

PREFACE

We Christians never cease learning. We must never consider ourselves as beyond the need for instruction. As disciples, or learners, we should never come to a status where we think that we have “arrived” fully in any Christian virtue. Even the Apostle confessed that truth about himself,

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth for those things which are before,

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. *Philippines 3:12-13.*

The subject of this booklet is the *mark* or finish line of the Christian life that is significantly Christ, namely love. Instruction in love is always needed, lest a presumptive assurance cause us to fall from loving and living love. We must ever be striving for more of love. May our goal be His supreme and perfect and pure love. One can never be too much taught about love, because *God is love*.

Love is a little like humility which cannot acknowledge itself or it ceases. When once one possesses love and practices love, but acknowledges and endorses love in himself, he has to some extent diminished love; because real love, true love, God’s agape’ love, *vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, and seeketh not her own.*¹

May we love naively, simply, and genuinely as He loves, and be always loving love for love’s sake, which shall prove to be for Jesus’ sake; and may we just let His love through us be its own best testimony of Him. This brief and simple exposition of Scripture² is sent out to promote love and thereby Him among God’s people.

¹ *I Corinthians 13:4b, 5b*

² The author has included with this exposition his distinctive translations of the Greek text. They are included to assist the reader’s understanding of John’s emphasis on love among Christians. It is designated ADT. Its value might be subject to one’s particular preferences in Bible study.

Authorized Version

I John 4:7-21

⁷*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

⁸*He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.*

⁹*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

¹⁰*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

¹¹*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

¹²*No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

¹³*Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*

¹⁴*And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

¹⁵*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

¹⁶*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

¹⁷*Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in the world.*

¹⁸*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

¹⁹*We love him, because he first loved us.*

²⁰*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

²¹*And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

Author's Distinctive Translation

¹ *Beloved, let us love one another; because this love is out of God, and everyone who is loving has been born out of God and he is knowing God.*

⁸ *The one not loving never knew God, because God is love.*

⁹ *In this was manifested this love of God within (among) us: because God sent His Son, the Only Begotten, into the world in order that we might live through Him.*

¹⁰ *In this is this love: not that we loved God, but quite the contrary, that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice removing our sins.*

¹¹ *Beloved, since God so excessively loved us, indeed we owe it to love one another.*

¹² *No one ever at any time has beheld God. If we love one another, God dwells within (among) us and His completed love is within (among) us.*

¹³ *By this we are experientially knowing constantly that we are dwelling within Him and He within us: because He has given to us the Spirit that is out of Himself.*

¹⁴ *And we have beheld and are bearing witness that the Father has sent the Son, Savior of the world [of Jews and Gentiles].*

¹⁵ *He who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells within him, and he within God.*

¹⁶ *And we have known by practical experience and have believed this love that God has within us. God is love, and the one who dwells within love dwells within God, and God dwells within him.*

¹⁷ *In this [way] this love has been brought to completion with us, in order that we might have boldness in the day of judgment, because according as that One exists [within this love], we are also [within this love] in this world.*

¹⁸ *Fear is not within this love [in this world], but quite the contrary, this mature love throws out fear as foreign to it because this fear checks growth, and the one who is fearing has not been brought to completion inwardly by this love.*

¹⁹ *Let us be actively loving [Him, one another, and all men] because He first loved us.*

²⁰ *If anyone says that I love God and he is hating his brother, he is a liar, for the one who is not loving his brother that he has seen, is not able to be loving the God Whom he has not seen.*

²¹ *And this commandment we have from him in order that the one who is loving God would also be loving his brother.*

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Love one another is indeed the sweetest admonition affecting the Christian life. Not many persons would doubt the goodness of such a directive. This love is initially toward other Christians and then expresses itself for the unsaved. God is its source, and its first reference is in the Book of the Law,

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.
Leviticus 19:18

Israel was to love *the children of thy people, thy neighbor*, Israel. But this was law *given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, John 1:17*. Jesus intensified this love and multiplied the recipients. His cross defined this love as God's highest love, and His example expanded the meaning of neighbor to include anyone in need.

Love's Maturity

Jesus gave new and greater meaning to love for others; He lived love, defined love, loved love. His is the most profoundly serious love, yet His is the most lovely and readily understandable love. His example of love for others is the definitive and final word on real love; therefore, we must go to Him for this love. He is its example, its lone source, and the Christian's true fountain of inspiration for its mature expression in this life. As you grow up into Him and experience more and more of His love, His love will not just be within your heart but will be expressed in the activities of living your Christian life down here and now. Maturity in Christ makes His love not just a heavenly doctrine, but a living experience while He loves others through your possession of Jesus' life and light and love within your heart. Then you shall truly know Him, and others will also come to know Him through your life, for His life is love; and to know Him is to know love, and to love is to know Him. That knowledge is the essence of Christian maturity.

The Epistles of John

Our Scripture text is taken from the Book of I John, one of three Letters by The Beloved Apostle John. Because they were not addressed to any particular group of Christians at any given locale, they are called General Epistles. Therefore, they are intended for all God's children in all localities and in all differing stages of maturity (q.v. *1:4* with *2:1, 12-13*). No Christian can escape their charismatic appeal because they abound in straightforward Christian truth and love.

In His three epistles, John dwells on love and enforces the duty of loving one another through a great variety of considerations, and shows that love is essential to the very nature of Christianity. He dwells on truth also, and fills his epistles with frank statements pertaining to the evidences of a devotion to believing and doing what is right, and that this piety is essential to a true experience of salvation. John peculiarly intertwines truth and love to reveal the holy walk of a true Christian. In I John the emphasis is upon love, with truth as its insight. In II John the emphasis is upon truth, with love as its sensible prudence. In III John there are living examples of those motivated and inspired by truth and love, and on the other hand, there is an example of a professing Christian who is divorced from both truth and love.

Our lesson text, *I John 4:7-21*, is the basis for this booklet and contains John's command for all God's children to love one another. These verses continue his main theme to live a unique life that combines both truth and love in the Christian's outward walk. In these verses, John will encourage all Christians to love one another (*v. 7a*), and then in the remaining verses (*vs. 7b-21*) he proceeds to list several reasons to be loving this love.

These reasons for loving one another will make up our divisions in this study.

I. LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE LOVE IS OF GOD

⁷*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

⁸*He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.*

KJV I John 4:7-8

⁷ *Beloved, let us love one another; because this love is out of God, and everyone who is loving has been born out of God and he is knowing God.*

⁸ *The one not loving never knew God, because God is love.*

ADT I John 4:7-8

John says, “You especially loved ones of God should be loving one another because the source of all love was placed within you when you were born again. You have come to know experientially the God Who provided you with an experience with His own love.” John establishes an irrevocable connection between loving and the new birth. The phrase *love is of God* is literally, “love is out of God.” The idea is one of origination. All partakers of the divine nature must love because that nature is in itself a nature of love that will love. Love is indispensable because *God is love*; if we are His offspring, His children, then we are bound to love. Just as natural birth passes to man’s offspring tangible characteristics of each parent, so spiritual birth passes to God’s offspring His most dominant and characteristic essence, His love.

And everyone that loveth is born of God; not that the new birth comes by way of our loving, but that since genuine love has God as its only source, every one loving that true love had to receive it from that same source, God. And that source is active and energetic in us only through the new birth, hence the connection between the new birth and loving other Christians. *Everyone that loveth knoweth God* refers to a knowledge by experience; in other words, this true love comes only by a joint expression of His most essential characteristic, love, as it conjoins or attaches to the believer’s willingness now to

express it also. God shares with and apportions to His children this most intimate quality of His Person—His love. When one loves with this real God kind, sort, or manner of love, one reveals a most intimate experiential knowledge of Him; he really knows God.

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. The word *knoweth* is an aorist tense in Greek, meaning “never knew at any point in past time”; that is, because of the irrevocable connection between loving and the new birth, one who never loves is one who never knew God in any true experience of salvation. *Verse 8* is the reverse side of *verse 7*, but with one additional and important change as denoted in the words, ***knoweth not God***. The Lord’s own words in ***Matthew 7:23*** echo the same truth to those who presume to be acceptable to Him and to His Kingdom in “that day,” even though they failed to know Him in this day,

***And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you:
depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matthew 7:23***

Again, the Greek word for knowledge in Matthew and in John is of an experimental knowledge. John is saying, “The unloving person never experienced God, never knew Him or His love, else he would be an actively loving person, because God is Himself essentially, intrinsically, Love; and everyone who has God has His love as a part of themselves.” The love-experience in salvation from sin is followed by His love possessed within and must express itself just as God must express Himself in all His children. That true attitude of love will find expression in the child of God. Once that knowledge of God’s love is acquired in salvation, it turns outside of itself toward other Christians. It turns outside of its own static existence within the soul of the true child of God and communicates that love through one’s life, conduct, and habits as a Christian. Therefore, *let us love one another* because love’s essential knowledge is our experience from God, and its absence means a doubtful salvation experience.

II. LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE LOVE IS OUR EXPERIENCE

⁹*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

¹⁰*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

KJV I John 4:9-10

⁹ *In this was manifested this love of God within (among) us: because God sent His Son, the Only Begotten, into the world in order that we might live through Him.*

¹⁰ *In this is this love: not that we loved God, but quite the contrary, that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice removing our sins.*

ADT I John 4:9-10

John mentioned the believers' experience in *verses 7 and 8*; now he intends to tell us what that experience of love is. The love of God, which all His children have experienced, is the gift of His Son to pay for the sins of His children (*vs. 9-10*).

God's Love Proven

In this was manifested the love of God toward us. The proof that *God is love* is the gift of Christ. *Verse 9* rationalizes the work of His Son on the cross as manifesting and confirming the genuine reality that *God is love*. The work of Christ is manifest proof of the prior existence of God's love for mankind. Indeed, the gift and the work of Christ manifested the love that God essentially is.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. This is true love, not our kind of love, or this love that we even now are loving and displaying to others, but the true preeminent love was only God's own. He was the One Who loved and fulfilled love's highest ideal when He gave His Son to be the atoning sacrifice (*propitiation*) for our sins (cp. *Romans 3:24-25*;

5:6-8; Titus 3:3-5). True love—God’s love to us—is viewed unobstructed as He died for wicked and ungodly men as we. Our love cannot measure up to His because our love is simply toward our own kind when we love other men. Furthermore, our love to Him fails to meet the high caliber of His love since it is love to a merciful, loving, and gracious Person, Who is quite easy to love when really known. But His true love had real affection for those who were/are quite contrary and antagonistic to Himself, for even the vilest of sinners, for us. He has loved those not at all similar to His holiness, and poured out the wrath of that holiness (His holy wrath) upon His own Son at Calvary for us who are exceedingly unholy. Therefore, those who have experienced the blessed release of personal sin through the cross must love in the light and life and love of that same cross, which is the epitome, the essence, and the exemplary of love. This means we must love sinners who are like ourselves (Christians) as He loves sinners like ourselves (Christians).

III. LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE LOVE IS OUR DEBT

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. KJV John 4:11

¹¹Beloved, since God so excessively loved us, indeed we owe it to love one another. ADT John 4:11

Beloved, if God so loved us; how fitting for John to address God's children in this way in view of God's great love for us in Christ Jesus and His propitiatory work for us. The *if* is from a Greek first class conditional sentence, which affirms the reality of the condition, meaning "since," referring to a reality. John says, "Especially loved ones, since God so loved us," and so loved us He did indeed!

The word *so* holds an emphatic position and means "to such an extent, so much, so very, so excessively, so entirely." God's love is *so* excessive and entire that we owe Him a debt to love one another as he instructed us.

We ought to love one another; the word *ought* means "we owe it" to love one another. We are debtors to return His love by loving Him in His people. After all, He loves all men through His people, and we must love Him by loving those same people. Our debt to God for His love in the cross is irremediable; only installments on the account may be made, and those by proxy—by loving His people. Since His love in this world is seen only in His children, we can only love the God Who is that love by loving His people; in doing so we are loving love. Our love to God is an attitude which remains a little thing unless it manifests itself just "so much, so excessively, so entirely, to such an extent," in love towards others as God's love manifested itself to us in His Son. Unless we do love—live and manifest love toward others in concrete expressions of that love—we have no real love at all,

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. I John 3:17-18

IV. LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE HIS LOVE IN US IS HIS CONTINUING WORK ON EARTH

¹²*No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

¹³*Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*

¹⁴*And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

¹⁵*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

¹⁶*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*
KJV I John 4:12-16

¹² *No one ever at any time has beheld God. If we love one another, God dwells within (among) us and His completed love is within(among) us.*

¹³ *By this we are constantly knowing by experience that we are dwelling within Him and He within us: because He has given to us the Spirit that is out of Himself.*

¹⁴ *And we have beheld and are bearing witness that the Father has sent the Son, Savior of the world [of Jews and Gentiles].*

¹⁵ *He who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells within him, and he within God.*

¹⁶ *And we have known by practical experience and have believed this love that God has within us [i.e. this love that God has "invested" in us through the redeeming work of His Son]. God is love, and the one who dwells within love dwells within God, and God dwells within him.*
ADT I John 4:12-16

This paragraph as a whole is an answer to its beginning thesis in *verse 12*, which is: *No man hath [physically] seen God at any time*. He is Spirit; howbeit He is love. Therefore, His continued revelation on earth of Himself (His love) occurs when His love is completed, finished, furnished, in Christians' lives as He indwells them. This perfecting of God's love takes place as Christians love one another.

John makes this rather profound yet unadorned statement, *No man hath seen God at any time*, that will have a direct bearing upon what he is about to say concerning love. John says this to emphasize to all God's children our need to show God in our living. Since no one can see God, men have a very limited understanding of Him. This requires that His children manifest God through their love one to another. This is the reason for Christ's words to His disciples just before His departure,

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
John 13:35

This testimony of love will be a testimony of God, or about God. This acknowledgement by the world that we are disciples of Jesus will be a manifestation of God to them through our love; therefore our love becomes God's finishing and crowning work still being accomplished here on earth through us as His disciples. He continues His love on earth through us.

His Completed Love in Us

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.
KJV I John 4:12

No one ever at any time has beheld God. If we love one another, God dwells within (among) us and His completed love is within (among) us.
ADT I John 4:12

The word *perfected* in this verse means "completed, finished, fulfilled, consummated." John is saying, "Since no man can see God, if we will be loving one another, God will be dwelling among us, even in us; and He will be completing His love so that all who cannot see Him may have a more 'perfect' vision of Him as they see Him in our love for one another." This means that Christians have a real testimony for God, and as they love one another they reveal that God does indeed dwell in them. In another sense, by loving one another we "finish" the love of Christ which He began during His earthly tenure. Compare the words of Paul concerning the manifestation of His love in suffering,

Who [I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind [lacking] of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.

Colossians 1:24

We *fill up*—complete, perfect, finish—Christ's love as we love one another. Through this completed love, God will be seen to dwell in us and our testimonies will be glorifying to Him. The Apostle means to press upon us the duty to love since the Son is now in heaven and can no longer reveal God's love on earth except through His children. Now, only through His many sons can the message of God's love be manifested. Whereas before, Christ, the only begotten Son, manifested the greatness of God's love in order to convey the message of salvation; now we, as His several begotten sons, must manifest the attitude of God's love in order that men might see the love of God, be conscious of God's provided salvation, and then be saved by His grace because of His love seen in us.

The Power to Love

Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. *KJV I John 4:13*

By this we are constantly knowing by experience that we are dwelling within Him and He within us, because He has given to us the Spirit that is out of Himself. *ADT I John 4:13*

John mentions the Holy Spirit to remind of God's provision of power and ability for Christians to love one another. Christians develop assurance of this love in and through them by the abiding presence of God's Holy Spirit, and through the actual love that He produces in and through them. In this way He enables Christians to love—to reveal God—on this earth today.

That Christians have the Spirit is confirmed by His inner witness with our spirits,

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. *Romans 8:16*

Since we know the experience of God's indwelling presence by His Holy Spirit, we know positively that the source for the love and the power to produce that love in us and through us is ours also. Since the Spirit is ours, the love is in us; therefore the power to produce His love is ours also since the love is a gift of and a fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit,

And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity. I Corinthians. 13:13

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. Galatians 5:22

The Testimony of Love

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. KJV I John 4:14

And we have beheld and are bearing witness that the Father has sent the Son, Savior of the world [of Jews and Gentiles].

ADT I John 4:14

The *we* in this verse refers to the Apostles as the eyewitnesses of Christ's redeeming work. This is the very testimony of God's love brought to us and believed by us: namely, that God sent His Son to be the Savior for all kinds and groups of men. Today, however, in addition to that original testimony of God's love, the believers' love for one another is a fresh testimony of that same love carried to the same world. Love for one another carries this testimony to the world,

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. John 13:35

His love is active in us Christians as we love one another, and it testifies the same message in the same power as the original Apostle's testimony. In fact, it is the very same witness. Love to one another conveys the message of the gospel; namely, that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. It is and always has been and always will be that plain message which brings sinners to the saving experience of God's love; and it is precisely that message that is continuing to be witnessed to the world through Christians' love to one another.

The importance of being identified with Christ is important for the Christian testimony to the world, in order for Christ to be accurately known in the world. Nothing testifies of Christians' affinity with Christ, and a oneness with the Father, as our love for one another.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
John 17:20-21

This testimony of love is itself the gospel message of salvation. Our testimony about Christ's saving work is somewhat ineffectual without this love one for another; however when our love for one another accompanies our witness, it provides a powerful validity for our gospel message to the world around us. Love among us identifies Christians with the God of love to the world which needs God's love.

The Acceptance of Love

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.
KJV I John 4:15

He who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells within him, and he within God.
ADT I John 4:15

John also includes how one accepts this love, and believes this testimony of love in the gospel, and is saved. This verse is John's way of saying what Paul wrote in Romans,

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.
Romans 10:9-10, 13

The bold and meaningful confession of Jesus as the Son of God is the unadorned method of experiencing God's love unto salvation from sin. God's work of love is simply and conspicuously realized in lost men when they outwardly acknowledge an inner faith in Jesus' work of love in their behalf. Through this confession, every Christian has invincible power, *God dwelleth in him*, and possesses life not of earthly dimension, *and he in God*. These in turn bring great assurance and encouragement to Christians to love one another, because they know their love will result in continued displays of God's work of love and grace in the lives of lost men, though He is not seen and His Son is removed from among them to heaven.

A confession of Christ is vital in order for others to obtain salvation through our witness of God's love in the gospel (cp. *Luke 9:26; 12:8-9*), a witness which is validated and made real to men through our love to one another. This confession is no mere mechanical recitation of words, but is heart-felt, and is a commitment in total agreement with all the saving truth about Jesus. It is to agree with Christ's work of love on the cross, and involves a personal confession to Him of one's own culpability because of personal sin, and is also, therefore, an admission of guilt. This guilt is caused from failing God's love; that is, the real confession of Jesus as the Son of God includes an admission of sin and guilt that failed to apprehend God's love, and still fails to deserve its bestowal. That factor of love as relates to salvation is emphasized by John as a controlling influence in salvation.

The Result of Love

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. KJV I John 4:16

And we have known by practical experience and have believed this love that God has within us [i.e. this love that God has "invested" in us through the redeeming work of His Son]. God is love, and the one who dwells within love dwells within God, and God dwells within him. ADT I John 4:16

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. Since this confession to (*of*) Jesus as the Son of God is the means to salvation, John now reminds us that was just what we all have done. In *verse 16* John says, “We have known experientially and have trusted in that love which only God has; we remain in that knowledge and faith which the gospel revealed to us; therefore we are as secure as God’s love is stable.”

The abiding knowledge and faith of all Christians is in the love of God which He has invested in us. God’s interest in the Christian consists wholly of His love. We Christians are valuable solely because of the love which God has in (within) us. He has a high stake within us—His love. Christ Jesus’ death, and all His work of love, assures that God will indeed continue His love in order to gain a return on His love given and a return of that love back to Him.

God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. God is love essentially and those who dwell in a love-experience of salvation dwell in God and God dwells in them. To ***dwell in love*** means that one’s heart is constantly occupied with God’s love which is mostly Jesus’ cross. Consequently, to dwell in love is to abide knowingly in the safe standing of God’s revealed love through Jesus’ redemptive work. It is to be secure in one’s experience of salvation. That secure standing in safety from God’s wrath is the result of love since ***God is Love***.

God is love; therefore the one who dwells in love—that is, who continues being occupied with love—will be continuously occupied with God, and God will be similarly occupied with him. The loving Christian is captivated by love. It owns him. It fascinates him and he loves love when he loves others. God will see the love—His own love—in the life of the loving Christian and will be enthralled by the love that He sees; and in turn will also be captivated, intrigued, and enthralled, in the Christian. God’s own love is the only particular quality which will work

this kind of enchantment in God in behalf of any mere man. Christ's love in active pursuit of others is the blessedness of God's eternal work of redemption in the cross. This love, and the Christian's infatuation with this love, is the return to God for the *love that God hath to us*—the return on His invested love in us. That love for one another is what He greatly yearns to see in every Christian, because this love is His own love in Christ. Amen.

Therefore, this love for one another can be expected from all His children, because the source of all true love, God, dwells—remains, abides, continues—in the person confessing faith in and love for the Savior. God *dwells* in every Christian and every Christian *dwells in God*. This means that the occupation of God's heart is constantly upon His every child, and at the same time, every child of God *dwells* in God; he abides, remains, continues, to be enthralled with God and His love. All God's children dwell in God and He in them; this is the interrelation of love.

In this wonderful *verse 16*, John is saying,

And furthermore, we have known from practical experience and still know, also we have trusted and still trust, that God so greatly loved and still loves us. Nothing has happened to change our experiential knowledge or trustful assurance of God's love. God is love, and accordingly, he who is constantly occupied in love is captivated by God, and God is similarly enthralled in him.

Yet according to *verses 14 and 15*, one cannot be saved except he believes in this love. This is that “interrelation of love” mentioned above. To believe in Him is to believe in this love, and to believe in this love is to dwell in this love, and in God. Hence, it is not only possible for believers to love, but it is entirely probable that all believers shall indeed love with the same love that He has for us since we *dwell in God* Who Himself is Love.

V. LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE LOVE PROMOTES MATURITY

¹⁷*Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in the world.*

¹⁸*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*
I John 4:17-18

¹⁷*In this [way] this love has been brought to completion with us, in order that we might have boldness in the day of judgment, because according as that One exists [within this love], we are also [within this love] in this world.*

¹⁸*Fear is not within this love [in this world], but quite the contrary, this mature love throws out fear as foreign to it because this fear checks growth, and the one who is fearing has not been brought to completion inwardly by this love.* ADT

The word *perfect* in these verses carries the idea of maturity. The word means “finished, completed, furnished.” The thought is of a child of God having reached the goal, having reached maturity in love, and having been brought to completion in Christ’s image. If God is love, then it stands to reason that Christ is love. Therefore, to be made like Christ—that is, to be mature as a son of God—is to be mature in love. That maturity will produce lavish freedom in the day of judgment and effect removal of doubts of dangers in this present time of trouble.

To be *perfect in love* is: (1) to be confident and bold in *the day of judgment*; and (2) to be like Him in this world. If one could be mature, complete, finished, in the Love, that person would be in this world as He is even now, that is, perfect in love. That would produce *boldness* (liberality, lavishness, Gk.) in the *day of judgment*. Great reward will be super-abounding to those who have grown to be mature in love. John is teaching that one’s maturity in this love *one to another* will be the measure of lavish liberality received when standing before Christ’s judgment seat. Rewards will be conditioned on one’s maturity in love, because this love will control or determine one’s faithfulness in all

areas of Christian conduct. Whether we will be ashamed or bold before Him at His coming will depend upon our maturity in Love.

In contrast to this *boldness* in the day of judgment there is now mentioned a *fear* which *hath torment*. This word *fear* means “panic, flight, doubt, dread of.” This refers to one’s lack of security in Christ’s salvation. The knowledge of God’s true love, such as that exhibited by God in Christ for the Christian, gains an assurance from God of further and greater acts of love by Him on our behalf (cp. *Romans 8:32*). When the spirit of love exists within one’s heart and is expressed in one’s life, there is a freedom and openness before God. But when dread or fear is predominate, one flees in panic from the face of God, even from the love of God. For a Christian, who knows the love of God and has trusted in this love, to have fear of a future judgment is very inconsistent with one’s profession of faith in God’s love for him. This grieves the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ spirit of grace.

John says in effect, *Fear*, as such, is actually a mark of gross immaturity, and continued fear actually hinders Christian development instead of promoting it.” The word rendered *torment* in the phrase *fear hath torment* (KJV) means literally “checked in growth.” The word was used in the ancient Greek world of trees that were checked in their growth and development by lack of water, etc. John is saying that a dread of judgment is caused by a lack of maturity in love (*v.17*), and will, from that abatement, really hinder Christian maturity. Fear checks the growth of the child of God. He is not *perfect* (mature) in the love which God has for him, because *perfect* [mature] *love casteth out fear*.

The more perfect (mature and complete) the attitude of love becomes in one’s heart and life, the less anxiety one will experience. The more one loves the more one instinctively becomes like God, for God is love. This in turn produces *boldness in the day of judgment*. Certainly, God is not *fear* or *torment* for those who dwell in God and dwell in Love.

VI. LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE LOVE IS INSTINCTIVE

¹⁹ *We love him, because he first loved us.*

²⁰ *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

I John 4:19-20

¹⁹ *Let us be actively loving [Him, one another, and all men] because He first loved us.*

²⁰ *If anyone says that I love God and he is hating his brother, he is a liar, for the one who is not loving his brother that he has seen, is not able to be loving the God Whom he has not seen.* ADT

I John 4:19-20

When we say that love is instinctive in Christians, we mean that love is an intuitive reflex, both spontaneous and most natural. The word *him* in the Authorized Version, *verse 19*, is not in the best Greek manuscripts. *Verse 19* reads, *We love because He first loved us*. There is an instinctive reaction on the part of those who dwell in God's love. That predisposition to love becomes an inspiration resulting from the experience of God's love in Christ. His love to us awakens within us an answering love. This responding love is a grateful love that will manifest itself in love for the Christian brother. This is the reason we read the words, *not that we loved him* in *verse 10*. That is, our love is, after all, inferior to His and always will be secondary because we love only because He first loved us. We love the Loveable: He loved the unlovable. We will never have the opportunity to love Him like He loved/loves us, but our love to Him is to have expression toward others, especially toward our family in Christ,

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.
Galatians 6:10

Love's priority for the Christian is the family of God; however, as Paul put it, *let us do good unto all men*. In that way our love can be on a somewhat higher plane in that we will

way our love can be on a somewhat higher plane in that we will be loving imperfect men—the unlovable—as He did/does us Christians also. This instinctive love will love God, other Christians, and other of mankind just because it is God’s love.

In *verse 20* the principle of loving God by loving those whom He loves is plainly pressed home as a duty for believers. As one loves a brother Christian, he is loving God.¹ *Verse 20* states a truth about loving the tangible or visible versus loving the intangible or invisible. John is really saying,

If a man says, ‘I love the invisible God,’ but cares not for Christians or their church, he is a liar; because he cannot love the invisible God and scorn His visible Presence and expression in this world in His assembly, the Christian church.

“It is much easier for human nature to be interested in what comes before its eyes than by that about which it has to think.”¹ Therefore, when one claims to have great interest in God (about Whom one can only think and not see), but has little regard for the assembly of Christians (who comes before the eyes), there is falsehood, deceit, depravity—*he is a liar*. There is no real love for God at all in that kind of profession of love for God. If one cannot love the Father’s representatives of Himself as well as Christ’s manifestation of Himself in today’s world—the Christians and their church—, then certainly one could not love Him Who is not nearly so visible, Who possesses precisely the same righteous qualities as His church. Thus our duty is to love those who come before our eyes and who are today the light of Him Who is in heaven, even the Christians and their assemblies, even if they be ever so shadowy a glow of His greater and more perfect love. Since we love Him Who is not so easily perceived, we must love those of Him who are so visibly His love in this present world.

¹ And vice versa , cp. *Matthew 25:31-45; Acts 9:4*.

² W. M. Sinclair, *The Epistles of St. John*, Vol. VIII, Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1970), p. 490.

VII. LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE JESUS COMMANDS LOVE

²¹And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. I John 4:21

²¹And this commandment we have from him in order that the one who is loving God would also be loving his brother.

ADT I John 4:21

John has listed seven primary reasons for our love to one another, this being the seventh.³ We are to love one another simply because Jesus Christ our Savior has left us commandment to do so. Besides all the benefits, have to's, requirements, and dogmas, this reason is the primal one. *And this commandment have we from him, [in order] that he who loveth God love his brother also.* The word *that* is hina in the Greek, and means "in order that." The very purpose of this commandment is not to produce fear (cp. *v.18*), but is itself an inciter to obedience. The commandments of Christ are not burdensome (*I John 5:3*), but they instill a holy fervor and zeal in the believer. Those who are *perfect* (mature) in love have a great catalyst in any commandment from Christ, their Redeemer. The true fulfillment of His love in us is to be activated and motivated to love this love just by hearing His commandment to be loving this love. And should not this one reason to love be quite sufficient? Attend carefully to our blessed Savior once again and become accomplished practically in this love which accomplished your free deliverance from your sin and guilt,

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. If ye love me, keep my commandments. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*⁴

—Jesus Christ, AD 33

³ Seven is the biblical number for perfection or completeness.

⁴ *John 13:34-35; 15:12; 14:15; 15:14*, respectively. Love in these words was the theme and thrust of Jesus' final instruction to His disciples the last hours before His death.

SOME THOUGHTS ON LOVE AND CHRISTIANS' EXPERIENCES IN LOVE TAKEN FROM *I John 4:7-21*

1. When God's love dwells within the Christian and the Christian dwells within God's love, it/He exerts a life-long upward influence upon him. When God's love dwells within, it influences, energizes, and empowers with God's love. When the Christian dwells, continues, and remains in God's love, then he is loving, adoring, and embracing God because God is love and true love is God's essence. From that process from loving God, God's love will produce true humble service to other Christians. This practical love produces further personal growth from that same love for other Christians. Please seek this truth from a re-read of and a meditation on *I John 4:7-16*.

2. The influence of love in the Christian drives him to prayer again and again, to deeper prayer and to displays of God's love in prayer, and to practical and prayerful love efforts for others, the greatest of which practical love efforts is prayer for life instead of death, *I John 4:7* with *3:19-22* and *5:14-16*.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

¹⁹And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

²⁰For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

²¹Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

²²And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

¹⁴And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us;

¹⁵And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

¹⁶If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

3. For the Christian, the love of God possesses a commanding attraction because it provocatively offers pleasure, delight, and reward, in its exceptional, continuing experiences in and through the Christian when loving others, *I John 4:12b*.

^{12b}If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

If we love one another, God dwells within us and His completed love is within us. ADT

4. The Christian, once being exposed to God's love and having that love dwell within him, has a unique susceptibility to the influence of God's love. His sensitivities and feelings are especially impressionable to God's love, *I John 4:13*.

¹³Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

¹³By this we are experientially knowing constantly that we are dwelling within Him and He within us: because He has given to us the Spirit that is out of Himself. ADT

5. Because of the love work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God is the very pleasing quality of Jesus which has a mystical power to fascinate and enchant all Christians, *I John 4:14-16*.

¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

¹⁵Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

¹⁶And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

6. The love of God once known and believed exerts such a force in the Christian that its magnetism draws the Christian to God and to His love more and more, *I John 4:16*.

¹⁶And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

¹⁶And we have known by practical experience and have believed this love that God has within us [i.e. this love that God has "invested" in us through the redeeming work of His Son]. God is love, and the one who dwells within love dwells within God, and God dwells within him. ADT

7. God's love evokes great admiration for His love, which in turn captures the attention and the affection of the Christian toward God, *I John 4:16*.

¹⁶And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

¹⁶And we have known by practical experience and have believed this love that God has within us [i.e. this love that God has "invested" in us through the redeeming work of His Son]. God is love, and the one who dwells within love dwells within God, and God dwells within him. ADT

8. The greatest delight found in the presence of God—in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, whether through the Word or through prayer—is the reality of His Love; He is love. See *I John 4:16* above.

9. Love is the uppermost characteristic of God which makes His presence so enchanting and blissful, both in this life's experiences and in the life to come. See *I John 4:16* above with *Psalms 16:11*.

¹¹Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

10. Love, when seen by God in the Christian, and when continuing to indwell the Christian, attracts God's favors; and He is influenced to bless that Christian when He recognizes in the Christian's love to others, the marvel of His own love, *I John 4:16*, which see above, with *John 14:21*.

²¹He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

11. Love sanctifies the heart before the Lord and pledges activities of love in one's life, thereby assuring an enlightened understanding of God's will, *Psalms 25:6, 12* with *I John 4:12-13*.

⁶Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.

¹²What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he [God] teach in the way that he [God] shall choose.

¹² *No one ever at any time has beheld God. If we love one another, God dwells within us and His completed love is within us.*

¹³ *By this we are experientially knowing constantly that we are dwelling within Him and He within us: because He has given to us the Spirit that is out of Himself.* ADT

12. God's greatest delight is to see Jesus Christ in His children (i.e. the love of His Son—His own love); then He is favorably disposed toward them as He grants them special audience, and bestows on them exceptional power and influence in prayer because it is addressed to Himself in Jesus' name (i.e. according to Jesus' loving manner and procedure), *I John 4:12, 16*, with *John 15:7-11, 16; 16:26-27*; and see under #2 above, *I John 3:19-22*.

¹² *No one ever at any time has beheld God. If we love one another, God dwells within us and His completed love is within us.*

¹⁶ *And we have known by practical experience and have believed this love that God has within us* [i.e. this love that God has "invested" in us through the redeeming work of His Son]. *God is love, and the one who dwells within love dwells within God, and God dwells within him.* ADT

⁷ *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

⁸ *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

⁹ *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you, continue ye in my love.*

¹⁰ *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

¹² *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

¹⁶ *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

²⁶ *At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:*

²⁷ *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

13. To love love is to love God because *God is love*. Therefore, to love love is to delight in God; and to delight in God is to love love. The two are mutually inclusive; since one is true, the other has to be true also. That kind of delighting in God—namely loving love just for love’s sake because of the exquisite qualities of love (God)—brings the desires of the Christian’s heart to realization. God will act out His love in that Christian’s life through affirmatively answered prayer and special encounters with Him. His endorsement will be upon all that Christian does, *I John 4:12, 16 with Psalms 37:4, 5*.

¹² *No one ever at any time has beheld God. If we love one another, God dwells within (among) us and His completed love is within (among) us.* ADT

¹⁶ *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* KJV

¹⁶ *And we have known by practical experience and have believed this love that God has within us [i.e. this love that God has "invested" in us through the redeeming work of His Son]. God is love, and the one who dwells within love dwells within God, and God dwells within him.* ADT

⁴ *Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

⁵ *Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*

14. Worshipping God *in spirit and in truth* comes from the love of God dwelling within His children. The *in spirit* worship can come as God sees His love in us; both the *in spirit and in truth* worship come as He sees His love from us to one another and to sinners. *I John 4:19*.

¹⁹ *We love him, because he first loved us.* KJV

¹⁹ *Let us be actively loving [Him, one another, and all men] because He first loved us.* ADT

⁵ Although the Greek text in *verse 19* has no person specifically referenced that Christians are to love (Lit. “Let us be actively loving.”), the context suggests that God, other Christians, and all other of mankind is understood. Christians’ love is to be as unlimited as God’s love is to us as a race of men, else it is not God’s love. This is a classic example of the an Elipsis figure, which the KJV acknowledges with its proper insertion of *him*.