

The Evidence of Godly Love # 15

1 John 4: 17-21

There are three words we never tire of hearing: I love you. No doubt we all have spoken those words many times in our lives, and I am sure we have been sincere, hopefully most of the time. I do fear there are times when words are empty though. We may have spoken the words “I love you,” and not really meant them from the heart. Speaking of our love is one thing, actually showing that love through our actions is quite another.

There can be no doubt concerning the love God has for us. His great love was displayed for the world to see as Christ hung on the cross of Calvary. We have discussed God being the source of our love and the need for a right relationship with Christ to experience genuine love.

Our text deals with how love affects our lives and the way it is expressed toward others. Those who possess God’s great love will reveal that love through the life they live. I want to consider the [attributes](#) of this great love as we think on: [The Evidence of Godly Love](#).

I. The Confidence in Love (17) – [Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world](#). Experiencing and possessing the love of God has a positive impact on our lives. One such way is in the confidence love provides. Notice:

A. Love’s Maturity (17a) – [Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment](#): We experience the love of God the moment we are saved, but as we grow in Him our love matures; it is made perfect. The believer better understands the great love God has for us. We know that He is love and we dwell within His great love. Through His love we enjoy peace and rest in this life. His love enables us to rise above many of the struggles we face.

- John offers an interesting aspect of this love: it allows us to look toward the day of judgment with boldness. That doesn’t reveal arrogance or pride, but rather faith and assurance. God’s love was proven as Christ bore our sin. We are now made acceptable to God in Christ and no longer fear standing before Him in judgment. I can admit my perspective of the future has changed through my relationship with Christ.

B. Love’s Motivation (17b) – [because as he is, so are we in this world](#). In Christ we realize we are no longer accountable for our sin. We have been pardoned in Christ, forgiven of our sin, our debt being paid in full. As God views us, He sees us as He sees His Son. We have not yet made it to heaven, but we are viewed as righteous as Christ our Lord is righteous.

- There is an aspect of John's teaching we must not miss. As Christ was in the world, so are we expected to be in the world. That doesn't imply we will achieve the perfection He enjoyed or possess the ability to love as He loved, but we are to strive for that. Our lives are to be a representation of Christ in every way, including our love for one another! We are here to maintain a consistent witness for Christ our Lord.

II. The Courage in Love (18) – *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* Along with great confidence, we also can enjoy courage in the love of God. Consider:

A. The Principle (18a) – *There is no fear in love.* God's love conquers all fear. While living in sin, apart from God, our lives were dominated by fear. We were unsure of our future, concerned with our health, and even worried about ensuring financial stability. Genuine love allows us to rest from our fears. The love of God has removed such fear from my life. I do not claim to never worry, but I have no reason to. God has secured my eternal future. I have no way of knowing what life will bring, but I am secure in Christ. If He decides to call for me in death, I will simply enter His eternal presence. He has always met my needs and I have no reason to fear He will ever fail.

- Often love is withheld because something is expected in return. Many want to ensure a proper return on their investment. God's love allows us to love others sacrificially. Our love is not dependent upon what we receive in return or fearful of loss. We love others as God loved us.

B. The Power (18b) – *but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.* The love of God is a powerful force. It rises above fear and enables us to cast such fear aside. We no longer live in fear of the future.

- Our lives should not be dictated by situations and circumstances, but by the love of God. Many live their lives driven by emotion and circumstance. They tend to respond to others relative to how they were treated. God's love provides the courage to open up and love and He loves, regardless of circumstance.

- John declares that fear brings torment. One cannot enjoy peace and rest while living in fear. Fear creates anxiety, doubt, panic, and worry. These are signs of weakness in mature love. God's love allows us to rest solely in Him, loving others as He loves, and leaving the situations and conclusions in God's hands. Mature love brings abundant peace and courage. If you are in Christ, you are secure in Him. There is no reason for fear or dread.

C. The Prognosis (18c) – [He that feareth is not made perfect in love](#). This brings conviction, but it bears truth. Where fear exists, love is lacking. There could be application for those who made a profession of faith and yet lacked genuine saving faith in Christ. Many today are religious, but not confident of their salvation. Those who belong to Christ do not fear His coming or standing before Him in judgment. I'm sure we all will discover how feeble our efforts were and that we could have, and should have, done much more for Christ, but believers do not fear the Lord's return.

- I will admit as well that we often allow fear to affect our lives. In reality fear reveals a lack of faith and mature love. When we are settled in the love of God as He would have us, we are fully trusting in Him, not lacking faith and fearful of what life brings. The Lord is still working in my life as I struggle with worry from time to time. I desire to walk closer to the Lord and fully trust in Him!

III. The Character of Love (19-21) – John concludes his thoughts on love with a description of its character. Consider:

A. The Source (19) – [We love him, because he first loved us](#). That goes against our self-serving attitudes, but it is true nonetheless. It would be impossible for us to love God had He not loved us first. His great love was displayed and proven in the crucifixion of Christ. He made the way for our salvation and offers eternal life. Had He not loved us, and gave Himself for us, we could never have loved Him.

- I am glad He loved me when I was unlovable. I rejoice that such great love was extended to me. I am thankful for the day the Holy Spirit revealed such love. After coming to the realization that God loved me, I was then able to love Him. He came looking for me while I was yet in my sin. I have nothing to boast of apart from His great love!

B. The Slander (20a) – [If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar](#): This is very simple and needs no explanation. We cannot love God and hate our brother. There will be times we are angry and maybe even bitter toward others, but we cannot hate others and love God. If genuine hatred exists, the love of God does not.

C. The Symmetry (20b) – [for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?](#) Again we find it is impossible to love God whom we have not seen and hate our brother whom we have seen. If we possess love for God, love for our brother will be evident as well. It is impossible to love one without loving the other. The love we have for God should be perfectly reflected in the love we have for others.

- We need to consider the magnitude of what John has said. This entire passage deals with agape love, love as God loves. This does not refer to a casual concern for those around us, but a genuine love as God does. I do not imply we possess hatred for others, but I had to search my heart as well and ask whether my love for others is as it should be.

D. The Submission (21) – *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.* Our love for one another is not optional. It isn't something we can choose to do or refrain from if we don't. We are commanded to love our brother if we love God. No doubt we would all like to think we love God. If so, we must also love one another. We are expected to submit to the will of God and love one another. *John 13:34-35 – A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; 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.*

Conclusion: None can doubt the love God has for us. Christ loved us enough to bear our sin and die in our place. The world needs to see and experience the love of God lived out through His people. Surely you would agree that more love would benefit all.

Is our love all it should be? Do we love as God would have us too? Are we as concerned about the condition of others as He was about ours?

Have you experienced the love of God that casts out fear? Are you ready for the return of Christ the Lord? If not, I urge you to seek Him as He deals with your heart.