

1 John 4:7-21

INTRODUCTION: The church father, Jerome, said that when the apostle John was in his extreme old age, he was so weak that he had to be carried into the church meetings.

At the end of the meeting he would be helped to his feet to give a word of exhortation to the church.

Invariably, he would repeat, "Little children, let us love one another." The disciples began to grow weary of the same words every time, and they finally asked him why he always said the same thing over and over. He replied, "Because it is the Lord's commandment, and if this only is done, it is enough" (cited by John Stott, *The Epistles of John* [Eerdmans], p. 49).

As we come to these verses, we may identify with those early believers.

John has already emphasized the importance of love in 2:7-11.

He hit it again in 3:11-18.

➤ We may be prone to say, "Okay, brother, we've got that one down now. Let's move on to something else."

➤ But John not only repeats the imperative to love one another in 4:7-5:4, but also he hits it longer and harder than at any other point in the book.

He wants to make sure that we understand that love **is not an optional** virtue for the believer.

It is to be the distinguishing mark of the church in the world.

John goes so far as to say that if you do not love others, you do not know God.

Notice 4:8

➔ So we all need to examine our own lives by this supreme standard.

By way of introduction, note that while love is the *inevitable* result of being born of God, it is *not* the *automatic* result.

Effortless

In 4:7 - John states, "Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

The implication is that the life of God imparted to us in the new birth manifests itself in love for others.

If we are children of the One whose very nature is love, then we will be like our Father.

But at the same time in 4:11, John commands, "Beloved, if God so loves us, we also ought to love one another."

It is not automatic or effortless!

There is always room for growth in love.

This passage falls into three easily discernible sections.

Each set off by the exhortation to “love one another.”

What is interesting is how John shows the relationship of love to the role of the Trinity.

TRANSITIONAL SENTENCE: What I want you to see therefore are three reasons we love one another. Love is:

- I. Provided by the Father.
- II. Personified by the Son.
- II. Perfected by the Spirit.

Let's examine each of these. First love is:

I. Provided by the Father. (4:7-8)

- John emphasis the fact that God the Father is the source of love.
- As we dealt with the theme of love before in this letter, we came to the definition of love.

Love is not primarily a feeling although it involves feelings and emotion.



When John speaks of *love*, he points us to the supreme example of Jesus laying down His life for us in 3:16.

Thus a helpful definition of biblical love is: *a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.*

- ✍ Jesus sacrificed Himself because He cared for us and He is committed to seek our highest good, namely, that ultimately we might share His glory.
- ✍ Or another way to say it is: Love is sacrificial acts of service on the behalf of others that results on there good.

QUOTE: Stephen Cole wrote, “At its heart, biblical love is a *commitment*, and thus it may be commanded. But it is not a commitment without feeling, but a *caring* commitment. In other words, biblical love involves delight, not just duty. Also, this caring commitment is not just an attitude, but an action: it *shows itself* in deeds.”

Where does love come from? Where did it originate?

A. Originates in the Father.

1. “love is of God” - v. 7

John states in 4:7 that “love is from God,” and then he goes farther and states that, “God is love.”

EXPLANATION: Before creation or time began there was love within the members of the Trinity. Perfect love was expressed between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

^{KJV} **John 17:24** Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Before this earth was created there was love. It existed in the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In fact, creation was the result of the love that was shared within the members of the Trinity.

2. “God is love” - v. 8

John goes even farther when he states, “God is love.”

ARGUMENT: Almost everyone readily embraces that concept, but it is often misunderstood and taken to unbiblical extremes.

Some misconstrue it to mean that because God is love, He overlooks or is tolerant toward sin.

Some go so far as to say that because God is love, He could never condemn anyone to the eternal punishment of hell.

✍ But the Bible is clear that God’s love does not negate His holiness and justice, or vice versa.

In **1 John 1:5**, the apostle stated, “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”

John also has said, “He is righteous” (2:29).

God’s holiness and His love are both a part of His nature, and neither negates the other.

In Revelation 20:15, the apostle of love writes about the final and eternal condemnation of all whose names were not found written in the book of life, that they were thrown into the lake of fire.

So, John did not see any contradiction between the concept that “**God is love**” and “**God is light**” or the concept of His holiness and justice in the punishment of the wicked in hell.

So, while it is vital that we affirm, “God is love,” it is also vital that we affirm, “God is holy,” and, “God is the righteous judge.”

3. The Unity of God.

There is an expression that is used by theologians called the “Unity of God.”

What is the unity of God? It is also sometimes called the simplicity of God.

By “simple” we do not mean God is slow or dim-witted. Nor do we mean that God is easy to understand.

Simple, as a divine attribute, is the opposite of compound.

Every attribute of God is identical with his essence.

The Simplicity of God is a theological term to convey the idea that God is not divided up into parts.

God is not part goodness, part justice, part mercy, part power etc.

He is completely goodness, and wholly just, wholly mercy, wholly power.

There is an assumption in Scripture that every attribute of God is completely true of God and is true of all of God's character.

The unity of God means that God is not part light and part love.

But rather God is all light and God is all love. Each of God's attributes are true of all of God's nature or character.

God is not more light than love, nor more love than light.

God Himself is Light and God Himself is love.

Every attribute of God we find in Scripture is true of all of God's being.

God himself is a unified and completely integrated whole person who is infinitely perfect in all His attributes.

4. The unity of God keeps us from singling out one attribute as being more important than another.

God doesn't have a dominant characteristic, or a defining character trait.

All His attributes are in perfect unity and harmony.

ILLUSTRATION: It is like looking at a diamond. It is one whole complete diamond yet from different angles one sees different colors.

Even so God's attributes and perfections are seen from different events and times in revelation.

Love

A. Originates in the Father but also

B. Operates in the Family. (vv. 7b-8)

"born of God" - This is the key expression. John's argument is that the nature of our heavenly Father is passed on to us.

Born – is a perfect tense Greek verb. Meaning an action completed in the past with continuing results in the present.

✍ At one point in time we were born into God family and we continue to show the results of the new birth which is love.

Here is another theological lesson.

1. All of God's attributes are divided into two categories.

Incommunicable – attributes that God does not communicate or share with us. These are the attributes that make God uniquely God.

Independence – God is not dependent upon the rest of creation. He does not need us. We can't say that of us.

Unchangeableness – God never changes, He is always the same. We can't say that of ourselves.

Communicable – attributes that God communicates or shares with us His creatures. There are many like goodness, mercy, knowledge, and wisdom etc. (Let us make man in our image...)

2. But perhaps the most wonderful attribute that He shares with us is LOVE.

Can you imagine a world without love?

ARGUMENT: When God created us, He created us with the capacity to love, and the need to be loved. This capacity for fellowship was to be shared with God (vertically) and our fellow man (horizontally).

1. Love a result of God's Common Grace.

Every person has the ability to love.

- Of course, even unbelievers may demonstrate sacrificial love for others.
- Unbelieving parents often sacrificially love their children or their mates.
- Unbelieving soldiers may lay down their lives for their comrades.

These loving deeds stem from God's common grace.

- Every person has some vestiges of true love in them, but it is corrupted by the Adamic nature. With the fall came an inordinate self-love.

Many of the so-called expressions of true love are simply a form of self-love.

2. Love as a result of Saving Grace.

- Salvation gives us the ability to love in a greater capacity and quality.

We can practice true biblical love in the same way that Jesus loved. We can show the love of God!

At salvation God implants in us through the Holy Spirit His love so we are able to love God and people.

At salvation, we have a new capacity to love as God loves.

The presence of this quality of love reveals we are truly God's child. The absence of it show we are not!

Notice v. 8

ILLUSTRATION: Alexander the Great, one day a soldier was brought before Alexander the Great. This soldier ran from battle and acted cowardly. Alexander the Great asked, "What is your name?"

- The man replied, "Alexander." Alexander the Great replied, "Change your behavior or change your name or change."
- If you name the name of Christ and don't demonstrate love to your neighbor and your brother – you need to change your behavior or change your name.

ARGUMENT: We need to take this to heart in a serious way.

There are many in churches that claim to be born again, but they do not love others and they do not even make an effort to do so.

- They are angry, unkind, impatient, abusive in their speech, self-centered in their daily lives, and judgmental of others.
- They spread malicious gossip with great delight, and they are defensive if you try to point out any of these sins to them. Of such people, Martyn Lloyd-Jones says (*The Love of God* [Crossway], p. 45), "Oh, my heart grieves and bleeds for them"

...; they are pronouncing and proclaiming that they are not born of God. They are outside the life of God; ... there is no hope for such people unless they repent and turn to Him.”

John's point is, because God is love, if we are His true children, then we must love one another.

Love is

I. Provided by the Father. 4:7-8

II. Personified by the Son. 4:9-11

v. 9 - manifested – from the Greek word *phaneroo* meaning “to make clear, to make evident, to reveal.”

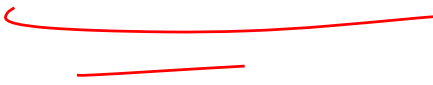
Never was God's love more clearly manifested than when he sent His Son Jesus Christ into this world so that we might have life.

A. The Expression of God's Love (vv. 9-10)

— We are to love one another based on God's gift to us: His Son.

The origin of love is in the being of God, the manifestation of God is in the coming of Christ.

1. Christ's supreme act



There have been many manifestations of God's love, but the greatest is the death of Christ.

Romans 5:8 says, "God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

ILLUSTRATION: The whole point of these verses is this, sometimes in society a person will die for a good man. It doesn't happen very often but sometimes.

But nobody will die for an ungodly man, nobody is going to die for a bad person.

That would be the ultimate expression of love.

ILLUSTRATION: During the Revolutionary War there was a faithful preacher of the gospel by the name of Peter Miller.

He lived near a fellow who hated him intensely for his Christian life and testimony. In fact, this man violently opposed him and ridiculed him and his followers. One day the unbeliever was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death.

Hearing about this, Peter Miller set out on foot to intercede for the man's life before George Washington.

The General listened to the man's earnest plea, but told him he didn't feel he should pardon his friend.

"My friend! He is not my friend," answered Miller, "In fact he is

my worst living enemy.” “What!” said Washington, “You have walked 60 miles to save the life of your enemy?”

That in my judgment puts the matter in a different light. I will grant your request.”

- With pardon in his hand, Miller hastened to the place where his neighbor was to be executed, and arrived just as the prisoner was walking to the scaffold.

When the traitor saw Miller, he exclaimed, “Old Peter Miller has come to have his revenge by watching me hang!” But he was astonished as he watched the minister step out of the crowd and produce the pardon which spared his life.

This was indeed an incredibly noble act.

- But this is nothing compared to what Christ did because Christ not only obtained His enemies pardon, but He died for them in their place.

2. Christ's supreme role

John says Christ is God's "only begotten [Gk., monogen[ma]es] Son."

What does that mean?

It does not refer only to Christ's birth or His humanness. Here it means, "the supreme one." There is none greater than Christ.

3. *Christ's supreme sacrifice*

To provide life for us, Christ had to become "the propitiation for our sin" (1 John 4:10). God is a God of justice who cannot tolerate sin.

The Greek word translated "propitiation" is hilasmos, which means, "satisfaction."

Christ's death satisfied God's requirements for dealing with sin.

- Hebrews 9:5 translates a form of that word as "mercy seat." In Old Testament times, blood from a sacrifice was taken into the Holy of Holies once a year and poured out on the mercy seat. That satisfied God's righteous requirements.

ILLUSTRATION: John Griffith grew up in Oklahoma with the dream of traveling to faraway places to see exotic sights.

That dream crashed with the stock market in 1929, the Great Depression, and the Oklahoma "dust bowl."

- He packed up his wife and tiny baby boy and their few meager belongings in an old car and drove to the edge of the

Mississippi River where he got a job caring for one of those great railway bridges that crossed the Mighty Mississippi. According to the late D. James Kennedy, it was in 1937 that this true story took place.

For the first time, John Griffith brought his then 8-year-old son, Greg, to work with him to see what Daddy did.

- The boy was wide-eyed with excitement to see how the huge bridge went up at the beck and call of his mighty father.
- He watched with wonderment as the huge boats steamed down the Mississippi.
- At 12 o'clock his father put up the bridge. There were no trains due for a while.
- Then they went out together a couple of hundred feet on the catwalk to the observation deck and sat down.
- They opened the brown bag and began to eat their lunch.
- The father told his boy about some of the strange, faraway lands that some of these ships were going to visit. The boy was entranced. The time whirled by.
- Suddenly they were drawn back instantly into reality by the shrieking of a distant train whistle.

John Griffith quickly looked at his watch.

- He saw that it was time for the 107, the Memphis Express with 400 passengers, to be rushing across that bridge in just a couple of minutes.

He knew he just had time. So without panic but with promptness he told his son to stay where he was.

- He leapt to his feet, jumped to the catwalk, ran back, climbed the ladder to the control room, went in, put his hand on the huge lever that controlled the bridge.
- He looked up the river and down to see if any boats were coming, then to see if there were any beneath the bridge.
- Suddenly he saw a sight which froze his blood. His boy had tried to follow him to the control room and had fallen into the
- huge box that housed the monstrous gears that operated the massive drawbridge.
- His son's left leg was caught between the two main gears. The father knew that if he pushed that lever his son would be ground in the midst of tons of winding, grinding steel.

His eyes filled with tears of panic. His mind whirled. What could he do?

He saw a rope there in the control room. He could rush down the ladder to the catwalk, tie off the rope, lower himself down, extricate his son, climb back up the rope, run back into the control room, and lower the bridge.

- No sooner had his mind done that exercise than he knew there wasn't time. He would never make it.

There were 400 people on that train. He heard the whistle again. This time it was startlingly closer. He could hear the clicking of the locomotive wheels on the track.

What could he do? There were 400 people on the train.

But this was his son. This was his only son. He was a father. He knew what he had to do.

So, he buried his head in his arms and pushed the gear forward.

The great bridge slowly lowered into place just as the express train roared across.

He lifted his tear-smeared face and looked straight into the flashing windows of that train as it flashed by.

He saw men reading the afternoon paper, a conductor in uniform looking at a large vest pocketwatch, ladies sipping tea out of tea cups, and little children pushing long spoons through scoops of ice cream.

Nobody looked into the control room. Nobody looked at his tears. Nobody looked into the great gear box.

In heart-wrenching agony, he beat against the window of the control room and said, "What's wrong with you people? Don't you care? I gave my son, I sacrificed my son for you!"

But nobody looked. Nobody heard. Nobody heeded. And the train disappeared across the river.

The Triune God, the Father, saw our human predicament. He had to make the choice to let us plunge headlong into disaster as a human race, as individuals.

He chose to take human form in the very person of His Son and to be crushed by the grinding gears of our sin, our hurts, our rebellion.

Through His death on the cross and His resurrection, you and I can live. We are offered, forgiveness, strength for both this life and the next.

B. The Example of God's Love (v. 11)

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

Here is John's argument, this is his whole point. If we have been the recipients of such unspeakable love, we ought to love one another.

"ought" – implies obligation or commandment.

That love can be commanded shows that it is not primarily a feeling, but rather an action based on commitment.

Again, love is not devoid of feeling, but it is not based on it.

We must love others or we are being disobedient to God.

- ✧ If everyone were easy to love, we wouldn't need this powerful example of God's love or this strong exhortation to love one another.
- The world loves those that love them. **But Jesus commands us to love even our enemies (Matt. 5:43-47).**
- ✧ Implicit in what John is saying here is that we must love those who may not be especially lovable or easy to love.

ARGUMENT: John says, "Beloved, if God so loved you, you also ought to love that difficult mate."

There may be people in this church whom you do not like. John says, "Beloved, if God so loved you, you also ought to love that difficult person."

- It is in these difficult situations that God's amazing love in Christ shines forth in us. **If you're having trouble loving someone, remember that God loved you while you were yet a sinner.**

He sent His Son to a world that is filled with sin.

If you are His child through the new birth, then you must be the channel for His love to flow to those who may not be very lovable.

Love is

I. Provided by the Father. 4:7-8

II. Personified by the Son. 4:9-11

But also:

III. Perfected by the Spirit. (4:12-21)

EXPLANATION: In this section John uses the term “perfect love”

Notice how many times he refers to it.

v. 12, 17, 18

1. What is Perfect love?

perfect – the Greek “teleios” it has the idea not of sinless or unflawed as some think of perfection, but rather the idea of “bringing something to its goal, completion, to bring to maturity.”

“It comes to ripeness, fullness or fruitfulness in us.”

John is using a Greek word that refers to something living that grows, matures and bears fruit.”

➤ It is God’s love in us coming to full bloom!

2. Why is it important that God’s love be perfected?

Notice John’s reasoning.

Notice v. 12

It is important because no man has seen God.

John says no one has seen the full manifestation of God.

a. Some may object

Some may object saying “what about Moses didn’t he see God?” God Himself said to Moses “No man can see me and live.”

Moses saw only a manifestation of God reduced to visible light.

Some say Isaiah 6:1 says Isaiah saw the Lord. He saw again only a reduced visible glory.

No man has ever seen a full disclosure of God. 1 Timothy 1:17 says God is invisible.

2. The only hope of the world seeing God today is through the believer.

ARGUMENT: If God can't be seen at all, the only hope the world has in recognizing God is if He becomes visible in human flesh.

And that's just what He did! John 1:14 says, "The Word was made 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."

But Christ is not here. He is in heaven.

So the only hope of the world seeing God today is through the believer.

Or we could say through the church.

Perfect love is the visible manifestation of God that the world is able to see today!

The revelation of God exists through the love of the church.

Is it any wonder the world is having difficulty figuring out where God went?

~~✗~~ We have a tremendous responsibility, but we fall so short of it. Love is our strongest apologetic.

How do we know God's love is being perfected in us?

A. We experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (v. 13)

Notice v. 13

Notice that John here does not say that God has given us His Spirit, although that is true.

He says, "He has given us *of* His Spirit." The Greek word means "out of."

— John is looking at somethings which God imparts to us from His Spirit.

↪ A sure sign of the ministry of the Spirit is that there will be love pouring forth from our hearts.

This is how we know God dwells in us. The Holy Spirit perfects His love in us.

John is saying that as the Spirit of God works in our life God's love is brought to ripe fruition and others will see it!

It will become obvious to all as God's love is perfected.

A. We experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (v. 13)

B. We become bold witnesses for Christ. (v. 14)

↪ You can't be a witness unless you yourself have seen or experienced something.

ARGUMENT: Have you ever seen or experienced something that changes you and you can't help but talk about it?

That is what happens at salvation.

“We have seen” – The verb is a Greek word that carries the idea of a supernatural impression.

- At salvation we see Jesus Christ through the eyes of faith and we are never the same again.

We can't help but speak of Christ.

ILLUSTRATION: Someone has said that the Gospel in the first century was carried by a good system. It was not telegram or telephone, or television.

- It was called the teleperson system, and it truly got results, better than we do today with our telephones, televisions, and so on.
- The woman of Samaria carried the Gospel after her meeting with Christ by the teleperson system. It is said that “many of the Samaritans ... believed on Him for the saying of the woman” (John 4:39).¹

ILLUSTRATION: In ancient Corinth there used to be staged the Isthmian Games, the forerunner of the modern Olympics.

There were many events, but the one which received the most attention was the relay race.

¹Tan, P. L. 1996, c1979. *Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : [a treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers]*. Bible Communications: Garland TX

The competitors lined up side by side at the starting line, each bearing a torch. In the distance waited still another line, of men, and still farther on other lines.

When the signal was given, the men started to run, bearing their lighted torches.

When a runner reached his partner in the next line he would pass on his light, and so on from man to man until the finish line was reached. With the famous relay race in mind, the Greeks coined a phrase: "Let those who have the light pass it on."²

A. We experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (v. 13)

B. We become bold witnesses for Christ. (v. 14)

C. We do not sacrifice the truth for love. (v. 15)

➤ John is very quick in this section on perfect love to point out that we never compromise truth for the sake of love.

We confess that Jesus is the Son of God.

Some people compromise truth in the name of love. But that is not love. Perfect love never compromises the truth!

John just warned in 4:1-6 to try the spirits! Right on the heels of that he says, "Let us love one another."

²Tan, P. L. 1996, c1979. *Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : [a treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers]*. Bible Communications: Garland TX

D. We know experientially God's love for us. (v. 16)

Notice v. 16 – “have known and believed the love that God hath to us. . .”

Known – ginosko – to know something experientially.

It is a perfect tense verb. Completed in past with continuing results. We experienced God's love at salvation and we are still seeing it's effects in our life.

In Romans 5 Paul wrote “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”

That means the Holy Spirit is the divine agent that gives us an inward witness which says, “I love you.”

God whispers to us by His Spirit. Do you have that inner sense of God's love?

Is your spirit at rest knowing that God loves you?

- A. We experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (v. 13)
- B. We become bold witnesses for Christ. (v. 14)
- C. We do not sacrifice the truth for love. (v. 15)
- D. We know experientially God's love for us. (v. 16)

Also:

E. We have no fear of judgment. (v. 17-18)

If we are perfecting God's love and demonstrating love to others around us, we won't be afraid at the time of judgment.

Notice – “as he is so are we in this world . . .”

- In other words – we are living like Jesus did. We are manifesting God's love in this world.
- Christlikeness gives us confidence at the day of judgment.

The Greek word translated "boldness" is parr[ma]esia, which means "confidence."

- The point is we don't need to worry--we will have boldness when the time comes because we've seen perfect love manifested in our lives.

QUOTE: John Piper wrote, “The assumption is that at the judgment day God won't condemn people who are like his Son. Living a life of active love shows that we have the Spirit of Jesus. It shows we belong to the family of God. And that gives us confidence before God. You can't live at odds with the character of Jesus and then expect to have any confidence when you stand before his Father at the final judgment.”

- We have confidence in the future. When love is made perfect in our lives, we don't fear the coming of Christ.

Those who don't know Christ have a fear of standing before God.

ILLUSTRATION: Charles G. Finney, a young lawyer, was sitting in a village law office in the state of New York. Finney had just come into the old squire's office. It was very early in the day, and he was all alone when the Lord began to deal with him.

"Finney, what are you going to do when you finish your course?"

— "Put out a shingle and practice law."

"Then what?" "Get rich."

— "Then what?" "Retire."

— "Then what?" "Die."

"Then what?" And the words came tremblingly, "The judgment."

He ran for the woods a half mile away. All day he prayed, and vowed that he would never leave until he had made his peace with God. He saw himself at the judgment bar of God.

For four years he had studied law, and now the vanity of a selfish life, lived for the enjoyment of the things of this world, was made clear to him.

Finney came out of the woods that evening, after a long struggle, with the high purpose of living henceforth to the glory of God and of enjoying Him forever.³

Perfect love eliminates fear!

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

- If you're afraid, then your love is not yet perfect.
 - Love that is mature and fulfilled has no fear of punishment, only confidence.
 - Because you love your brothers and sisters in Christ, you can look forward to the coming of Christ.
- A. We experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (v. 13)
 - B. We become bold witnesses for Christ. (v. 14)
 - C. We do not sacrifice the truth for love. (v. 15)
 - D. We know experientially God's love for us. (v. 16)
 - E. We have no fear of judgment. (v. 17-18)

Also:

F. We reciprocate God's love. (v. 19)

³Tan, P. L. 1996, c1979. *Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : [a treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers]*. Bible Communications: Garland TX

- We understand that it was God who first loved us.
- We were not looking for God He came looking for us.

Because God loved us so how can we help but to love Him with all our hearts, soul, and might!

G. We love show our love for God by loving our brother. (v. 20-21).

This is the seventh time John has used the phrase "If a man says."

- Each time it refers to some illegitimate claim to faith. It is a warning against some pretender.
- In this case someone claims to love God, yet he hates his brother.

Where does God dwell in this world? IN US!

How can I love God and hate another believer when God lives in that believer?

It's impossible. The person is obviously a liar.

ARGUMENT: I don't care how cantankerous and obnoxious another Christian may seem to you, God still lives in him.

Don't say you love God but hate him. How can you claim to love the invisible God and not love His presence in His people?

It is easier to serve a visible man than an invisible God. If you can't serve a visible man, you certainly can't serve the invisible God. A claim to love God is an obvious lie if it is not accompanied by unselfish love for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

CONCLUSION: Three Reasons We Love One Another

- I. Provided by the Father. 4:7-8
- II. Personified by the Son. 4:9-11
- III. Perfected by the Spirit. (4:12-21)

ILLUSTRATION: I read an amazing story that came out of the Korean War. A young Communist officer ordered the execution of a Christian civilian.

When he learned that his prisoner was in charge of an orphanage and was doing much good in caring for small children, he decided to spare his life, but kill his son instead.

The 19-year-old boy was shot in the presence of his father.

Later, when the tide of events changed, this same officer was captured, tried, and condemned to death for war crimes.

But before the sentence could be carried out, the Christian father pleaded for the life of this Communist who had killed his son.

He admitted that if justice were followed, this man should be executed.

- But since he was so young and blindly idealistic, he probably thought that his actions were right. "Give him to me," he said, "and I'll teach him about the Savior."
- They granted the request. That father took the murderer of his son into his own home.

As a result of his self-sacrificing love, that Communist became a Christian pastor ("Our Daily Bread," April, 1980).

- Thankfully, most of us will never have to go through that kind of ordeal!

But, if God so loved us, shouldn't we work at loving one another in our homes and in this church, even when it is difficult?