

God is Love (1 John 4:7-12)

How can I be assured of my salvation?

1. He walks in the light as God is in the light, and is the light (1:5-7)
2. He sees his sin, confesses it, and repents of it (1:8-10)
3. He abides in Jesus and walks as He walked (2:1-6)
4. He loves the brethren in word and deed (2:7-11; 3:14-18)
5. He does not love the world (2:15-17)
6. He practices righteousness considering Christ's return (2:28-3:3)
7. He sins less, not sinless (3:4-7)
8. God's seed abides in him, not the devil's (3:8-10)
9. The world hates him because of God's righteousness in him (3:11-13)
10. His heart (conscience) does not condemn him (3:19-22)
11. The Spirit of Christ (Holy Spirit) dwells in him (3:23-24)
12. He listens to the truth in growing discernment (4:1-6)

13. He loves God and His saints because God's love is wrought through him (4:7-12)

- The words "love," "loved," or "loves" are mentioned over thirty times in this pericope (1 John 4:7-5:3). The Greek word is *agapao*, a love marked by self-sacrifice, self-denial, and self-devotion for the well-being of the object of its affection.
- Jesus taught His disciples (including John) in the Upper Room discourse to "love one another" (Jn. 13:34-35; 15:12). John has implemented this in his first and second letters to the churches in Ephesus (1 Jn. 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 Jn. 1:5).
- In Greek, there is an article equivalent to "the" in English. John is speaking not of a generic love but a specific and unique love: "the" love from God.

Three elements of the love of God in the beloved:

A. The origin of the love of God in the beloved (v.7-8):

- While John has previously exhorted his readers to love one another (2:10-11; 3:13-15, 23; 4:7-12), he unpacks the DNA of this love more extensively.
- Love is from God (v.7), and God is love (v.8): Love flows essentially, like a fountain, from the Godhead. The Father loves the Son (Matt. 3:17; Lk. 3:22), the Son loves the Father (Jn. 14:31), and the Holy Spirit sheds the love of the Father and the Son abroad in the believer's heart (Rom. 5:5).
- God is essentially love. It is Who He is in Himself. God is love and has been loving Himself for all eternity: each person of the Trinity has loved one another, for God is one.
- God, as a result, is the origin, source, and communicator of His love.
- God's wrath is released from the bosom of His love, for wrath is an attribute of love. Love is angered at evil and wickedness.

Can an unbeliever love?

- In a general way, yes (with a caveat). They can love in part only as they act in concert with the virtues embedded in their DNA as image-bearers (though polluted and stained). This must be cultivated from early childhood and supplemented throughout all of life. Regardless of how motivated and noble it appears, it must include God as the supreme object of affection.
- Sin corrupts how image-bearers demonstrate love toward one another.
 - The culture has equivocated love with "tolerance and acceptance." This is not God's definition but a smokescreen that demands opposers to adopt their position.
 - "God is love" has been hijacked by the LGBTQ2+A community. It is rooted in a sinful deviancy that parades under the guise of "love" (a perverted lust). This cultural expression of "love" is birthed in sexual perversion.
 - They want to live in peace with their sin. After hardening their consciences as image-bearers, they want to silence those who plead with them to repent.

- God is love (v.8). Consequently, God defines and demonstrates love by His character, as love is most concerned with the well-being of the object of its affection.
 - The most unloving act against a fellow image-bearer is to sin against them, as God defines it. To live in sin is to hate, because God judges both the sin and the sinner.
- True love not only warns of the consequences of sin, but also provides the remedy for it: The embodiment of love is in the person and work of Christ, Who gave His life for sinners.

B. The means of the love of God in the beloved (v.9-10):

- The full expression of the love of God is demonstrated through the incarnation (v.9) and the atonement (v.10).
- We have not loved God (v.10). God has loved us (first). Our excellency, worth, and merit are not the driving force for the incarnation. It was God's love for Himself.

God sent His only Son (v.9):

- The Son is not a reference to incarnation initially but instead to the proper name of the second person of the Trinity: the Son.
- The Son did not become the Son through the incarnation but has eternally been the Son. As the Son, He was sent: God from God (begotten without beginning). God's unique, one-of-a-kind Son.

Jesus is our propitiation (v.10):

- This carries the idea of appeasement (through satisfaction). God's wrath is appeased through Christ's righteousness to the law of God and His substitutionary death on the cross. The result is reconciliation.

God's eternal plan is in the Son willingly giving Himself, out of love to the Father, to redeem those whom the Father gave Him. The Spirit secures everyone whom the Father had given to the Son and those whom the Son had atoned for: the plan of the ages is God welcoming us into His fellowship that He has eternally enjoyed. God not only gives Himself **for** us, but to us.

This was agreed upon before the creation of time, space, and matter in which the Son would add human flesh and human nature to present to the Father those whom the Father had given Him (Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Cor. 15:24).

C. The result of the love of God in the beloved (v.11-12):

- John previously mentioned that we must love and lay our lives down for the beloved (3:16-17; 4:11-12). Other portions of Scripture provide additional fruits of this love:
 - Outdoing one another in honor (Rom. 12:10); refusing to pass judgment on tertiary issues of the faith (Rom. 14:13); instructing one another (Rom. 15:14); serving one another in love (Gal. 5:13); refusing to entertain deceit, envy, or provoking one another to anger (Gal. 5:26); carrying one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2); being patient with one another (Eph. 4:2); being kind and compassionate with one another (Eph. 4:32); forgiving one another (Eph. 4:32); speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19); submitting to one another (Eph. 5:21); not lying to one another (Col. 3:9); overlooking grievances (Col. 3:13); encouraging one another (1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11); spurring one another toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24-25); confessing sins to one another and praying for one another (Jam. 5:13-16); and offering hospitality to one another without grumbling (1 Pet. 4:9).
- Since no one has ever seen God (v.12), God's presence is demonstrated in the outward manifestation of God's divine love in Himself. Love assimilates us to God by making us more like Him. Christian love is the stamp of divine inhabitation.
- This virtue is derivative from God and empowered by God in us through the work of the Holy Spirit (2:20; 3:24; 4:13). God's love originates in Himself (1 Jn. 4:7-8), is manifested in His Son (4:9-10), then perfected in us (4:12).