



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

No Legitimate Excuse 1 John 4:7-21

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“In regard to duty, let me, in conclusion of this hasty letter, inform you that nearly a hundred years ago there was a day of remarkable gloom and darkness -- still known as "the dark day" -- a day when the light of the sun was slowly extinguished, as if by an eclipse. The Legislature of Connecticut was in session, and as its members saw the unexpected and unaccountable darkness coming on, they shared in general awe and terror. It was supposed by many that the last day - the day of judgment -- had come. Some one, in the consternation of the hour, moved an adjournment.

Then there arose an old Puritan legislator, Davenport, of Stamford, and said that, if the last day had come, he desired to be found at his place doing his duty, and therefore moved that candles be brought in, so that the House could proceed with its duty. There was quietness in that man's mind, the quietness of heavenly wisdom and inflexible willingness to obey present duty. Duty, then, is the sublimest word in our language. Do your duty in all things like the old Puritan. You cannot do more; you should never wish to do less. Never let your mother or me wear one gray hair for any lack of duty on your part.”¹

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates his brother is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must love his brother also.

In this brief paragraph of 331 words John uses the word love a total of 25 times, not counting the two times he addresses the recipients as beloved; eleven times in the noun form and fourteen times in its various verbal forms. Not too difficult to determine the focus of his concern in this section.

As we have noted throughout our time in this epistle, John has emphasized the wonder of salvation in the face of man's fallenness. He has delineated how one may know one is part of the Household of The Faith, how one may identify those who are not, and the seriousness of the time presently at hand.

In the face of this, John does not want to lose sight of the supreme obligation, the duty overriding all others and the fulfillment of which affords at least two major benefits: 1) The defeat of fear and 2) the subjective assurance of one's salvation.

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John addresses a circumstance common to all mankind, loving the unlovely, but in John's focus it is the love of one believer for another. Why this, for shouldn't it be quite easy to love another believer? An unknown author expressed the concern in this manner:

To dwell above with saints we love
That will be grace and glory.
To dwell below with folk we know;
Now that's a different story

The love John is speaking of flows from the outworking of God's Spirit in the life of the submissive believer.

John is reiterating a truth the Apostle Paul taught in his epistle to the church at Rome: *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ... because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*²

BIBLE STUDY

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS AT 8:30AM, ROOM 100, RYAN BUILDING

PENNSYLVANIA

Soli Deo Gloria

We recognize the goodness of God in that what he requires he provides via the ministry of His Spirit. One of the wonders of what the scripture refers to as the new birth, that is being “born from above”, is the entrance into knowledge of God. We see this in the experience of Lydia, the seller of purple as she listened to the Apostle Paul teach alongside a river in Philippi³. It is this action on the part of God, opening the mind’s eye of the individual which then enables that individual to receive what is taught in scripture.⁴

Twice John tells us God is love. John also tells us God is Light and God is also spirit. These are not definitions of God, but comments relative to God’s essence or nature.

The love God pours through His people is not a sentimental, mystical type of conduct or response. The love God speaks of is concrete and tangible as evidenced by *He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins*. God didn’t just “feel” loving toward us, he acted in a concrete manner at a particular time, addressing a distinct need. This provides us with a definition of the love John is referring to in this paragraph.

Similarly, the love we are to display is to be concrete and addressing distinct needs. Living as we do in a cultural context where love is so often thought of in romantic and sentimental terms, we need to force ourselves to think of love in these terms. Love is a decision manifested in concrete actions. Granted, it generally produces certain emotions in the lover and the one loved, but the emotion is not the love.

Granted, in all likelihood, we will not be called upon to demonstrate the ultimate sacrifice of our lives, though some have in the past. Instead, our expression of love will occur in the halls of this capitol, on the floor of the legislative chamber, in a committee context or in any number of circumstances whether professional or domestic.

John encourages the believer that as he or she loves in the manner God has illustrated, their relationship with God, implied in “knowing” God will grow and conversely, the failure in manifesting this kind of love results in an absence of this “knowing”

Another implication of manifesting this type of love will be a demonstration of God’s presence through the life and conduct of the believer. Years ago I came across quatrain with which you are probably familiar:

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day
By the deeds that you do and the things that you say.
Men read what you write-distorted or true;
What is the gospel according to you?⁵

So far, John has developed the doctrine of Propitiation and made reference to the Trinity. He has also established the Uniqueness of Jesus, God’s only son. Though all of God’s children through faith in Jesus are referred to as sons and daughters of God, Jesus’ status is unique as the second person of the Trinity.

John’s concern for these believers is that they grow in confidence so as to deliver them from any sense of fear of punishment, recognizing Jesus in His role as Savior, bore the punishment they justly deserved.

John continues his emphasis in being able to discern those who genuinely belong in God’s family from those who do not. This is important in light of the reality of anti-Christ among the community. Those who deny the Incarnation *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world*⁶, those who hate their brother are not to be numbered among the faithful *Whoever claims to love God yet hates his brother is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must love his brother also*⁷ and those who deny the reality of a sin nature and sinful acts *If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us*⁸. are not to be considered among the household of The Faith

OUR APPLICATION

Admit we have no legitimate excuse to refuse to exercise a loving spirit and acts of love.

Love as we have opportunity. Rejoice in our Savior who bore our punishment. Be discerning.

¹ <http://3.ly/D2T5>

² Romans 5:1-5

³ Acts 16:14

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:14

⁵ Anonymous

⁶ 1 John 4:3

⁷ 1 John 4:20, 21

⁸ 1 John 1:8, 10