

# “Perfect Love”

(1 John 4:7-21)

## Introduction

➤ Unfortunately, while many Christians rightly believe that are saved by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, they wrongly believe that they need to secure (or maintain) their salvation by good works. This seems to be a major reason why many Christians lack an assurance of salvation [to be sure, there are also many professing Christians who have embraced a false assurance of salvation; oftentimes by believing a false gospel (a false view of God/Christ), and/or believing they are saved by good works].

Many Christians struggle with the assurance of salvation. They doubt whether they know enough, or have believed enough truth. They doubt whether they have a strong enough faith, or maintained the right quality of faith. They doubt whether they have done enough good works, or have stopped doing enough bad things. They may even fear that having assurance of salvation will cause them lose their security of salvation. To whatever degree, such thoughts reveal a self-righteous or legalistic view of salvation; which amounts to a false gospel.

The truth is, no one is saved by doing enough – by having the right quality or quantity of faith or good works. We simply do not – and cannot – merit our salvation. Not by the quantity of our works, nor by the quality of our faith. Salvation is not ours to earn (by how good we live the Christian life), but ours to receive (by the righteous life Christ lived for us)!

✓ Illust: “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood” (hymn: “Blessed Assurance”; by Fanny Crosby).

✓ Illust: “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling; naked, come to thee for dress; helpless, look to thee for grace; foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die” (hymn: “Rock of Ages”; by Augustus Toplady).

✓ Illust: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. Refrain: On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand” (hymn: “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less”; by Edward Mote).

➤ In large part, as we have already seen, the apostle John wrote the book of 1 John to help encourage true believers to have the assurance of salvation based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In our passage this morning, we find him encouraging believers to examine the veracity of their faith in Christ based on their love for God and for one another.

**1 John 4:7-21** ~ “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. <sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup>So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

<sup>17</sup>By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

- As we have seen now many times, throughout our study of the book of “1 John”, the Greek words translated in various forms of “love” is used often throughout the book of “1 John” (used 52 times in 105 verses). This is very evident in the passage we are studying this morning, where various forms of the word for love are used 29 times in 15 verses: *“love”* (*agapaō*, vb. [15 times; vs. 7<sup>2x</sup>, 8, 10<sup>2x</sup>, 11<sup>2x</sup>, 12, 19<sup>2x</sup>, 20<sup>3x</sup>, 21<sup>2x</sup>]; *agape*, n. [12 times; vs. 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16<sup>3x</sup>, 17, 18<sup>3x</sup>]; *“Beloved”* (*agapētos*, adj. [2 times; vs. 7, 11]).
- In the New Testament, this *agape* love refers to a divine love that is sacred, sacrificial, and selfless. It is a love that is unique to Christians, because it is a love that given by God to all those who are (truly) in Christ.

This passage represents the third time the apostle John taught about love in the book of “1 John” (2:7-11 and 3:10-17). In these verses, John (as in typically in the cyclical nature of this book) repeats some common truth about love, reiterating the commands to love, and gives some deeper insights into the true meaning of knowing and receiving God’s love.

- Specifically, in 1 John 4:7-21, we find three great themes concerning God’s love.

#### A. The ATTRIBUTE of God’s love (vs.7-8)

- True love is an attribute of God. An “attribute of God” is a characteristic or quality that God possesses – describing or defining what makes God, God. Theologians make a distinction between God’s “communicable attributes” (that which God imparts to His image-bearers, and uniquely to all believers; e.g., wisdom, mercy, righteousness, and grace), and His “incommunicable attributes” (that which God alone possesses; e.g., omniscience, sovereignty, and eternity).

The attribute of God’s love is a communicable attribute in which God imparts to all of His children – those whom He has saved through Jesus Christ. Whereas God’s attributes are always complete and perfect in Himself, they find limited and imperfect expression in the lives of Christians. As Christians, we are commanded to actively demonstrate the attribute of God’s love in how we relate to others – fellow believers, unbelievers, and even our enemies.

**1 John 4:7-8** ~ “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

- Simply stated, those who truly belong to God will love God – will love what God loves, will love who God loves – for true love is from God and of God.

##### 1. *“Love is from God”* (vs.7)

- True (*agape*) love does not come from the world (apart from God) and it cannot be manufactured by human goodness or sincerity, religious works or rituals, or spiritual passions or pursuits. It only comes only from God – *“love is from God”* (vs.7). This means emanates from God alone, and only God can impart this love to others.
- This is one reason why true love is known only by those who have been reconciled to God through their faith in Jesus Christ. For God only bestows the attribute of His love on those whom He has saved – on those who are truly His children – *“whoever loves has been born of God and knows God”* (vs.7).

Which is also why we find the absolute statements in Scripture that those who do not possess God’s love do not truly belong to God. For example:

**1 John 2:9** ~ “Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.”

**1 John 3:10** ~ “By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”

**1 John 3:14** ~ “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.”

**1 John 4:8** ~ “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

- A person cannot truly love God and hate God’s children. Likewise, a person cannot truly love Christ and hate Christians (followers of Christ, the Bride of Christ). In this sense, hatred is not from God but contrary to the will of God, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God.

## 2. “*God is love*” (vs.8)

- In order for us to rightly understand what it means to know God’s love and to know what it means to be loved by God, we must NOT think of human (i.e., worldly) love and reason upward to God. Rather, we must discover what the Bible says about God’s love, and apply these truths to our understanding and our lives.

✓ Illust: “God by nature is love, and therefore He defines love; it does not define Him. People constantly impose on God a human view of love, but He transcends any such human limitations” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*; 1, 2, 3 John; 1Jn.4:7-8).

- One thing we must understand is “*God is love*” (vs.8, 16) does not mean love is God. While this may make mathematical sense ( $2+2=4$  and  $4=2+2$ ), it is theological heresy. Unfortunately, such a false teaching is prevalent in our culture and even among many professing Christians. Since many wrongly believe that love is to be permissive, unconditional, and ever-pleasing, they wrongly believe that God is a pampering, tolerant, and ever-accommodating God. That is, they use their erroneous view of love to justify their erroneous view of God – a God without wrath, holiness, truth, or righteousness. Any view of God that neglects all of God’s attributes is a distorted, even idolatrous, view of God.

To say that love is God is to deify love. That is, to make love into an idol (a significant problem in our world, and in evangelicalism). We must not equate anything as being equal to God except God Himself. Only God is God!

- Another misunderstanding with regard to God’s love is the thought that God is only love. People also use this false teaching to perpetuate their false view of God; another attempt to make God tolerant of sin. While God is all love, He is not only love.

God is not merely loving or lovely. God is, by divine nature, love. Love is an attribute of God, not merely an attitude God resembles. He defines love. He characterizes love. He exemplifies love. God is the source of true love, He is the perfection of true love, and He is the ultimate and absolute expression of love.

- Many people oppose the doctrines of God’s holiness, righteousness, and justice by saying, “My God is a God of love.” But God’s love does not eclipse His justice, or His holiness, or His righteous, or His wrath – God’s love guides and executes all His other attributes. In fact, all of God’s attributes work in absolute harmony with all of God’s attributes. God’s love never operates apart from His holiness, mercy, justice, omnipotence, omniscience, or any other attribute.

✓ Illust: “When we consider love as an attribute of God, we recognize that it is defined in relation to all the other attributes of God. ... He is not constructed of various segments of being that are assembled together to compose His whole being. It is not so much that God *has* attributes but that He *is* His attributes. ... all of God’s attributes help define all of His other attributes. For example, when we say God is immutable, we are also saying that His immutability is an eternal immutability, an omnipotent immutability, a holy immutability, a loving immutability, and so on. By the same token, His love is an immutable love, an eternal love, an omnipotent love, a holy love, and so forth” (R.C. Sproul; *God’s Love*; ch.1).

## B. The MANIFESTATION of God's love (vs.9-16)

➤ Thankfully, God has manifested His love to us even though we were hateful and rebellious sinners (Rom.5:6, 8, 10). In fact, our salvation represented the greatest demonstration of God's love.

**1 John 4:9-16** ~ "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. <sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup>So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

➤ These verses highlight two extraordinary ways in which God has revealed and demonstrated His love in the world.

### 1. In the coming of Christ (vs.9-10)

➤ God's love is clearly and gloriously on display in the (first) coming of Christ. "*In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him*" (vs.9). In other words, God's love was revealed (or has appeared, or has been made known) in the fact that He sent His one and only Son into the world to be our Savior. We must not glance over this truth: God's love is seen in the very act of His sending His Son, not just in the act of His Son dying (although this is certainly true as well). The very fact that God would even send His Son – to be born of a virgin, to be "*born in the likeness of men*" (Phil.2:7), to be mocked and humiliated and blasphemed, to be beaten and flogged and crucified – is an incredible display of God's love. In fact, the Gospel declares that God's love is displayed in the Father's willingness to send His Son into the world, and in the Son's willingness to come into the world.

**John 3:16** ~ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

**1 John 3:16** ~ "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us ..." (see Eph.5:2; Tit.3:4)

John 15:13 ~ "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

**Eph 1:4-5** ~ "... In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will"

➤ This truth is also evident in the next verse: "*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*" (vs.10). The Greek word translated "*propitiation*" (*hilasmos*) is a big word because it describes a big doctrine. This single word refers to the whole of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross – His dying in our place for our sins. The term conveys a covering for sin; God's mercy (not getting what we deserve) and grace (getting what we do not deserve) in the substitutionary death of His one and only Son.

1 John 4:10 ~ "In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." (NET)

➤ This (exact) word is used only twice in the New Testament, both by the apostle John and both in the book of 1 John.

**1 John 2:2** ~ "[Christ] is the propitiation [*hilasmos*; atoning sacrifice, sin offering] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."

Rom 3:23-25 ~ “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a propitiation [*hilastērion*] by his blood, to be received by faith. ...”

Heb 9:5 ~ “Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat [*hilastērion*]. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.”

➤ Theologians refer to Christ’s crucifixion as His substitutionary or vicarious death. Which simply means that He died in our place, for our sins. He did not die for His own sins, because He was sinless (2Cor.5:21; Heb.7:26; 1Pet.2:22-24; 1Jn.3:5). Christ’s death on the cross completely and perfectly satisfied God’s wrath against our sin, for “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rom.6:23). This has been called “the great exchange” – Christ bearing the punishment and death for our unrighteousness while we receive the glory and reward for His righteousness.

**1 Peter 3:18** ~ “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit”

**2 Cor 5:21** ~ “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (see Is.53:4-6)

## 2. In the lives of Christians (vs.11-16)

➤ First and foremost, God’s love is manifested in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of God. But it is also to be manifested in the lives of those whom Christ has saved – those who are truly children of God and true followers of Jesus.

**John 15:12** ~ “This is my commandment, that you love [*agapaō*] one another as I have [*agapaō*] loved you.”

**Eph 5:1-2** ~ “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved [*agapētos*] children. <sup>2</sup>And walk in love [*agapē*], as Christ loved [*agapaō*] us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

**1 John 3:16** ~ “By this we know love [*agapē*], that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”

➤ In these verses (vs.11-16), we can identify at least four ways in which God’s love is manifested in the lives of Christians.

### a. Through the love they show one another (vs.11-12)

God’s love is manifested in Christians through the love they show one another. Again, while Christians are called to love everyone (Matt.22:39 [Lk.10:25-37; Rom.13:10]; Matt.5:44), we find a special emphasis placed on Christians loving one another (see Gal.6:10). This is clearly the immediate context of these verses: “*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us*” (vs.11-12).

**John 13:34-35** ~ “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

How Christians treat other Christians is, in many ways, a prominent indicator of true salvation. When Christians hate other Christians, they are not reflecting the love of God or the love of Christ; but the hatred that is contrary to God and opposed to Christ (see 1Jn.2:9, 11; 3:10, 15; 4:20)

b. Through the Spirit of God dwelling in them (vs.13)

God's love is also manifested in the lives of Christians through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling inside them. Only true Christians possess the Holy Spirit of God (2Cor.1:22, 5:5; Eph.1:14; 2Tim.1:14). Therefore, those who truly possess the Spirit of God have truly been saved by God through Christ. *"By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit"* (vs.13).

To all whom He saves, God gives the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God enables/empowers Christians to live according to the will of God and the Word of God. Among other things, the Spirit leads, guides, instructs, and convicts Christians to live for Christ, which is evident in their lives by the "fruit of the Spirit":

**Gal 5:22-23** ~ "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

c. Through their Christian testimony (vs.14-15)

Another way in which God's love is manifested in the lives of Christians is through their testimony of Christ. *"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God"* (vs.14-15). To *"testify"* (*martyreō*) and to *"[confess]"* (*homologeō*; vs.15) are essentially two ways of saying the same thing. John is stating here that he and the apostles were witnesses of the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world. John then proceeds to make the obvious application: those who are truly Christians will confess *"that Jesus is the Son of God"* (vs.15). This is an essential part of what it means to be truly saved.

**1 John 2:22-23** ~ "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup>No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also."

**1 John 4:2-3** ~ "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup>and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already."

Those who truly acknowledge (put their faith in) Jesus Christ as the one and only Son of God and one and only Savior from God, have *"God [abiding] in [them], and [they abide] in God"* (vs.15). Consequently, they manifest the love of God in how they live (see Jn.13:35).

d. Through their knowledge and faith in God (vs.16)

God's love is also manifested in the lives of Christ through their knowledge and faith in God. The Christian's faith is not presumption, sentiment, or wishful- (or positive-) thinking, and it is not a blind-faith, a reckless faith, or a faith-in-faith. The Christian's faith is based in knowing, believing, and trusting that Jesus is the Son of God (see Matt.16:16; 27:54; Jn.1:49; 11:27). John wrote: *"So we have come to know [ginōskō] and to believe [pisteuō] the love that God has for us"* (vs.16).

**John 20:30-31** ~ "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup>but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

**1 John 5:13** ~ "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life."

**1 John 5:20** ~ “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

One result of a Christian’s knowledge of and faith in God, having received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, is to live a life reflecting the love that God has for them and the love that God has commanded of them: *“God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him”* (vs.16). To put it another way, since *“God is love”* and *“God abides in”* the true Christian, the true Christian also *“abides in love”* because he *“abides in God”* (vs.16; cf. Jn.15:1-10).

### C. The **PERFECTION** of God’s love (vs.17-21)

➤ As with all of God’s attributes, His attribute of love is infinitely and eternally perfect – as He is infinitely and eternally perfect. As Christians, God’s perfect love dwells in us as we dwell in Him (and He in us). This does not mean that we love perfectly, but that God works to perfect His love in us – just as we are at one time sanctified and being sanctified (see Heb.10:10, 14).

We saw this previously in verse twelve: *“No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us”* (vs.12). The Greek word translated *“perfected”* (*teleioō*; vs.12, 17, 18 [and adj. *teleios* in vs.18]; cf. 2:5). The idea here is not that Christian love perfectly (i.e., without error or failing), but that God’s love is complete or made complete in them. In other words, God is not withholding or restricting Christians from loving as God loves. Therefore, we have no excuse when we fail to love as God has commanded us (we cannot honestly say, “God has not given me enough love to love that person!”)

**1 John 4:17-21** ~ “By this is love perfected [*teleioō*, vb.] with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love, but perfect [*teleios*, adj.] love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected [*teleioō*, vb.] in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

➤ The perfection of God’s love, in true believers, has massive consequences. In these verses, John gave two important – life altering – effects God’s perfect love has in the Christian’s life.

#### 1. Confidence in the judgment of God (vs.17-18)

➤ All those who truly love God, as evidenced by their receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, do not need to fear the coming judgment of God: *“By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment”* (vs.17). Since true Christians abide in God’s love and God’s love abides in them – through Christ and in the Holy Spirit – they need not fear or be anxious about *“the day of judgment”* (vs.17), which refers to God’s final judgment.

Rather than fear God’s judgment, true Christians can have *“confidence”* (*parrēsia*) for that day. This is no self-righteous arrogance, but the bold assurance of knowing God’s promises to be true and the work of Christ to be sufficient. For the Christian whose love for God and faith in Christ is genuine, the day of God’s judgment is not something they fear or dread but something for which they look forward with confidence.

**Heb 4:16** ~ “Let us then with confidence [*parrēsia*] draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Heb 9:28 ~ “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” (see Phil.3:20; 2Tim.4:7-8)

Rev 22:20 ~ “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”

**1 John 2:28** ~ “And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence [*parrēsia*] and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.” (also 1Jn.3:21; 5:14).

➤ The reason for this confidence is not our own worthiness or goodness, not the quality of our faith or the quantity of our works, but the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ (2Cor.5:21; 1Pet.3:18) – not because *we* are so good but because *He* is so good. John put it this way: “*because as he is so also are we in this world*” (vs.17). True believers are dressed in the righteousness of Christ, possess the love of God, and are indwelt with the Spirit of God (see Rom.8:29; Eph.4:22). Since Christ has paid the full penalty for our sin (“*the propitiation for our sins*”; 1Jn.2:2; 4:10), there is no reason to fear God’s judgment. Nothing – absolutely nothing – “*will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom.8:39).

**Rom 8:1** ~ “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”

➤ This is why true Christians can have confidence in the day of judgment; they need not be afraid of the coming judgment, nor will they be fearful in the midst of God’s judgment. “*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love*” (vs.18). Those who truly fear God need not fear anything else, specifically the judgment of God (Ps.111:10; Prov.9:10; Lk.12:4-7).

This verse is often taken out of context and misinterpreted and, therefore, misunderstood. The point is not “if you have enough love, you will not be afraid of anything.” Love does not serve as an antidote to that which is fearful in this life.

The truth is, for those who truly love God (in that they have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; 1Jn.5:20; Jn.14:6) there is no fear of punishment from God. For Christ bore the full weight and penalty for all the sins of all who would ever believe.

## 2. Loving God and who God loves (vs.19-21)

➤ Another consequence of the perfection of God’s love in believers is that they love God and love who God loves. As we’ve seen, this is an oft-repeated teaching in the book of “1 John” (2:9, 11; 3:10, 15). And, here, this truth is abundantly clear: “*We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother*” (vs.19-21).

The love of God comes only from God, and is given only to the children of God by the Son of God in the Spirit of God. The logic is simple and air-tight: for a person to truly love God, he/she must love that which God loves. Anyone who “loves God” and yet hates Christians, must examine their lives to see if they are truly saved. For such an attitude reveals a false profession of faith.

➤ The love that comes down from heaven, from God, is displayed on earth. One cannot truly receive God’s love and not actively reciprocate with God’s love. In fact, we are called to love others as we have been loved by God (Jn.13:34; 15:12). This leaves us without excuse. For no one has hurt us, offended us, wronged us, disappointed us, betrayed us, anywhere near the degree to which we have sinned against God. And yet, God loves us with an everlasting love (Jer.31:3). Likewise, we are called to love God and to love those who God loves.



## Conclusion

➤ Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) wrote more than 8,000 hymns and gospel songs, with more than 100 million in print, even though she was essentially blind from birth. In 1873, at the age of 53, she wrote one of her most popular hymns – “Blessed Assurance.”

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain:

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.  
This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect communion, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight.  
Angels descending bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love. [Refrain]

Perfect submission, all is at rest. I in my Savior am happy and bless'd,  
watching and waiting, looking above, filled with his goodness, lost in his love. [Refrain]