1 John 4:18-21 **“The Power of Love”** **Love**

Attention:
Love is the only force strong enough to change someone without overpowering them.
Fear can control behavior. Rules can restrain actions. Pain can force compliance.

And here’s the shocker within the shocker:
The people who hurt us most often have the most power to be healed by love—yet they are the least likely to receive it. **Because the most dangerous place to be is not unloved—it’s loved but unchanged.**
1 John 4:18 provides a powerful message that perfect love drives out fear, specifically the tormenting fear of punishment and judgment, by establishing confidence through God's unconditional love. God's love replaces this fear with security.

The "No Fear" Paradox: "Every time I see someone wearing a 'No Fear' t-shirt, I think they are a liar. If you’re honest, you live with fear—fear of failure, fear of the future, or fear of judgment. But what if I told you there is a kind of love so potent, it actually makes fear impossible?".

Need:
Love is the most powerful force in the earth which demonstrates action without control. God’s love does not coexist with fear. You can get through anything when you have learned God’s love.

Background:
The epistle is traditionally attributed to John the Apostle, the same John who wrote the Gospel of John. By this time, John is an elderly pastor-apostle, often called the Apostle of Love—not because he is soft, but because he has seen what love looks like at the cross. The letter was likely written late in the first century (around AD 85–95). The church was no longer new. Persecution existed, but the greater threat here was false teaching, not Roman oppression.

1 John was written to early Christian communities in and around Asia Minor (modern-day western Turkey). These were believers who had been in the faith for some time—but were now facing confusion, division, and deception from within the church. John referred to anyone that opposed the deity of Christ as the antichrist. Much of the church’s problem came from within the church itself. Christians were embracing false teaching which became confusing among the ranks of the church. This led to a lack of love among followers of Christ. They claimed to love God but they found fought in their fellow brothers in Christ. John’s plea and proclamation was love. He emphasized this by declaring what love looks like in action; love expels fear. When love is distributed there is peace among the saints. This was first demonstrated by Christ, who is the epitome of love, even His death on the cross.

1. **Agape Love—**selfless love
   Perfect Love (v. 18). Flawless; agape; selfless.
   - **a.** Agape love is not a mere feeling but a choice and a commitment to action.
     - i. It is unconditional, sacrificial, love.
     - ii. This love is an outpouring of God's character and is used to resolve divisiveness.
   - b. God's love will go with you and show you mercy.
     - i. *"But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the **keeper of the prison**."* (**Genesis 39:21**, NKJV).
   - c. If your faith never inconveniences you, it has not yet encountered the command of love.
   - d. God's love does not ask if loving others is easy. It commands it because He did it first.
   - e. God's love is not here to make you feel safe while staying the same.
   - f. Perfect love does not coddle; perfect love commands change.
   - g. God's love confronts.
     - i. *"Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."* (**Genesis 50:19–21**).

2. **Reciprocating Love** (v. 19). Mutual affect.
   - a. Conditional Love—love given *if* terms are met.
   - b. **"Faithful love"** – is a love that remains when no one is watching.
     - ii. *"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?""* (**Genesis 39:9**, NKJV).
     - iii. Joseph loved God and people despite being wrongly accused.
   - h. This is a reciprocating love: "I will love you as long as you love me."
   - i. "Conditional love keeps score; covenant love keeps promises" (1 Cor. 13:5).
   - j. **"Some people don't love to give themselves—they love to protect themselves."**
   - k. **Loving God Without Loving People Is a Lie.**
     - i. John does not say "confused," "immature," or "hurting." He says liar.
       1. You cannot worship vertically, while poisoning people horizontally.

3. **Superficial Love** (v. 20-21). Having no depth; outward appearance; shallow.
   - a. Marketplace Love—love when people are watching.
   - b. Jesus dealt with the Pharisees on this.
     - i. *"But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'"* (**Matthew 23:5–7**, NKJV).
   - c. **"Faithful love"** – love that remains when no one is watching.
   - d. *"Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more."* (**Genesis 37:5**, NKJV).
   - e. Fear Is Evidence of Incomplete Transformation.
   - f. Joseph loved his brothers despite how he was treated.
   - g. They have not learned to yield to what God is doing.
     - i. When fear trumps love, it is not about knowing more, going to another marriage retreat.
   - h. Fear lingers where love is resisted, negotiated, or compromised.