

**TITLE: THE CHILD OF GOD LOVES**

**TEXT: 1 JOHN 4:7–5:4**

**INTRO:** John briefly introduced the topic of love in 2:9-11, showing that “hating” & “loving not” are the same thing. Then he made this clearer in 3:11-24, where he gave the command/precept of love (v. 11-15), the pattern of love (v. 16-18), & the promise of love (v. 19-24). Now in 4:7–5:4 he continues talking about love, giving the same three-point outline in v. 7-13.

**I. THE NECESSITY OF LOVE (v. 7-13):**

**A. The Precept of Love (v. 7-8)**

**(v. 7) *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.***

1. *Let us love* – as defined in **3:16-18**. Agape love causes us to bear each other’s burdens, forbear & forgive one another, strengthen, comfort, console, teach, reprove, rebuke, & exhort one another! It causes us to help a brother with *whatever* needs he has...even the needs he doesn’t *think or realize* he has!
2. *Let us love one another* – this means it’s mutual, reciprocal. For a congregation to be fulfilling this command, each member must have a commitment to each member; *we all love all the brethren!* This means that if you have this love for *some* of the brethren, you’re falling short of God’s expectations. And this shouldn’t be a surprise to us; Jesus said, “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*” (**John 13:35**). You don’t need to know much about God, Jesus, the Bible to know that if someone *claims* to be a follower of Christ, then he ought to look like Christ! And Christ loved the world enough to **die** for us (**3:16**)!
3. The Christian who loves his brethren *like this* is born of God & knows God (these are the same thing–**v. 6**). He loves, so He’s *of* God, because *love* is of (source) God. To love means to take care of one’s physical **and** spiritual needs, and there is no way to do this outside of following *God’s* will! How can it be otherwise?
4. So many will teach a watered-down meaning of this, ignoring **1**) the meaning of “love” in this letter (*we must* define “love” properly!), and **2**) the many other requirements to be “of God” & to “know God” (e.g., **3:9-10**).

**(v. 8) *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.***

1. The person who doesn’t love doesn’t know God, is not of God (**v. 7**), & is sinning (**Jam 4:17**). “*Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him*” (**3:6**). So if you don’t love, you aren’t of Him, haven’t known Him, haven’t even seen Him!
2. Can you really legislate love like this? Yes! 1) God just did. 2) He’s given us the motivation to love (**3:16** & now in **v.9-11**).

**B. The Pattern of Love (v. 9-11)**

**(v. 9-10) *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, & sent his Son to be the propitiation....***

1. Notice the problem that requires a propitiation (atonement, amends, satisfaction, fixed) is “our sins” (nobody else’s – **2:3**).
2. God’s ultimate love was seen not just in creating us & giving us our daily provisions, but in providing a door for us into Heaven. *Any* act on His part that accomplished this would be considered “love.” But then we factor in **how** He did it – by sacrificing His only son – we’re amazed & humbled!
3. Good leaders say “I don’t ask you to do anything *I* don’t do.” Well, God is no different! What he asks of us is actually *less* than what He did. He sent His only begotten Son to die for us, so we could live. He didn’t ask us to offer our children (even w/Abraham –**Gen 22**); rather He asks us to offer ourselves as *living* sacrifices (**Rom 12:1**).
4. Context: John isn’t just randomly reminding us about the death of Jesus. He’s encouraging us to love one another like God wants & expects us to – like He Himself did for us in sending Jesus! Shouldn’t this motivate us to love one another? This is why we need to be reminded of this; it’s why we remember it weekly in the Lord’s Supper.
5. What does it mean “*that we might live through him*”?
  - a. Through our obedience to Him, spiritually crucifying ourselves, He lives through us (**Gal 2:20**). When He lives through us, then we truly live! Then, this life is much better. Jesus said “*I am come that they might have life, & that they might have it more abundantly*” (**John 10:10**). We have this abundant life with one another (“*now in this time*” – **Mk 10:29-30**) because we love & trust one another. We live by *God’s* precepts, and that is the **best** life to live! Imagine if *everyone* was a faithful Christian! How perfect life on earth would be!
  - b. This perfect life is what we anticipate in Heaven. *This* is truly how “*we might live through him*” – in Heaven *with Him*!
  - c. Ultimately, I believe the meaning here is spiritual *life* – as opposed to death (i.e., forgiveness of sins)!

**(v. 11) *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*** Here is the “Pattern” (**v. 9-11**)

1. *If* (Greek 1<sup>st</sup> class cond.– reality) God so (in this manner–**v. 9**) loved us, then we ought (are obligated) to love one another.
2. God’s love for us is so strong that He would’ve done **anything** to save us. We know this because of what He *did* do. If He sacrificed His only Son, what *wouldn’t* He do?! If this isn’t motivation for us to love one another, then what would it take?

**C. The Promise of Love (v. 12-13)**

**(v. 12) *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.***

1. “*No man hath seen God at any time*” (**Jn 1:18**). God told Moses, “*there shall no man see me & live*” (**Ex 33:20**). Why bring this up here? Because as true as this is, it is just as true that God *can* be seen in His faithful followers – when we love one another, like *He* loved us. People saw God in Jesus because of His obedience (**Jn 14:9-10**). It’s the same with us.
2. And by doing this His love is perfected in us (completed, fulfilled, accomplished what He wanted). God wants His people to love like He loves. He wants the church to be the closest thing to Heaven on Earth as possible!

**(v. 13) *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.***

1. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century context, the Spirit (miraculous ability) was a sign by which they knew God dwelled in them & they in Him.
2. We know he dwells in us... not by some physical or emotional feeling, but by our agape love for each other (per His Word).

**CONCLUSION:** John makes it clear how important it is for us to have agape love for each other. It shows we’re of God, that He is in us & we in Him, that His Spirit is in us (figuratively), & it perfects His love (**v. 12**) – gives Him what He wants (cf. **v. 17**). It was this love that caused Him to send Jesus. It was this love that caused Jesus to go to the cross for us. If this love is in us, what *won’t* we do for one another (**3:16**)?

**INTRO:** He's been talking about our love of one another; now God's love of us and our love of Him. In the church, all three go together. You can't truly experience God's love (i.e., Christianity) without loving Him and His people in return. Anyone who thinks otherwise – that he can be a child of God without loving God and/or God's children (the rest of the family) – is fooling himself (remember the "triangle" of 1:7)!

## II. **THE BLESSINGS OF LOVE (v. 14-18):**

### A. **Fellowship With God (v. 14-16)**

**(v. 14) *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.***

1. *The Father sent the Son* – God sent Jesus of Nazareth, His only begotten Son (v. 9-10). This is obviously a huge point of Christianity. However in the context, John is still refuting the Gnostic ideas regarding Jesus. God *did* send Him in the flesh!
2. *To be the Savior of the world* (Jesus died for *all*, not just the elect – 2:2). This includes these Gnostics – Christ died even for them. But if they continue to reject Him, they can't be saved! This message can be looked at in two parts:
  - a. First, it shows that *everyone* is worthy of the gospel message. As much as God's spokesmen could ever rebuke a false teacher (which is done many times in the NT), these same false teachers still have the opportunity to be saved if they'll repent & obey! This means that we as God's people need to make sure we're giving **everyone** ample opportunity!
  - b. Second, like many of these Gnostics, there are always people, in & out of the church, who refuse to accept & obey Jesus, no matter how hard we try to teach them the truth. When this is the case, we have to take the same approach Paul did with the Jews in Pisidian Antioch: "...seeing ye put it (the word of God) from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). Sometimes we just have to move on to someone else!
  - c. Third, sometimes this person who won't accept the truth is a member of the church. This is the case with many of these antichrists John is dealing with in this chapter (v. 1-6; cf. 2:19 – "they went out from us"). They must be exposed, their false doctrine refuted, and not allowed any fellowship with faithful brethren (2 John 9-11), until they repent.
3. Back to the truth about Jesus, John says "we've seen & we testify (bear witness, give testimony)...." This **cannot** be done today, because nobody today was there back then. Nobody today can say "I have heard him, I have seen him with my eyes, I have looked upon Him, and my hands have touched Him." John can & did say (1:1-3) because he & the other apostles *did* see, hear & touch Jesus. *Their* testimonies matter! So again, John says "we saw it, we know it, and we declare it – that Jesus was God's Son, in the flesh, and was sent for the purpose of being the Savior of the world!"

**(v. 15) *Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.***

1. **Condition:** *Whoever shall confess* (say the same thing; agree) *that Jesus is the Son of God....* This is **NOT** the only condition; it's a response to Gnosticism! The Gnostics wouldn't confess this, so the promises that follow are *not* given to them. The Jews in Jesus day who believed in Him but wouldn't confess (Jn 12:42) do *not* have these promises. And as we saw in 4:2-3, these promises aren't for *anyone* who refuses to obey Him, regardless of what they *believe* about Him.
2. **Promises:** *God dwells in him, & he in God.* Again, this is figurative! It's the same thing for God to dwell in you & you to dwell in God; you can't have one without the other. And it's accomplished by keeping His commands (3:24).

**(v. 16) *And we have known & believed the love that God hath to [in-ASV; for-NKJV] us* (v. 14). *God is love* (v. 8); *& he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, & God in him.***

1. (Perfect tense) *We have known & believed*, & still do know & believe – knowledge comes before belief (Rom 10:17).
2. We've known & believed the love God has to/for us (ref. to v.14 – seen in sending His Son). We **know** this (1:1-3)! We knew Jesus personally; we saw, heard, & touched Him. We *know* why He came; we know what He taught. We saw Him live, die, be buried, & resurrected! Love is action, & we saw the ultimate actions of love!
3. *God is love* (as he said in v. 8), *and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God....* The most basic definition of agape love is found in 5:3 & 2 Jn 6 – "keep His commandments." We love by obeying God & helping one another (as defined by God – 3:16-18). By doing this we keep ourselves in Him and He in us (true safety)!
4. So we see the fellowship we have with our Creator. What an amazing blessing – to be considered worthy to even come before Him, to be in His presence. We know His dwelling in us is **not** literal, it's a figure of speech. But we recognize that it's the figure of speech *He* used – that He dwells in us! It's figurative, but still amazing – that God cares enough about us to dwell in us – that by providing us with His word, He provided a way for us to dwell with Him for eternity!

### B. **Boldness With God (v. 17-18)**

**(v. 17) *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: ...as he is, so are we in this world.***

1. **How:** *In/by this our love is made perfect* (complete): *this* refers to v. 16 – by dwelling in God (v. 12 – by loving the brethren).
2. **Why:** The purpose for perfecting our love is *that we may have boldness*. 2:28 – "abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence..."; 3:21-22 – "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask we receive...because we keep his commandments." God doesn't want us to worry about the judgment (5:13 – "we may know we have eternal life"). But to have this confidence, we must abide in Him by keeping his commandments (3:24)!
3. *As He is, so are we....* We look like Him. We strive for sinless perfection, & repent/confess when we fail. If this doesn't describe your life, then you shouldn't be confident; you should "fear" (v. 18). If this *does* describe you, you *can* have boldness before Him, & not fear...because *He* is the Judge, and *He's* the one who is providing the assurance!

**(v. 18) *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: b/c fear hath torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.***

1. **Heb 4:1** – *Let us fear*. They should fear because of their departure from the truth & lack of love in not assembling (10:24-25).
2. *Perfect love* – "Love" is usually misdefined by the world; so let John define his terms! 4:12,16; 5:3 – perfect love is loving one another & obeying God. This love includes a respectful fear & awe which encourages obedience (Prov 1:7; 9:10), but dispels fear of judgment.

**CONCLUSION:** As we noted in v. 7-13, God commands agape love from us. He also gives us motivation (in knowing what Jesus did for us). But this emotion is not *required* in order to love as commanded. Agape love seeks the best interest of others. Emotion should be a *result* of agape love, but it's *not* agape love itself! Agape love is action! And we as Christians must love one another, helping each other when we have the ability (3:17). This love (obedience to God) gives us boldness in the day of judgment (v. 17; cf. Mt 25:31-46)!

### III. THE CONDITIONS OF LOVE (4:19–5:4):

#### A. Love of the brethren (4:19–5:1)

**(4:19) *We love him, because he first loved us.*** – He gave us the example.

1. “*We love, because he first loved us*” (ASV) – many ancient manuscripts (MSS) do not have the direct object “him,” indicating that “we love” is very general; i.e., we love Him, His Son, and one another - because he first loved us.
2. Either way is accurate, especially when we define “love” (agape) properly. When it’s *improperly* defined as an emotion, this verse ends up having very little meaning; it just communicates the idea that it’s easy to like someone who likes you first.
3. But knowing what John said in **3:16**–“*Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down His life for us....*”, we understand the meaning of “love.” God “loved” us (*acted* in our best interest) by sending Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins! “*And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (**v.16b**), by helping them (**3:17**). This shows how “we love because he first loved.”

**(4:20) *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?***

1. Notice again that “hateth” & “loveth not” are used interchangeably here (as in **3:14-15**).
2. A man who says “*I love God,*” but hates his brother is a liar – not “incorrect” or “mistaken,” but a “liar”; he is *not* telling the truth. We don’t call someone a liar if he *unintentionally* says something that’s untrue; in that case he simply didn’t know! But John calls this man a liar! He *says* he loves God, but he really doesn’t, *and he knows he doesn’t!* This tells us that he understands the evidence John is about to give for making this accusation.
3. Evidence (like a syllogism): 1) It is impossible to love God and *not* love your brother (fact). 2) This man *doesn’t* love his brother. 3) Therefore, he does *not* love God! And he claims that he does, so he is lying, because he should’ve known....
4. John says that this truth is understood by asking, “How can you love God (whom you haven’t even seen), and *not* love your brother (whom you *have* seen)? The understood answer is “you can’t!” But why not? What does “seeing” matter?
  - a. He’s *seen* (discerned, experienced –cf. **3:17**). He *sees* his brother’s need & can help him. He can’t *see* God (**v. 12**).
  - b. Again, when we incorrectly define “love” as a feeling or emotion, this becomes more difficult to understand.
  - c. Define it properly – *he that does not love his brother* (help him, as God commanded –**3:17**), *how can he love God* (obey –**5:3**)? How can you disobey God & be obeying God? You cannot love the One from whom love comes, if you don’t do it the way *He* said to (i.e., if you don’t love those whom *He* loves and whom *He* commanded you to love).

**(4:21) *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.***

It’s as if John is saying, “In case you missed my reasoning, just understand that this is a commandment!” You have to love your brother in order to love God! Who is my brother? The next verse tells us (it may be another chapter, but it’s still the next verse)!

**(5:1) *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*** The main condition is that we love one another. But there are even conditions within the condition!

1. 1<sup>st</sup> condition: Believe that Jesus is the Christ (“anointed,” chosen One; Messiah); i.e., believe Jesus was the promised Son of God of the OT (cf. confession –**4:2-3,15**). Again this is a response to Gnosticism. And believe means obey! The person who believes Jesus was the promised Messiah (& obeys Him) is spiritually born of God (in His family), & therefore my brother.
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> condition: Love Him that begat (God the Father – more on this in v. 2-3).
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> condition: Love the one begotten. Everyone (no exclusions) who loves God loves the one He begat (His child/children). This can be seen as Jesus, the only *physically* begotten child of God. But in the context, it seems clear that it refers to His *spiritually* begotten children – faithful Christians – the ones who believe on & obey Jesus.

#### B. Love of God (5:2-4) *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God & keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

1. How do we know that we love His children (His begotten)? If you have to ask the question, then either you *don’t* love your brethren, or you don’t know the meaning of love (agape) & you define it as a feeling. Agape love is action & is *seen* (**3:17**)!
2. How do we know that we have agape love for one another (as we’ve been commanded)? *We know* we do if we love God, because as we already seen in **4:19–5:1**, we **can’t** love God and *not* love His children. So how do we love God? By keeping His commands. And one of His commands is that we love each other (**3:10-11,14,16-18,23; 4:7-8,11-12,20-21**). So if we *don’t* love one another (actively seek each other’s best interest), then we don’t love God (obey Him).
3. (**v. 3a**) In case we missed it, he makes it as plain as possible: *This is the love of God, that we keep His commands!*
  - a. When you hear people say “I love God/Jesus,” do they mean “I keep God’s commands”? Not usually (if ever)! To them it’s just an emotion in response to what Jesus did. It’s a very important emotion (how can we *not* have it?); but it is NOT love. Love of God is keeping His commandments! Yet most people who *say* it don’t *do* it!
  - b. Remember that agape love is seeking someone’s best interest. How do you seek *God’s* best interest? Many times (even brethren), what’s in a person’s best interest isn’t necessarily what he *wants* (e.g., rebuking & correction). *People* don’t always know what they *need*. What about God? Is He ever wrong? Does He turn to *us* for guidance (**Rom 11:34; Psalms 40:13**)? Obviously not! So to seek *His* best interest is simply to do what He says (obey Him)!
4. (**v. 3b**) *And, His commands are not grievous* (weighty, heavy, burdensome). He’s not trying to make life difficult; His commands are for *our* best interest (agape love). Obeying Him will make *this* life better, as well as the next life!
5. (**v. 4**) *For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: & this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.* The one born of God is one doing righteousness & not sinning (**3:9-10**). He obeys God, & overcomes (conquers) the world. This is obviously not in a military sense; this “world” is the same as in **2:15** (“*love not the world...*”); it’s Satan’s realm & is in contrast to God & all He commands. Our faith (obedience–Jam 2:14-26) to God’s commands causes us to defeat each one of these temptations & thus overcome the world. This verse is a transition to the next topic –the Christian’s victory (**v. 5-12**).

**CONCLUSION:** John makes it clear that you have to love your brethren in order to love God, & you have to love God in order to truly love your brethren! Do you love God? Do you keep His commandments? Do *you* love your brethren? Do you actively seek their best physical *and* spiritual interest? Are you there to help when they have needs? The church that does this is a **strong** church & *will* overcome worldliness!