

**1<sup>st</sup> John 4: 18; “Perfect Love casts out Fear”, Sermon # 19 in the series –  
“Behold What Manner of Love”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall  
on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The last time I spoke to you from this chapter, I said to you that there are two results of love being made perfect, and being perfected in us. The first was, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment. And the second, which we will talk about at this hour, is the ability to cast out our fears by perfect love. The statement is made in verse 18, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.” And “the one who fears has not been perfected in love.” I would like you to be able to consider with me, now, the power of true Christian love. 1<sup>st</sup> – God’s love in the Christian is powerful because there is no fear in it. 2<sup>nd</sup> – God’s love is powerful because it teaches us to cast out fear. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – God’s love in the Christian is powerful because it teaches Him humility. I want us to look briefly at each of these points before we partake of the Lord’s Supper.

**1<sup>st</sup> – God’s love in the Christian is powerful because there is no fear in it.**

In past sermons from this chapter, I have been speaking to you about the love of God for us, His believing people. We have seen that God’s love is a particular kind of love. It is not simply a humanistic care for the welfare of other people, as valuable a part of God’s love as that is. It is God giving His Son to die on the cross for our sins so that we would become, after our conversion to Jesus Christ, different people. Verse 10 says, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” We become people who ourselves are able to love others with the same kind of love that we have been shown. God’s love becomes “our companion” as Lenski says in his commentary. That love, “has been perfected in us”, it says in verse 12. And in verse 17 we are told that it “is being perfected in us”. R.S. Candlish says in his commentary, “The exact rendering is, ‘Herein is perfected the love with us.’ “Here in verse 17, it is the verb that is used, and it is used so as to denote a work or process brought to a full and final issue.” Christ’s love, we know, was and is a perfect love.

Everything that Christ did while He was here upon the earth was done out of love to God and love to His neighbor. The Love of God which is poured out in our hearts because of Jesus Christ, is a perfect grace which, and when God gives it to us as believers, He continues to think about how we are using it. The real question that we must ask ourselves is this – Is our obedience to God motivated supremely by love to God and a sincere desire to love other people, especially the brethren? Does this translate into loving attitudes, loving words, and actions toward people around us? What do you do when the pressure is upon you to think badly of others and speak against them? Are you willing to lay down your life for the brethren or will you only live to yourself? These are things that God is looking at, and which are being perfected in us. God is perfect in love. His love toward us is perfect and complete in Christ. But our love toward Him and others is not yet perfect. It is being perfected.

“There is no fear in love,” the text says. Love by its very nature is a grace which looks out from ourselves to another and looks out from ourselves, for the people around us. Love does not focus primarily on itself. Fear is primarily focused on one’s self and what we think might happen to us in various situations. The context of the verses that we are studying shows us that when love has been perfected in us, and when love is being perfected in us, that we do not need to fear the Day of Judgment. We may have committed many sins in the past. We may presently be struggling greatly against some sinful tendencies in our heart. But when we have Christ, then we may have boldness to come right up to the throne of our Savior on the Day of Judgment and we will not have any fear that our sins will be brought up. Why? Because we have trusted in Jesus Christ. And once we have been saved, we know that it is the right thing to do, to continue to bring all of our sins to Him so that we might know daily cleansing. We perceive that He died

for sinners and for sins, and we recognize that in many ways we fall short of God's glory every day. But we believe that our love can be perfected; that we will become more loving over time as we abide in Christ and dwell upon the way that He loved. We look to Christ for the power to love, and as we do this, we then come to see how important it is to "do all that we do, in love". 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16: 13 and 14 – "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong." "Let all that you do be one with love."

When you come to Christ in prayer, in the privacy of your own heart, before you partake of the Supper today, remember that He has died so that you might be cleansed of anger, and bitterness, and wrath against people around you. He has died so that you might be freed from the guilt and the power of all of these sins, and be with His love. "I lay my sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God; He bears them all, and frees me, from the accursed load." "I bring my guilt to Jesus, to wash my crimson stains, white in His blood most precious, till not a spot remains." "I rest my soul on Jesus, this weary soul of mine; His right hand me embraces, I on his breast recline, I love the Name of Jesus, Immanuel, Christ the Lord; like fragrance on the breezes His Name abroad is poured." (Hymn 430) (Horatius Bonar)

So we find that this is the way to repentance and the way to exhibit greater love to people around us; we come to believe the love that God has for us. He has adopted us into His favor, and He has adopted us into His family, and He shows us the love of a Father. We do not fear God's punishment any longer, and so we are able to love. It is hard for you to love, or even to learn to love, when you are often afraid. It is hard to draw near to God and to believe that He can love you, unless He Himself has convinced you that you are loved and accepted in Christ. Many of us have been taught to love by a godly parent who showed us that they cared for us when we were sinners. How much more so, God. Some of us may have been taught to fear by a parent who did not show us God's love. This can be overcome by faith in Jesus Christ. God has loved sinners in Jesus Christ. And He shows them love and He gives them love, and He will do so for each one who comes by faith to Jesus, even now.

There is no fear in the very nature of love itself. God is love; there is no fear in God. You say – That is because He is all-powerful, and He is the one who, because He is all-powerful, would have no reason to be afraid of anything. You say – I am not all-powerful and so I have good reason to be afraid of many things. Yes, this is true, but to the degree that the love of God is poured out into your heart, and to the degree that His love is being perfected in your experience, the more it will become true that you "abiding in God's love". The more that you are delivered from fear, the more that you will be able to love others. This is the holy principle that we are looking at. This we learn from Jesus Christ. And, if we are a true Christian, we will learn it very practically and very thoroughly.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – God's love is powerful because it teaches us to cast out fear.**

"Perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment, or punishment, and the one who fears has not been perfected in love." How does this work in the life of the true Christian? Well, I think that casting out fear begins with strengthening ourselves in God, on a daily on-going basis. Turn with me over to Psalm 34. So far, we have only looked at the principle of love. We have looked at God Himself, who is love and perfect in love. And we have looked at Christ and seen how He was perfect in His love, which is the basis of our changing, and then becoming like Him in love. But how do we make progress in love when we are afraid? Psalm 34 is the place to start. "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." "My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear it and be glad." "Oh magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." This is where we begin. We begin with making our boast in the Lord. We will boast in His strength, His ability, His wisdom, and His power to save us and to help us. We will begin by praising God for the power and the strength of His grace toward us. We must not only believe it in principle. We must with our mind and with our lips, acknowledge it before Him in praise and prayer.

In order to cast out fear we must, and we will, magnify the Lord. This is the beginning of the casting out of fear. We see and believe God as being bigger than our fears. We ask and invite others to magnify the Lord with us. We come into the Church of Jesus Christ so that our praises and prayers with other Christians, who love us, are joined together. This is the importance of regularly going to church and being with God's people in worship. We become afraid when we isolate ourselves, when we focus on our limited ability and resources to be able to deal with our fears. But our love is perfected in us to look outside of ourselves to God for the answer, and remembering that Christ and His love are with us. Now look at verse 4. "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." "They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were unashamed." "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those that fear Him, and delivers them."

Here we find two different types of fear being mentioned. There is the fear of the Lord mentioned as "those who fear Him". And then there is the fear that comes from being unable to deal with our troubles; either sin in ourselves or sin working in others towards us. We are delivered from our unholy fears by prayer. Prayer is an act of faith which is called here "fearing Him". Listen also to Psalm 56, verse 1. "Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; fighting all day he oppresses me." "My enemies would hound me all day, for there are many who fight against me, O Most High." But then what does David say that he is going to do about it? He has all of this fear in relation to what the Philistines are doing to him; he has been captured by them. Verse 3 tells us. "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You." "In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear." "What can flesh do to me?" You see here that it was prayer and deliberately deciding to believe in God and His word, that was the way that David dealt with fear. And you can do the same. But you can only do it if you will exercise your love toward God, knowing and believing all that He can do for you. Perfect love will cast out the fear of being punished by God, because you believe the love that God has for you.

There is a holy fear of God, and there is an unholy fear of God. The holy fear of God believes in God, loves God, trusts in God, and the promises of His word, because it has seen God's love demonstrated in Christ. The true Christian has not only seen it, but he experiences it on a regular basis, because of the Holy Spirit's presence; His pouring the love of God out into your heart. Christ's love and His presence are his companions. An unholy fear is a fear that will not trust in God, that will not rest in God and His word. A person rather chooses to think selfishly, and to doubt God. That person says to themselves – God will not supply me with grace to deliver me from my fears. In this frame of mind, where fear reigns, it reigns there because of unbelief. But faith will say just the opposite. Philippians 1: 19 – "For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ..." It says – "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4: 13)

When fear reigns in your heart, the love of God in Christ Jesus is not being focused on, or remembered by you. But when it is focused on, and remembered, then this perfect love of Christ, casts out fear by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Faith is then working by means of love, to cast out fear. Unholy fear does not draw near to God in prayer and praise because it is filled with doubts about God and His sincerity. Unless this changes, by looking to Jesus Christ, and by believing God's word, that person will be very discouraged, downcast, and actually may become spiritually depressed. If fear rules in the heart continually, it is a good indication, not of salvation, but of a rejection of God and His good ways. This way of continual fear, which is a real distrust of God, lead down to hell.

It says in Revelation 21: 8, "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." The KJV translates the word cowardly as

the “fearful”. Cowards are those who are so fearful that they will not draw near to face what they are afraid of, in the right way. Let it not be said of us that we are fearful in this way. The way to deal with your fears is not to draw back from God, but to draw near to Him. “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you”, it says in the book of James. Unholy fear cannot only not love God, but it cannot love other people. It can only focus on itself. Perfect love to God will cast out fear so that other people can be viewed rightly. I want you to come down front now and we will observe the Supper with this thought that perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – God’s love in the Christian is powerful because it leads him to humility.**

Let us be humble enough people to realize that we need to be here at this table this afternoon. It is very probably true that we may have fears as well as sins that we need to confess to God. Christ has died for us and He has borne our punishment at the cross for our sins. We now have the Holy Spirit, who leads us to humility, to receive all the spiritual grace and blessings which He died to purchase. “But he who fears has not been perfected in love.” To be perfected in love, we must become a humble person, if we are not now. Back in Psalm 34 again, it says this. Verse 11 – “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” It is this holy fear of God, which believes and loves Christ, that casts out fear. What does it lead to? It leads to loving and careful actions. “Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?” “Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.” “Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

These are all acts of the perfect love that is being spoken of, here in 1<sup>st</sup> John. Verse 15 of Psalm 34 says this – “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.” “The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.” “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.” “The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.” This is the perfect love that casts out fear. It is the heart that is broken before God in prayer, crying out to Him for help to do the loving thing towards the person that they are oppressed by and offended by. This is how perfect love casts out fear. It does so by a humility that recognizes that it is all too easy to speak against others. But it takes love and grace to view those people who trouble us with the compassion and love that we would want to be viewed with. This takes the grace of Christ. This takes sacrificial, supernatural, humble, persevering love. We do not seek to have our own way in things like that. We humbly pray to cast out our fear and to be given the grace to love. It is only Christ that can give you this. It is only Christ who can heal broken or strained relationships. But it brings glory to God when we cast out our fears by the means of His perfect love.

"My God is reconciled; His pardoning voice I hear; He owns me for his child, I can no longer fear; With confidence I now draw nigh, with confidence I now draw nigh, and "Father, Abba, Father!" cry." (Hymn 223)