

TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

Will You Be Bold on Judgment Day?

1 John 4:17-21

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In seminary they teach you in homiletics that you need to do something to engage your audience at the start so they will pay attention for the rest of the time that you preach. I have never been good at that and I am also not sure of how true that is. The idea is that you come in and tell a funny story and get people to laugh or some kind of a tear jerker story, I don't know, but something that would kind of move and manipulate your audience to engage the topic at hand.

Well, come on, particularly with the passage that is exalted in its theme as it is today, fleshly carnal means of introducing the message are not the way to get people to think in spiritual lofty biblical terms. And so we have to be aware of the limitations of what an introduction can do for the message.

But I will say this to you, you are all basically like me, the same as me, you come in with various distractions. Sometimes you come in joyful when things have gone well or you have been in a particular week of walking with the Lord and come in encouraged and joyful or you come in discouraged, come in weighed down by trials, even in despair. I want to tell you that this passage here today, where ever you are at, is going to elevate your joy in to a different stratosphere because of the glory and grandeur of what we have to talk about today and what the apostle John leads us in to. And if you are in despair, this is going to be light in to the darkness, this is going to open up a different perspective that you need because in light of the things that we are going to see today, we are going to see there is no cause for despair, there is no cause for fear, there is no cause for worry because of our great position in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So if you are down in despair this morning, if you think that God is fighting against you, if you think it seems that heaven is hidden from your eyes, come to this passage this morning with open ears and with an open heart and find in this passage in the word of God the solace for your soul and the food that would energize you for a very long time.

1 John chapter 4 is where we are at. This is not a special text chosen for this morning, it is simply the next text as we continue on in our study of 1 John. If you are visiting here, God has providentially brought you here for this very time. And if you are not visiting here, God has brought you providentially here for this time, for this passage. We talk about that a lot in our home, you know it's providential that you got just the parking spot you need. Well, it's providential if you don't get the parking spot that you need. Everything is under God's providence whether it works out the way that you wanted it to or not, but this is a special act of

God's providence for you to be here for this text this morning. 1 John 4:17-21. I am very delighted and excited to be able to open this for you this morning. 1 John 4:17:

By this love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the Day of Judgment, because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love. The perfect love casts out fear because fear involves punishment and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love because He first loved us. 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. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Here is a question that will lift you out of the day to day world and put your focus where it probably needs to be that is provoked by the words of this passage. Will you be bold on Judgment Day? When the day comes where God brings men in to His presence to judge them, are you going to be bold in that day or will you shrink away in fear and in terror? Christians should anticipate, Christians should expect, Christians should be confident that when the day comes to appear in the immediate presence of God that they are going to be bold, that they are going to be confident, that they are going to have a sense that "I belong in the presence of God here now and the fact that He is executing judgment against sinners is not a cause for me." It is an amazing thought, amazing statement. But if you are a Christian, you should anticipate appearing before God with full assurance of receiving eternal blessing, full absolute confidence of receiving eternal blessing when that day comes and when that appointed hour comes, and this passage explains to us why that is.

We are going to see in this passage two results of being a true Christian, two results of coming to true salvation and I am going to outline this simply.

The first thing that we see in this passage, the first result that flows from a profound understanding of true salvation is:

1. You Should Have Confidence in the Presence of God

An understanding true salvation as a Christian should lead you to confidence, unreserved, undiminished confidence in the presence of God as you think about yourself in the presence of God, as you think about coming judgment, you look at that coming day with boldness without fear. And that's what John is writing to promote here in this particular passage.

Now, we have been going through chapter 4 and last week we ended at verse 16. Just to set the context for today's passage, look at verse 16 with me, John says:

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

Speaking of that mutual indwelling, us in Christ and Christ in us. There is a mutual indwelling that is the result of God's love for us. God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our lives, in our minds, our affections, our thinking, our hearts are anchored in the love

of God. One of the things that we said was that this love of God is not just a sentimental affection, we should not think about it in those romantic sentimental terms. When John in 1 John chapter 4 is talking about the love of God, he is saying the same thing when he says God loved us and He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. When we think about God's love, as a Christian we should think about it biblically and theologically, saying that the love of God, yes, you immediately connect that with the fact that Christ came and offered Himself as a sacrifice to turn away the wrath of God from our sins. Look at chapter 4:10 where it 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.

The sacrifice that turned away the wrath of God from our sins. So when John is talking about the love of God here, he is talking about it in a salvific sense, he is talking about it in a theological sense, he is talking about it in a redemptive sense that has nothing to do with the current circumstances of your life. When he says God loves us, he is saying the same thing that God loved us and sent His Son to be the sacrifice for our sins. He sent Christ so we could be reconciled to God.

Now, that produces confidence in the presence of God as you are going to see. He goes from that mutual indwelling, this love of God, this propitiation for our sins, he flows from that and starts to unfold for us the spiritual benefit of being saved, the spiritual benefit that that mutual indwelling guaranties to us as believers in Christ. Look at verse 17, this is phenomenal, this is absolutely phenomenal, this makes everything else pale by comparison, everything else pales by comparison to this. And I say this knowing the depths of trials that some of you are going through. Even those darkest hours pale in comparison to what John says, what the Bible says in 1 John 4:17:

By this love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the Day of Judgment because as He is, so also are we in the world.

One of the goals of God's love and as he talks about the love being perfected with us, he is talking about it coming to maturity, accomplishing the purpose for which God has loved us. "By this love is perfected with us..." This is where love reaches its goal so that with this goal in mind, that we would have confidence in the Day of Judgment, that we would look forward to the Day of Judgment with the sense of assurance and confidence that that day is going to go well for us, that we would not perish in the fiery wrath of God when He unleashes His fury against sinners. That is one of the primary goals of God's love for us in this life is that we would be confident, that we would be bold as we think about this, that there would be a core in our heart that is without fear in light of the coming judgment of God.

Let's step back for a moment and ask ourselves this question. Can you really be like that? Is it really possible for you to be without fear as you think about coming judgment? Because look, coming judgment is going to be terrifying. The Bible describes the coming day, the appointed time of God's judgment as a time of absolute terror and distress for sinners throughout the world whether they have heard the gospel or not.

Listen to how Zephaniah, Zephaniah, yes, an Old Testament book, chapter 1 describes it. We will study Zephaniah one day, I have plans for that. But in Zephaniah 1:17-18, speaking about that final coming judgment of God, the Lord is speaking and He says:

I will bring distress on men so that they will walk like the blind because they have sinned against the Lord and their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the Lord's wrath and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one of all the inhabitants of the earth.

There is a comprehensive universal judgment that God is going to bring upon mankind without exception, in general and men individually are going to face the judgment of God because we have sinned and fall short of His glory, because we have not loved Him nor given honor to Him as we should. As Romans 1 says we see the creation all around us, but we do not honor Him or give thanks. Lack of gratitude in and of itself is sufficient means for someone to experience God's eternal judgment upon them.

Listen to how the apostle Paul described it in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 beginning in verse 7:

The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day.

Hebrews says:

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

And so there is this appointed time in the presence of the righteous God where sinners will give an account and receive judgment upon their souls, irreversible, irrevocable judgment.

Now, how can you and I, in light of that, have confidence when we ourselves are part of the guilty problem, we ourselves are part of the guilty mass? How is it that we can have confidence in judgment as believers in Christ? What is it that is going to shield us as we go through that day, and not only go through that day, but through that day with boldness—this is the tension between these two concepts that is almost inconceivable.

John tells us the ground at the end of 1 John 4:17, we are going to spend most of our time on this phrase here. Look at the end of verse 17: Love is perfected, we might have confidence on the Day of Judgment because—here is the ground, here is the reason that we can have confidence in the Day of Judgment:

...because as He is, (as Christ is,) so also are we in this world.

As Christ is, so also are we in this world. Now at first glance it seems to be a little bit of an enigmatic statement, it seems a little hard to understand. And if you are just reading through 1 John as part of your regular approach to reading the Bible on a consistent basis, you just breeze right through that phrase and hardly give it another thought. But look, this is the most important thing in the universe what we are about to describe right here, nothing matters more than this to your eternal soul because we are talking about what is going to happen to you on the Day of Judgment. This Day of Judgment that we just talked about and saw from the scriptures that is going to be a day of distress and retribution, terrifying retribution on the inhabitants of the earth and this text says that you and I can know confidence when that day comes, that day that is coming. And we can have confidence in that day and trust me, nothing else is going to matter at that point except getting through that day safely and on to the other side—that's the only thing that is going to matter.

And so, that which would give us confidence, that which would give us understanding, that which would be the key to unlock the door through which we go through that judgment safely is the most important thing to your eternal soul—nothing else matters than that. And if you know that you have that key as it were, then everything else pales by comparison, whatever else happens here over these next few years in your life, your fleeting life on this earth. Nothing else matters because that day is going to be a day of glory and honor rather than a Day of Judgment and distress. So this is the most important thing in the world and look at what he says, that's why we are going to consider this carefully. Here is our confidence, because He is, as Christ is so also are we in this world. We have confidence because as Christ is so also are we in this world.

What is it about the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to confidence for us? What does it mean when John says because as He is? Somehow your confidence is tied in to, is exclusively linked to whatever it means that Christ is—that is the ground of your assurance. What does it mean that He is and so also are we in this world?

I want to dismiss something rather quickly. There are prominent commentators who would say that what John is talking about here, what our ground of confidence is the fact that we as believers love one another and that our confidence is tied to the fact that we are somehow replicating the character of Christ in the way that we love one another and they say this is what the context points to. That's not right, that cannot possibly be right because John is talking about a confidence that is bold, a confidence that is without fear. Let me ask you this. Do you want your confidence about that great coming Day of Judgment to be tied to the way that you love from day to day this life? Do you want that to be the final ground of your confidence? Hay, I have seen some of you drive on the freeway, you don't want to go there. (laughter) That is not your conduct, even your love for the brethren is not the final ground of your confidence and he is not pointing to your conduct as the ground for your confidence here, he is pointing to who Christ is as the ground of your confidence.

Now having said that, the fact that we are saved, we will see love coming out and that is an evidence of the reality of our salvation—we have said that for weeks in here as we have gone through 1 John 3 and 4—that is an evidence of salvation and there must be love in your life for the brethren. But that is not what he is talking about here, he is pointing to Christ as the ground

of your confidence, he is pointing to Christ as the example, Christ as the ground of confidence and your confidence flows from who Christ is not who you are.

If you want to talk about it theologically, just to throw this in, he is talking about the difference between imputation and impartation here. It is about the work of Christ imputed to you not what the measure of righteousness is that is imparted to you as you go through your growth and sanctification.

What does it mean that “He is”? I have got to tell you, this is glorious, this is just glorious. What does it mean that “He is”? When you have a question or a really crucial question like that that comes up in the Bible verse, step back and look at the context. Look at what the author has been saying beforehand leading up to this. What has he said earlier in this letter about who Christ is and what Christ is. Look at that as your answer to what this means. You don’t have to dig in to anything that is beyond your realm and your capacity to understand. Even as a young person just new to the Bible, you can see this on the pages of scripture for yourself and see what it means and I am going to show you that.

What does it mean that “He is”? And why is that the ground of our confidence? Oh, follow me, beloved, follow me as I say this and I’ll lay five things out for you really quickly. Who is He? What does it mean that “He is”? What is the present condition of Christ that gives us confidence in this world? Five things here under this confidence in the presence of God, why we can be confident in the presence of God is tied to “Christ is” and who is He, what is He, what does it mean He is.

A. He is our advocate in heaven

Look at chapter 2:1, it says:

If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.

What does it mean that “Christ is”? Where is He now? He is in heaven in the full presence of God, advocating on our behalf, representing us in the Father’s presence. He is our advocate in heaven. That’s who He is, that’s what He is, that’s what He is doing. He is in heaven right now in the immediate presence of God the Father, representing His people to the Father—that’s who He is.

B. He is righteous

Look at chapter 2:29, it says:

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Along those same lines, drop down to chapter 3:5:

You know that He (meaning Christ) appeared in order to take away sins and in Him there is no sin.

So, stay with me as we are building this together here. He is our advocate, He is there and He is righteous. He is without sin as our advocate in the immediate presence of God the Father, He is our advocate, He is righteous.

C. He is the one who came to give us life

Look at chapter 4:9:

By this the love of God was manifested in us that God has sent His only Son in to the world so that we might live through Him.

The whole purpose that God sent Christ in to the world, so we might live and not die—eternally in the face of God’s judgment. He came so that we might live. He is the one who came to give us life.

D. He is the propitiation for our sins

Look at chapter 4:10:

And this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

He is our propitiation. He is Himself the sacrifice that turned away the wrath of God from us. He is the one who paid the penalty for our sins in full.

E. He is the savior of the world

Verse 14:

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world.

By very nature, Christ is the savior of the world. By very nature, He is our propitiation. By very nature, He is the one who came to give us life. By very nature, He is righteous. By very nature, He is advocating as our high priest in heaven, interceding for us. And this Christ, this glorious magnificent Christ in the context of verse 17, this is the one in whom we abide and He abides in us, we are in union with Him, perfect union with this Christ.

Now, watch this, go back to verse 17, he says “As He is, so also are we in the world.” Think with me here. Where Christ is right now is at the right hand of God and God fully accepts Him in His presence. God will never cast Him out, cast Him away—why will He do that? He is His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. Sinners cast away from the presence of God—yes, absolutely. It will be a terrifying day, I hope you are not one of them. But Christ? Never. Christ? No. Christ is in intimate, face to face communion with the Father right now. Christ is

fully accepted in the father's presence. Now, that is His status, that is what He has earned, that is why God raised Him from the dead, because He accepts Him. The Father accepts the Son, He loves the Son, He always has and He always will.

Why does that give you confidence? Your status before God corresponds perfectly to the status of Christ before God. If you are a believer in Christ, you stand complete in Him. The Father accepts you now even in this world because He accepts you on the merits of Christ and He has even brought you in to His family, John said. Look at chapter 3:1. Stay with me here, notice the "we are" in this:

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us that we would be called children of God and we are.

(Verse 17) Just as Christ is, so also are we in this world.

We belong to God because of Christ. We are children adopted in to the family, never to be cast out. What John is saying here in chapter 4:17:

As Christ is, so also are we in this world.

He is making a statement that the work of salvation is complete, it is finished. And Christ now stands in the presence of God, having finished the work that God gave Him to do. And in salvation as our advocate, the merits of His work are applied to your account and that is the basis of your status before God. Listen, let me put it to you this way, simple question, you can't get this wrong. Does Jesus Christ belong in the presence of God the Father? Yes or no? Do you see that? Because He has redeemed you and made you His own, do you see that? Because He purchased you out of sin and brought you to Himself, do you see that? Because He is your propitiation, do you see that? Because He is the savior of those who believe in Him, do you see that? Because He abides in you and you abide in Him, do you see that and go back? Christ belongs in the presence of the Father and you belong to Christ, therefore you equally belong in the presence of the Father. You belong in the presence of the father just as much as Jesus Christ does—it's amazing because what Christ has done God has counted to your account. And so just as Christ enjoys that status now as He is in the presence of the Father, the work of salvation completes it, you belong to Him. What John is saying is just as Christ now belongs to the father in heaven, you enjoy that status now here in this world.

Let's tease us out just a little bit further. What does that mean? God will never condemn Christ. God would never send Christ away in judgment—the thought of that is beyond absurd. To say that you belong to Christ means that God will never send you away in judgment either. God will never condemn you if you belong to Christ. The Bible says in Romans 8:1:

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Day of Judgment will be a day of condemnation, but there is no condemnation for those of us that are in Christ because just as He is in the presence of the Father and belongs there, so do we. And that's why we could die this moment (don't do that on me) you could die this moment and

the Bible says you go immediately in to the presence of God, why, because you belong there. Christ has earned the title to presence in heaven on your behalf.

Listen to the familiar words of Paul in Romans chapter 8:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That is why we have confidence. Your confidence is not about how you loved this past week, your confidence is grounded in the settled eternal work of Christ who now is in the presence of the Father. And the fact that He is in the presence of the Father and we belong to Him shows that we belong there too and that is why there is no fear of judgment. We follow in the wake of the work of our risen Lord. The merit and the position of Christ and the presence of the Father belong to us because Jesus did His work for us.

If you were a guest in my home and we were around having a meal together, enjoying fellowship together, no one could come from outside and tell you that you needed to get out. My home is my domain so to speak and if I accept you in to my home, you belong there. Well, in a much greater sense, heaven is God's domain and if He has received Christ there and He accepts us on the basis of Christ and says you belong there, then no one could cast you out. And so in the great, fathomless, measureless love of God for sinners like you, whom has provided a means for you to go through the Day of Judgment without fear because He looks not at you and your sin, but He looks at Christ as your representative. He looks at Christ as the one who stands for you before the Father's presence and you know what He sees? He sees your name written in the wounds, He sees your name in the context of the glory of Christ, He sees your life hidden in Christ.

The Father looks at the glory of Christ, He looks at His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased and He sees your name there and says yes, that one belongs here because Christ is here on their behalf. That is the perfection of our salvation, that is why we have confidence in the Day of Judgment, a confidence without fear, without hesitation because I am confident in Christ and because He came for me. And as He is accepted in the Father, I carry that same acceptance status before God in this world. And one day, that faith is going to become sight. And we are going to look up and we are going to somehow, I don't know where we are going to look, but we are going to see Christ. And it is not going to seem strange, it is not going to seem alien when that happens. No, quite to the contrary, it is going to be the most natural thing that you had ever experienced since you became a Christian because that was the goal for which you were saved was to be in the Father's presence. And there is going to be somehow a sense when we come in to that great eternal moment where we exhale and we say it is so much better than I dreamed—

that is your destiny in Christ. We own it now, it belongs to us now just as Christ is in heaven, we own it now, the fullness is just a little bit further down the road.

When you understand those things, when you understand the perfection of the work of Christ on behalf of us, there is no room for you to be afraid any longer of judgment. If you understand that, they you see that is judgment is a settled issue and that's what John says here in verse 18. Look at verse 18, he says:

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

When you understand that you belong to Christ and that Christ belongs in heaven and that therefore you belong in the presence of the Father, there is no more room for fear. You understand the love of God that He has poured out on us unworthy sinners and you realize it is settled, there is nothing else to be said. There is no more condemnation that could possibly come, therefore when that happens in the language of this verse, fear of judgment is flung out the door, it is cast out, it is thrown away. You can't be afraid any more of judgment when you understand the work of Christ on your behalf—it is settled.

And for those of you that still have a lingering fear about judgment, understand that that is a certain sign that something is wrong in your understanding either of salvation or the love and faithfulness of God. There is no defect in the perfect work of Christ. There is no defect in the love of God. There is no defect, there is no possibility of someone slipping through the net, of being lost after they are in Christ, there is no defect anywhere in the perfect plan of God's salvation, there is no defect in Christ's perfect work—it is settled for ever. And if there is still fear in you, what John is saying is that you are missing it. It is not that you need to try harder, it is not that you need to get up another hour earlier for your quiet time, it is that you are missing the fundamental point of salvation. The whole point of God's love is that you would have confidence and that fear would be removed because fear, look at verse 18 with me. If you think about judgment and you find yourself afraid for the security of your own soul, what you are saying is "I'm still afraid that I might be punished, that God would punish me. I'm not sure about that." That's what John is saying to you when he says in verse 18, the one who fears like that, the one who has a reservation about this, the one who is still concerned about punishment enough to cause fear in his heart, that one is not perfected in love because the whole goal of love is to bring you to a spiritual maturity where you understand that these things are settled and therefore the fires of judgment can never singe a hair on your head.

To say anything less than that, to question that, to doubt that is to doubt the very perfection of Christ, to doubt the very perfection of His work, to doubt the perfect way in which we He is accepted in heaven by the father—there is no room for that kind of fear in Christian life. Judgment on you is impossible when you belong to Christ because God has poured out without measure all of His eternal saving intentions on your life. He has given you the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as a deposit that guaranties the final payment—you are secure, you are confident, you are unafraid. Think about this, the day that will bring terror on the world is the day of confidence and boldness for us.

Now, we should think about that and be very humbled and it should occur to us that what John says in verse 19 is true, we love because He first loved us. We love God, we love each other, our love has to be a response to His not something we initiated and therefore God rewarded us with this. When you really think about it, it is just such a blasphemous thing to think that somehow God was responding to my effort in order to save me—that's just so dumb, I mean it's really dumb. Think about the glory of heaven, think about Christ in the presence of the holy throne room of God in face to face communion with Him and a man on earth would say "Well, you know, my good works somewhat are a little bit more than my bad works and so therefore I deserve all of the glories of that." Oh, please! That just makes me nauseous to think that. There is no way that that is true, there is no way that the excellencies and the glories of heaven could be a reward for something that you did.

No, no. We dwell in this kind of love because God took the initiative, God loved us first and the one who thinks that he deserves it is one who is saying that he knows nothing about His love at all. The one who says he deserves this "I've been good enough" is the one who is saying "I'm a sinner, going to hell, God is going to judge me." (in audible word) when you encounter that in conversation. "I think I've been good enough." "Oh, so you're saying that you're going to hell." Respond that way and see what they say—I'm serious, but they need to think. We don't deserve that, do we? You deserve the glories of heaven? You deserve the glories of Christ? He deserved to stand and belong in the eternal throne room of God in all of the majestic glories for all of eternity. And you are going to say you deserve that? No, no. We are recipients not initiators. God was the one who first came to you with regenerating, saving grace. While it is true that you must exercise faith in Christ, but you put your faith in Christ only because God first moved on you.

So I ask you this morning, have you believed in Christ for your salvation? Do you know this confidence? Will you be bold on Judgment Day? Answer carefully, answer thoughtfully, it is the only question that matters. I invite you to Christ today. I ask God to open your heart just like He did Lydia in the Book of Acts, to open your heart, your stubborn heart to the truth of what we are saying that you would respond in humble repentant faith that receives Christ for all of the years. Because you can know this same confidence and love, I want that for you. God invites you to that confidence and love, the amazing love.

Now, true salvation leads to that kind of confidence without a doubt as you read the scriptures, you see how God unfolds this. But it does not end with that internal confidence, it does not end it there. There is a second result that comes out of true salvation as well and it is the one that we have been talking about for weeks now. John goes back to this point, true salvation results in confidence in the presence of God:

2. True Salvation Results in Love in the Presence of Believers

Not only our confidence about judgment, but our love for believers that true salvation produces. Look at verse 20 with me, he says:

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.

John has said so much about love since chapter 3 verse 10, and yet he returns to this theme once more. He has talked about this over and over again for a period of almost 25-30 verses by this point. And so it shows us the prominence and the importance of this theme. The one who has truly been redeemed by God is going to love the brethren as well. You know and I know that there are people that say they love God and claim to be Christians, but they have no use for the church—too many hypocrites there. Look, that is a major fail, error, that does not compute, that doesn't add up because when you come to Christ, you realize that you have come as an undeserving sinner and the love of God poured out upon you. And so you come in to the church and you see imperfect people like you, surrounded and yet you find yourself that you love them because you realize that you are not so perfect yourself and you have that common bond in Christ that gives you shared affection. And so the Christian who has received Christ will love after the manner of Christ, the Christ who said I have come and gave my life for ransom for many. The true Christian must, will, definitely, without exception have a love that spreads out also, it doesn't simply receive the love of Christ and stay in his shell. No, this is the love that causes you to reach out in love to others. John says if you fail in the visible task of loving the Christian in front of you, then it is absurd to claim that you love the invisible God who is not in front of you. You do what is in front of you and you love the people that are in front of you, that is the expression of your love of God. And if your life is not like that, your claim to know Christ—verse 20—“liar”. Pretty blunt.

So love is the natural result of receiving the love of God in our hearts, it is also His command to us as well. Look at verse 21:

And this command we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

This is the command, this is what Jesus commanded to His disciples before His crucifixion—“This is my commandment that you love one another.” And so love is natural for us, but it is also a matter of obedience to the command of God, the God who saved us, the God that we say we love, the God we submitted to, He commands us, we say yes, of course, it is not contrary to our desires, we want to fulfill that.

Beloved, confidence in the presence of God, love in the presence of believers, isn't it wonderful to be a Christian? Isn't it wonderful to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb? Isn't it wonderful to have no fear of the prospect of coming judgment? Our sins have been forgiven. And more than forgiveness, God has given us a legal status of perfect righteousness, the very status that our Lord Himself enjoys and it is by nature, we look forward to the Day of Judgment with confidence. We abide in God's love and have the joy of loving one another.

One thought, thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we do thank you for this indescribable gift. We thank you for the perfection of your gift of salvation. We thank you for the perfection of Christ and look to Him and Him alone as our confidence in light of judgment. Oh, we know father that on our own the judgment should have, could have, would have fallen on our heads, but it is not going to now because you first loved us. The glory of what we discussed here today Father will echo to all of eternity, it will unfold to us an unending bliss, an unending joy, gather around your throne and we will sing the praises of the Lamb loudly and gladly with all the redeemed through all the ages, not by works that our hands have done, but by the work reflected in the hands of Christ and those wounds which were on our behalf. Oh God, we do thank you. We are confident in Christ and we do want to love the brothers even as you have commanded us to do. And so with hearts bursting forth with the hallelujahs that are only a precursor to those that will be expressed in heaven, Father we thank you and commit these things to you.

And we ask again Father for those that are still here with the stoney stubborn heart, would you work on their heart and open the doors to the gospel so that they might be saved. Oh God, it is just unthinkable that someone would hear these things and still end up in eternal perdition. No God, work by your Spirit in their hearts and bring them to this faith. There is room for one more in the hallelujah chorus Father. There is room for one more in the breadth of your mercy. So have mercy on that one or those ones here in this room that are still stiff-necked against you. Convict then and bring them to repentance so that they would know this joy and confidence which the rest of us share. We ask this for your glory and in the powerful, glorious, wonderful name of Jesus. Amen.