

1 John 4:17-21

"Perfect Love"

Ladies & Gentlemen; as sure as I stand before you today, J.C. is coming again... It's a truth that John affirms over & over throughout this little letter. Back in Vs 28 of Ch 2 he said, *"And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."*^{1*} I'll say it again, the day is coming when J.C. will return to this earth, & He won't be coming as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. He'll be coming as the Lion of the tribe of Judah & His agenda will be to clean house, to make right all that is wrong & to judge the world in righteousness.

We read in the book of Rev, *"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war."*²

I know that sometimes we look around at this debased climate/culture into which we've been called, & as we see the activity, the volatility & the hostility toward righteousness we can wonder, "Where is God in all this?" **Let me affirm in your heart today the fact that God is right where He's always been, He's on the throne. & The bible teaches that He has in His hand a "winecup of His wrath" & when a people fill that cup to the brim through sin/rebellion/depravity & debauchery, God will press it to their lips & force them to drink it down to the dregs.** It's happened again & again historically & the Bible teaches that the Day is coming when Christ will judge the earth w/finality. *

As for you & me, God doesn't want us *intimidated* of that day, or *ashamed* on that day. He would have us be assured (bold) on that day, & it's His love *for* us, the fullness of the work of His love *in* us that will give us the assurance, the boldness to stand before Him on that day.

Vs 17

Seems to me we should just stop right here & think this Vs through a little bit. John has been speaking to us of the marks of God's love maturing in our lives. He's told us what it will look like (what the net effect of it will be) presently/practically, here he shares how it will serve you prophetically, ultimately (in the day of judgment).

In our previous section of scripture Jn told us that God's love completes its purpose in us (is perfected in us) if we love one another. – When you & I come to that place whereby rather than talk negatively about our brother/sister we choose to bless them.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Jn 2:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Re 19:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

When rather than avoid them or fight w/them we choose to build up & encourage them. When we will (rather than feeling entitled ourselves) sacrifice for & serve others in the body of Christ, the love of God has accomplished its purpose in our lives.

Here, Jn says, "There's another benefit/blessing to the love of God coming into maturity in us & that is this: that we may have *boldness* (we might say 'confidence') in the day of judgment." Now some of us may be of the mindset, "Are you kidding me!? I'll be happy just to *survive* the day of judgment, much less have a boldness, a *confidence*, an *assurance* in it." ☺

But the mark of God's love maturing in you, isn't intimidation, fear or uncertainty concerning that day... it's *boldness* (not arrogance) but confidence... How is it that we can stand *confident* before God on the day of judgment? Jn tells us plainly. But before we consider it, 🚫 I want to talk about this touchy topic for just a second that many people like to bury their proverbial head in the sand about & hope that if they don't think about it, or try not to believe it, then it won't happen & that is... the words are... the day of judgment.

Let me begin by simply saying that *believing* something is not the means by which something is made true or not true. Something is either true or it's not. & *Believing* that truth doesn't affect the *truth*, it affects *me*. For example, it's *dangerous* to play in traffic. That's simply truth. If I choose to *believe* it, the truth will serve me, benefit me (I won't play ball in traffic). If I choose *not* to believe it, it doesn't change the truth, but it will definitely affect me when I'm out there playing catch on I-44.

People are into this moral relativism, what's true for you, speak your truth... you may as well say, "Speak your math." Try that on your math test, tell your teacher, that may be how the #'s added up for him/her, but not for you. ☺ You'll still get a zero because truth is truth. Try that at the bank. Go try & w/draw 10 million from your account. The teller will look at your account & say, "I'm sorry, you only have \$3.47 in your account." Then say this & see where it gets you, "That may be true *for you*, it's not for me." Try that w/medicine. Ladies & Gentlemen, truth is truth. There is no "your" truth, there's only truth. Believing it affects *me*, not the truth.

Now, here's truth. The day is coming when J.C. is going to judge the living & the dead, both small & great, every tribe, every tongue & every nation... 🚫 Perhaps you recall the scene in your minds eye. There he was, Paul the apostle, addressing the men of Athens in midst of the Areopagus regarding their epic levels of idolatry. & He said...

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.³

Jesus said in Matt 25, “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”⁴ To those on His right hand He will say, “Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” But to those on His left He will say, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil & his angels...”

& Of course Rev Ch 20, “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”⁵

Just as surely as God has appointed *this* day, He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.

Now, some would say that John isn't speaking of *that* day here. But that he's speaking of the judgment seat of Christ (the bema seat) that Paul speaks of in 2 Cor 5:10 where each of us as believers must stand before Christ to receive our rewards &/or the lack thereof. He said, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”⁶ But here's the catch, the word “judgment” in 2 Cor 5, is a different Greek word than the word “judgment” in 1 Jn 4.

The word in 2 Cor is “bema” (again, alluding to the judgment of believers not w/regard to salvation, but an examination of motives for the purpose of rewards). The word in 1st Jn 4 is “krisis” speaking of “condemnation, accusation & damnation”.^{*} & This is why we plead w/people to repent of their sin, to believe upon the Lord J.C. & be saved from this wicked/perverse generation. Because one day all will stand before the throne of God.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ac 17:30-31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 25:31-33). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Re 20:11-12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Co 5:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& The books will be opened, (the records kept of people's lives) & another book will be opened called "The Book of Life" & whoever's name is not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire which burns day & night forever & ever.

But as for you (believer) there's no need for you to be worried about that day, to stand intimidated by that day. You can have *boldness* because J.C. bore your judgment upon the cross. He bore the wrath of God against sin on your behalf that you might gain the benefit of God's love on His behalf.

It's kind of funny. Some people think that they're going to judge God. That when they see God, they've got some questions for Him! That's absolute nonsense. There isn't anyone who's going to have *anything* to say to Him. The *only* way to have boldness in the day of judgment is to receive, and walk in, the transforming love of God today. *

You see, you won't fear in that day. You'll have boldness. How so? "Because as He (that is Jesus) is, so are we in this world." Paul said that like this, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."⁷ & To the Colossians, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."⁸ As for John, he likes the word "Abide". We abide (live) in Christ. Our identity is bound up in Jesus. * As He is, so are we in the world.

How is Jesus, right now? He's glorified, justified, forever righteous, sitting at the right hand of God the Father. Now... we're not there *practically*, we're all still growing. But *positionally, spiritually*, this is where you are, you have that same standing right now, because as He is, so are we in the world. Is Jesus worried about His standing before the Father? No. & On that day, you won't be either. You will have boldness because the work of J.C. on your behalf has forever satisfied the righteous wrath of God.

Jesus said this (& then we'll move on). "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."⁹ There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Listen, for the believer, God's judgment isn't in the future; it's in the past. You're sins were judged at the cross & have been cast as far as the east is from the west, never to be held against you, to be brought up nor even remembered. (Now somebody give God praise) 😊. *

⁷ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Ga 2:20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Col 3:3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Jn 5:24]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 18

You see? Boldness is the necessary result of God's love coming to full fruition in our lives. Because love (agape) expunges, it purges, & washes away fear. They're mutually exclusive.

Here's something else to think about. If as He is, so are we in the world, that means you are a child of God. God deals w/us as He does His own Son. How then can we ever be afraid? Listen, if God loved you when you were *outside the family*, disobeying Him, rebelling against Him. How much more (if you'll allow me) does He love you now that you're His child?

Now I want to just touch on a couple of things here because I believe they're worth noting. #1 I'm not sure that John is saying that this doesn't mean that you'll never be afraid, never experience any kind of fear in any context if you're moving in the maturity of God's love. (Back to my previous example, it's ok to be afraid to play tag on the freeway. It'll keep you alive! Fear in such context is wise!). Paul spoke of being in peril on a regular basis! This is specifically a reference to not fearing God's judgment.

& W/that, the 2nd thing I want to draw to your attention is the fact that, * there is a "healthy" fear of God that the Bible speaks to. So, the principle of "fearing God" is always hedged w/in an appropriate context. We might consider it a context of "godly fear" or "ungodly/unhealthy fear". The author of Hebrews writes, *"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."*¹⁰

It's like I was just saying, *godly* fear will keep you & me out of trouble. It's the beginning of wisdom. I revere God, respect God, try to be careful to honor God in the decisions I make or direction I take. * (Of course there are a # of references we could site that speak to our healthy need, even responsibility to fear God in this capacity).

But we needn't fear God's judgment (in the sense of, "Will I make it to heaven, will God judge me according to my sins?) That involves torment, God does not desire that for you! This is where (as His children) we're to allow His love to have its way in our lives. God *loves* you, Christ died *for* you. (I've given you a lot of scripture today, there's more on the way). *"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'"*¹¹

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Heb 12:28-29]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 8:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

* God wants His children to live in an atmosphere of love and confidence, not fear and torment. “He who fears has not been made perfect in love.” If our relationship with God is marked by this tormenting fear (“What’s God going to do, what’s He going to say when I stand before Him?”), what that tells us is that God’s love hasn’t matured in our hearts/lives.

Keep going, keep growing, maturity takes time. How many years does it take to grow from childhood to adulthood? For a tree to grow from a sapling to a might oak? God has begun a good work in you & He will be faithful to complete it. It’s ours to abide in Christ & let His words abide in us. Faith comes by hearing/hearing by the word of God. Mature love is something cultivated through time/testing & patience. *

* How many times have you had a problem w/someone & you want to fix it – now. But sometimes it takes patience. When Paul said that we’re not to let the sun go down on our wrath, he didn’t say, “Fix your problems the same day.” It means, let go of your anger before the sun goes down (proverbially speaking [what if you fight at night ☺]) so that you can then work to resolve the problem in a proper frame of heart/mind! A mature love has the proper patience to resolve the problem at the right time. *

Vs 19

You should know that the word “Him” isn’t found in every manuscript. But that’s ok, it’s not needed because the point remains the same. “We love... Because He 1st loved us.” Our love (agape) owes its origin to Him, to the Lord. But to follow up on what we have here, if a man doesn’t love God, he’s not born again of God. As Charles Spurgeon said, “Show me a fire w/out heat, then show me regeneration that does not produce love to God.”

* We should be unafraid, unashamed to openly proclaim that we love J.C. Jesus was willing to die over His love for you, are we willing to live in open love for Him? – He 1st love us. Before the world was created, before you were formed in the womb God knew you & He loved you. When you were in sin, against Him, neglecting His Word, prideful rather than prayerful, He loved you... & Thus the song is born, “I stand amazed in the presence Of Jesus the Nazarene, And wonder how He could love me, A sinner, condemned, unclean. O how marvelous! O how wonderful! And my song shall ever be: O how marvelous! O how wonderful! Is my Savior’s love for me!” It’s the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. How He’s loved us & given Himself for us... Divine initiative, Human Responsibility. We love because He 1st loved us. *

Do you believe that today? That God loves you... * Love believed is the mother of love returned. The way to love the Lord even more isn't to really try, to stop doing this, start doing that... It's not in being mindful of your love for Him, all your sacrifices for Him. Focus on His great love for you & you'll find a greater love for Him welling up in you... If you want to love Him more, think more *on* Him, more *of* Him, that He chose you, died for you, forgave you & made *you* His own... & your love for Him will only increase. *

Vs 20-21

Well. Some of us wish Jn would've stopped at the, "Bask in God's love" club... But He didn't. We don't get to sit around speak of God's great love for us & our great love for Him. * It's pretty easy to say that we love an invisible God, but if you don't love your brother in the body of Christ... You don't really love God.

He takes us back to the words of Jesus when He said that by this all would know that we were His disciples, if we could quote scripture back & forth... Is that what He said? "If we give generously to the cause of Christ." "If we pray day & night & operate in spiritual gifts." Is that what He said? No. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."¹² The fruit of the Spirit... is love. Loving God & loving your neighbor as yourself, they're mutually inclusive.

Therefore, God doesn't suggest that we love our brother, He *commands* that we love our brother (that fellow believer). Love isn't emotion, it's action. It's a choice we make & an action we take. Does it mean we're best friends? No. It means I'll serve you, value you. Your love for God (in principle) will be shown in your love for your brothers/sisters in the practical... As pastor Chuck Smith used to say, "Loving God. Loving my brother. You can't do one without the other." * (Close)

Leave 1st Jn, we'll close in **Matt 5**

Vs 23-24

* Imagine someone coming to church & they have it in their heart to give a million dollars to the Lord. (I've never met that person, but I presume they're out there somewhere 😊). There they are check in hand getting ready to drop it in the offering & then it surfaces in their mind/heart that there's an unsettled issue between them & another brother or sister.

¹² *The New King James Version*, (1982). [Jn 13:35] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God says, "There's something that you can do right now that's of more value to Me than a million-dollar offering (or any other amount you want to add in for consideration). Go & get right w/your brother/sister, then (if it's found in your heart to make that offering, wonderful) bring your gift.

The command from God is that we love one another. Should we give? Should we serve? Of course. But those things are to be the overflow of love, not a legalistic endeavor to add credit to our cause or somehow make ourselves right w/God. We're never made right w/God by something we do, as you well know, we're only made right w/God upon the basis of faith in what He's *done*. The works, the service, the giving, all those kinds of things aren't an effort to obtain God's love, they're the result of & response to receiving God's love.

So, receive God's love. Grow in & give way to God's love & God will be glorified in your life. *

Prayer Points:

God we're so grateful for Your love. May your love be perfected, matured & made complete in us. & May our love for You be obviously noted in our love for one another.

God has so loved you, that Christ died for you. If you've not received His love, believed on J.C. then do so today. Judgment is coming, grace is available. Turn from your sin, believe on J.C. & be saved.