

Assurance From Love

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[0:00] Last week we saw John return to the subject of love.

This really is a continuation of what we started last week.! 1 John 4, 7-21 is the third and final time that John appeals to the subject of brotherly love.

He first mentioned it back in chapter 2, verses 7-11. That's where it's given as an indicator of someone who is walking in the light. Then he mentioned it again in chapter 3, verses 11-18, and really all the way through verse 24.

And there it's mentioned as evidence that someone is a child of God. In verses 7-12 of chapter 4 that we looked at last week, John focused on the command to love one another.

So let's read these verses again to provide the context for tonight's passage. So here are 1 John 4, 7-12. 5. 5.

[1:05] 5. 5. 5. 5. 5. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love has been perfected in us. For some review, verses 7 through 10 showed us that Christian love is the reality of God's greatness.

Then verse 11 showed us that Christian love is a response to God's gift. And verse 12 showed us that Christian love is a reflection of God's glory.

God's love is not an abstract principle or sentiment, but it was made manifest in sending his only son into the world so that sinful humanity might live or receive eternal life, in other words.

We see that from verse 9, and this shows God's greatness. Properly understood, God's grace demands a particular response. Once somebody really begins to understand the incredible price paid for sin and the magnitude of his own personal sin, he will understand the love of God and demonstrate that love himself.

[2:43] We saw last week that love does make specific moral demands, including certain absolutes. The proper motivation, then, for our interpersonal relationships always remains a profound sense of gratitude for what God has done for us in Christ.

Nobody can see God loving because God is invisible. Jesus is no longer in the world to manifest the love of God. The only demonstration of God's love in the world today, then, is the church.

God can be seen in the lives of those who demonstrate his love to others. And when we demonstrate God's love to others, that's how we reflect God's glory. So now that we've reviewed the first portion of this section on love, here's how tonight's verses fit with what we looked at last week.

Last week reminded us of the command to love. This week, John focuses on the benefits to us when we love others. When we love like God commands us to love, we'll get assurance from that love.

In other words, we'll see evidence that we ourselves are children of God. So here are 1 John 4, 13 through 21. Those are the verses that we'll cover tonight.

[3:57] And 1 John 4, 13 through 21 say this. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his spirit.

And we have seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.

And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us.

If someone says, I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

[5:06] And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God must love his brother also. We'll break this passage into three sections.

And the first section covers verses 13 through 16. That's where we see the confirmation of love. The confirmation of love. And verse 13 explains that confirmation.

Verse 13 is the verse that said, So John now provides a way to confirm that we've come to know God's love, and that's the gift of his spirit.

So we know with the personal knowledge then that we abide in him. Note the plural there. It says believers and we. So believers should be conscious of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The knowledge of this Holy Spirit then gives the believer assurance of his membership in the family of God. Here's a cross reference to you to something that Paul said.

[6:13] Paul said this in Romans 8.16. And listen to how much it sounds like 1 John 4.13. Romans 8.16 says, The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Our ability to love one another is dependent upon the spirit whom he has given us. That spirit lives in us and is the one that implants God's love in us, exercises God's love through us, and then also assures us that we live in God.

The presence and activity of the Holy Spirit within Christians gives evidence that they are abiding in God. We already know that abiding is one of John's favorite words.

When John uses abide, he means to continue in a daily personal relationship with Jesus, and that relationship is characterized by trust, prayer, obedience, and joy.

So abide means to continue into a daily personal relationship with Jesus with trust, prayer, obedience, and joy. Because the spirit dwelling in us is one of the assurances of salvation, we really should spend time evaluating whether the spirit is working in us.

[7:26] So in the remainder of this section, John explains how a believer can know that the spirit is working in his or her life. Look at verse 14 again. Verse 14 says, And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

For the third time in verses 7 through 21, John speaks of God sending his Son. He first mentioned it in verse 9, and then he also mentioned it in verse 10.

Now John refers to God intimately as Father, and John gets to the core of the gospel message here, and that core is that the Father has sent his Son as Savior of the world.

John begins there with the emphatic we, and proclaims that the message is noted in historical reality and personal experience. Remember, when we first started, John talked about how they had seen and handled Jesus, so they were eyewitnesses to what Jesus had done when he was resurrected from the dead.

John introduces another way to tell that believers are in union with God here, and that's adherence to what the apostles taught. So when we adhere to what the apostles taught, it also gives evidence that we have the Holy Spirit in us.

[8:46] And seeing and testifying about God were particularly and uniquely true for the apostles like John, who were Jesus' hand-picked eyewitnesses, but by extension and through our faith, all subsequent believers really testify to the same truth.

Nobody today has seen God in the literal sense, but believers who abide in him have seen the Son as he has manifested among loving Christians. Have you ever really stopped to think about the significance of that when you realize that we really are the only evidence of Jesus that some folks will see, and that might be the way that God uses to bring those believers or unbelievers to him? It's a little bit of a sobering thought when you think about it. It really makes you think about how important our witness is to others, and I don't mean just witness in the sense of telling people about the gospel.

I mean how they see us live as well. So Christians who have seen God's love work through others have in fact seen and can testify to the fundamental truth that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

And so this great truth then is what's put on display when we show Christian love to others. So with these words, John really reached the goal that he announced in the first four verses of this book, and that was mainly that the readers of the book would share in John's experience of seeing and knowing God.

[10:19] Verse 15 gives another way then to confirm that the Spirit abides in us. Verse 15 says, Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.

Jesus, you know, is the Son of God in a unique sense in which Jesus is acknowledged as personally divine and also sharing every attribute fully that God has. In 1 John 4.2, it was required that true teachers affirm Christ's full humanity.

Here, John is requiring that the true teachers affirm Jesus' full deity as well. So when we recognize that Jesus is the Son of God who is in every way sharing the same attributes that God has, we provide further evidence that there's communion between God and the person making that statement.

It also is a way to tell the true from the false. It's a confession in public of a conviction and an acknowledgement that reveals an inward commitment. And that inward commitment is that Jesus is the Son of God.

We believe in him. We trust in him not just as Savior of the world, but as our personal Savior. So when we say that, we're saying that we personally trust him as the Savior who's the Savior sent from God.

[11:46] So this is more than just a statement acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God. It's a confession that results in the reception of new life resulting in a commitment to obediently trust Jesus.

The natural reaction of somebody who genuinely believes that Jesus is the Son of God is to join his life with Jesus and all that it means to do that.

Of course, that results in obedience. And so the result in obedience gives the outward evidence that there's true fellowship with God. To live or abide in God, and notice that's in the present tense there, is a vital, intimate, continuous, and growing reality.

The believer has a new and visible power for the fulfillment of his work on earth. And when we have that power working in us, we have God in him.

And then we realize that our life is not really of this earth, that we really belong to another kingdom. In other words, we are in God. So that's how we can have God in us and be in God at the same time when we recognize that our kingdom is not of this world.

[12:57] Assurance of salvation, then, is never an arrogant presumption, but it can be a settled state of mind and heart. And we see that in verse 16. Look at what verse 16 says.

It says, And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. John's really summarizing several of his previous thoughts.

Again, the we's emphatic here. He clearly identifies himself to relate to all of his readers, and he affirms what they know and believe. And the two Greek words translated know and believe are so closely connected that it's almost like they're sort of a compound verb if there is such a thing because they both concern the object of love.

Notice they're both in the perfect tense, too, and that signifies that the result of these two characteristics is an ongoing, abiding reality that continues all throughout the future.

There's a definite order in the verbs as well because knowledge is prior to and also explained by faith. Faith must have content. If we tell somebody to keep the faith, that's really nonsense because what are they supposed to keep the faith in?

[14:20] What we're keeping the faith in is the crucial question. It's not enough just to have faith. We need to have faith in the right thing. When somebody abides in the love of God, his knowledge of God grows and his faith in God grows.

The more we love God, the more we understand God, and then that leads us to trust him more and of course, that leads our faith to increase as well. So when somebody says it's important to have faith, you always should keep in mind faith in what?

Because you have to have faith in the right thing for it to make any difference. We know that the Spirit abides in us because we testify that Jesus is the Savior of the world and that Jesus also is the Son of God.

Paul also emphasizes this orthodox belief in another one of his letters that proves we have the Spirit of God in us. Listen to Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2, verses 14 through 16.

Again, these are 1 Corinthians 2, verses 14 through 16. Paul wrote, through the mind of Christ.

[15:57] Through illumination of the Word, though, the Holy Spirit provides believers the capacity to discern the truth. And the spiritually dead are unable to comprehend that truth.

So now that we've seen the confirmation of love, let's move on to the consummation of love. And we see the consummation of love in verses 17 through 19.

Those verses say, Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

We love Him because He first loved us. We'll take those verses apart and look at them one at a time. So here's verse 17 again.

[16:58] Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. This is really the second time that John has brought up the judgment seat of Christ in this letter.

He briefly mentioned it in chapter 2, verse 28, and now it's reappearing again here to assure us that we can face Christ on that day with confidence.

And that confidence comes because we live toward God and toward one another in love. So the person who does not love his brother may experience shame, that's what we saw back in 228, but if we live in love toward our brothers, we'll have confidence when we face Jesus because we've already been like Him in this world.

The clear message is that the love somebody has for God has an effect on the future. The confession of Jesus as Lord and a mutual abiding between God and the believer allow for God's love to have its full expression.

When we're united with God, a believer's love is made complete or perfected in that he'll have no fear in the day of judgment. We won't have to worry about facing shame there because the function of love in the believer's life is the giving of a bold confidence that we will be okay on the day of judgment because Christ has atoned for our sins.

[18:28] The atonement also has a present effect because in this world we actually are like Christ. This doesn't mean that we've attained His perfection, of course, but it does mean that in relation to God we have the same standing that Christ does so in that way we're like Him.

You know, Don likes to use several times that when God looks at us when we're believers He doesn't see us He sees Christ and that is how we have the same standing that Christ does with God.

Those who are indwelt by God have a relationship with God as judge that's characterized by love and this love allows the believer to have confidence when looking toward that day of judgment. I wonder if we really stop and realize just how significant that is that because we have God abiding in us we can have confidence in the day of judgment.

That's really something that we need to probably think about and meditate on a little more often than we do. God's perfect love for believers is one cast out the fear of wrath and eternal punishment and we see that in verse 18.

[19:40] Verse 18 says there is no fear in love but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment but he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Notice that John starts this verse by affirming something. He affirms that the reason why a believer doesn't need to fear is because of the relationship between him and God through Christ is based upon love and in love there is no fear.

In the actual Greek of that verse the word fear begins the sentence and that makes it more emphatic than literally John says fear not is in love. The believer can have full confidence based upon this assertion.

John uses the word fear which can either mean a good fear or respect or a bad fear or dread. In this context he's referring to the bad type of fear.

There should be no fear or dread in the life of somebody who's come to know God and in whom God actually dwells. The claim here is that love and fear are mutually exclusive.

[20:50] They can't coexist because John tells us that perfect love drives out fear. Nobody who is like Jesus in this world can fear approaching Jesus' judgment seat.

You want to think about that if you're going in front of somebody and you've done exactly the same thing that that person does why is that person going to be upset with you then?

Fear expects punishment but one who loves like Jesus did can expect to receive love in return. So somebody who fears the judgment seat of Christ shows that God's love has not yet reached maturity in him or maybe does not even exist at all yet in him.

But a person who lives in love toward God has nothing to fear on the day of judgment. Check out verse 19 now. It's an important verse as well.

It says we love him because he first loved us. Christian love is a gift from God and it's demonstrated supremely then by what Jesus did on the cross.

[21 : 55] Remember what Paul said in Romans 5.8. Romans 5.8 says but God demonstrates his own love toward us that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

God's love always takes the initiative. The love of Christians is a response to that love. Likewise all morally good human actions are good not because they conform to some human standard but because they're rooted in imitation of the morally perfect character of God and conform to God's commands.

Once again we love him because he first loved us and here are three reasons why the order of God's love and our love are significant. First our love owes its origin to God's love.

We only love him because he first loved us. Second love is characterized by fear when there is doubt that it will be returned. We have no fear because God's love was prior to ours.

We don't have to worry about God returning love to us. He's the one who extended love to us in the first place. Then third affection can easily flow from a heart filled with gratitude for God's initiating love toward us.

[23 : 13] We love him but only because he first loved us and I have these reasons in your notes as well. Remember if you have any doubt about that he sent his son to die for us while we were still sinners.

Listen to how Matthew Henry summarizes verse 19. His love talking about God is the incentive the motive and moral cause of ours.

We cannot but love so good a God who was first in act and work of love who loved us when we were both unloving and unlovely who loved us at so great a weight who has been seeking and soliciting our love at the expense of his son's blood and has condescended to beseech us to be reconciled unto him let heaven and earth stand amazed at such love his love is the productive cause of ours.

So listen to that one more time to let the old English sink in just a little bit. His love is the incentive the motive and moral cause of ours. We cannot but love so good a God who was first in the act and work of love who loved us when we were both unloving and unlovely who loved us at so great a rate and who has been seeking and soliciting our love at the expense of his son's blood and has condescended to beseech us to be reconciled unto him let heaven and earth stand amazed at such love his love is the productive cause of ours.

When you get right down to it heaven and earth covers everything so everything should be amazed and everybody should be amazed at the cause of such love because God had no reason other than the fact that he wanted to love us himself to give his son to die for us and that should always fill us with awe and wonder when we think about it.

[25 : 11] Going back to some more homespun English J. Vernon McGee summarized verse 19 like this he said he loved us when we were unlovely that part sounds like you took it from Matthew Henry doesn't it?

He loved us when we were unlovely he is worth loving he is worthy the lamb is worthy of all our love of all our devotion and of all our service he loved us when we were unlovely he is worth loving he is worthy the lamb is worthy of all our love of all our devotion and of all our service verse 19 should humble us and convict us but it should also compel us to return that love so we've seen the confirmation of love we've seen the consummation of that love and in fact we just discussed how God's love should compel us to return that love in the last section of the lesson we see that compulsion to love and verses 20 and 21 are where we see the compulsion to love first though we're going to see the significance of an absence of such a compulsion look at verse 20 if someone says I love God and hates his brother he is a liar for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen how can he love

God whom he has not seen remember when John's talking about brothers he's talking about fellow Christians here the inward character of an individual is revealed when he lies about his love for God he declares that he loves God but fails to demonstrate that love in his treatment of fellow Christians

if he does that God then he gives evidence that he may not be a true child of God somebody may possibly claim to love God and deceive others because God cannot be seen and others aren't able to prove or disprove whether that person really loves God or not but the visible manifestation of an individual's love for God will eventually show up in how he deals with his brothers and sisters in Christ because those people are very visible and you can observe that interaction notice that John uses a phrase whom he can see there and it's expressed in the perfect tense and it pictures a permanent condition that continues from the past so John's talking about seeing and unloving a brother who's been and continues to be in that person's sight while God continues to be out of sight so really

John's not talking about a sporadic occasion but a constant and sustained situation the person habitually refuses to love his brothers in Christ when that's the case it's not just unlikely it's also impossible for a man to love God if he fails repeatedly to love his Christian brothers love for God and hatred for Christian brothers can't coexist in the same heart they're mutually exclusive and completely incompatible with each other I want to drive home the point that the concern here is not with the individual's attempt to love in other words it's not that the person tried to love and failed but that the person is completely unwilling or unable to love because he does not have the love of God in him in order to give that love to somebody else in the first place so the words God and brother are turned around there to emphasize the fact that one must have the same love for both Jesus has already made it clear that to love God and to love our neighbor are mutually inclusive in other words you have to do both John very clearly acknowledged that here but he also acknowledged the potential for people to claim verbally to know God and not yet be indwelt by him if we treat others with disdain that's a sobering thought as well isn't it John has not hidden his own contempt for this kind of hypocrisy in fact he's already stated that to behave this way shows that the perpetrator is in kinship with Cain flip back a page or two and look what John said in verse John 3 10-12 in 1 John 3 10-12 John said in this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God nor is he who does not love his brother for this is a message that you heard from the beginning that we should love one another not as

[30:03] Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother and why did he murder him listen to those last couple of verses again for this is the message that you have heard from the beginning that we should love one another not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother and why did he murder him because his works were evil and his brother righteous just a few verses later John said this in 1 John 3 18 and 19 my little children let us not love in word or in tongue but in deed and in truth and by this we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him once again you see there that when we love in deed and in truth we have the assurance that God is in us and that's the point that John reemphasizes in the last verse we'll cover tonight so turn back over to 1 John 4 and look at verse 21 again verse 21 says this is the commandment we have from him that he who loves

God must love his brother also the reason that it's impossible for the inconsistency stated in 420 to remain is that the command to love God and the command to love one's brother are two parts of the same command notice John says this is the commandment we have from him that he who loves God must love his brother also John doesn't say you must love God and think about loving your brother he says you must love your brother also so these two ideas are inseparable the verse is connected with the prior verses the phrase from him is a reference to God the father as the final source of the commandment disobedience to this commandment demonstrates a false love toward God that results in a failure to love the brother it's difficult to prove whether or not we love God based upon our actions toward God because we cannot see God love for God though is reflected in love for his children our brothers and sisters in Christ whom we can see therefore

God gives us this verifiable command and of course that command is what we just read whoever loves God must also love his brother Jesus stated this same principle in other words he said whatever you did not do for the least of these you did not do for me and then of course what you did do for the least of these you did it as unto me so a claim to love God is a delusion if it's not accompanied by unselfish love to fellow Christians so that brings us to the application of tonight's passage we can see at least five things from it one is that the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit provides confirmation of God's love for us we really need to just think about how significant that is that we actually have the Holy Spirit living inside of us and that can give us confirmation of God's

love the second thing is we know we have the spirit because we confess Jesus as Savior and Son of God if you look at all of the false religions that are around they'll fail on at least one of those two points they won't recognize

Jesus as being the only Savior or they won't recognize that he is the Son of God in the biblical sense of the Son of God where he's both fully man and fully God at the same time God the third thing that we can see from the passage tonight is that assurance of God's love will provide confidence in our day of judgment that really should hit home with us as well to think that we don't have to fear our day of judgment because we already know that we have God's love and Jesus who gives us that love will be our judge so we're already aligned with that judge the fourth thing is that God's love is the source of our love and that's why we can be confident in that love because with God as the source of the love we don't have to worry about messing that up we're just responding to the love that he's already given us and of course the last thing is what we just talked about and that's we demonstrate

God's love now by loving other believers and showing them that love and that's why John can say this to end chapter four and this is the commandment we have from him that he who loves God must love his brother also