

Title:            **IS IT REALLY TRUE?**  
Text:             1 John 4:17  
Subject:         *The Believer's Conformity to Christ*  
Readings:       *Psalm 108:1-5 and 1 John 4:1-5:4*  
Introduction:

Let's turn to 1 John 4:17.

(1 John 4:17) “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.”

“*As he is so are we in this world.*” — What an astounding statement! If these were not the words of God himself we might well consider such a statement as this the most arrogant, presumptuous, blasphemous statement that ever fell from the lips or pen of man. But these are the words of God himself. — “*As he is so are we in this world!*”

We are told in Romans 8:29 that **the object of God in predestination and in providence** is that all his elect “*be conformed to the image of his Son.*” Here John declares that God’s great purpose is accomplished, at least in measure, “*because as he is so are we in this world.*” **Our hearts’ great desire**, our souls’ great ambition is that we be made conformable to our blessed Savior in his death. Is it not? Here the Holy Spirit assures us that our hearts’ desire is, in great measure satisfied, “*because as he is so are we in this world.*” Let’s look at the three things the Apostle John states in this verse together.

### **LOVE MADE PERFECT**

First, he tells us about love made perfect. — “*Herein is our love made perfect.*” John has been telling us about God’s marvelous, infinite, eternal love for us in Christ. **God’s love for us is revealed in the sin-atonement sacrifice of his dear Son for us as our Substitute** (1 John 3:1-3; 3:16; 4:9-12).

(1 John 3:1-3) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall

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be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (3) And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

(1 John 3:16) “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.”

(1 John 4:9-12) “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. (10) Herein 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 man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

The apostle tells us that **if we are born of God we love one another** (vv. 7-16). This is an indisputable fact, plainly revealed throughout the Scriptures. God’s saints truly love one another. — “*He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.*” — “*If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*” That is to say, our love to one another is the reflection and fruit of God’s love to us; and our love to one another demonstrates the truthfulness of our professed love for God. **God’s love is made perfect in us** (v. 12); it is made known in us, when we love one another. That is John’s doctrine in verses 7-16. When the love of God is known and experienced in the heart, love flows from the heart. But then, in verse 17, the Apostle shifts gears.

“*Herein is our love made perfect*” – If you have a marginal reference you will notice an alternative translation. The text might be better translated, “**Herein is love with us made perfect.**” John is now telling us what he meant in verse 12, when he said, “*his love is perfected in us.*” The Syriac version translates these words, “Herein is his love with us made perfect.” The Latin Vulgate reads, “Herein is God’s love with us made perfect.” He is not talking about us loving God perfectly, or loving one another perfectly. Our love is anything but perfect love. **John is talking to us about the knowledge and revelation of God’s perfect love for us in Christ in the sweet experience of his saving grace.** He is here describing the “*grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*” Look at Romans 5:1-5.

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(Romans 5:1-5) “Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

**God’s love toward us, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the knowledge of Christ, is made perfect in us when we are made to see the fullness, completion, and perfection of our salvation in Christ.**

**THE DAY OF JUDGMENT**

The second thing John mentions is the Day of Judgment; but he says something that appears, at first glance, to be a very strange thing about that day. — *“Herein is God’s love made perfect in us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.”* — There is a day appointed when God shall judge the world in righteousness and strict justice. In that day, though the wicked and unbelieving tremble and fear, the saints of God will have confidence, joy, and boldness.

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who ought to my charge shall lay,  
While through Christ’s blood absolved I am  
From sin’s tremendous guilt and blame?”

**The wicked and unbelieving fear the Day of Judgment. Some of you have nightmares about it. But God’s saints love it, long for it, and anxiously await it, at least we ought to.** In that great day, we shall stand fearless, without the least dread, while the rest of the world cries for the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of God and the Lamb. In that great day, when God shall judge the world in righteousness, God’s elect will have boldness. In that day we will...

- Speak to him who sits upon the throne freely and without fear.
- Ascribe all praise, honor, and glory to Christ alone as our Savior.
- Express our love and adoration to our God forever.

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**Would you have this boldness in the Day of Judgment?** What is the basis of it? Where can it be found? Read the next line. “*Herein is God’s love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because (Here is the cause of that boldness.) as he is so are we in this world.*” What an astounding statement!

**AS HE IS**

This is the thing I want us to think about — “**As he is so are we in this world.**” Are you a believer? Are you a child of God? Are you redeemed by the precious blood of Christ? If so, this text applies to you. If at this very moment you trust Christ, if you have just this moment been born of God, this text is talking about you. As Christ is so are you in this world! It is our union and identification with Christ that will give us boldness in the Day of Judgment.

**Proposition:** Everything that the Lord Jesus Christ is, in his office capacity as our Mediator, Representative and Substitute, before God we are in him.

The Holy Spirit does not say, “**As he was,** so are we.” That would carry us back to our Savior’s life on earth and would make us think that if there is a moral likeness between him and us that moral likeness will give us boldness in the Day of Judgment. Without question God’s saving grace works in us such a likeness, causing us to love God and one another; but that likeness could never give us boldness in the Day of Judgment, because that likeness is only a very vague similarity at best. Only the most arrogant self-righteousness could ever imagine that we are as he was in conduct or in character. Yet, we can look up to Christ in heaven and say, with assurance, what he has said, that because he lives we shall live also. And the Holy Spirit here teaches us to say, with that same assurance, “*As he is, so are we in this world.*”

The Holy Spirit does not say, “As he was, so are we.” And he does not say “As he is, **so we shall be in the world to come.**” The text reads, “*As he is, so are we in this world.*” John is speaking of the perfection of our acceptance in the Beloved. That and that alone casts all fear out of our souls. Our eyes are taken off self and fixed upon Christ. God’s perfect love for us in Christ, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, “*casteth out fear*” from our hearts.

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If I really believe and am sure that God has made me now to be what Christ is, how can I fear the Day of Judgment? The Day of Judgment will only display the completeness and perfection, not only of what Christ has done for me, but also of what I am by the grace of God in Christ.

**The whole purpose of God's grace toward us is that we should be conformed to the image of his dear Son. To that end...**

- God the Father chose us in eternal election (Ephesians 1:3-4) and predestinated all things from eternity (Romans 8:29).
- God the Son redeemed us with his own precious blood (Ephesians 5:25-27).
- God the Holy Spirit called us, gave us faith and preserves us in grace (Jude 24-25).

**We know that God will accomplish his purpose, ultimately, in resurrection glory. But here the Apostle John tells us that God's whole purpose concerning us is, at least in a sense, now accomplished in us and for us by virtue of our saving union with Christ.** — *“Because as he is, so are we in this world!”* **Right now, living in this world “as he is, so are we.”** I cannot begin to expound the meaning of those words. But I hope, by the help of God the Holy Spirit, to convey to your heart the glorious message of them. If I can do that, I will have fulfilled the charge the Lord God has given me as his servant, saying, *“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people”*

**THE BEGOTTEN SON**

As the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, is the begotten Son of God, so are we! — Christ is the Son of God by nature, eternally begotten of the Father. In that sense, he is *“the only begotten Son”* of God. But we are the sons of God by adoption and grace. The man Christ Jesus, our Mediator, is the Firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29). And we are his brethren, the sons of God. And he is not ashamed to call us his brethren, because we are truly the sons of God with him (Hebrews 2:11).

- **God loved us** as his sons (1 John 3:1).
- **God chose us** to be his sons in eternal election and adopted us (Ephesians 1:5).
- **God gave us the nature** of his Son in regeneration (2 Peter 1:4).

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(2 Peter 1:3-4) “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: (4) Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

We were begotten of God in the new birth by the power and grace of his Spirit (Galatians 4:6; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; John 1:13).

(Galatians 4:6) “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

(James 1:18) “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

(1 Peter 1:23) “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

(John 1:13) “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, who “*loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*” is “*first begotten of the dead*” (Revelation 1:5); and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, “*according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1 Peter 1:3). — “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God!*” We are the sons of God by adoption and grace! As Christ is the Son of God, so are we in this world!

**LOVED OF GOD**

(John 17:23-24) “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (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.”

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As Christ is loved of God with an everlasting love, so are we! — “*Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me...Thou lovedest me before the foundation of the world*” (John 17:23-24). — Try to grasp the meaning of those words, which fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ as he spoke to God the Father for us. As he is loved of God from eternity, with an immutable love of complacency and delight, because of his pledged obedience to God as our Surety (John 10:16-18), even so we are loved of God.

(John 10:16-18) “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. (17) Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

- **God loves us as he sees us in Christ.**
- God loves us **for Christ’s sake.**
- God loves us **as he loves the Lord Jesus Christ, to the same degree, for the same reason.** — Eternal love! — Immutable love! — Everlasting love! — Perfect love! — Free Love, Yet Earned Love! — Totally Undeserved, Yet Fully Deserved!

God loves us without beginning, without cause, without end, and without change! Child of God, here is sweet water drawn from the wells of salvation. You are loved of God, right now!

**GOD’S ELECT**

As the Lord Jesus Christ is elect, chosen of God and precious, so are we.

(1 Peter 2:6) “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”

(Isaiah 42:1-4) “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. (2) He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. (3) A bruised reed shall

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he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. (4) He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”

(Isaiah 43:4) “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.”

Christ was chosen of God **to be our Surety**. We were chosen to be his people. He was chosen **to be our Savior**. We were chosen to be saved. He was chosen **to be our Redeemer**. We were chosen to be redeemed. He was chosen **to be the Head of all things**. We were chosen to be his body. He was chosen **to be the Foundation Stone**. We were chosen to be the temple and building of God.

“Christ be my first Elect he said,  
Then chose our souls in Christ our Head,  
Before He gave the mountains birth  
Or laid foundations for the earth.

Thus did eternal love begin  
To raise us up from death and sin;  
Our characters were then decreed,  
‘Blameless in love, a holy seed.’”

Predestinated to be sons,  
Born by degrees, but chose at once,  
A new, regenerated race  
To praise the glory of His grace!

With Christ our Lord our souls are one  
In the affections of His heart;  
Nor shall our souls be thence removed  
Till God forgets His first Beloved!’

—Watts

**WELL- PLEASING**

**IS IT REALLY TRUE?**

As the Lord Jesus Christ, our Substitute, is well pleasing to God, so are we in this world. — When Peter, James, and John were in the mount of transfiguration with the Lord Jesus, Moses and Elijah appeared before them, talking with the Savior. Peter was so pleased that he wanted to build three tabernacles, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Christ. He appeared to place the law of God and the prophets of God upon equal ground with the Son of God! But God stepped in and said – Never! *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!”* (Matthew 17:1-5).

God almighty is pleased with no one and nothing but his Son. After God spoke, *“when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only!”* (Matthew 17:8). — Blessed blindness is that blindness caused by SON burnt eyes! — Blessed is that man who sees no man, save Jesus only, as the object of God’s pleasure! — Blessed are those people who sit under a preacher who sees nothing, but Jesus only as the theme of Holy Scripture. Be sure you learn these two things from the mount of transfiguration...

- **God is pleased only with His Son.** — His Person! — His Obedience! — His Blood! — His Intercession!
- But, blessed be his name, **God is pleased with us because we are in his Son, robed with his righteousness, and washed in his blood!** — *“He hath made us accepted in the Beloved”* (Ephesians 1:6). — Accepted From Eternity! — Accepted Right Now! — Accepted At All Times! — Accepted Immutability! — Accepted Forever!
- Yet more, the Lord God is well-pleased with what we offer him because we are one with his Son (1 Peter 2:5).

(1 Peter 2:5) *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”*

**Imagine that!** As God is pleased with his Son, he is pleased with me! — *“Because as he is, so are we in this world!”* As God is pleased with and accepts the obedience of his Son, he is pleased with and accepts my feeble efforts at obedience! — *“Because as he is, so are we in this world!”* The God of Glory is pleased with our desire to please him, pleased with our efforts to please him, *“because as he is, so are we in this world,”* — well-pleasing to God!

**IS IT REALLY TRUE?****FREED FROM SIN**

As the Lord Jesus Christ is justified from all sin, so are we (1 John 3:5; Romans 6:6-11).

(1 John 3:5) “And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.”

(Romans 6:6-11) “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) **For he that is dead is freed from sin.** (8) Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: (9) Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. (10) For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. (11) **Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.**”

**McCheyne** said, “When Christ was made to be sin for us and crucified as our sin-bearer, he was buried, and his body laid in the tomb for three days in an unjustified state. And on the third day, when he rose from the dead, ‘*He was justified in the Spirit.*’” (1 Timothy 3:16). — “*He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin*” (1 John 3:5).

**Illustration:** Christ the Paschal Lamb was slain for our sins. — Christ the Scapegoat carried our sins into the tomb. — Christ the Fit Man returned from the grave without sin!

“With His spotless garments on  
I am as holy as God’s Son!”

**Children of God, behold the risen Christ and understand that the law has no more dominion over him,** and “*as he is so are we in this world*” (Romans 7:4). — Sin has no more dominion over him, and “*as he is so are we in this world*” (Romans 6:18; 1 Pet. 4:1).

(1 Peter 4:1-2) “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; (2) That he no longer

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should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

**Death has no more dominion over him**, and “*as he is so are we in this world*” (1 Corinthians 15:55-57; Heb. 2:15).

(1 Corinthians 15:55-57) “O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? (56) The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. (57) But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(Hebrews 2:15) “And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

**A STRANGER**

As the Son of God is a stranger to this world, so are we. — “*The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not*” (John 1:10-11; Isa. 53:1-3).

(Isaiah 53:1-3) “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? (2) For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him. (3) He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

(John 1:10-11) “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. (11) He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

And as long as we are in this world, if we follow him, we will be strangers to it (John 15:17-20; 16:1-3).

(John 15:17-20) “These things I command you, that ye love one another. (18) If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. (19) If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (20) Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If

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they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

(John 16:1-3) “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. (2) They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. (3) And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.”

“*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you*” (1 John 3:13). The Lord Jesus places this badge of honor upon all his disciples, “*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*” (John 17:16). **We are not of...**

- The World’s Religion!
- The World’s Philosophy!
- The World’s Fashion!
- The World’s Ambition!
- The World’s Mind! (1 Corinthians 2:14-16 – “*We have the mind of Christ!*”)

**APPLICATION**

“*As he is, so are we in this world.*”

- The Begotten Son of God!
- Loved of God!
- Chosen of God!
- Well-pleasing to God!
- Justified – Freed from sin!
- A Stranger in This World!

One more thing I must tell you before I send you home — **As Christ is now, so shall we be in the world to come!**

(John 17:5) “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

(John 17:22) “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:”

(1 John 3:1-2) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath

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bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

**Illustration: Rowland Hill's Dream**

(Jude 1:24-25) “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, (25) To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.”

In the light of these things, I call you and call myself to utter commitment, devotion, and consecration to our God in Christ (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 10:31).

(Romans 12:1-2) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20) “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

(1 Corinthians 10:31) “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> See Similar Sermons 992 and 1576  
Danville — (AM - 09/22/91)

Turkey Creek, KY — (09/24/91)

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Cottageville, WV — (09/26/91)      Danville — (AM – 06/28/04)  
Wichita Falls, TX — (11/13/06)  
College Grove Baptist Church, College Grove, TN (11/15/06)  
Rescue Baptist Church, Rescue, Ca — (SUN AM – 01/28/07)  
Sovereign Grace Church, Jackson, MO — (FRI 02/16/07)  
Fairmont Grace Church, Sylacauga, AL — (SAT 03/02/07)  
Honiton, England — (MON –04/23/07)  
First Baptist Church, Almont, MI — (SAT 07/28/07)  
Lincoln Wood Baptist Church — Houston, TX — (SUN PM 12/16/07)