



The Epistle of 1 John

“LEARNING HOW TO LOVE”

1 John 4:13-19

Theme: As the love of God is perfected in us, we are able to love even as He loves.

I. Acquire the Assurance of God’s Love – *4:13-16*

A. THE ASSURANCE OF GOD IN US – *vv. 13-15*

1. John is teaching us through this section that we need to find assurance through the ministry of God’s indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives.
2. However, we are to be careful not to accept every spirit as coming from God – that we are to “test the spirits” – cp. 4:1; How then are we to know?
 - a) First, by confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh as the Savior of the world – cp. *4:2-6*
 - b) Second, by loving with a love that is from God – cp. *4:7-12*
3. Now, John connects these two tests by saying that when these things exist, the Holy Spirit is present and abides in us ... *“By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”*
4. This is the issue when we can say that *“we have seen [through the eyes of faith] and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”*
5. This confession is more than mere acknowledgement of historical fact but is the work of the Holy Spirit in one’s heart so that one doesn’t merely accept the “fact” as a mental reality, but one grasps it with the heart by faith.
6. “It is spirit dealing with spirit, not mere intellect dealing

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with intellect. It is God's Spirit dealing intimately and lovingly with my spirit, and that too upon a special theme – a specific subject; 'Jesus Christ come in the flesh,' as 'the very Son of God; sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world.'"¹

7. John declares that *"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."* – cp. *Matthew 16:17*.

B. THE ASSURANCE OF US IN GOD – v. 16

1. Proof that God abides in you is given by virtue of the heart-felt confession concerning the Son of God; proof that you abide in God is given through the godly love that is present in our lives.
2. We are told that *"We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us."* – that is, God's love has transitioned from a matter of purely objective truth to that which has been embraced by our hearts through faith.
3. God's love is not merely a matter of revelation from without; it now has been born to our hearts where it becomes a moving principle and power from within us.
4. Thus, this love is most literally said to be the *"love which God has in us."*
5. It is in us and working to magnify the reality of the Gospel to our own hearts so as to give us confidence that indeed *"God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."*

II. Appreciate the Asset of God's Love – 4:17-18

A. THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVE – v. 17

¹ Robert S. Candlish, Commentary on 1 John, (GR: Kregel Publications, 1979), p. 319.

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1. **“By this ...”** – [a reference to the confession of Jesus Christ and the testimony of God’s Spirit of His love working in us] **“... love is perfected with us.”** – that is, we grow in our appreciation of this love as well as an awareness of its impact.
 - a) **“perfected” [ΤΕΛΕΙΩΩ]** – refers to a completed activity or “to bring to an accomplished state”
 - b) It conveys the idea of an intensifying progression in knowing this love – both from God and like God to others.
2. The result of the presence of our heart-felt faith in Christ and the working of God’s Spirit bringing the subjective reality of the love of God in our hearts is **“that we may have confidence in the day of judgment”** – that we no longer fear condemnation.
3. The reason for this confidence is **“because as He is, so also are we in this world.”**
 - a) Notice the present tense **“... as He is ...”** right now, what is His present condition?
 - (1) Prior His resurrection and glorification, Jesus became the object of the infinite wrath of God toward sin.
 - (2) The things that passed between God and Him as He hung on the accursed tree were not loving and gentle, but wrathful and **“pure”** judgment.
 - (3) “However, now that His dark agony is over, and all His groans are past:
 - (a) ... now that there is no more present with him, on the part of God, any wrath at all, but only perfect love;
 - (b) ... now that no longer bearing condemnation, but accepted for his righteousness’ sake, he has boldness to set any day of judgment at defiance;
 - (c) ... now that his Father need have no other dealings with him any more forever but only dealings of perfect love;

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(d) ... now that, being raised from the dead, he dieth no more; death, judicial death, having no more dominion over him"² --- all privileges that John declares are ours right now – Praise God!!!

b) *“So also are we [right now] in this world”* – we are completely accepted in the Beloved One, Jesus Christ; without fear of condemnation – cp. *Ephesians 1:6;* *Romans 8:1.*

B. THE PERFECTING OF GOD’S LOVE – v. 18

1. Because of this *“there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear”* – when we have God abiding in us and we abide in Him, there is no fear of condemnation in the face of judgment.
2. John then gives us a principle that explains why love casts out fear: *“because fear involves punishment”* and there is no condemnation for those in Christ.
3. Thus, *“the one who fears [condemnation] is not perfected in love”* – or is not in a condition of enjoying a relationship of mutual love between the Father and oneself.
4. As the love of God is perfected in us, we are made more bold in our confidence before God – and indication not of arrogance before God, but of intimacy with God in a loving relationship.

III. Affirm the Affection of God’s Love – 4:19

A. THE CONTRAST TO THE FEAR OF GOD

1. In contrast to the fear which exists because of a lack of abiding in God through love, John makes a simple statement: *“We love ...”*

² Candlish, pp. 325-326

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2. This love is a divinely instilled faculty that provides us with the assurance that we indeed have a relationship with God – a love that enables us to realize the abiding presence of God’s Spirit in us.
3. Obviously, if we are to realize in our experience, the relationship and fellowship of love, as one in which there is not fear, it must be by faith because “*we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us.*” – cp. v. 16.

B. THE CAUSE OF OUR FEARLESSNESS

1. Once again, the cause for this fearlessness is “*because He first loved us.*”
2. This emphasizes that our love is a reciprocation or response to the initiation by the love of God.
3. When you believe that God first loved you, and lay your whole heart open to the free, frank acceptance of the love with which He first loves you – from that love, there will spring up love in you – a love that initiates a mutually loving relationship which eliminates all fear and provides confidence before God in the day of judgment.