people of this world and has offered them a way by which they might escape coming judgment (in hell)—doesn't automatically mean that all people *will* be saved.

Perfect or *perfected* love is the love of God in a person's life that has reached its perfect conclusion—saving us and conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ.

This is why, when we understand the eternal, unconditional nature of God's love for us as His children—we never need fear coming judgment—

John 5:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

We have been 'hidden' in Christ by the Holy Spirit (Eph.1:13-14) and as such we are as perfect, blameless and holy as Jesus Himself!

Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-14 (NKJV)

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved... ¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. ¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

1 John 4:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.**

Again, this is a statement of *sanctification* (spiritual growth and maturity) and not of salvation.

The issue John is focusing on isn't how someone who is saved loses their salvation, but how a child of God loses the assurance of their salvation and allows fear, torment and condemnation take hold in their heart.

And the way that happens is thru legalism—or to put it in John's terms—a Christian who doesn't understand the perfected, unconditional nature and eternal security of God's love for them once they become a child of God—

John 10:27-30 (NKJV)

²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand. ³⁰ I and My Father are one."

Romans 8:38-39 (NKJV)

³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:1 (NKJV)

¹ *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...

And so, once again—

1 John 4:17-18 (NLT2)

¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸ Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

1 John 4:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ **We love Him because He first loved us.**

John is telling us that God is the 'initiator' of salvation—not us (fallen sinners).

The only reason we love God and are saved is because He first loved us and put the plan of redemption into place by sending His Son to the earth.

Jesus eventually died for our sins on Calvary's Cross and reached out to us in love to come to Him and be saved—which caused us to love Him and accept His 'proposal of marriage' (salvation commitment).

But understand, Jesus is the Good Shepherd that goes out looking for lost sheep—He initiated the process of our salvation—He found us we didn't 'find' Him.

John 6:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 12:32 (NKJV)

³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself."

1 John 4:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ **If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?** ²¹ **And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.**

One commentator sums up what John has been saying in this epistle—

"Love for God expresses itself not only in a confident attitude towards him, devoid of fear, but in a loving concern for our brothers and sisters (cf. 3:14). The perfect love that drives out fear, drives out hatred also. If God's love for us is made complete when we love one another (12), so is our love for God. John does not mince his words. If how a person behaves contradicts what he says—he is a liar. To claim to know God and have fellowship with God while we walk in the darkness of disobedience is to lie (1:6; 2:4). To claim to possess the Father while denying the deity of the Son is to lie (2:22–23). To claim to love God while hating our brothers is also to lie. These are the three black lies of the letter: moral, doctrinal and social. We may insist that we are Christian, but habitual sin, denial of Christ or selfish hatred would expose us as liars. Only holiness, faith and love can prove the truth of our claim to know, possess and love God...

It is easy to deceive ourselves. The truth, however, is plain. Every claim to love God is a delusion if it is not accompanied by unselfish and practical love for our brothers and sisters (3:17–18)...