



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 4:12 - "IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER!"

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The love John speaks of can't be understood apart from the cross. It is by the cross that the greatest of all love, agape love, is demonstrated fully. Christ was not killed as a martyr, but He willingly as an act of His own will, gave Himself for us. He acted in the interest of others and not Himself. Christ gave the greatest possible expression of love for others by His death on the cross. Christ's love was not mere sentiment or emotion. No His love was expressed by what He did.

Our world encourages self-satisfaction and not sacrifice. But sacrifice is the standard of love that we are obligated to give of ourselves as Christ did. This is what love really is. And this is our continuing obligation to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

I. 1 JOHN 4:12 - "IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER!"

(7) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." (8) "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (9) "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." (10) "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." (11) "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (12) "No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." 1 John 4:7-12

The supreme motivation for godly living lies in believers grasping the wonder of God's love for us! That's why John has spent so much time on this truth. The sheer, undeserved grace and kindness of God's love for us should inspire us to "love one another".¹

A. "NO ONE HAS BEHELD GOD..." – 1 JOHN 4:12A

"No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." 1 John 4:12

John begins this next verse with an unexpected statement, "No one has beheld God at any time..." (1 John 4:12) At first glance this statement really doesn't seem to contribute to the subject of love John has so intently focused on. Yes the truth is that no one has ever seen God fully at any time. He is the unseen, invisible God. So if we can't see God, how is our fallen and sinful world ever to know what God is like? Maybe they have never read the Bible or gone to church. But is there a way for the world, our fellow neighbor to see God? Well, as we shall see, John asserts that the church, true believers are a window for our world to see God the Father!

B. "IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER..."- 1 JOHN 4:12B

"No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." 1 John 4:12

John uses a third class conditional clause, "if we love one another" which leaves the actual fulfillment of the action to love, as an undetermined condition. Clearly, John knew with this use that the condition to "love one another" was not being carried out, lived out or practice well in some of the professing believers.² No doubt the same could be said today.

So John is saying that we are called to love one another as 1 John 4:11 says. All believers have a continuing obligation to that same kind of love. God's love for us is the example as well as the motivation for our practice of mutual love. And Jesus Himself has already insisted that genuine love for God and love for our brothers and sisters cannot be separated. Likeness is evidence of belonging. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (1 John 4:11) John refers to our continuing obligation to love. And John says in 1 John 4:12, "if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us."

C. "GOD ABIDES IN US..." – 1 JOHN 4:12C

"No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." 1 John 4:12

The practice of love demonstrates that God does abide, does dwell in us. Genuine believers are born again. When believers practice Godly love, God becomes visible in the lives of those in Whom He dwells. Love visibly expressed to others confirms the reality of God's indwelling presence and genuine salvation.

The unseen God reveals Himself through the visible love of believers. Although God cannot be seen, John is making the point that the Almighty, Self-Existent One can be seen in those whom He abides and in whom His love is lived out.³

D. "AND HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US." – 1 JOHN 4:12D

"No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." 1 John 4:12

A believer's obedience flows from that love for Him. God's love so captures our hearts that we make His pleasure the all-absorbing interest of our lives. And real love for God is demonstrated by doing His will. The practice of Godly love gives evidence of genuine saving faith.

1 JOHN 4:12 – “IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER!”

Now we all know that our love for God and our love for others can often be lacking. But thankfully, God is at work in each of our hearts to bring about a mature love that finds its expression consistently in our lives. John writes that, “*His love is perfected in us.*” We are by no means perfect in our love for God and others, but God is at work perfecting the love He has implanted in our hearts.

“**perfected**” Greek “**teteleioken**” means to bring the work to a finish, to a full and perfect completion. It is passive, which indicates another actor involved who took the initiative.

God took the initiative to open and transform our hearts, from darkness to light. It is He Who began a good work in our heart and it is God Who will continue to perfect and bring that work to a completion one day at a time. (Philippians 1:6) Because of God’s work in our lives, only the one who is a true believer, can have a love for God and then reciprocate that love. We are able to truly love God and love others because of His work in us. And the one who truly loves God will keep His Word.⁴

Authentic Christianity, the real deal is obvious to all. A true believer is one who keeps God’s Word because of the transforming work of God. That work is obvious to all by a love for God demonstrated through obedience. To walk as Jesus walked in love for God and others is not a condition for our salvation but it is a sign of it.

¹ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 60.

² Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expositional Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg. 205.

³ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expositional Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 116.

The truth in this verse is staggering. How is our world, our neighbor, our coworker who doesn’t know the Lord, who lives in spiritual darkness, ever to see God? And as we know, no one has ever seen God with their eyes. But, John writes here that “*if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.*” It is the Christian love, which our neighbor sees that reveals the unseen God to them. God’s purpose is that His glory will radiate from the lives and lifestyles of His people.⁵

✚ So what does the world around you see of the glory of God?

✚ How does our fallen and sinful world know what God is like from your life, from your love?

✚ As a believer in Jesus Christ, can you shrug off your responsibility; your obligation to love one another knowing your love reveals to them our unseen God?

⁴ O’Donnell, Douglas Sean, *Reformed Expository Commentary: 1-3 John*. P&R Publishing Company: Phillipsburg, NJ, 2015. Pg. 39-40.

⁵ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 61.