

Will You Be Confident at God's Judgment?

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We are teaching through the book of 1 John and I would invite you to turn to 1 John 4 as we've come to the end of chapter 4 in 1 John as we have been teaching over the past several months out of this great epistle which clarifies the nature of true salvation. And one of the things that John says, the reason that he wrote this letter was is that he wanted you to know that if you believe in the name of the Son of God that you have eternal life. He's writing to produce assurance and he's writing to instill confidence in true believers about their spiritual state and as we come to this passage here today, we're reaching one of the pinnacles, we're reaching one of the top mountain peaks in the entire letter about the profound essence of Christian assurance and the profound nature of Christian confidence that comes from understanding and believing in our great Lord and Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. To understand what he has done for us settles the issue of fear forever.

Look at chapter 4, verse 17. Our passage will go down through verse 21 this morning. The Bible says that,

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. 18 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. 19 We love, because He first loved us. 20 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. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

As a preliminary thought as we approach this passage, what I want you to see as we look at verses 17 and 18 as we just kind of glanced down there at the start of the message here this morning, what I want you to see is that nagging, abiding or controlling fear is not intended to be the spirit of the true Christian life. If you are a person that is marked by fear, you fear what death will bring, you walk in fear over what God thinks about you, understand that that is not the way God intends for the Christian life to be lived out. That is not the spirit that animates true growing maturing Christians. We're not people of arrogance, we're not to boastful, we're not proud of our spiritual attainments. We

understand that we are spiritually bankrupt before God apart from Christ but our confidence flows from a certain assurance of the perfection of Christ and the perfection of the salvation that he purchased for us on the cross and when our confidence is grounded in our perfect God-man Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, then that takes away fear. That drives out fear. That's what our passage is teaching us here this morning. So, beloved, I invite you, if you came in this morning in a state of despair, if you came in in a state of uncertainty and doubt, if you think that God has been fighting against you and that heaven is hidden from your eyes and doesn't see the steps that you take, I invite you to drink from this passage this morning and see what the Bible says about the Christian's confidence because this passage puts our confidence in the context of that final day of judgment when all men will stand before God and what John is telling us here is that Christians should anticipate future judgment assured of their eternal blessing. We think about the future coming judgment of God with a sense of absolute utter confidence rather than with a sense of fear that God will somehow send us away when we are true Christians.

We're going to look at two consequences this morning of being a true Christian that flow inevitably from the reality of our great salvation. What is the first consequence that we're going to look at? Well, the first consequence in your spiritual life of being a true Christian – this is wonderful – is that you are entitled to, point 1: confidence in the presence of God. Confidence in the presence of God. Look at verses 17 and 18. Actually, we'll start in verse 16 here as we take a running start into the passage this morning. Look at what John says in verse 16, just immediately prior to our passage which is our text for this morning. He says in verse 16, chapter 4, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us." We believe that God has a disposition of love, an attitude of favorable grace toward us as true Christians. How can that be? Well, look on in verse 16, "God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." God has established his love forever for all time when Christ went to the cross and hung and died for our sins. That was an expression of the eternal sacrificial nature of the love of God toward his people. If you have any doubts as a Christian whether God is favorably disposed to you, whether he intends good on your life, forget about your present circumstances and fix your attention on the reality of Christ on the cross suffering in your place to take away punishment so that you could be reconciled to God. That settles the issue of whether God is favorably disposed toward us or not, whether God intends good for you or not. If you are a Christian, of course God intends good for you. Look back at the cross. There couldn't have been a greater sacrifice paid on your behalf than what the Lord Jesus did when he laid down his life for you.

So we come knowing that God is love and that as Christians we abide in that. Well, now going into verse 17, John explains the benefit, the present spiritual benefit of that indwelling. Look at verse 17 with me. This is a pinnacle. This is strategically crucial for you. Verse 17, "By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is," meaning as Christ is, "so also are we in this world." Listen, here's what John is saying, John is saying that as a Christian salvation brings confidence to us that God's future judgment will not consume us. It will be a terrifying day for sinners. It will be a terrifying day for those who have not bowed the knee to

Christ. It will be a terrifying day for those who have claimed to know Christ without the inner reality. It will be terrifying for them. And the book of Zephaniah, you don't have to turn there; it would take us all too long to find it. But the book of Zephaniah describes one aspect of this judgment and the terror that it will be upon sinners. Chapter 1, verse 17 of Zephaniah says this, 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," listen to that, "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." My.

Do you want to know where this world is headed? Forget about global warming, there is a coming judgment of fire that is going to consume it all. There is a day of terror awaiting sinners who have rejected Christ, who have rebelled against God. And God is not going to take lightly that trampling on his truth, that trampling on his self-revelation, that trampling on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The hostility of men against their Creator is going to come to a terrifying end for them. If you've ever been in the midst of a natural disaster, of a tornado swirling about or, as we were many years ago, in the midst of a severe earthquake in Southern California and you just see the sense of elements that are hostile, beyond your control, beyond anything that you can do and wondering what the next moment is going to bring. Under the fury of the natural elements, you have a tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny, did I say tiny? A tiny taste of what the terror is going to be like for sinners in the day of God's wrath and it's not going to be a momentary terror that passes, it's going to be a terror that introduces them into eternal judgment. It's a terrifying thing, the book of Hebrews says, to fall into the hands of the living God. And those who have mocked the name of Christ, who have mocked his standards of righteousness, who have mocked and persecuted his true church will get the reward that their actions deserve and it is going to be an awesome, dark day for them and it will be a dark awesome day for you too if you don't know the Lord.

The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and with the fullness of God's revelation in front of us we see that this fear starts with the reality that he does not forever tolerate the rebellion against him which we currently live the midst of. And if you're a sinner here today without Christ, you are without hope and your future is dark and frightening and terrifying and there is no hope for you other than that which is expressed in the Gospel. You cannot continue to reject Christ without bringing upon yourself these terrors of judgment that I just read before. Oh beloved, I don't want you to be one that's devoured in the fire of his jealousy. I don't want you to be one of whom he makes a complete end, indeed a terrifying one when he judges all the inhabitants of the earth. No, don't you see? Don't you see that God brought you into this room maybe for the last time to hear a final warning about the destiny that you are currently facing apart from Christ? Don't you see that? Let the terror of the Lord drive you to the Savior that you need in order that you might be saved out of that awesome, terrible, black coming day of God's righteous judgment on the earth.

But our focus here this morning, John's focus in this passage is positive. It's about the benefit that we have as believers. We understand that that day is coming but we also understand as Christians that that day holds no terror for us based on the authority of God's word. And how can it be, how can it be that we can have confidence in judgment when you and I ourselves have sinned? You and I ourselves have fallen short of the glory of God; even today as people in the body of Christ, we fall short of his glory. We're not all that we should be. How can we have confidence in light of that? Well, beloved, it can't be about anything that you do. It can't be about any rituals that you keep. It can't be about any resolutions that you've made to be better. It has to be about something outside of you and that's exactly what it is.

Look at the end of verse 17, actually let's look at the whole verse again. "By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment." When God loved you, when Christ died on the cross, he had an end in mind, he had a goal in mind. It was more than just the forgiveness of your sins, it was more than just bringing you into heaven when you die. There is a goal in this life as you walk through life that is intended to be accomplished by the love of God at work in your soul and it is this: that goal that he is after, the perfection of that love is found when you are confident in light of the coming judgment. When you are so confident about the perfection of the way that Christ has rescued you from your sins, you're so confident in that that you rest in it and fear is driven out from your soul because of the perfection of Christ and the totality of the way in which you trust him. You know that he is perfect. You know that he is a perfect Savior. You know that he is perfectly faithful. He did a perfect work for you on the cross and he's going to perfectly carry you through all the way to heaven and judgment will not singe a hair on your head as a believer in Christ. To have that kind of confidence in the face of the terrifying judgment that is rolling like a boulder down a hill toward a waiting earth, to have that kind of confidence is a mark of the perfection of the love of God being worked out in your soul. Professing Christian, when you think about the coming judgment, are you confident? Do you know? Are you certain that God is going to preserve you through that because that is the goal of salvation in this context, it's that you would be confident.

And what is the ground of that confidence? Look at verse 17 with me again. Oh, this is wonderful and it points us to our Savior, not to our own efforts. John says, "we may have confidence in the day of judgment." "Why, John? This judgment is serious, a terrifying end. I need to know that that judgment isn't going to burn me too. How can I know that, John? How can I know that, Lord Jesus?" Well, he states it right there in words that are so easy to just kind of roll through and not really think about. We have confidence in the day of judgment because, look at verse 17 with me; you need to see this with your own eyes. I am not making this up. We have confidence in the day of judgment, "because as He is, so also are we in this world." It's easy to breeze through that phrase but it's so important. It's the ground of your assurance. We have confidence because as our Lord Jesus Christ is, so also are we in this world.

What is it about Christ that makes us confident? What is it about his person? What is it about his work that gives us such great confidence? Well, let's just review a little bit of

the things that John has said in this letter. Go back to chapter 2, verse 1. What we're dealing with is when he says, "because He is as he is, we have confidence in this world," well, what is it about Christ then, what is it about him that gives us confidence? Well, let's just see what John has been talking about leading up to that great mountaintop pinnacle in verse 17. Turn back to chapter 2, verse 1. Where is Christ, you might say. Who is Christ? What is he like? What is he doing right now that somehow affects me in this world? Chapter 2, verse 1, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins," here we go, put on your seat belt, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins." What is Christ? Who is he now? He is our Advocate in heaven. He is face-to-face with the Father, having offered for all time a perfect sacrifice on behalf of our sins. Oh, beloved, don't miss this. Don't roll pass this too quickly. Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior, is in face-to-face communion with God the Father right this moment. He is in heaven. He is in the throne room of God representing you as your brother in heaven. Perfectly righteous, having offered the perfect sacrifice on your behalf and in perfect communion with God the Father. Righteous, it says that he is. Propitiation, it says that he is. An Advocate, it says that he is.

Think with me, as Christ is right now in heaven, accepted by God, in perfect communion with him, in perfect righteousness, that's who Christ is, somehow that factors into who we are in this world. Do you know how it factors in? All of those merits of Christ, all of his righteousness, all of his work on our behalf where he paid for our sins, all of that has been fully deposited in our spiritual account so that as Christ himself is in perfect righteous communion with God by the basis of his own righteousness, beloved, that is what your legal standing is before God as well because Christ has given you his righteousness as a gift in salvation. Christ has washed away your sins through his work on the cross. Everything – listen – everything that was a reason for you to be judged has been dealt with. Your guilt has been satisfied by the blood of Christ. Your failure to obey God has been answered in the righteousness of Christ. That's who he is. That's what he has done and the Bible says that as Christ stands in that status before God, you share in that same status before God in this world as a recipient of his grace. The perfections of God have been credited to your account. That which makes Christ fit to be in heaven before God the Father is the prism through which God looks at you as a believer in Christ. He looks at you and he sees the merits of Christ. Not that you're living perfectly know, that's not the point, the point is that your status before God is the same equal status of Christ himself before God. That's amazing and that is why, because God has imputed that righteousness to your account, that is why you can have confidence in judgment that what judgment requires is utter perfection to survive it. Christ through his gift of salvation, through his work on the cross, through his perfect life of obedience which fulfilled the law of God utterly for all time on our behalf, that is the ground, the righteousness of Christ is the ground upon which you stand in the presence of a holy God and that ground will not shake. That ground will not shift underneath you. It won't fall out. Christ is our Advocate in heaven.

But there's more and we'll just look at chapter 4 for now. Christ is our Advocate in heaven. Secondly, Christ is the one who came to give us life. Look at chapter 4, verse 9,

"By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." Look at these purpose clauses. I know that most of you probably didn't like English in high school, I didn't either, but purpose clauses and pronouns and prepositions sure tell you an awful lot about your relationship with God. John gives us a purpose clause here, verse 9, chapter 4, God sent his Son into the world so that, with this purpose, "that we might live through Him." The whole reason that Christ came was to give you life. Life indestructible. Life eternal. Life that would survive the judgment of God. It's the whole reason he came. Don't you think that Christ accomplishes all of his purposes by the power of his great omnipotence? By the power of his intercession before the Father? If he came that we might live, listen, it does not depend on you and me, it depends on the fact that he will carry out his purposes to perfection and he came that you might live and therefore you will never die in judgment.

If you belong to Christ, you have the assurance that the purposes for which he came will be utterly fulfilled to perfection in your life by name. By name. He didn't just do this for an indistinguishable mass of humanity and then step back and leave us to sort it out on our own. Oh, perish the terrible thought of that inadequate theology. No, no, Christ came as a Shepherd who knows his sheep. Christ came to purchase those whom God gave to him and he did it, and he did it by name. You know, Jesus emphasized that a shepherd knows his sheep by name. Listen, he knows you. If you are in Christ, Christ knows you by name. Your hairs are numbered. Your days are numbered. Christ knows it all as part of his comprehensive intention to deliver you from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God that you might know the bliss and glory of heaven forever. Christ said, "I love you by name and I'm going to save you and I am going to guarantee that you will live, not only in this life but through judgment and for all of eternity in the glories of an ever resounding heaven. In the perfections of holiness in the presence of God, I," Christ says to his people, "I have saved you for that glorious destiny. Trust me and have no fear."

Look, we just covered a lot of theology there and I want you to see something: it's one of the base, crass, foolish accusations of the devil and of those who despise Bible teaching to say that theology is theoretical and impractical. Look, do you care about your eternal soul? Do you want to live with confidence knowing that God's judgment is coming? Well, understand that biblical theology is what informs the reality of that confidence. We should never despise Bible teaching as though it were impractical, as though we need something else day by day. No, Jesus said, "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." And in this context, beloved, you can see why that's true. I'm frightened by the prospect of judgment. I don't mind telling you. I am scared to death of that, not for myself but for those who are going to experience it. You can understand why the Apostle Paul would say as he was thinking about his Jewish brethren who were still living under the law, "Oh, my prayer to God is for their salvation." He says, "I could almost wish myself to be accursed myself if it would just result in the salvation of the Jews." No, these are things that stir us into the depths of our soul and Christ through his word this morning is pleading with you who don't know Christ, "Take these things to heart. Look unto me all the ends of the earth, and be saved. Be saved from this wretched judgment that is coming." Christ says, "Come to me for life

because that's why I came." It says so in 1 John 4:9, the Son came so that we might live through him.

So go back to chapter 4, verse 17 for a moment. We're not done yet, not by a long shot, but I just want to keep the context clear in your mind. John says, "love is perfected in us when we have confidence in the day of judgment." How is it that we can have confidence? It's because, "as Christ is, so also are we in this world." Okay, who is Christ? What has he done? He is our Advocate in heaven. He came so that we might live. We understand these things. We rest in them. We trust in him that the one who promises us eternal life if we give our hearts to him will keep his promise. We are confident in that. We trust in that.

And go on in verse 10, we see another reason for our confidence. Christ our Advocate, Christ who came to give us life, verse 10, Christ our propitiation. Look at verse 10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son," there it is again. Christ, who is he? What did he do? "The propitiation for our sins." Christ is the one who satisfied the wrath of God. He is the one who turns away the wrath of God. And beloved, when you abide in Christ, when Christ abides in you, in other words when you are a true Christian, the perfections of his propitiatory work on the cross that turns away the wrath of God is fully placed upon your soul so that the wrath of God will not touch you. It will pass over you. You will be delivered from it because what Christ is, the propitiation for our sins, is the status in which you live through this world today. You live in the status as a Christian as one having had the wrath of God turned away from you by the work of another. The one who is our present Advocate, the one who came to give us life, is the same one who is the covering for our sin so that the wrath of God will not come upon us. That's why this all comes to this central question of confidence, that's why you can have confidence, that's why judgment need not frighten you as a Christian. It's because Christ has already satisfied the demands of that judgment, the demands of justice, which will bring that judgment on an unbelieving world. Christ has already satisfied it all on our behalf. You could sum it up by looking at verse 14 of chapter 4, "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." Anyone from any race under the sound of the Gospel can believe in Christ and be saved. He is a Savior which means you need to be saved from something. What is it that you need to be saved from? The coming wrath of God. Does Jesus truly deliver us? Yes, to perfection. He's our Advocate. He's our propitiation. He came to give us life. You can sum it up in an overarching statement: he is the Savior, the perfect one who delivers us from the wrath to come.

You see, beloved, think about it this way, who is Jesus? What is he now and all of this? Let's kind of tie all of this together and think about it this way: Jesus Christ right now is perfectly accepted. Accepted. He is accepted in the presence of God the Father. He is in intimate face-to-face communion with him. That's who he is. That's his status now before God. And why does that bring confidence? Watch this, our status before God corresponds to the perfect status of Christ. As Christ is now in the presence of God the Father perfectly accepted, so God views us through the lens of Christ and accepts us to that same unlimited extent. If you're a Christian, God accepts you because your sin has been dealt

with. Righteousness has been accounted to you. There is no barrier to your fellowship with God. There is nothing on your account that God will bring up and charge against you on that final day of judgment. One of the promises found in Hebrews 10, God says, speaking of Christians, "Their sins and their lawless deeds, I will remember no more." We will go before God, as it were, on the day of judgment, whatever that looks like in your eschatological scheme, we'll go before God and he's not going to bring a sin up because it's all been already dealt with. He's not going to invoke double jeopardy. He's not going to raise it again and say, "I have to deal with you according to your sins now." Beloved, Christ has already taken that out of the way and so there is no barrier to our fellowship with God. There is no barrier to us walking through the day of judgment unscathed. In fact, that's exactly what we're going to do.

So judgment holds no fear. Death holds no fear for us because we understand these God revealed realities about salvation and we believe our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit has opened our minds and we trust him. We rest in him. We're not trying to do anything else to earn any more merit. We're not trying to keep any more rules and regulations. It's all been done and we, therefore, have confidence as we go through this life. Unafraid if a drunk driver runs the red light and hits us. Unafraid of what death might bring. Unafraid if Christ comes. We're unafraid, beloved. We are not afraid because Christ is our perfect, fearless Advocate and we walk into the presence of God in the wake of his perfect work and that's why we have confidence. So if you're lacking assurance, if you feel there is darkness between you and God, come to these things because this is the only place of rest. Psychology can't give you the gift of a perfect assurance in the face of judgment, you can't work it out on your own, you have to come to the Scriptures and see what it says about the work of Christ, understand it, and believe it, and rest in him, and trust him.

Look at verse 18. You see, John emphasizes this. This whole passage is to drive that nagging fear out of your heart as a true Christian. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment." You see, if you're afraid of coming judgment, it indicates one of two things. It indicates that you're not a Christian and you should rightly be afraid. If you're a true Christian but still struggling with fear about coming judgment, it means that you haven't yet been perfected in this aspect of your salvation to realize that Christ as your Savior has delivered you from that punishment. Because, you see, what you are afraid of is the fact that punishment will ultimately fall upon you even though it seems like it's going okay right now. What John is saying is that your fear of judgment indicates it's a symptom. It's not the disease. The fear is a symptom that you're missing something. You're not understanding something about the nature of the work of Christ on your behalf because if you understood that, verse 18 says, "the one who fears is not perfected in love." It means that you're lacking an understanding, you haven't fully entered into an understanding that would deliver you from that fear. Romans 8:1 says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and that is why we have confidence. The position of Christ that he now has belongs to us in this world. God looks at Christ as your representative and do you know what he sees? He sees your name written in the wounds. He sees your name inscribed in the glory of Christ. That is what the Son of God has done on our behalf. He has reconciled us fully

to God and because we are reconciled with a gift that is irrevocable that will never be taken away, therefore we go forward without fear about what that awful future judgment is going to bring to us personally. Beloved, do you understand if you're a Christian, your mind should almost be bursting with the thought that, "I have been given a great unspeakable gift!" And your mind bursts with gratitude and interwoven with that gratitude is a sense of confidence that the one who gave this gift will not withdraw it; the one who started the work will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus, Philippians 1:6. Beloved Christian, embrace the truth and the reality that as you look to your future you have nothing to fear because that is what Christ has purchased for us with his life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension. Judgment on your head is impossible when you belong to Christ. God has already poured out on you all of his eternal saving intentions. In Christ you have life, propitiation and salvation.

That kind of love that did that for you when you weren't looking for it, look, you know, I like to remind people, I like to remind us, I like to remind myself, Christ did his work on the cross 2,000 years ago, long before you were ever born. Christ was working out this intention from before time began. There is no way that you could have provoked him by something that you did of merit to get him to give you this. Are you kidding me? Do you think, would you really think that there is something that you could do that would obligate God, a holy, righteous God, to give you this kind of immense blessing in Christ? Are you kidding me? Do you really think that? "God, I did this therefore you owe me salvation." Oh, please, don't insult the holiness of God with such unworthy thoughts. No, no, something of this vast eternal measure, to be with him 10,000 years in heaven, singing his praises, secure forever in the perfection of bliss and it's only just begun and I did something to earn that? I want to tell you: a true Christian despises that thought. A true Christian spews that thought out of his mouth like he had just drank a rotten egg. No, no, we believe what 1 John 4:19 says. Look at verse 19 with me. This is the only way it could be, "We love, because He first loved us." The attitude of your heart, the understanding of your mind should be, "I'm in this wonderful position of security because God had mercy on me. God first moved toward me. God saved me. I didn't do anything to deserve this." It totally humbles us in the presence of God and it gives him all of the glory. Honestly, honestly, because I walked a few feet of carpet to the front of a church and knelt at an altar God would be obligated to give me all of those riches in Christ? Please. No. No, this was all of his initiative. It's all of what he did. We are in this position of love because God first loved us. It's the clear teaching of Scripture and it's what gives God glory.

So true salvation leads to that kind of confidence. As Christ is, so also are we in the world. But there's a second consequence that moves on and, you know, when we talk about these glories of heaven and the glories of Christ, you really don't want to leave, do you? You don't want to leave that mental realm. You just want to stay there and you have a little...beloved, if you feel that, if you sense that, you know a little bit of what I'm talking about, "Oh, don't leave that yet!" Understand that if you grasp that, you've got a tiny little foretaste on the tip of your tongue about how great heaven is going to be because understanding and embracing and rejoicing in the glory of these truths now is just a tiny little foretaste of the reality that is yet to come. It is the greatest most noble

thing in the world to be a Christian. It is the greatest most noble gift that God could have given us and by his grace somehow here in a little corner of northern Kentucky, you and I share in that together. We know it's true because we believe what God said.

Now, there's a second consequence, though. We have that confidence in the presence of God. We'll cover this last one real quickly because we've said so much about it elsewhere in the book. The second consequence, not just confidence in the presence of God but love in the presence of believers. Love in the presence of believers. When we're with Christians, we love them and we love to be there. Look at verse 20. John flows out of this statement of confidence that we just looked at, 17 through 19, flows out of the statement of love casting out fear and says this has practical implications for life in the body of Christ. Look at verses 20 and 21, "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." Beloved, you see and hear one of the primary motivating forces for unity in the body of Christ. When you and I see the glories of salvation that God has bestowed upon us and we look at each other and say you share that same gift, we understand that there is a common life, there is a common spirit, there is a common affection that binds us together. It's just a natural product of it.

So what John is saying here in verse 20 is that it's impossible to say that, "I have this salvation. I love this God who did so much on my behalf but I reject the fellowship of other Christians. I don't want to be a part of their lives. I don't need them and I don't want them. Please just leave me alone and I'll worship God in my own way." Beloved, that is a self-deception of major proportions. That does not calculate. That does not compute. That is a major fail. That would cause the whole computer to break down because if you're overwhelmed with this love of Christ that we were just discussing, you will also by necessity love others for whom he also died. That doesn't mean that we won't work through issues in relationships but there will be an underlying disposition of love, trust, and self-sacrifice toward those who share the same life that we do. And what I would hope the effect that that would have upon you is that it would just make you desire the fellowship of believers all the more. John is saying if we don't love Christians, it's absurd to say that we love the God who saved them. How could you have a hateful disposition toward those who belong to the living Christ, how could you have a hateful disposition toward them and have any kind of love or affection to the one who gave birth to them and gave them life? How could you say you loved my kids and absolutely detested their father? That doesn't make any sense. John is simply repeating what he said throughout this letter in chapters 2, 3 and 4, that true salvation, one of the marks of it, is that it produces a love for the people of God. Love results from receiving the Christ of love. It's a natural product and if you look at verse 21 with me again, it's not just something natural, Christ seals it with his own command and says, "this commandment we have from Him," it's a commandment, "that the one who loves God should love his brother also." But understand when God gives us that command, he commands us according to that which is already present in our hearts. This isn't contrary to our desires. If you are a true Christian, you want to love other Christians; you want to serve them; you want to be with them; you want to minister to them. We love each other because it's natural to do so.

Jesus said in John 13:34, he said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

Let's tie it all together, beloved. I'm at the end of my notes here so that means the message is almost over. We walked through in a preliminary mental way, we walked through the halls of heaven this morning looking at the glories of what Christ has accomplished for us and realizing that that means the eternal well-being of our soul. Having done that, we look forward to the day of judgment without fear, we look forward to it with confidence, and then we look down and we look around and we see our brothers and sisters around us and filled with the glory of the love of God that saved us, we eagerly look for the opportunities to splash that love over in the lives of those that he has brought us into contact with; you and me together manifesting the overflow of this great eternal love that God has given to us in Christ, a love that drives out fear, a love that establishes us in confidence and now we get to just display it to one another joyfully, gladly, until God, as it were, blows the whistle. I can't do that but you know what I'm doing. He's going to blow the whistle and call us home. "The play is over, come into my presence." That's what lies ahead for you as a Christian. Isn't it wonderful to know Christ? Isn't it glorious to belong to him? Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, when your word says it's indescribable, that's what it means. Human languages burst at the seams trying to respond to the initiative of the great things that you have done for us in Christ and we thank you for it. Father, have mercy on those that are here who don't know Christ and who have spurned him and mocked him and, if nothing else, just been indifferent to it and said, "That's not for me." O God, help them to see that this must be for them. This must be for them. They must come to your Son for salvation because the alternative of judgment is too fearsome to contemplate. And Father, just as you've poured out your love on so many of us here, drawing us to Christ and setting us secure in him forever, Lord, we ask you to exercise your grace again to extend it further, to show yourself once more a great God of salvation in the hearts of those who do not know Christ because, Lord, we can't bear the thought of anything else. We can't bear the thought of having shared a room, having heard the same word of God, having shared life together, only to find ourselves separated and parted at the day of judgment. No, Lord, not that. Not here. Not with these people. Have mercy on us, Lord, and extend your grace to still more. There are too many here, Father, to assume that they're all in Christ and we make no assumptions. We plead with you, the Author and Perfecter of salvation, to do for them whom you know what you have done for us. We want them to know this gift of life as well and so we ask you to accomplish that by the power of your Spirit working through the truth of your word to the conversion of their souls. We honor you. We bless you. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

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