

INTRODUCTION

1. This morning we are looking once again at 1 John chapter 4.
2. Please take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 John chapter 4.
3. We are looking today at verses 12-16.
4. John says, “ 12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”
5. All of us desire assurance.

6. When we are told something that promises future fulfillment, we want the assurance that it will happen.
7. In verses 12-16, John gives us the assurance of God and His love.
8. As we will see later in 1 John 5:13, John is highly interested in his readers understanding the assurance God gives in His Word.
9. He says, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”
10. John wants his readers to “know that [they] have eternal life.”
11. This truth is mentioned throughout this letter as we are also seeing here in chapter 4.
12. So as we begin chapter 4 and verses 12-16, “John reminds his readers that God as the object of Christian love is unseen (v. 12a), but adds that the practice of mutual love confirms the operation of God’s love in our lives (v. 12b).¹

¹ Hiebert, D. Edmond. [*The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*](#). Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1991. Print.

13. We have already looked at the exhortation, the manifestation, the intervention and the debt of love.
14. This morning we are going to look at another quality of God's love...it's assurance.

LESSON

- I. The Exhortation to Love (vv.7-8)
- II. The Manifestation of Love (v.9)
- III. The Intervention of Love (vv.10-11)
- IV. The Debt of Love (v.11)
- V. The Assurance of Love (vv.12-16)

John says in verse 12, “No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.”

This verse is striking both in its affirmation and order.

Literally, the verse begins, “God no one ever has beheld.”

Hiebert notes: “The verb used here is not that used in John 1:18 (ἑώρακεν [*eōraken*]), which simply denotes the fact of having seen; the verb here (τεθέαται [*tetheatai*]) implies a careful observation or close scrutiny (the word “theater” is derived from it).”

No man has seen God in his unveiled essence, glory, and majesty.

Indeed, we are incapable as finite sinful creatures of looking on God. It would certainly be our death.

He can be seen, however, in the lives of those who demonstrate his love to others.

So...

A. No One Can See God Loving Since He is Invisible
(v.12)

1. God's love is seen by our loving one another

William Hendricks said, "No man can see God directly, but men will see Him indirectly if we love each other."²

That brings to mind the words of Jesus to His disciples in John 13:35 (NASB) "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

2. If we love one another it assures us of His love

² William Hendricks, The Letters of John, p.102.

John says in verse 12, “If we love one another, God abides in us.”

A person loves because God has come to dwell within him.³

Romans 5:5 says “...the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

So...

a) God’s love is manifested in us by His presence

John uses the word “abides” in this section to demonstrate this (vv.12, 13, 15, 16)

God “abides” (meno) or “dwells”⁴ in us
The word meno means “to remain, to stay”⁵

It’s used in the present tense to indicate continuous action.

Love is also used in the present tense.

³ Akin, Daniel L. [1. 2. 3 John](#). Vol. 38. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001. Print. The New American Commentary.

⁴ Strong’s Dictionary

⁵ Louw-Nida

We could translate the verse, “If we continue to love one another, God continues to dwell in us.”

The use of “if” undetermined the actual fulfillment of the condition.

John well knew that the indicated condition was not being carried out in the lives of some professed Christians.

But the form challenges his readers to make sure that they do “love one another.”

Such mutual Christian love is evidence that “the unseen God, who was once revealed in His Son, is now revealed in His people if and when they love one another.”⁶

So everytime we love one another, God’s love is seen. It is revealed.

It also assures us that we belong to Him.
So...

⁶ Ibid., Hiebert

b) We abide in Him by loving one another

- (1) Remember what John said in 1 John 3:10 (NASB) By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.
- (2) In 1 John 3:14 (NASB) he says, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.”
- (3) In 1 John 4:8 (NASB) He says it again, “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”
- (4) He sums it up in 1 John 4:20 (NASB) If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

So when we love one another it reveals that God is abiding in us and His love is perfected in us.

The rendering “perfected in us” at the end of verse 12 is not correct.

God’s love is ever perfect, is never subject to perfecting.

His love aims at reaching a certain goal in us.

When we keep loving one another, this goal has been reached by God’s love.

Our loving one another is the evidence that God’s goal has been attained in us.⁷

This is possible because of the Holy Spirit who is mentioned in verse 13.

So we could say then that...

c) God’s love is seen in us by His Spirit and His Son (vv.13-14)

John says, “By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”

⁷ Lenski, R. C. H. [*The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966. Print.

(1) God has given us His Spirit (v.13)

- (a) John said earlier in 3:24 that “we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”

It is the Holy Spirit who gives the assurance.

He is the one who produces the love of God in us.

Paul says so much about the Holy Spirit.

If you don't have Him, you don't belong to Him.

- (b) Paul says in Romans 8:9 (NASB) However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

- (c) Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2:12, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.

- (d) He said in 1 Corinthians 3:16 says, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

- (e) He also said in 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?”

- (f) He also told the believers at Galatia in Galatians 4:6, Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

- (g) To the Ephesians he said in Ephesians 1:13-14, “In Him, you

also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

John mentions his own testimony in verse 14 that he includes with the rest of the apostles.

He says, “We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

This is how we see the love of the unseen God....by what He does.

(2) God sent Jesus “to be the Savior of the world” (v.14)

(a) Luke 2:11 says, “for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the

Lord.

- (b) Acts 13:23 says, “From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus.”

John is undergirding the fact that although “no one has seen God,” “we have” seen his Son whom he sent.⁸

John MacArthur writing on this verse says, “Belief in the gospel (the doctrinal test) provides evidence of the Spirit’s ministry and presence (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). Because sinners are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1, 5), they cannot come to God on their own (cf. Matt. 12:35; John 1:12–13). Saving faith is possible only because God grants it (Eph. 2:8). In John’s case, his own experience of seeing and being with Jesus verified his faith (1 John 1:1–3). He bore witness **that the Father has sent the Son to be Savior of the world**, but he would not have believed had the Father

⁸ Ibid., Akin.

not chosen him (John 6:44; 15:16, 19) and the Spirit opened his eyes to the truth.⁹

So verses 15-16 indicates that...

B. No One Can Experience God's Love Until They Agree that Jesus is the Son of God (vv.15-16)

John says in verse 15, "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

1. The general invitation (v.15a)

"Whoever"

This is restricted only by the individual's willingness to make the indicated confession.¹⁰

- a) Matthew 7:24 says, "Therefore everyone (whoever - NKJV) who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to

⁹ MacArthur, John. [1, 2, 3 John](#). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

¹⁰ Ibid., Hiebert

a wise man who built his house on the rock.
(Matthew 7:24)

b) Matthew 10:32 says, “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.”

2. The effectual call (v.15)

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God.”

Much stress is laid on this confession, because the false teachers denied the reality of the incarnation.¹¹

It is not the confession of merely intellectual assent, but a confession that involves the commitment of one’s person to the Lord Jesus Christ.¹²

The aorist verb “confess” denotes a specific, and apparently public, confession born of an inner persuasion. It is a response to the apostolic

¹¹ Adam Clarke

¹² MacDonald, William. *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.

testimony recorded in verse 14. The verb, which basically means “to say the same thing,” denotes a personal acceptance of the reality being confessed. It is not merely a group’s rote recital of a creedal confession.¹³

What John is doing is linking back into verses 2, 3.

This confession is open evidence for the invisible inward union with God. Its substance is “Jesus Christ having come in flesh” (4:2), and this is proof that one is “from God,” “born from him” (2:29), or in other words, “that Jesus is the Son of God.”¹⁴

Those who specifically heard the effectual call specifically confessed:

- a) John confessed - John 1:34, “I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”
- b) Nathaniel confessed - John 1:49, “Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of

¹³ Ibid., Hiebert

¹⁴ Ibid., Lenski

God; You are the King of Israel.”

- c) Martha confessed - John 11:27, She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.”
- d) The blind man Jesus healed confessed - John 9:35-38, Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” 36 He answered, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” 37 Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.” 38 And he said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped Him.
- e) The Ethiopian eunuch confessed - Acts 8:37, [And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”]

3. The eternal consequences (vv.15-16)

“God abides in him, and he in God.”

The greatest marvel is God abiding in us and we in Him.

a) The indwelling of God in us (v.15)

(1) John already mentioned this abiding in 1 John 3:24

(2) He mentions it in John 15:4-10, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 "If you keep

My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.”

b) The assurance of His love (v.16)

“We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

(1) John has used the word “known” (ginosko) many times in this epistle to speak of “experiential knowledge” and “understanding”.¹⁵ It means “to recognize or understand completely.”¹⁶

(2) “Believe” (pisteuo) is another favorite word of John's. It means “to believe, trust”,¹⁷ “to be convinced of something.”¹⁸

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(3) 1 John 3:24 says, “The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He

¹⁵ Kittle

¹⁶ W.E. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary

¹⁷ Ibid., Kittle

¹⁸ BAGD

abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”

- (4) Romans 5:5 says, “and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

CONCLUSION

1. Do you have God’s assurance of His love?
2. If you have confessed that Jesus is the Son of God you do!
3. If not, confess Him now and surrender your life to Him.
4. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”
5. Let’s pray.
6. Lord’s Supper