

1 JOHN – CHAPTER 4:9-12

Love Perfected

INTRODUCTION

The Epistle of First John is a fatherly appeal—gentle in tone yet deliberate in guiding the reader’s thinking. Its purpose is to draw the audience into alignment with apostolic truth concerning the identity and message of Jesus Christ. Through thoughtful repetitive layering, variation in phrasing, and utilizing contrast and tension, the author leads the reader not merely to hear, but to think about the truth—wrestling with the question, understanding the answer, and the outcome is to return (or maintain) to belief in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ and love one another.

Last lesson (1 John 4:7-8) we saw how the author takes one last parting shot at the opposition by stating that they (the antichrists - the ones who do not love God) do not know God, for God is love. In contrast, the children are “the ones who love” and they born of God and know God.

1 JOHN 4:9-10 LOVE EXPLAINED

Moving forward in 1 John 4 we come to verse 9, the main thrust of the Gospel is on display but realize first that John is not evangelizing them. The basics of the Gospel is the foundation for not only being saved but for all of life.

This verse begins with the phrase “By this” (ἐν τούτῳ en toutō), literally “In this.” This a common structure in John and 1 John used to introduce explanations.

Once again, small little inconsistencies drive a student insane. Verse 9 and Verse 10 is the exact same beginning in Greek. We have two different explanations. Verse 9 explains how we can understand the manifestation of God’s love. Verse 10 explains what love is.

In Verse 9 the first explanation is about the love of God manifested

In this “the Love of God,” we have talked about this before, this is not love in general, defined by our inadequacies, but by God.

φανερῶ phaneroō - to cause to become visible (reveal, expose publicly); to cause to become known (disclose, show, make known). In Scripture the Love of God is expressed (demonstrated, shown) in a very specific manner). We do not get to decide how God shows love, it must be found in Scripture.

In 1 John it states that “God has sent His only begotten Son into the world.” The love was manifested (shown, revealed) “to us.” That does not mean that it is only to “us” but the world does not know, comprehend, or see what God has done.

The verb “φανερῶ phaneroō” is in the aorist passive which indicates a completed action. We know we cannot be exclusive from one verse, but we can ask? Does God demonstrate love any other way?

In the Old Testament God demonstrates His love in His faithfulness and mercy to Israel (Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 86:15; Zephaniah 3:17). All aspects of God’s Love deal with

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the Son coming and dying for and the believer's identity in Him (Romans 8:37-39; Ephesians 2:4-5; Jude 1:21). There are no explicit verse that state God's love is demonstrated in the life of the believer in another aspect other than the salvation plan and work of Jesus Christ.

God's love was manifested to us (Apostolic and readership – we can understand this for ourselves as well) through God having sent his only begotten Son into the world.

We may ask, are we not also God's children, sons of God? The Greek phrase is a compound accusative τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ utilizes apposition for emphasis; "the son (of) his."

μονογενής monogenēs – literally "only born" the word is used 9 times in the New Testament, three times is used of the only child (son or daughter) in Luke. In John is used to speak of Jesus Christ (John 1:14,18; 3:16,18), then we have is here. But we also have it in Hebrews 11:17 – Abraham offered up Isaac, his μονογενής (monogenēs).

We should make an observation here, is Isaac Abraham's only born son? Isaac is not even Abraham's first son. What makes Isaac Abraham's μονογενής (monogenēs)? This is why in these contexts we understand Jesus as the uniquely born son, especially since as the preexisting Son coming in the flesh.

The purpose is made clear by the ἵνα hina clause: "so that we might live through him," with ζήσωμεν ("we might live"). The hina with the subjunctive is as real as the reality as the premise. "So that we would live." The message of the Gospel is the reality.

Theologically, this directly counters those who denied Jesus' incarnation by insisting that God's love is shown in the real, historical sending of his Son, in the flesh. To deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that God sends of Himself in the flesh, is to deny the love of God.

Verses 10 and 11 are strait forward basic compound sentences that informs the readers the reason the author is bringing up the sacrifice of Jesus. The first phrase is "In this is THE Love." Definite article is there and needs to be added to ensure that we remember the Godly nature of love in this text.

The verb is "eimi" in the Present Indicative. The love of God "is..." in this (remember the "ἐν τούτῳ en toutō" is used to introduce an explanation).

The next portion is literal and Greek word order "not that we love God, but that He loved us." This is a great way to speak of love in any context. "Do we know the love of God?" This can be used for any person in any situation. Both verbs for love here are in the Aorist indicative. One-time act, pointing to the act of love by God by sending His Son, we are

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merely responders to His love. This speaks against one very important distinction in the Gospel, especially to the evangelism of the lost.

Do we need to love God to be saved? We need to understand the love that God has for us (for me) and we need to believe the message of love (John 1-3) but response to love with love is not the call it is to believe the proclamation of the truth.

Why is the love NOT explained in our love for God? Why does this resonate?

1. When it comes to love mankind is really bad at it, especially when we understand the Biblical, Godly definition.
2. In the secular world (especially the Greek world) religion is strongly based upon devotion and love toward deity. This is a direct blow to the religious system of the mindset of most people, even most believers.

The next main distinction in verse 10 is “to be the propitiation for our sins.” “ἱλασμός *hilasmos*” is the noun for the verb that means to satisfy the need for justice, atone for. Being a noun this is used as a word in apposition to “the Son.” This word redefines “the Son.” The literal translation is “He sent His (the) Son, propitiation for our sins.”

Verse 11. “Beloved” regaining the attention to drive home the point.

“If God so loved us” is a first-class conditional sentence. This information is known and understood to be true, so the appropriate translation is “since.” Loved once again is in the Aorist Indicative.

The next verb is the word for ought. “ὀφείλω *opheilō*” means to owe, to be in debt to. This is not an imperative but an indicative, a truth. This signifies a strong obligation—a debt owed because of God’s love.

Our society treats debt differently. We are in debt to buy a car, if we do not pay the car gets repossessed. Here we have and therefore we are indebted. The ownership has no bearing on paying the debt. In other words, if we do not make good on the debt does not mean that we will lose what has been gifted.

Why does John invoke the sending and sacrifice of Jesus in this passage? This is not to evangelize the readers but to appeal to them, to inform them of their obligation to love because of the awesome love God has given in abundance.

Verse 12 begins by asserting an absolute and timeless truth. “No one has ever seen God.” In Greek word order is even more poignant “God, no one ever has seen.” This is very emphatic and only increase when you consider that the verb tense is Perfect Indicative with the negative particle means that “no one ever.” The verb is in the singular. In Greek there is a word for ever. This means that not one single person has ever, ever seen God.

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“θεάομαι theaomai” means to look at, see, observe, a direct visual encounter. A question should be forming in your mind. Hold that question.

Exodus 33:20; John 1:18; Romans 1:20; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:13-16

Isn't Jesus God, so if you see Jesus haven't you seen God? God is used in the Tri-une God head, or in some instances for the Father. Jesus, the Son, individually is called “the visible of the invisible” (John 1:18; Colossians 1:13-15; Hebrews 1:1-3). The same word for “see” in the perfect tense is used in verse 14 “we have seen...the Father has sent the Son...”

Now we have “if we love one another.” This is a third-class conditional clause. It is possible, the certainty of it happening is uncertain.

The next part causes much some to stumble over this passage. If we love one another, THEN God abides in us. The antithesis is “if we do not love one another...” is that true? We have to rewind the clock a few months, almost a year. We discussed these “if clauses in 1 John” and made a point and asked a question.

The point is that in Greek, this kind of “if” clause can indicate cause and effect or correlation. To make this cause and effect creates a poor theological point. Is our action of self-sacrificial love toward one another enact God residing in us and His love being perfected in us? Or is it rather that if we love one another, it demonstrates that God resides in us and His love has been perfected in us? The point cannot be understated. It is inconsistent for our actions be a cause for God to enact something upon us.

Believers loving one another is based upon, God residing in us and love being perfected in us. We do not cause it, but the facts are correlated to the activity of the believers.

We know that our love for one another is correlated to God abiding in us, but what about the seconded part. Some have stated that if we love one another, then His love is perfected in us.

The word perfected is “τελειόω teleioō” means to be completed, finished. This is an Adverbial Perfect Participle, this indicates that this completion preceded the main verb in the sentence. This is not causative but correlation, but His love must be complete in believers prior to them loving one another. 1 John 4:17-19 explains completed (perfected) love –

- Confidence in the day of judgment
- No fear of God or from God
- Complete understanding, confidence, and assurance of the love of God in Jesus Christ's complete sacrificial atonement for our sins.
- When this is understood and believed, then His love is completed
- Now that believer can demonstrate the love of God for the brethren properly, still a choice.