

# CHAPTER FOUR

And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.

There is an important point to consider before we can fully understand the passage. John began the letter by reminding these readers that there were a group of men (apostles) who had been chosen by the Lord to give eyewitness testimony. He referred to these men with the personal pronoun "WE." In the first five verses, he used WE and YOU differently than he does in other parts of the book.

## The Distinction between "WE" the Apostles and YOU the Readers

*That which was from the beginning, that which WE have heard, that which WE have seen with OUR eyes, that which WE beheld, and OUR hands handled, concerning the Word of life 2 (and the life was manifested, and WE have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto YOU the life, the eternal (life), which was with the Father, and was manifested unto US); 3 that which WE have seen and heard declare WE unto YOU also, that YOU also may have fellowship with US: yea, and OUR fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: 4 and these things WE write, that OUR joy may be made full. 5 And this is the message which WE have heard from him and announce unto YOU that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 1 Jn 1:1-5*

There is a clear distinction made between the apostles who were eyewitnesses (WE) and the people who were then receiving the letter (YOU) and us today who are also those in the (YOU). This distinction is made throughout the New Testament.

*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but WE were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 2 Pet 1:16*

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach YOU all things, and bring to YOUR remembrance all things that I said to YOU. John 14:26*

*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, (even) the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: 27 and YE also bear witness, because YE have been with me from the beginning. John 15:26-27*

*I still have many things to say to YOU, but YOU cannot bear them now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide YOU into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell YOU things to come. John 16:12-14*

*21 Of the men therefore that have companied with US all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among US, 22 beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with US of his resurrection. . . . 32 This Jesus did God raise up, whereof WE all are witnesses. . . . Acts 1:21-22; 32*

*and killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof WE are witnesses. Acts 3:15;*

*33 And with great power gave THE APOSTLES THEIR witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. . . . Acts 4:33;*

*32 And we are witnesses of these things; and the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him. . . . Acts 5:32;*

*39 And WE are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. 40 Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, 41 NOT TO ALL THE PEOPLE, but UNTO WITNESSES THAT WERE CHOSEN BEFORE of God, (even) to US, WHO ATE AND DRANK WITH HIM AFTER HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD. 42 And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God (to be) the Judge of the living and the dead. . . . Acts 10:39-42;*

*31 and he was seen for many days of THEM THAT CAME UP WITH HIM FROM GALILEE TO JERUSALEM, WHO ARE NOW HIS WITNESSES unto the people. Acts 13:31*

## Jesus appeared to Paul for the same purpose.

And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. 15 For **THOU shalt be a witness for him; unto all men of what THOU hast seen and heard.** . . . 16 But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for **to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein THOU hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto THEE;** ACTS 22:14-15 Acts 26:16

and last of all, as to the (child) untimely born, **he appeared to ME also.** . . . 9 For **I am the least of the apostles,** that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. . . . 12 Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: 14 and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. 15 Yea, we are found false witnesses of God; because **WE witnessed of God that he raised up Christ:** whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: 1 Cor 15:8-9; 12-16

## Clearly the witnesses were the apostles.

That being the case, the "**WE**" are the apostles and the **YOU** are all the Christians who believe on him through their word. Jesus made that same distinction in his final prayer:

As thou didst send me into the world, **even so sent I THEM into the world.** 19 And for their sakes; I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. **20 Neither FOR THESE ONLY do I pray, BUT FOR THEM ALSO THAT BELIEVE ON ME THROUGH THEIR WORD;** Jn 17:18-20

Then, John made a transition with no explanation but context. In the context it is evident that he has changed from **WE the apostles** to **WE the Christians**.

"If **WE** say that **WE** have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, **WE** lie, and do not the truth: but if **WE** walk in the light, as he is in the light, **WE** have fellowship **one with another,** and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth **US** from all sin. 8 If **WE** say that **WE** have no sin, **WE** deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in **US.** If **WE** confess **OUR** sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive **US** our sins, and to cleanse **US** from all unrighteousness. If **WE** say that we have not sinned, **WE** make him a liar, and his word is not in **US.** (1 John 1:6-10)

As we now move into Chapter Four, there is another shift in these pronouns, and once again the apostles and brethren are distinguished.

All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this **WE** know that he abides in **US,** by the **Spirit** which he has given **US.** 1 **BELOVED,** do not believe **every spirit,** but test the **spirits** to see whether **THEY** are of God; for many **FALSE PROPHETS** have gone out into the world. 2 By this **YOU** know the Spirit of God: every **spirit** which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every **spirit** which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the **SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST,** of which **YOU** heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already. 4 **YE** are of God, (my) little children, and have overcome **THEM:** because greater is he that is in **YOU** than **HE** that is in the world. 5 **THEY** are of the world: therefore speak **THEY** (as) of the world, and the world heareth **THEM.** 6 **WE** are of God. **Whoever knows God** listens to **US,** and **he who is not of God does not listen to US.** By this **WE** know the **spirit** of truth and the **spirit** of error. 1 Jn 3:24; 4:1-6

Note the nouns **BELOVED** and **SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST / FALSE PROPHETS** and the pronouns **YOU, THEM, and HE.** But what do we do with the **WE** that follow these nouns? There is no doubt that the **YOU** are the **BELOVED** disciples to whom John writes. Also that the **THEM** and the **HE** are those who follow the **SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST,** and are **FALSE**

**PROPHETS.** What about the **WE**? Is this the apostles alone, or the apostles in one sense and the rest of us in the other?

It depends on how we interpret the passage. The direct knowledge that God abides within Christians was only given to the apostles. They are the ones who received the “*power of the Holy Spirit*” and could work miracles, lay their hands on others and preach and write inspired Scripture. But since we are in fellowship with them, when we trust their writings we have the same knowledge but in a secondary sense. We know they had the Holy Spirit, so we know that we have the Holy Spirit when we abide in their teachings. So it could be both here in 3:24, but not in 4:6

*We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 1 John 4:6*

There is no easy answer. But if it is the apostles it is an objective standard we can all measure. If it is us, it becomes more subjective.

The reason this needs to be decided is that it completely changes our understanding of the concept “*by the spirit which he gave us.*” There are two distinct gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is the miraculous measure Jesus promised the apostles and that they freely used throughout their ministry to validate their testimony. There is a second way that “he gave us the spirit” that includes all Christians:

*Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God; 22 who also sealed us, and gave (us) the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. 2 Cor 1:21-22*

*Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 2 Cor 5:5*

*in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of (God's) own possession, unto the praise of his glory. Eph 1:13-14*

Yet it is difficult to see how this actually proves anything. The only way we even know we have the spirit is through the word of the apostles so it would not be a direct proof. Even if we affirm it, we would still have to prove it by the veracity of the apostles who revealed this.

But if we see the “**US**” as the apostles, then we clearly and objectively know he abides in us. Peter used this gift in the very first sermon he preached and it was used often thereafter. He cited what the audience “*saw and heard*”(“*sound as of a rushing of a mighty wind*” “*tongues like as of fire on each one of them; speak with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance*”). Since they could clearly see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, there was no doubt of the veracity of what Peter was saying.

*And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. 4 And **THEY were all filled with the Holy Spirit**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave **THEM** utterance. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, **he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.** . . . 33 Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, **he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.** Acts 2:2-4; 33*

*how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which **at the first** began to be **spoken by the Lord**, and was **confirmed to us by THOSE WHO HEARD HIM**, 4 God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will. Heb 2:3-4*

Later when “*the apostles heard that Samaria had received the word they sent Peter and John*” so they “*could receive the Holy Spirit.*” Simon could clearly see the truth. It was obvious that “*through the laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Spirit was given.*” Once again there is nothing subjective here. It is clearly an objective manifestation that no one could argue with.

Now when **the APOSTLES that were at Jerusalem** heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them **Peter and John**: 15 who, when **THEY** were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: 16 for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then **laid THEY their hands** on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that **through the laying on of the APOSTLES' hands** the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14-19

Paul told the Corinthians who had received this gifts from his hands exactly what these gifts were and how they were to be used. He first made the same point John did here. The idols they had left did not have such power. These gifts were “word of wisdom;” “word of knowledge;” “faith,” “gifts of healings;” “workings of miracles;” “prophecy;” “discernings of spirits” “(divers) kinds of tongues;” and “interpretation of tongues.” Those with these gifts did not have subjective feelings. They had a power that was beyond their own ability.

*Now concerning spiritual (gifts), brethren, I would not have you ignorant. 2 Ye know that when ye were Gentiles (ye were) led away unto those dumb idols, howsoever ye might be led. 3 Wherefore I make known unto you, that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 12:1-3*

*But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: 9 to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; 10 and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits; to another (divers) kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will. 1 Cor 12:7-11*

It was this Spirit that was in and came through the apostles in the first century that gave them this assurance. It put the stamp of inspiration and Scripture on their writings and gives us the assurance they are from God. I am convinced that the change of “we” and “you” begins with the phrase “the spirit which he gave **US**.”

# CHAPTER FOUR

## The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error

*by this we know ... by the Spirit He gave us (True miracles given to apostles)*

*Believe not every spirit ... prove the spirits (Test them by writings of apostles)*

Many false prophets gone out into the world.

**Every spirit that confesses not Jesus**

this is the spirit of the antichrist now in the world

They are of the world speak as of the world, the world hears them

he who is not of God does not hear us

By this we know the spirit of error.

hereby you know the Spirit of God:

**every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ**

You are of God and have overcome them:

greater is He in you than he in the world.

We are of God: he that knows God hears us

By this we know the spirit of truth

**1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits,**

For the fourth of six times(2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11) John used the word of warm love and concern. These are people he truly cared about. He had developed the same love Jesus had expressed to His apostles in His final night.

*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. Jn. 14:15*

*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. Jn. 15:9-10*

Since John has just finished speaking of their keeping the commandments it is fitting for him to use this term here. This is an especially important warning to give to those we love, since it is one of the most serious dangers we face. Although there is a chapter break, in this case there is no doubt that the two verses go together. In the previous verse(3:24) John revealed that we know "he abides in us by the Spirit which he has given us." As discussed there, this was not some subjective emotional feeling in the heart that led them to know. The apostles were performing miracles and they knew they had the Spirit because they could perform these miracles. We know they had the Spirit and that therefore we have the Spirit by keeping the words they had written: The sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17).

John now furthered this idea by warning them that not every spirit is under consideration. Before commenting on this verse we must look at the overall context.

*hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us. 1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the (spirit) of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already. 4 Ye are of God, (my) little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. 5 They are of the world: therefore speak they (as) of the world, and the world heareth them. 6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. 1 Jn 3:24-4:6*

Since John uses the term "spirit" in the plural, each prophet coming to them claiming to be influenced by the Holy Spirit must be tested. These spirits must be proved because many false prophets have gone out into the world each of them claiming to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit. One of the spiritual gifts given in that time was the ability to discern spirits to do the very thing John asked be done.

*to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to*

*another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 1 Cor 12:10-11*  
We can do exactly the same thing today because we can assess the words of those who claim to have the Holy Spirit and if they are not following the Scriptures we know it is not the spirit of truth but the spirit of error.

There are two different “*spirits*” under consideration: The spirit of truth and the spirit of error. In that age, as in ours, many claim to have the Holy Spirit, but John warned that in fact they were animated by a different spirit. Since the “*Spirit of God*” and the “*spirit of the antichrist.*” are both present, every teacher who comes to them claiming to be animated by the Spirit of God must be carefully tested and proved.

*“dokimazo... to try 1. to test, examine, prove, scrutinize( to see whether a thing be genuine or not), as metals... 2. to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy.” (Thayer, p. 154; 1381).*

Only by *scrutinizing* can they be *recognized as genuine after examination* and be “*deemed worthy.*” As noted earlier Jesus warned us to assess them as we do a tree. Each tree has its own fruits and so do the spirits that animate false prophets. They come in sheep’s clothing, but they are wolves. Jude noted that they often “*creep in unnoticed*”(Jude 4). Paul spoke openly about their disguise.

*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. 15 It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works. 2 Cor 11:13-15*

There has been some discussion over the nature of the *spirit* in this verse. We know that all those who are following the Scriptures are filled and directed by the Holy Spirit. We understand that no prophet ever spoke by his own will but as moved by the Holy Spirit and that it was not they that spoke but the spirit of the Father that was in them.

*But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you. Mt 10:19-20*

*For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Pet 1:21*

But what is the spirit that animates the false prophets and antichrist? After a careful reading of the following Scriptures it appears that *the Devil and his angels and demons* are behind all error. Since the devil is a *liar and the father* of all lies, he is the true source for all error. He was the spirit in the serpent who deceived Eve and he works today through his *ministers* and the *hypocrisy of men*. Such men teach through *seducing spirits* the *doctrines of demons*. This is the *spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience*. The *wiles of the devil* include, “*the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly places.*”

***Ye are of (your) father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. John 8:44***

***But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ. 4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or (if) ye receive a different SPIRIT, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with (him). . . .13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. 15 It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works. 2 Cor 11:3-4; 13-15***

***And you (did he make alive,) when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, 2 wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the SPIRIT that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; Eph 2:1-2***

***to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by SPIRIT, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; II Th 2:2***

***And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: 4 in whom the god of this world***

**hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving**, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn (upon them). 2Cor 4:3-4

But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times **some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing SPIRITS and doctrines of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branding in their own conscience as with a hot iron;** 1 Tim 4:1-2

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to **stand against the wiles of the devil.** 12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but **against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places).** Eph 6:11-12

What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice **they sacrifice to demons** and not to God, and I do not want you to have **fellowship with demons.** 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? 1 Cor 10:19-22

### **whether they are of God;**

From all this it is clear that the Holy Spirit is the author of all truth and Satan with the influence of his demons, spiritual host of wickedness, working through men branding in their own conscience teaching doctrines of demons is the author of all error and lies. So the most important thing about spirits is to determine whether they are under the influence of the true Spirit of God.

### **because many false prophets are gone out into the world.**

This is the reason for proving all the spirits. There are **many** of them. This is a word that describes not only the number, but also the intensity. There are great and strong false prophets.

*"polus,... much; used a. of multitude, number, etc., many, numerous, great: b. with nouns denoting an action an emotion, a state, which can be said to have as it were measure, weight, force, intensity, size, continuance, or repetition, much l. q. great, strong, intense, large... c. of time much, long... d. Neut. sing. polu, much, substantively, i.q. many things... much, adverbially, of the mode and degree of an action..."* (Thayer, p. 529; 4183)

Peter uses the same word to describe their influence over others.

*But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of.* 2 Pet 2:1-2

This is a terrible reality that every child of God must recognize. Whenever there are many, it is unlikely to be the truth. Again using the same word:

*Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and **many** are they that enter in thereby. 14 For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.* Mt 7:13-14

*And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that are saved? And he said unto them, 24 Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for **many**, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* Luke 13:23-24

*For **many** are called, but few chosen.* Matt 22:14

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 **Many** will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* Mt 7:21-23

So what we must do is be very skeptical and critical of all who would preach and teach. They must use the Scriptures for all their teaching and must be scrutinized.

### **2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:**

We see a slightly different use of spirit in this verse. He now speaks of the influence upon our eternal spirit. The spirit who confesses would of course be our own spirit. When any spirit "says the same thing as" the Holy Spirit and agrees and assents with what he has revealed then we know they are of the Spirit of God.

*"homologeo... 1. prop. to say the same thing as another, i. e. to agree with, assent, both absol.*

and with a dat. of the pers. 2. univ. *to concede* i.e. a. *not to refuse*, l. e. *to promise...* b. *not to deny*, l. e. *to confess; declare...* 3. *to profess...* l. e. *to declare openly, speak out freely*, [A. V. generally *confess;...*] ... “ (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 446; 3670)

It is important to remember that this is also what each person has to do to be a Christian and receive salvation.

*Every one therefore who shall **confess** me before men, him will I also **confess** before my Father who is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven. Matt 10:32-33*

*And I say unto you, Every one who shall **confess** me before men, him shall the Son of man also **confess** before the angels of God: 9 but he that denieth me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God. Luke 12:8-9*

*because if thou shalt **confess** with thy mouth Jesus (as) Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: 10 for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth **confession** is made unto salvation. Rom 10:9-10*

*that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should **confess** that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:10-11*

Once again the literal “in this” describes the boundary around which all within will occur. In the midst of the boundary of one’s confession of Jesus as Christ in a fleshly body one knows for certain that it is the Spirit of God.

*Wherefore I make known unto you, that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 12:3*

*He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. Mt. 16:15-17*

There are some things that cannot even be known without God revealing it through the Holy Spirit.

*but as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And (which) entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. 10 But unto us God revealed (them) through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 1 Cor 2:9-10*

Man cannot even imagine the great mystery of godliness.

*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the spirit, Seen of angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. 1 Tim 3:16*

But as we tie all these things together we see a clear boundary line. The Holy Spirit has revealed from heaven that Jesus is Lord, the Christ, the son of the living God. He has also revealed that he was “*manifested in the flesh, Justified in the spirit, Seen of angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.*” All who preach and believe such things are filled with the Spirit. But those in that day who refused to say such things were false prophets.

**3 and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the (spirit) of the antichrist,**

There is another spirit but it is not of God. These are the individual spirits of those who are being influenced by the devil. Paul warned Timothy that such people have been “*taken captive by the snare of the devil to do his will.*”

*And the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, 25 in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves; if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may **recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will.** 2 Tim 2:24-26*

Anyone who refusing to confess Jesus cannot be of God. Far from being of Christ or Christlike, this is the very heart of the antichrist. The term antichrist simple means someone who is “opposite” of Christ. It is someone “*instead of or in place of*” Christ.

“*anti...* 1. properly, it seems to have signified *over against, opposite to, before*, in a local sense... Hence 2. indicating exchange, successions, *for, instead of, in place of* (something). a. univ.



*instead of... b. of that for which anything is given received, endured... c. of recompense... for that, because... d. of the cause... e. of succession to the place of another... 3. as a prefix, it denotes a. opposite, over against... b. the mutual efficiency of two... c. requital... d. hostile opposition e. official substitution, instead of... " (Thayer, p. 50; 473)*

Of course since the confession Jesus is the Christ the son of the Living God is the foundation of the church, anything opposed and seeking to replace him is going to have serious consequences (Mt 16:15-18). As noted in the introduction, the doctrines John was fighting against were the philosophies of the nations seeking a place in the church. In order for these philosophies to enter, Jesus had to be changed to something far less than the Scriptures teach him to be. If they can remove his coming in the flesh and remove him from being the Christ or the Son of God, then their doctrines could still be believed and practiced in the church. But to do that they had to undermine the authority of the Scriptures and allow their own ideas to have the same power and stature as Scripture. John is unbending any doctrine that does such things is not of the spirit of truth.

**whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already.**

This is a close repetition of what John wrote back in the second chapter.

*Little children, it is the last hour: and as **ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists**; whereby we know that it is the last hour. 19 they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but (they went out), that they might be made manifest that they **all are not of us.** I Jn 2:18-19*

This time he uses a perfect instead of an aorist emphasizing that they had heard this long ago, still remembered and were keeping it close to their heart. We have no exact Scripture that warns of these specific people. But there seldom is such an exact warning. Most of the time Scriptures warn in a general sense of things that lead to Christ's authority being undermined. We ourselves have been warned against this from the beginning. The entire scope of Bible authority is under assault here. Most of us can quote these Scriptures in our sleep. Paul's warning to the Corinthians and Galatians; Jesus warnings in the gospels. John's warnings in his epistles and in Revelation. Are just a few of the many such warnings in both covenants and throughout the Bible.

*Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not (to go) beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other. 7 For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? 1 Cor 4:6-7*

*Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and (that) there be no divisions among you; but (that) ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1 Cor 1:10*

*I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; 7 which is not another (gospel) only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. 9 As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. Gal 1:6-9*

*Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Ye are severed from Christ, ye would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace. Gal 5:3-4*

*We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. I Jn 4:6*

*Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into (your) house, and give him no greeting: 11 for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works. II Jn 1:9-11*

*I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: 19 and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book. Rev 22:18-19*

Through these Scriptures we are warned that they are always coming and when they come we

will know they are here. The doctrines change as the cultures and philosophies change, but the result is always the same. Some element of God's revelation is denied or set aside for whatever reason and instead of Jesus having all authority in heaven and earth to reveal the doctrines and moralities we live by, someone comes along and seeks to get true brethren to follow them instead of Christ.

*So then am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth? 17 They zealously seek you in no good way; nay, they desire to shut you out, that ye may seek them. Gal 4:16-17*

*Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Acts 20:28-30*

#### **4 Ye are of God, (my) little children,**

As he has done throughout the letter, John again reassures those who truly believe and are following the system of authority and revelation Jesus himself set forth. For those who trust in the Lord with all their heart and don't lean upon their own understanding and who accept the authority of those Jesus sent forth exactly as he decreed they do so, are all the promises and assurances in the Scriptures. Those who accept without question the authority of Jesus as the Christ and refuse to speak any differently than the oracles of God are of God.

The criteria John used to make this assessment is not subjective. It is objective. They have confessed Jesus is the Christ and has come into the world. They are proving the spirits and rejecting those who are preaching error. Additional proof follows: They are of the world. They speak as of the world (rejecting the objective standard of the truth as written by the eyewitness apostles). Those who know God hear us. Since you hear us and reject them, you too are of God.

#### **and have overcome them:**

Those who truly are of God and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ have overcome. This too is in the perfect tense. The victory of the servants of God was granted the moment they became a servant of Jesus Christ the Son of God. They conquered, carried off the victory and were victorious at that moment. They still are and ever will be as long as they hold fast to their convictions and confessions.

*"nikao... to conquer... a. to carry off the victory, to come off victorious... when one is arraigned or goes to law, to win the case, maintain one's cause..." Thayer p. 425; 3528*

John likes this word. He has used it twice before (2:13-14) and will use it three more times (5:4-5). Paul too spoke of our victory.

*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom 8:37-39*

#### **because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.**

The reason for this victory is clear. God is greater than the devil and Jesus is also greater. As long as we are doing and believing exactly as they have asked us to do we have nothing to fear. This is something Jesus said at the very beginning.

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who hath given (them) unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch (them) out of the Father's hand. John 10:27-29*

#### **5 They are of the world: therefore speak they (as) of the world, and the world heareth them.**

All antichrists are of the world. Remember John's words in Chapter Two. All that is in the world: lust of flesh and eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. All who are of this world will speak as those who are of this world. Instead of a simple trusting faith that leads them to accept with humility and faith whatever is decreed in Scripture there is pride and lusts that need to be fulfilled. Remember Paul's warning:

*For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will*

*heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. 2 Tim 4:3-4*

Jesus also gave an important warning that fits perfectly here. These are the fruits that will always reveal a false prophet. They will speak as the world either doctrinally or in their definitions of sin.

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Mt. 7:15-20*

The Scriptures give the light of moral and doctrinal truth. Many do not want to be bound by such a rigid set of righteous standards. That's why there were so many warnings about it. Those in the world will never be bound by them and those in the true church will often be tempted to loosen one thing or another. As long as this occurs the world will listen. But the moment the true gospel of Jesus Christ is set forth, those in the world who love darkness rather than light will not longer be listening.

*And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." Jn. 3:19-21*

## **6 We are of God:**

The only sealed and true witnesses of Jesus Christ were those hand chosen men. This is why Paul often places this in his letters.

*Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake; Rom. 1:4*

*Paul, called (to be) an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 1Cor. 1:1*

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia: 2Cor. 1:1*

*Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me, Gal. 1:1*

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus: Eph. 1:1*

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, Col. 1:1*

*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, 1Tim. 1:1*

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus. 2Tim. 1:1*

*Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, Titus 1:1*

We know that Paul and the other twelve men hand chosen by the Lord were of God. We know that those who laid hands on and became prophets(Mark, Luke, James, and Jude) were also of God. These are the Scriptures. We know that they were of God and that inspired of the Holy Spirit and accredited by miracles, by revelation they made know the mystery. They were of God.

*He that hears you hears me; and he that rejects you rejects me; and he that rejects me rejects him that sent me. Lk 10:16*

*He that receives you receives me, and he that receives me receives him that sent me. Mt 10:40*

*Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace (be) unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. John 20:21*

## **he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not.**

If we have the true *gnosis* of God then there is a clear sign. We will accept his messengers. They were clearly placed into the chain of authority just as Moses was under the Old Covenant. Our relationship to their word is our relationship with God. There can be no separation. Many

see them as the weakest link in the chain. Modifying their words is one of the simplest ways of rebelling against God's authority, but that is exactly what it is! If we accept their writings as Scripture then we are of God. If we do not hear then we are not of God.

*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; 16 as also in all (his) epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as (they do) also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 17 Ye therefore, beloved, knowing (these things) beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. 2 Pet 3:15-17*

**By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.**

Instead of the "hereby(in this)" that John often uses, he says "by this(out of this)." Again we have a circle but this time instead of the boundary it is the source from which it comes. We know that our relationship with the writings of the apostles is the means by which we know whether we come out of the spirit of truth or out of the spirit of error. We must speak as the oracles of God or we speak out of error.

**7 Beloved, let us love one another:**

After John expressed his own love to them(*agapetos* - *beloved, esteemed, dear, favorite*) he exhorts them to also do the same for one another. This is called a "*hortatory subjunctive*." It is used in phrases where the author joins with his hearers to plead, exhort, beseech or command in a gentle and loving manner. When he adds the term "*one another*" emphasizing "*reciprocally* or *mutually*" we see the power of his words. In order for brethren to truly function as God had planned, each member of the local body of believers must not only be receiving this love from God and other brethren they must also be giving it.

We see examples of this love in the early church where they had all things common( Acts 2; 4-5). Many years later Paul wrote to the Gentile churches asking them to do the same for their brethren in Judea. One of the things Paul said revealed how God expects us to love one another reciprocally. Love is not a command to ease some and distress others, but exactly the opposite. Every brother and sister in Christ has things in abundance and things they are short of. What we have in abundance we share and what we lack those with abundance share. The true goal of *agape love* is equality.

*For if the readiness is there, (it is) acceptable according as (a man) hath, not according as (he) hath not. 13 For (I say) not (this) that others may be eased (and) ye distressed; 14 but by equality: your abundance (being a supply) at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become (a supply) for your want; that there may be equality: 2 Cor 8:12-14*

This is exactly what *agape-love* is from God. He loves us and we love him. He has given us of his abundance in the material creation and in his mercy and compassion, we give to him what we are to have in our abundance: gratitude, faith and devotion. This is exactly what Jesus wanted his servants to do in the church. When the brethren in a local work love one another then they always share what they have(not always or even often is this material things). Instead the Spirit asked us to look at our gifts. Peter revealed that if we are fervent in our love to one another then we will use hospitality and minister our gifts among ourselves.

*above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins: 9 using hospitality one to another without murmuring; 10 according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; 1 Pet 4:8-10*

Just before the great passage on love(I Cor 13), Paul spoke of the church as the body of Jesus Christ. We were all baptized into that one body and each of us is to see ourselves as members in that body suffering with those that suffer and being honored with those who are honored. Manifesting the same care one to another.

*that there should be no schism in the body; but (that) the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or (one) member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof. ... And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you. 1Cor 12:25-27, 31*

Paul also spoke of this to the Romans, where after exhorting them to present their bodies as a living sacrifice reveals that the love and tender affection in the body will be seen by reciprocal

giving of our gifts to the mutual edification of all.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, (which is) your spiritual service. . . . 4 For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. 6 And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, let us use them ... 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another; Rom 12:1, 4-5, 6, 9-10*

This is just the beginning of these exhortations, but something critically important if we are to leave human love behind and press on to the divine love Jesus came to reveal.

### **for love is of God;**

This is not the first time John has spoken about love in this epistle. In the previous chapter John demanded “we should love one another.” and “love the brethren.” (3:11,14, 23) He then revealed “we know love because he laid down his life for us” “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,” and that if we have “this world’s goods” see a “brother in need” and “shut up our compassion” “how does God’s love abide in us?” (3:16-17). So “don’t love in word or tongue but in deed and truth” (3:18).

Now, as Paul did for the Corinthians(13:1-8), John will elaborate and expound on the new and divine command to love. John used “love” 32 times in 4:7-21; 5:1-3 (*agapao(v)* - 19 *agape(n)* 13)

He begins by revealing that this love is “out of” God.

“ek... It denotes as well exit or emission out of, as separation from, something with which there has been close connection; opp. to the preposition *eis* into and *en* in: *from out of, out from, forth from, from...* I. of PLACE and 1. univ. of the place from which; from a surrounding or enclosing place.. from the interior of... II of the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE;...” (Thayer, p. 189; 1537)

This preposition draws a circle around God, then reveals that love was “from out of, out from, forth from” God. God is the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE” of “agape -love”

Without God there is no origin, source, or cause of this type of love. *agape love* is distinctly different from any love in this world. When sin entered *agape* exited and selfish care, consideration and deliberation replaced it. *phileo* love still existed, but the true power of what *agape* could move one to do is now only found within God. Only God and his son Jesus Christ can reveal the ultimate extent of *agape*. We might slip into it, but it is no longer the norm and is not a normal way for men to act

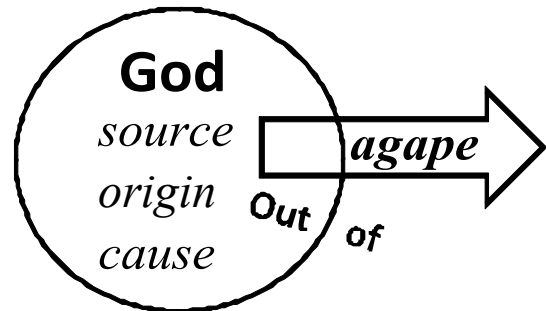
*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:7-8*

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16*

*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God. Eph 3:17-19*

Can we even wrap our minds around this? Think of it! God has absolute power. He answers to no one. He can do whatever, whenever and however he pleases within his own nature. So for God to love us unconditionally and with absolute power make great sacrifices in order to be a blessing to us is a natural part of his nature. This is not something we ever see in this world. Paul said it would be an exceptional thing for anyone to see such love for a righteous or good man, but never would you see what God has done by man. It’s breadth length, height depth

*Let us agape-love*



truly are is unfathomable.

This is why Greek Scholars have made a very interesting distinction on this word. Generally word definitions in the Bible are based on how the word used by the Holy Spirit in Scripture was used in the culture. We do this because the Holy Spirit selected that specific word from the Greek language to explain the things in God's mind. Obviously the best way to know what he meant is to know what that word meant at that time. After we see how it is used in the language of the day, we compare it with all its uses in the NT in context. Then we can blend the meaning in the original language with its actual usage in the context of Scripture to have a full understanding of the concepts the Spirit had in mind when he gave that word.

But we can't do this with *agape* and *agapao*! Vine captures the difficulty by saying: "*since the Spirit of revelation has used it to express ideas previously unknown, enquiry into its use, whether in Greek literature or in the Septuagint, throws but little light upon its distinctive meaning in the NT.*" This means that the only way we can get a clear idea of this word is to forget its use in Greek and focus on its use in the NT. Thayer says exactly the same thing: "*a purely biblical and ecclesiastical word.*" This means the only places *agape/agapao*-love are used and discussed is in the NT Scriptures and in the writings about the Bible from the first century onward.

We are therefore completely dependant upon Jesus and his apostles to reveal what these words mean to us as Christians. Jesus laid the foundation and the scope and left it to his apostles to give the fine details. The foundation of love is based on an answer he gave to a lawyer.

*And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him: 36 Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? 37 And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second like (unto it) is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. 40 On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets. Mt 22:35-40*

All the Law and the prophets are summed up by two concepts. Love God with all heart, soul, and mind and love neighbor as self. Thus every command, ordinance, and example reveal how to love God and how to love our neighbor. Although this laid the foundation, it did not give the full scope. He gave that the night before his crucifixion.

*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Jn 13:34-35*

The command is not new regarding foundation, but it is new regarding scope. The foundation command was to love one another **as yourself**(a subjective command based only upon our own conception of the love we have for ourselves). The new command is love all of the above and **as I have loved you**(an objective command fully revealed in the gospels and especially in the crucifixion). That same evening Jesus did exactly the same thing with loving God. The foundation was to love the Lord your God with **with all your heart, soul and mind**(a subjective standard based on our own heart, soul and mind). The new standard is all the above and "**if you love me keep my commandments ... even as I kept my Father's commandments**(an objective standard revealed throughout the gospels and especially in his crucifixion).

*15 If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. . . . 21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. . . . 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. . . . 12 This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. . . . 14 Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. Jn 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12, 14;*

So we see that Jesus example of love(even as) for others and his example of full submission to God's commands (even as) have replaced "as yourself" and "with all your heart, soul and mind."

Paul carried this to the next level with his explanation of what love will do. This was first revealed as it came out of the heart of our God. Now it is our lifelong quest to become more like our God in these things.

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5*

does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails. 1 Cor 13:4-8

John now lays some of this foundation and also builds upon it.

**and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God.**

With all the above as background one can see the logic and sense to this statement. Everyone (every class and every kind) who loves with *agape*-love must be begotten of God and must know God for there is no other way they could possess it. Since all *agape* love comes forth from God as ORIGIN SOURCE and CAUSE, no one could possess even a portion of it without a knowledge and relationship, they must know God and be born of him. The other side of this absolute truth also holds true:

**8 He that loveth not knoweth not God;**

Everyone that does not have this love in his possession and manifest it in all their dealings with their fellow man and their God could never have known or at the present moment know God. In the same manner, to the degree that we fall short of the ideals of *agape* love, to that degree we are still in ignorance of God. This answers so many questions and reveals the justness of so much that is in the Scriptures. It was the embers of *agape* love that led Abel to offer his sacrifice to God based on God's needs and not his own. It was the lack of any *agape* love in the heart of Cain that led him to offer a sacrifice to God with only the desires of Cain as his goal. This is also true of all the Law. Who with any *agape* love in his heart could harm his neighbor? Who could kill, steal, covet, or commit adultery if they had true *agape* love in their heart. So in every possible sense without *agape* we are in ignorance of God's true nature and being. The absolute reason for this is given in the next phrase and is summed up by the preposition "for."

"*hoti...* the reason why anything is said to be or to be done, *because, since, for that, for,* (a causal conjunct. ...)... a. it is added to a speaker's words to show what ground he gives for his opinion;... b. *hoti* makes reference to some word or words that precede or immediately follow it..." (Thayer p 458-460; 3754)

The reason why no one who does not love does not know God is therefore set forth. John adds this to "show what ground he gives for" this truth.

**for God is love.**

Because God is love, only those who manifest love are the true children of their Father in heaven. In the first chapter of Genesis God made it clear that "everything would produce after it's kind." Every form of life begotten on earth resembles the one who brought it into existence. By fruit we always know. God is *agape* - love. It is a part of his being. Throughout the pages of the Scriptures God is revealed to us as he really is and as we once were and still should be. These are all part of the divine nature we seek to become partakers of (II Pet 1:3-5). God is spirit (Jn 4:23-24), God is holy (1 Pet 1:15-16), God is light, God is righteous, and God is love so we must be also.

*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24 but like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; 16 because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy. 1 Pet 1:14-16*

*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1 Jn 1:5-7*

As we learn of God's character, as his obedient children, we must seek to restore ourselves to what we were created to be when made in his image and likeness. John has now placed love in its highest position. All the commands, explanations and illustrations of love have been given to us to lead our hearts and minds back to the true purpose of existence. God lives to bless and help others. He seeks with all his being to be helpful and generous to fill the needs of others. This is why he sent Jesus. This is why he is so kind, patient, merciful and forgiving. All his power, wisdom, might and greatness are directed toward helping and blessing others.

Man has drifted far from such an existence. We are much more accustomed to using all we possess for ourselves. Something Jesus never did and something now revealed as a characteristic that did not come from God.

“love is not so much a quality which God *has*, rather the all-embracing total of what he *is*”(Besser)

**9 Herein was the love of God manifested in us,**

Herein(within -in the midst of this) was love manifested(make visible or known what has been hidden or unknown). By drawing a circle around the incarnation of Jesus and all that it means we see the love of God clearly revealed. This is the true nature, extent and scope of *agape* love.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16*

*But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:8*

Without such acts we could never truly know what love can do and what God expects us to do.

**that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.**

Through the gospel, it has been revealed to us the terrible consequences of sin and the price that must be paid for those sins to be forgiven and those sinners who committed them to be restored to hope, joy and peace. Passages like Isa 53 and the scenes from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross set forth the full extent of the terrible price of sin that had to be paid for us to “*live through him.*” Each time we partake in the communion of our Lord on the first day of the week we are remembering the full scope and depth of love. This is how the love of God is clearly manifested and made known to us. We now understand how much God loves us. We now see what love in the heart of one who has the ability to relieve suffering will do.

**10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us,**

Herein(in the midst of) this is love truly seen. This time there are two circles. One a positive and one a negative. Love did not come into being as a result of our initiative. We did not come to God and manifest our true love and devotion that then led him to act in our behalf. It had nothing to do with our *agape* love toward him. It is made clear in many passages of Scripture that before what God had already done for us had been revealed to us we had no care or concern at all for God. It was nothing within us that led God to be as he is.

*But love your enemies, and do (them) good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Lk 6:35*

*For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; Rom 5:10*

*And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him: Col 1:21-22*

It was God from beginning to end. It was love that created us and love that gave us the time to repent. God wants all men to be saved and is longsuffering not wishing that any should perish(1Tim 2:2-5; 2Pet 3:9). So the circle through which we see the love God is his own love toward us.

**and sent his Son (to be) the propitiation for our sins.**

This is the highest pinnacle from which to view the absolute fulness of love and what it will do to accomplish its end. This is the second time in this letter(2:2) that John has spoken of propitiation. We will not repeat all that was said there, but only sum it up. Every one of us seeks propitiation whenever we offend another. If in a moment of anger or jealousy we do or say something to deeply hurt another, we seek for the means to propitiate and remove it. But this is completely turned around. We did the offending and God did the propitiation. It would be like a husband who deeply offended his wife, but she went out and bought the flowers to bring about the reconciliation. This is *agape* love. It takes the initiative and does all that is necessary to bless and restore even if we did not bring it about. We see this when Jesus says if someone sins against us we go and seek reconciliation but God did it first and more fully than we. It was God who sent his son to save our souls.

**11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

John now speaks of congruity and proportion. God “so” loved us. What John just finished discussing is the manner and the way that God love us.

*“houtu... in this manner, thus, so; 1. by virtue of its native demonstrative force it refers to what*



preceded; *in the manner spoken of; in the way described; in the way it was once; in this manner; in such a manner; thus so...* (Thayer, p. 468-469; 3779)

Since having fully explained love to the best we can see it, the only thing left to do to truly grasp it is to begin to show this in our own life. There is nothing that will bring an understanding of the difficulties and costs of *agape* love than to do it ourselves. But it is not simply learning and growing that this command is based upon. Since this is God's character, it "ought" to be ours.

*"opheilo... to owe, a. prop. to owe money, be in dept for... b. metaph... absol. to be a debtor, be bound... foll. by an inf. to be under obligation, bound by duty or necessity, to do something; it behooves one; one ought; used thus of a necessity imposed either by law and duty, or by reason, or by the times, or by the nature of the matter under consideration..."* (Thayer, p. 469; 3784)

It is a debt we owe and we are bound by duty and obligated by necessity to mutually and reciprocally do this for our brethren. This is the love by which Jesus stated all will know that we are his disciples. This is a quality we simply do not see in anywhere else in this world. It is a refreshing and yet startling concept, but it is the truth and we need to both accept it and then manifest it ourselves.

## **12 No man hath beheld God at any time:**

Perhaps the Gnostics had made some claim to this or perhaps it is simply a statement of fact upon which to build his next thought. No one has ever seen(perfect) God. This is the second time John has stated this truth.

*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared (him). John 1:18*

There can be little doubt in the context of both these verses that John expected it to be clearly understood at face value that no man has ever seen God. In both passages the word no is unambiguous.

*"oudeis... and not one, no one, none, no; it differs from meideis as ou does from me... 1. with nouns... 2. absolutely, ... nothing whatever, not at all, in no wise..."* (Thayer, p. 462; 3762)

John plainly states that "*none, absolutely no one, in no wise*" has "seen" God. So absolutely no one in no wise has ever beheld or "looked upon" God.

*theomai . . . to behold, look upon, view attentively, contemplate, . . . to view, take a view of. . . to learn by looking: . . . to perceive* (Thayer 2300)

But what about...? Some have objected and some religious today actually teach that man has seen God. Some passages in the OT are cited: God said of Moses "*the form of Jehovah shall he behold.*" Moses and the seventy elders "*saw the God of Israel*" Isaiah "*saw the Lord sitting upon a throne,*" and later said "*mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of Hosts*"

*My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all my house: 8 with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the form of Jehovah shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses? Num 12:7-8*

*Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. 10 And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness. Ex 24:9-10*

*In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. Isa 6:1-2,5*

So now we have Scripture clearly cited against each other. So do we minimize what was said in the Old Testament in some way to harmonize these passages or do we minimize these passages in some way? First, before we seek to answer this question, look at what God said to Moses after the event with the seventy elders:

*And he said, Show me, I pray thee, thy glory. 19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. 20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live. Ex 33:18-20*

Since God told Moses "*Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live.*" Whatever other passages in the Scripture that seem to indicate that some men did see his face and live must be reconsidered. With John's words here and in his gospel, and with God's words

to Moses the simplest explanation is that they saw a vision of a form of God that God allowed them to see. It resembled him but it was not him.

Yet even though no man has ever seen God, they can understand him and be just like him all based upon our relationship to love.

**if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us:**

Although no one has seen God, If we love one another he abides and dwells in us. John is here affirming that the closest possible fellowship man can hold today is not based upon what he has seen or what he knows. It is based upon how much *agape* love we have managed to comprehend from God's own character and how much of that love we have created and are practicing in our lives as a Christian.

This gives additional power to all that he has just finished revealing: "*Love is of God,*" "*every one that loves is begotten of God and knows God*" "*love not know not God; for God is love.*" "*God so loved us, we ought to love one another.*" This is why those who love one another will have God abiding in them. Does this mean that God is dwelling in us in some supernatural sense that no one else has or does it mean that if we have love, then God is moving and guiding us for we have allowed him to fill and direct our heart? From the context it appears that it is both. We have seen in the previous verses that based upon God's character we understand love and as we allow more and more of his character to animate our own lives he will abide in us.

In the next verse he makes it clear that God truly is dwelling in us. Yet the only way we know he is dwelling in us and that we are dwelling in him is because of the Spirit he has given us.

### **13 hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.**

Once again he begins with “*hereby - in the midst of this*” drawing a circle this time around “*the Spirit that he gave us.*” Before commenting on this, note the similarity in thought between this verse and the last verse of the previous chapter.

*And he that **keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him.** And **hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.** 1 Jn 3:24*

*No man hath beheld God at any time: **if we love one another, God abideth in us,** and his love is perfected in us: 13 **hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.** 1 Jn 4:12-13*

Except for the replacement of *commandments* with *love* and a few changes in pronouns, word order and tense they are the same. John keeps driving this point home as it is the greatest proof God has given of the veracity of the Scriptures. The miraculous power of the Holy Spirit to verify the truth of what is being said.

*how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? Heb. 2:3-4*

The only thing the Bible has that all other counterfeits do not have is the Spirit God gave us. As we look at Peter in Acts 2 and the apostles throughout the book of Acts, it is clear that the proof was the miracles and fulfilled prophesy. This is how we know! The Spirit revealed these things and thus bears witness and the Spirit validates the truth with the miracles.

### **14 And we have beheld and bear witness**

Once again, the pronoun shifts. “*We*” now returns again to 1:1-5 and includes only those who were true eyewitnesses(*beheld*) and therefore could bear witness.

*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, (even) the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: 27 and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. Jn 15:26-27*

This too is a repetition of what he said in at the very beginning of the book (1:1-4). John affirmed this in the perfect tense that they had seen (*beheld*) and the impact and effect of what they had seen still held a powerful influence over their lives. This time he used the middle voice (*we saw for ourselves*). They had not heard this from others, they say it for themselves. The bearing witness is in the present indicative as a continuous action from the time they first beheld it up to the present moment.

*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **we were eyewitnesses** of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: 18 and **this voice we ourselves heard** borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. 2 Pet 1:16-18*

As was noted in the first chapter, there is nothing higher than this available to the human race when it comes to things we cannot see for ourselves. Time and space prohibit our experiences from being anything but a tiny portion of what has occurred in the history of the human race. All history courses face this same issue. No one in the class was present so we must rely upon the witness of those who were there. If we respect their character and veracity, then the thing is proven as true. John has the higher and greater position in any argument with those who are teaching things about Jesus. Not only because of his eyewitness testimony, but more important, the Holy Spirit who was verifying all that they said.

### **that the Father hath sent the Son (to be) the Savior of the world.**

All that they had seen and heard led to this one single foundation truth. God had a specific purpose for everything Jesus did and one purpose for Jesus coming. If this is not completed then it was all in vain. Jesus sought many times to help his disciples understand that he could only save them if they believed him enough to do everything he commanded.

*For God so loved the world, that **he gave his only begotten Son,** that whosoever believeth on him **should not perish, but have eternal life.** John 3:16*

*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 who would have **all men to be***

**saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.** 5 For there is one God, **one mediator also between God and men, (himself) man, Christ Jesus,** 6 who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony (to be borne) in its own times; 1 Tim 2:3-6

The true intent of all their testimony about all they had seen was to establish this fact. It was all “in order that” all would know that the Father “sent” the Son to be the savior of the world. This is one of the things that the gnostics denied and it was the foundation of the gospel.

*apostello ... properly, to send off, send away; .1. to order (one) to go to a place appointed; a. either persons sent with commissions, or things intended for someone. So, very frequently, Jesus teaches that God sent him, as Mt 10:40; Mk 9:37; Lk 10:16; Jn 5:36, etc. he, too, is said to have sent his apostles, i. e. to have appointed them: Mk 6:7; Mt 10:16; Lk 22:35; Jn 20:21,...” (Thayer's 649)*

Jesus was God’s apostle to save the world and the men he sent forth to testify were his twelve apostles. In the perfect tense, God sent him to be the savior and the effects of that sending are exactly the same today as they were then.

### **15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God,**

This is the fifth time John has used the word *confession*. We are to *confess*: “our sins” (1:9); “the son” (2:23); “that Jesus is come in the flesh” (4:2); and “Jesus” (4:3). We need to keep in mind throughout this section that this it all in light of and in the context of God’s love. In 4:9-11 John used these facts to prove the extent of God’s love that we are to imitate ourselves. The “love of God” was “manifested” “that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.” “Herein is love,” “that he loved us, and sent his Son the propitiation for our sins.” “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Confessing is not simply words coming from the mouth, but from the heart.

*because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus (as) Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: 10 for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame. Rom 10:9-11*

This is a confession that takes in our entire being. We believe it in our heart and confess it as the truth to all who will hear. The very thing these false teachers were refusing to do. Regardless of what else they were doing to convince and deceive, this one thing must immediately disqualify them and lead to complete rejection.

### **God abideth in him, and he in God.**

For those who truly want to draw near to God and abide in him, this confession must be held fast until the very end. The moment we doubt this truth, is the moment we are no longer in fellowship with God. Jesus spoke of this fellowship with the same preposition “in.” This is the “oneness” Jesus prayed for all his disciples.

*Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; 21 that they may **all be one**; even as thou, **Father, in me**, and **I in thee**, that **they** also may be **in us**; that the world may believe that thou didst send me. 22 And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they **may be one**, even as **we (are) one**; 23 **I in them**, and **thou in me**, that they may be **perfected into one**; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me. Jn 17:20-23*

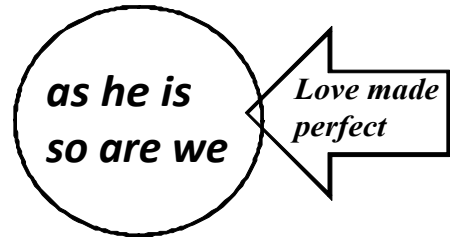
Following the thread and context of his words here, God loved us so much he sent Jesus to be propitiation and savior. If we believe this enough to confess it and to do the things that naturally follow these convictions then we are one with God and with one another. It is the simple litmus test for all Christians to apply to their teachers and preachers

### **16 And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us.**

The pronoun now reverts to the things both the apostles and believers have in common. Both of these perfect tense verbs describe events that occurred in their past but continue to strongly affect them up to the present moment. We came to know and still know! We came to believe and still believe! It is impossible not to! The more we understand about what God did for us in Christ, the stronger and more absolute our convictions. Only incredulity and disgust should follow any sermon that would deny or seek to undermine these things. The loving kindness, care and concern that led to God’s sincere efforts to help us, bless us and save us should overwhelm us with gratitude and then conviction. Especially during the partaking of the Lord’s

supper and the anguished confession of sins that rip our hearts into agony and are replaced with the peace which is beyond understanding. All true servants of God are convinced in their knowledge of the great love that God has for us in sending His son in the flesh to suffer and die on the cruel cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

*“in the midst of”*

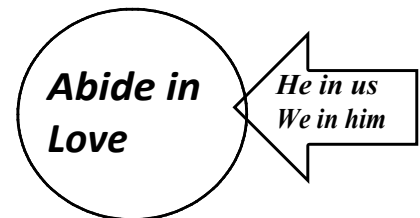


*Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ... 8 For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. ... 12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors. Isa 53:4-6, 8, 12*

**God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.**

John returns to the complete permeation of the *agape*-love that exists within God’s heart and must be formed in our own, repeating his words from 4:8. God does not simply have *agape*-love, he *is* *agape*-love. This love that Jesus came to demonstrate is a natural part of being in the image and likeness of God for God has always had this characteristic in its fulness. To truly care for the state of others and to use our resources to bless and help is one of God’s attributes, just as his strength, power and wisdom. This being true, the rest follows logically, like links in a chain. Since God is love, if we want to abide in God and have God abide in us, we must abide in love. The key then is “abide in love.”

*“God is love”* <sup>4:16</sup>



Just as in the previous verse “*abide in*” reflects the closest possible tie we can have. We “*abide in*” love when we seek to have the closest possible relationship with it. We want to feel it, live it, and act it out in our own life, just as God has done in his. As God is love, we must be love. As we are love as God is love, we abide in him and he abides in us. We can have no closer relationship with God than we have with unselfish *agape*-love. As we grow in this love, we grow closer to God. Without this quality of love, there is still a great chasm between us and God. A chasm that can only be closed by our taking on this characteristic. Again, something the gnostics refused to do.

**17 Herein is love made perfect with us,**

We now have another circle and “*in the midst of*” this love is made perfect. The term “made perfect” in this context means “*carry through completely*,” “*bring to the end proposed*,” and “*bring to fulfillment*.”

*teleioo . . . to make perfect or complete; 1. to carry through completely; to accomplish, finish, bring to an end: . . . 2. to complete (perfect), i. e. add what is yet lacking in order to render a thing full: . . . 3. to bring to the end (goal) proposed: . . . 4. to accomplish, i. e. bring to a close or fulfillment...” (Thayer 5048)*

Love becomes all that it was intended and can be when “*as he is so are we in the world*.” This is the great goal that Jesus came into the world to reveal to us. First he lived it and then he demanded that we also live it.

*Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: 44 but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; 45 that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. 46 For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more (than others?) do not even the Gentiles the same? 48 Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly*

*Father is perfect. Matt 5:43-48*

**that we may have boldness in the day of judgment;**

The goal of “*in the midst of this*” is “in order that” we may have “*boldness*.” In 2:28 he said if we abide in him when he is manifested we can have boldness. In 3:21, if our heart does not condemn us we have boldness toward God. Here, we can have this boldness in the day of judgment if we are like him in this! This boldness is a “*free and fearless confidence*,” and “*cheerful courage*.” In the day of judgement as we are placed on the right hand of the Lord, we will have “*the undoubting confidence of Christians relative to their fellowship with God*.”

“*parresia... 1. freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, ... openly, frankly, i. e. without concealment... 2. free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance, ... of the undoubting confidence of Christians relative to their fellowship with God... 3. the deportment by which one becomes conspicuous or secures publicity...*” (Thayer, p. 491; 3954)

While the previous two spoke of the boldness we now have because we trust God’s promises and when we do what he says, he will do it. He promised, he swore with an oath, and it is impossible for him not to do what he promised(lie). This was done so we could have strong consolation and thus boldness.

*Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. Heb 6:17-18*

Two important truths are revealed here. First, we will have confidence in the day of judgment. There will be no doubt of the outcome. John does not speaking of a boldness we have right now. He speaks of the boldness that will be ours in the future day of judgment. He then revealed what we must be doing now to have boldness at that day.

**because as he is, even so are we in this world.**

“*kathos,...1. according as, just as, even as: in the first member of a comparison:...2. according as i.e. in proportion as, in the degree that:...3. since, seeing that, agreeably to the fact that.*” (Thayer, p. 314; 2531).

This is the great goal of the gospel. We are to be restored to the image we had in the beginning. God created Adam and Eve to be as he is in this world. Through selfishness they seriously damaged that image. Through the love revealed in the gospel that image can be restored. As we learn about the love of God and we manifest that love in our own lives, we are as he is in this world. But who is the “he?” The nearest antecedent is God, but John uses a different pronoun. The word “*he*” is ambiguous in this passage:

*ekeinos* properly, the one there, demonstrative pronoun, *that* man, woman, thing . . . properly of persons, things, times, places somewhat remote from the speaker. . . 1 used absolutely b. of noted persons (as in classic Greek): in a bad sense, *that notorious man*, Jn 7:11; 9:28; in a good sense — of the Lord Jesus, 1 Jn 2:6; 3:3,5,7,16; 4:17; c. referring to a noun immediately preceding, *he, she, it*, (Thayer ; 1565)

It could be simply God, or it might be Jesus. Actually it makes little difference because “*if you have seen me you have seen the Father*.” (Jn 14:9). It was Jesus life that clearly revealed the love of God to fallen man. So as he is, so is the Father. So if the “*he*” is Jesus, we make the mental note that it is as Jesus reflected the Father’s love. If “*he*” is the Father then we have to make the mental note that Jesus truly reflected that love that God is.

John’s point here is clear. If we want to have boldness in the day of judgment, and we seek to make his love perfect and complete within us, then we must be “*as he is*.” We must balance all our conduct to others as closely as we can to how Jesus would have reflected the love of God. Remember though that this is *agape*-love and not *phileo*-love. Therefore it is impossible for us to intuitively know how to do this. Listen to Paul speak on this same thought:

*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; 10 so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ; Phil 1:9-10*

This love can only abound in knowledge and discernment. It can only reach perfection when we

approve the things that are excellent and are therefore sincere and void of offence unto the day of judgment. We can't be "even as he is" unless we learn and know what he knew. *agape*-love can only operate in knowledge of God's will and the proper application (discernment) of it in our every decision. Thus we can't go on our own feelings of love, but on God's love expressed in his will in the New Testament Scriptures. For God, discipline is love, both in the home and in the church. Many while feel they love the sinner too much to cast him away, that is not love but only our own human wisdom masked as love.

### **18 There is no fear in love:**

We come now to another one of those passages that Peter described.

*our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 2Pet. 3:15-16*

Just as there were some passages in Paul's epistles that were hard to understand and are thus wrested, so also here in John's "rest of the Scriptures." This is a very difficult passage and is easily wrested. We know the Scriptures cannot be *broken* (Jn 10:35) or made to contradict each other. So when John speaks of casting out all fear, it must be understood in harmony with the rest of the Scriptures.

"*phobos*, ...1. *fear, dread, terror*; in a subjective sense... In an objective sense, *that which strikes terror* ... 2. reverence, respect (for authority, rank, dignity)..." (Thayer, p. 656; 5401)

"*phobos* first had the meaning of flight, that which is caused by being scared; then, that which may cause flight, (a) fear, dread, terror, always with the significance in the four Gospels; ... (b) reverential fear, (l) of God, as a controlling motive of the life, in matters spiritual and moral, not a mere fear of His power and righteous retribution, but a wholesome dread of displeasing Him, a fear which banishes the terror that shrinks from His presence, Rom. 8:15 and which influences the disposition and attitude of one whose circumstances are guided by trust in God..." (Vine Vol 2, p 84)

By using this word, John affirmed that when love is perfected it will cast out all "*fear, dread terror*," and/or "*reverence, respect for authority*." If taken too far, John affirmed that when love is perfected we will not longer have fear at all. . Yet other Scriptures warn us that we must always have this fear. Lest we think this is only an issue of grammar or vocabulary, these are all the same Greek word in its noun and verb forms.

*And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will warn you whom **ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.** Lk 12:4-5*

*but in every nation **he that feareth him**, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. Acts 10:35*

*And Paul stood up, and beckoning with the hand said, Men of Israel, and **ye that fear God**, hearken: Acts 13:16*

*Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. **Be not highminded, but fear**: 21 for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee. 22 Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. Rom 11:20-22*

***Let us fear therefore**, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard. Heb 4:1-2*

*Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. **Fear God**. Honor the king. 1 Pet 2:17*

*So the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, **walking in the fear of the Lord** and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied. Acts 9:31*

***Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord**, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. 2 Cor 5:11*

*Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God**. 2 Cor 7:1*

*subjecting yourselves one to another **in the fear of Christ**. Eph 5:21*

*And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, **pass the time of your sojourning in fear**: 1 Pet 1:17*

*but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: (being) ready always to give answer to every man that*

asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, **yet with meekness and fear:** 1 Pet 3:15

How can we harmonize these passages? How can perfect love cast *all* fear when Jesus said: “*I will warn you whom **ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.***” If perfect love casts out all fear then why does Paul say “***Be not highminded, but fear,***” and “***perfecting holiness in the fear of God.***” The Hebrew writer adds, “***Let us fear therefore***” and Peter, “***pass the time of your sojourning in fear.***” It is clear from these passages that this passage can be carried too far. Yet at the same time we cannot carry the above passages so far that they violate what John is here affirming. With this caution in our hearts, we must now carefully consider the passage with these limitations in mind.

### **18 There is no fear in love:**

Since we are commanded to fear all the things above, what fear is John speaking of? The contrast appears to be in the boldness of verse 17 and the “no fear” in this one. When we are bold because we love as he loved, to that degree the boldness removes the fear. This comment from the Pulpit commentary paves the way for a good and Scriptural understanding.

Perfect love will absolutely exclude fear as surely as perfect union excludes all separation. It is self-interested love that fears; pure and unselfish love has no fear. Yet nothing but perfect love must be allowed to cast out fear. Otherwise this text might be made an excuse for taking the most unwarrantable liberties with Almighty God. To cease to fear without attaining to perfect love is to be irreverent and presumptuous. Hence the apostle is once more pointing out an ideal to which Christians must aspire, but to which no one attains in this life. There is a fear, as Bede points out, which prepares the way for love, and which comes only to depart again when its work is done. (The Pulpit Commentary)

The idea then is very similar to the passage above it. Just as our “boldness” is in the day of judgment, so also our love, which is growing all our lives reaches its perfection after the resurrection. Most Christians begin their sojourn with God in fear of the punishment of hell. As time passes this fear recedes and our desire for heaven takes its place. But this too passes as the love for God and of God fills our own hearts. As we do more and more for unselfish reasons the less fear is a motivation. So the goal is to grow in love with the realization that when our love is perfected (but it will not be in this life), we will no longer have any fear.

There are times in the life of a Christian they have repented of all sins and are living in all good conscience. Their faith is strong, and they are fulfilling God’s expectations to the best of their ability. During such times how are we to feel? God is faithful and just to forgive us, and we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. There is no need for fear at such times. This doesn’t remove vigilance, but it does allow us to enjoy the joy of our salvation until we sin again. We are still trusting in the Lord with all our heart, we are still taking heed lest we fall, and continuing to seek for areas of weakness and ignorance, but is this a time for great fear? No because for that moment, perfect love has removed it. Yet it is not truly gone because we cannot yet proclaim that perfect love is in our possession. We catch glimpses of it while we live in this life, but it will never be our possession until we leave the body of flesh behind. After we have sinned and are feeling deep remorse and sorrow (because for that moment, love was banished from our heart) we will again feel fear. Yet as love is again perfected in our hearts the fear will again drop into the background, but will and must continue to surface each time we commit sin.

### **but perfect love casteth out fear,**

The word “perfect” validates the above interpretation. When *agape*-love has been “*brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect*” then it will cast out fear.

The goal to which we are running toward will ultimately when perfected lead to a time when all fear has been banished. It begins in this life, but is often ripped from us at the same time our *agape*-love is ripped from us (each time we sin). So while we are walking in the light as he is in the light, perfect love will cast out fear, but when we stumble into darkness we must feel fear until we have regained the light, because we truly are in mortal danger between the time we sin and the time we repent.



### **because fear hath punishment;**

The reason that perfect love will cast out fear centers on the fact that all fear is based upon punishment. When we have done something wrong, and we know there is a punishment associated with that act we will feel fear. All fear is based on punishment. When all threat of punishment is removed, then and only then will there be no fear. When we are walking in the light and our sins are forgiven we can banish fear for we know there is no punishment. But again, after we have sinned and we are led crying bitter tears and repenting of what has just been done that does bring punishment, not only is fear not cast out, it is necessary, logical and scriptural. But after the judgment, when love is perfected, there will be no fear, and the more we grow in love here the less fear we will have.

### **and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.**

This is an absolute statement that reveals a lot about our character. Whenever we feel fear, it is because we are not yet made perfect in love. This does not mean that perfect love will remove all fear. But perfect love will remove all the things that bring punishment and thus by extension remove all fear. The more we love the less we sin. The less we sin, the less we are liable to punishment. The less we are liable to punishment the less fear we will fear. When this finally reaches its end and goal, we will no longer fear. When we consider that every sin takes something either from God or from our fellow man it becomes obvious why when love is perfected, sin is removed and with sin gone, the fear of punishment also is removed.

### **19 We love, because he first loved us.**

This is simply another way of saying what John has been seeking to get his brethren to see. We know love because of God's initiative, love is of God, Love was manifested when God sent his son, Love is not that we loved God but that he loved us, and if God so loved us we ought to love one another.

3:16 *Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us:*

4:7 *let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is begotten and knows God,*

4:9 *Herein was the love of God manifested: God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.*

4:10 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son the propitiation for our sins.*

4:11 *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

All of these passages say exactly what John repeats here. Our love is not based on what we did for God, but it is all based upon what he did for us. We did not love him. That is the sad but unvarnished truth. There was no initiative on our part. We did not know and had completely forgotten how to love. We only love now because he first loved us. It seems that John is finishing the previous thoughts with this conclusion. Like Paul he is simply reminding us that if God took all the initiative, then God will finish what he started with those who are responding back to him and to others with his love.

*hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us. 6 For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath (of God) through him. 10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; Rom 5:5-10*

### **20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother,**

Once again John makes it clear that this love is not theoretical. It is not knowledge based or worked out in the mind. When one has *agape*-love toward God, it will move and impel him to also love his brother. Regardless of how far we have progressed in knowledge through the Scriptures, we will never truly love God until our knowledge of *agape*-love is strong enough and broad enough to encompass our brother. As long as we are not treating our brethren with love, forgiveness and forbearance, we are hating them. As long as we are hating them then all claims to love God only makes us a liar.

**he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen.**

Once again the strong term of rebuke. To make such a claim is to make oneself a liar. It is not possible to learn of and truly know *agape*-love and not practice it toward our brethren. God's love was manifested to us by how he poured it out upon us. Our love is manifested by how richly we pour it out unto our brethren. There is a two fold-reason for this. First, the very nature of this love requires that as quickly as we learn it we begin to practice it. We cannot love God whom we do not see and not love our brethren whom we can see.

**21 And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.**

Secondly, since love for God is based upon keeping his commandments and one of the commandments is to love our brethren, it is a contradiction(a lie) to break this command and claim to love God. Thus we see a spiritual paradox and a spiritual impossibility. With a clear command to love our brethren, refusing to submit to it does not manifest a love for God, but a rebellion against God.

