



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Some Gentle Reminders (1 John 4:13-21)

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, March 4, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, March 4, 8:30 PM in Office #225**
(Sen. Wayne Wallingford's office)

In 1758 Robert Robinson wrote,

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
Mount of Thy redeeming love.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood;
How His kindness yet pursues me
Mortal tongue can never tell,
Clothed in flesh, till death shall loose me
I cannot proclaim it well.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

INTRODUCTION

If it sounds like several of our last studies in the book of 1 John seem to cover items that have been discussed already, it is because John, in this letter, has been covering material that he had previously discussed. The same can be said about this study, as well.

1 John 4:13-21 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the

world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. ¹⁹We love, because He first loved us. ²⁰If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

In today's study, we will review the things that John has already addressed in this letter. We will also look at a couple of newer items of discussion, then wrap up with John's conclusion of this section.

SEVEN REMINDERS

There are seven discussion items in this passage that serve as reminders which lead up to the one command at the end.

Abiding (4:13—cf. 2:22, 3:24)

God has given His people a great gift—His Holy Spirit. With the Spirit, God not only lives with His people, but also abides in them. It is through the Holy Spirit that the children of God can properly understand and acknowledge Jesus Christ as God's Son. It is God, who is love, abiding in His people that give them the ability to properly love one's brother.

And how do people know that God is abiding in them and they abide in God? Because they are known to show *agape* love (4:12, 16) and they have a right belief about Jesus (4:14). These are not preliminary works to earn the presence of God, but are true signs that God lives in someone.

Seen & Heard (4:14—cf. 1:1-4)

The Apostle who wrote this letter is an eyewitness of the work, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. John made this clear in the opening of his

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letter: "...what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life..." (1 John 1:1b).

And it was not simply a testimony that John and the apostolic band had seen Jesus, but they heard and proclaimed the purpose of Jesus' mission to seek and save that which was lost. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:17).

A Correct Confession (4:15—cf. 2:22-23, 3:23, 4:1-6)

One of the signs that someone is truly a child of God is that they hold to and confess a right understanding of the nature and work of Jesus Christ. One is not allowed to "cut and paste" and form their own "Jesus". Each person is called to believe and confess the truth of Christ as revealed in Scripture.

What has been revealed about Jesus? The Bible (including the Gospels and Christ Himself) clearly shows and teaches that Jesus Christ is God. The deity of Jesus is what John observed (1:1-4). It is a truth which cannot be denied by anyone who claims to follow Him.

Amazing Love (4:16—cf. 3:1, 4:7-12)

"God is love"—this is second time in this section that John reminded his readers of this amazing truth. It is of God's nature to love. His love is eternal, infinite, immutable, holy and gracious. He has a great care and concern for people which can be seen in His general provision and sustaining of His creation. It is especially seen in the fact that He sent His Son to provide what we all truly need—to have our sins removed and be reconciled back to Him. His love is amazing for it is vast, complete and bestowed upon those who have nothing in them to warrant it from Him.

Confidence (4:17—cf. 2:28, 3:21-22)

Because of the gracious love of God and His presence in their life, the children of God are able to stand in His presence with much confidence. It may be standing before Him in judgment (2:28) without shame or it may be standing before Him in prayer (3:21-22) with boldness. There is no

casualness nor flippancy in this confidence and it is not because of anything the child of God has done, but because the unique Son of God, Jesus Christ has given Himself to be the propitiation or atonement for the children of God (4:10). They have no sins which would be a cause for punishment—the punishment has been paid by Christ on the cross (Colossians 2:13-14).

God Loved First (4:19—cf. 4:7, 10; 3:1)

This is the third time in this section alone that John reminded his readers of this truth. In verse seven, he phrased it that loves comes from God and "everyone who loves is born of God" which implies that God's love is first. In verse ten, it was God's love, not ours for we did not love God, which sent Christ to the cross.

The only way people on this earth can know what true love looks like and have the ability to do it is because they have seen it first in God the Father. As has been discussed before through the songwriters of our culture, love is totally misunderstood and applied. But when God's love is seen through Christ, we can know what true love is.

Love Thy Brothers (4:20-21—cf. 2:10-11, 3:10-18)

Agape love is "a self-sacrificing desire for and delight in the welfare of the one loved."¹ This is love for which God is known. It is the type of love which the children of God are to be known. It is the type of love which presents an unseen God to those who do not know Him (4:12). It is the type of love which can be and is commanded of God's people.

TWO NEW ITEMS

In the midst of this section of reminders, John inserted a couple of newer discussion notes that are most encouraging.

The first of which is found in verse 17. John wrote that the child of God can stand before God with confidence on judgment day "because as He is, so also are we in this world."

The phrase "day of judgment" is a reference to the day of reckoning which all people will face. A day of terror for those who stand before God with

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nothing but their own “righteous resume”. But for the child of God, who is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, it is a day to be without fear.

John MacArthur asked and answered:

Why can believers have such confidence? **Because as He is, so also are we in the world.** This stunning statement means the Father treats the saints the same way He does His Son Jesus Christ...Someday believers will stand before God’s throne as confidently as their Lord and Savior does.²

A stunning statement, indeed. And the more one meditates on the condition of God’s people before God saved and redeemed them, the more stunning the statement by the Apostle John truly is. We, who should stand before God like Isaiah crying out ‘Woe is me’, can stand with assurance because God will see us as He sees Jesus. Truly, God’s grace is more and more amazing.

**LET THY GOODNESS, LIKE A FETTER,
BIND MY WANDERING HEART TO THEE.
PRONE TO WANDER, LORD, I FEEL IT,
PRONE TO LEAVE THE GOD I LOVE;
HERE’S MY HEART, O TAKE AND SEAL IT,
SEAL IT FOR THY COURTS ABOVE.
--ROBERT ROBINSON**

The second item that John brings up in this passage goes hand in hand with the first. In verse 17, he stated “perfect love casts out fear”.

Three times in these two verses, John used the Greek root word translated “perfect”—meaning “complete” or “mature”. As a child of God grows in Christlikeness (Philippians 2:1-5), he or she will also be growing in love for God and love for one another. And the more one matures in this love, the more assured one can be that he or she is a child of God. Thus, when the day of judgment comes, there is no fear of punishment because one knows that they are in Christ.

Before one is a child of God, there is no fear nor love of God. When faced with the reality of God and His standards, there is fear but no love. After initially becoming His son or daughter, there is both fear and love. And through growing in Christ, there is no fear and much love.³

What tremendous words of encouragement from the Apostle John as he discusses love. *Agape* love does not solely bring help and aid to the one being loved. And *agape* love does not solely glorify God and present Him to an unbelieving world. *Agape* love also drives out fear and provides the confidence God’s children need as they stand before Him.

Praise be to God who first showed His love to His people by sending His Son to cleanse them of their sins.

ONE COMMAND

With all this in mind, it becomes quite clear why John has such strong language in verse 20—“If someone says, ‘I love God’, and hates his brother, he is a liar...”

Again, this is not a new warning, John has already addressed it several times (2:4, 9; 3:10, 17; 4:8). John reminded his readers that it is absurd, hypocritical and sinful to say that one loves God and then hate his or her brother.

Brotherly love seeks nothing in return; instead it unconditionally forgives, bears others’ burdens, and sacrifices to meet their needs. Yet it is also a righteous love that tolerates neither false doctrine nor habitual sin.⁴

Jesus laid down this same principle in His teaching on forgiveness:

Matthew 18:23-35 For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until

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he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.

It is truly a slap in the face of God who has shown so much love to His children for them to not show love to others. In fact, as has been brought up many times, a lack of love is a sign that a person is not a child of God.

¹ R.A. Torrey, *The God of the Bible* (New Kensington, Penn.: Whitaker House, 1999), 169.

² John F. MacArthur, *1-3 John* The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 170-71.

Now, after spending several weeks discussing the *agape* love of God and the *agape* love the people of God are to have to one another, how can you, in the unique role that God has placed you, show *agape* love to those He has placed in your path? Use the blank space provided below to answer this question.

CONCLUSION

“The love of God is one of the great realities of the universe, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rests. But it is a personal, intimate thing, too. God does not love populations, He loves people. He loves not masses, but men. He loves us all with a mighty love that has no beginning and can have no end.”
--A.W. Tozer

God, in His love, through His Son Jesus Christ, can forgive a person of his or her sins--are you interested?

³ Paraphrased from James M. Boice, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004), 120.

⁴ MacArthur, 171.