

GOD IS LOVE

1 John 4

Love for God and One Another

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. 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.

Knowing God Through Love

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Seeing God Through Love

No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

The Consummation of Love

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.

Obedience by Faith

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

There is a very apparent theme in **1 John 4**, as it is practically impossible not to notice. But really, it could be said that the same theme is throughout the Apostle John's epistles or letters, and also in his gospel account, or narrative of the life and ministry of Christ Jesus. For **1 John 4** though, not including the subtitles, the word love is mentioned **30 times**. If we included the subtitles that were added by biblegateway.com, of which I copied this text, there are 4 more mentions of the word love. That's a lot of the love of God being talked about by the Apostle John. In the previous chapter, the Apostle John aptly expresses the great love of God saying, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." (**1 John 3:1**) When we consider the great love that God has bestowed upon us, through Christ Jesus, dying on a cross for our sins against God, to pay the penalty that had to be paid based on God's perfect justice, as God is perfect in all of His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and His Works (**Deuteronomy 32:4**), and as Jesus conquered death and sin and evil so that we can be reconciled to God to be children of God, so that we can know Him, as our Lord, God, and Savior, and as our Heavenly Father, I don't think I'm making the Scriptures say something that it isn't intended to mean, by saying, that sounds like it is a very personal thing between each of us and God. God's love that has been demonstrated to us through the great sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus, so that we may have a living and active relationship with God through Christ Jesus! Another example given by Jesus, as to how personal that relationship is meant to be is as Jesus stated, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (**John 14:23**) For our passage of Scripture then for today, let us consider, this day and every day, the great love that God has bestowed upon us, through His only begotten Son, Christ Jesus. What we then know is that the love of God is not only expressed in John's writings, just because he was an emotional kind of guy. John quoted Jesus Himself as saying, in **John 3:16-17**, "For God so loved the world [that's us] that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." The question that is asked us, with regards to that great love of God that has been bestowed upon us is, "how are you and how will you respond to God's love?" That word believe, that we get from **John 3:16**, and is throughout the New Testament, is the Greek word "pisteuo" (pist-yoo-o) actually has more of a meaning than just believing that something exists. It is the having faith in, putting one's trust in.

Where we are being led is to the understanding of God, as He intends to be our Lord, God, and Savior, and even our Heavenly Father, and to also understand then the teachings or doctrine of Christ, that is

based upon the great love of God that He has for us, as His creation, as we were created to be His children, through Christ Jesus, as it is told us in **Colossians 1:16**, "For by Him [Christ Jesus] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." Likewise, according to what God spoke through Isaiah the prophet we were created for God's glory. "Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." (**Isaiah 43:7**) Our being subjected to God's will is not only for God's glory but we are also told, through Isaiah the prophet, "Surely your salvation is coming; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." (**Isaiah 62:11**) That work that is spoken of, is primarily us, His children, those who have believed on (put their trust in) and received Christ. "For by grace [it could be substituted to say, "by God's great love that He has bestowed upon us"] you have been saved through faith [of which God gives to each of us a measure of faith, **Romans 12:3**], and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast [We are not doing works to be saved, we are responding to God's great love that He has bestowed upon us and also the measure of faith that He has given us]. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:8-10**)

It is said time and again by Bible scholars, those men and women who know the Scriptures, of how it all is the fabric of God's Word, beautifully woven together to give us the knowledge and understanding of God's will and great love for us, they contend that if a word or phrase is mentioned more than once, then that is, generally speaking, something that one should carefully consider. Therefore, we have the word love mentioned by the Apostle John in this one chapter, 30 times. There's no doubt then that John was driving home a point, that we are to intended to respond to God, that is, the love of God, as God IS love. That is how, when Jesus was asked what is the great commandment of God, Jesus said that it is to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and then the second commandment that is like it, to love our neighbors as ourselves. (**Mark 12:30-31**). Matthew's account of Jesus saying that has Jesus concluding, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (**Matthew 23:30**) That is God's intended purpose of how we respond to His great love that He has bestowed upon us!

John, being one of Jesus' closest disciples, didn't have to struggle with contextualizing or wrestling with Scripture to come to that conclusion. John started his gospel account of Christ Jesus saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him

was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (**John 1:1-5**) "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. [Here it is of which I was getting at] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (**John 1:10-14**) What manner of love indeed, has God bestowed upon us?

That word love then is the Greek word "agape", which is an attribute of God, aka "God is love". The attributes of God are not only something that God possesses, such as love, but are also working through all of God's children through the work of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul spoke of the fruit of the Spirit as being, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (**Galatians 5:22-23**) Once again, to clarify, happiness is not listed as an attribute of the fruit of the Spirit. There's much that could be said about that, but I was reminded of what the Apostle Paul said in **1 Corinthians 13:11-13**, in what is called the "love chapter". "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." While in context Paul was addressing spiritual gifts, the same could be said about our world-view or perspective in what we are pursuing. As we are to be always "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (**Hebrews 12:2**), we soon realize as we mature as a man or woman of God, that happiness comes and goes, but the love of God will always remain.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." We are told right there how to test the spirits. Yet, our spiritual battle, as explained by the Apostle Paul, says "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (**Ephesians 6:12**) John though is not just talking about those spirits, for he continues by speaking of

the false prophets and teachers. There is a very prevalent movement today as it has been from even before the time of Christ of Gnosticism, taking Jesus' Words out of context when He said to the Pharisees that **"the kingdom of God is within you."** (Luke 17:21) John tells us, once again, "every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God." He is saying, that every spirit that does not acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One by God to be the salvation to all who will believe on (that is, to put their trust in Him) and receive Him, is not of God. As Jesus clearly proclaimed in **John 14:6**, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."** Right after Jesus said, what we know of as **John 3:16-17**, He continued by saying, "He who believes in Him [Jesus] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 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." (**John 3:18-19**) What Jesus is implying is what He was saying in **John 14:6**, that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, which means that He alone is our Righteousness in making us right with God. So that as God has bestowed upon us His great love, through Christ Jesus, God's only begotten Son, and as we respond to His love, believing on Christ, which also means we are believing in His Word and His doctrine. The Apostle John tells us as much in his second epistle saying, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (**2 John 1:9**) That leads us once again to the love of God. God expects for us to respond to His love by loving Him, "We love Him because He first loved us. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (**1 John 4:9-10**)

Then also, we are told to love one another. Jesus expounded upon that by saying, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (**Matthew 5:43-45**) "Yeah, yeah, yeah, brother, we know all of that", one could say. Hopefully we do all know that, at least in our minds. The next step then is to get it working in our hearts, so that ultimately God's Word, being Christ Jesus and God's written Word, becomes us. Yet none of us are perfect, right? "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 just 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 1:8-**

10) **“God is love**, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so are we in this world**. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” GOD IS LOVE, praise the name of Jesus!