

1 John 4:17-19 (NKJV)

17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

Suppose that at the end of this sermon, today, we were all going to face judgment. And suppose I could tell you, right now, that Christ is coming back in less than an hour to judge the world.

Imagine that. Christ is coming to judge the world in an hour. You will see Him and receive your eternal edict in less than an hour.

How do you feel? What does that **inspire** in you?

Truly?, without running it through all your “**shoulds**”

There may be a myriad of emotions we experience. And mixed in there somewhere we will find ourselves somewhere on a continuum between Fear ----- Boldness

Fear from the **uncertainty** that we have that **we do not know** how we will fare in this transaction.

Or **boldness** because we have a **rock solid confidence** that this day is what we have waited for all of our lives. We will finally receive what we have hoped for.

This little exercise might seem to be **trivial**, but it is not trivial at all. It reveals much about us. It instantly tells us how much we **really believe** about our doctrine. It tells us how much we are truly **convinced of our own salvation**.

It reveals the flaws about what we **really trust** to save us and how much **confidence** we have that God truly loves **us**. It tells us how much we are focused on the here and now and how much our hearts are set on eternity.

What do you feel about the Judgment Day of Christ?

John is coming along side us as a friend in this book. He is **intruding** into our day to day with truths about eternity. And first he talks about **confidence**.

But he knows us. He knows that we do not always gravitate to the right side of truth. Sometimes we need to be **shocked** with the **negative** to **wake up**.

And he knows that there are a lot of people who call themselves believers who are **not confident**, they are **not bold** about judgment. They are not **bold** in God's presence in prayer. They are uncertain. Their hope is not made certain by faith.

So John brings up the topic that is close to their hearts. **Fear**.

Our status on the **Boldness/Fear** continuum is exactly what is being addressed here.

Fear or Boldness.

The Bible has a lot to say about fear. We dealt with it extensively in Isaiah. But this text is speaking of fear in the context of God's judgment. It is directly talking about **just this fear**, but some of the principles can be expanded to any fear in this life.

What John displays here is that loving Christians are the only Christians who have reason to believe their salvation is certain.

And those who only have excellent systematic **theology** but no real **testimony of change** will have a problem here because they have no evidence that God will be providing this wonderful salvation **for them**. They may believe that there **is** such a salvation. But they have not been convinced by the change in their lives that they must be **one of the elect**. They cannot point to the **life of love** that Christ has drawn them to to give them confidence of their standing.

John says- fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Let's start with this. It is a negative truth. But God's wisdom requires that we often deal with truths in **negative** and **positive** principles. When He gave the 10 commandments, what were they? They were extremely positive guides but they were prohibitions. They were things we **weren't** supposed to do for the most part. Thou **shall not's**.

Well here John shows us the back side of **faithless** living. **Fear**.

Now we know that the natural man **should** fear the day of judgment. Until love comes, there is **fear** and it is rational and reasonable.

Believers know the danger in Christ's coming judgment of the world. It will be a disaster for those who do not know Christ. And they do not know the half of it.

Now how does the world regard this judgment?

Well, let's start with atheists. In our world, an increasing number of people refuse to allow for even the existence of God in their thinking. So a committed atheist cannot allow for even the **possibility** of a judgment. It is impossible for them to **fear** it if they do not allow for its **existence**. They are, by far, in the greatest danger of facing that judgment. Because just because you don't believe in the existence of meteors, that will not keep one from landing on

you. And just because you don't believe in the existence of God will not stop that God from eternally judging you.

So the atheist is bold, but has no reason to be so because it is a boldness borne in ignorance.

Then we have the **circumstantially** ignorant. These people have no access to the Christian Bible. Romans tell us they are still accountable, but they do not know about this God and what it is He will judge them for. So they might be vaguely afraid of God. But they do not know the specifics of the one true God. Then we have the **willfully** ignorant. These people give themselves away. They may have a Bible. They might even believe in some vague sense that it is true. But they will not access it to find out what God wants and does not want. They will ask questions about lots of other things. They show they have a mental capacity to discover things. They can read. They aren't stupid. But the bottom line truth if they were to tell the truth to themselves is that they don't want to know. Maybe these people fear, maybe they don't.

Then there are those who have actually heard. They know about judgment. But they will not think about it. They will not consider it. They will not hold their actions against any kind of absolute standard, even though they know they should. They have seared their consciences with a hot iron.

Then there are those, and there are probably many many of them, who have a **vague fear** of judgment. They think there **is a God**. And they are pretty sure that they have **upset this God**. And this God is against them. They are afraid and they should be afraid. They stand in God's judgment. In fact all of these people stand in God's judgment, but only some of them are afraid like they should be.

Romans seems to say that any person who seriously thinks about that which they **can see and know** ought to have the good sense to be **afraid**. They can see that there is this this **amazing creation** that would require unlimited power in a Creator. And there is **order** in this universe that was put into place with purpose. And all **creation** must answer to **this creator**. That in itself **ought** to inspire **fear**. And every man experiences some "ought to's" in their lives that they do not live up to. We all experience **guilt** for not living up to what even we think we **as humans** ought to do. We must do something with that guilt. And if we think that guilt deserves punishment, we find ourselves in a pickle.

Even the atheist cannot rule out the possibility of God. He can wrongly conclude that God does not exist. I am not aware of any atheists who declare themselves omniscient. So what if God **does** exist. Honesty would require

this shadow of a doubt. And in light of that, suddenly the more I know about what this God is **supposed to be like**, the more my **fear** and **uncertainty** grows. It is actually worthy of **terror**. If this God truly has spoken absolute laws, and if He is all knowing and all powerful, we are in a boatload of hurt in our natural state.

(explain Gospel- sin has cursed you, damned you. But Christ died for people like you and He calls you to come to Himself and receive what He did on the cross to count for you. Believe on Christ and submit your life to His Lordship. That is the only way to have your sins covered and not only avoid judgment but receive eternal blessing.)

Every person outside of the faith in Jesus Christ should be afraid.

But then there are people who **should not** be afraid, but they still **are**. And actually, I think, John is trying to address **these** folks. He is showing them that **if you are a believer**, if you have **evidence in your life** that Christ is perfecting you, if he is **turning you into a lover of God and a lover of people...** And if you **believe in Christ** and the justification He accomplished for you, there is **no need for fear**. You are not adding things up properly in your life if you both **believe in Him** and are **afraid of His judgment**. Maybe you have believed lies about what salvation is all about. Maybe you have accepted some kind of moral standard that does not exist. Maybe you believe that somehow you have not **performed well enough** to earn your way in. Even those of us who have been believers a long time still easily fall into that. We think that we have not been a **good enough Christian** to get into heaven. That is a ridiculous idea, but we still believe it. Do we really think that **our performance** is required to make the perfect blood of Christ to cover our sin? Does his justification need just a **little bit more help**. That is stupid thinking. But we probably all think that a little bit. We fail to think properly. Our performance does not **aid** our salvation from sins penalty. **Never** It only **proves** it. If we are a Christian **at all**, we are a **100% Christian**. Again, it is like being pregnant or having a flu. You either are or you are not. Only Christ is a **good enough** Christian. Only Christ **earns** His own way in. You and I **aren't** good enough. That is why Christ had to die. The only question is **are we His child**. If we are **His child** we are not **good** enough but we are **saved** enough. We get in on our **brother Jesus's coat tails** because He is **good enough for all of us**.

So there is no **fear** in love. Love casts out fear.

I used to come to this verse and think that if God loved me enough, or if I loved Him enough, I would lose every kind of fear. It looked like the verse was saying that the nature of love is to remove all fears. But in the context I do not

think that is the essence of it. When we love God, and when we love each other, that certainty of God's work in our lives **casts out** our fear of God's **casting us** out. Love for God and people is the evidence that proves that we do not need to be afraid of God's punishment. That is the essence of it. We cannot allow this passage to take us anywhere that our imaginations will take us. We must understand it in context.

Now let's focus on the fact that the Christian should be free of the fear of judgment.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,
¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Why do people fear death? Is it not mostly because of the **fear of the unknown**? We haven't seen what is on the other side. Then how do we get **release** from the fear of death? We become **confident** of what lies on the other side for us. And that is the Christian message. That is the good news. Human beings can be **confident** of what lies on the other side of life because Christ took care of all of the **obstacles** that would have kept us from being received into God's kingdom.

Bondage comes in the not knowing. Bondage comes in the fear and the desperate attempts to make ourselves acceptable. Bondage comes in the realization that all of our attempts are futile.

But our **release from the bondage** comes through **faith** in Christ. We are released from that fear. We are not meant to live in that fear. We are meant to be free from it. We should not be **worrying** about that which lies on the other side of death. We should be **looking forward** to it.

2 Peter 3:10-13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Look at the attitude here. We are supposed to first, wean our **unrealistic expectations** and **hopes** from what this world can provide. If a person places their hope on this world, it is going to be a disappointment. This world is going to be thoroughly wiped out. Certainly there is much in this world that God gave us enjoy here and now. And Timothy tells us the Godliness is profitable for both this life and the next. So I am not trying to say this life has none of God's blessings. No. It is full of them. But it is not where we are to place our hope.

We ought to be looking forward to the day that God sets things right. That is the Christian payday. We get to live in the new earth where all the **good stuff** is and none of the **bad stuff** exists.

Do you see any fear of judgment in Peter's text? It looks just the opposite to me. It looks more like **looking forward to a party**.

Peter pictures us not even regarding a negative outcome in the judgment as a **possibility**. It is not even a **consideration** in the life of faith. Our minds are so fixated on what our Lord has **promised** that we can only see a **good outcome**. And not only can we **see it** in our minds eye, our hearts become **fixated** on it.

Romans 8:12-17 (NKJV)

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

Here again we see what we have seen many times in **1 John** and its supporting scriptures. When we **obey God** we **gain confidence** that we are His kids. And as His kids we have a new identity that looks like Christ. And in that new identity we have no reason to keep **living in fear**. There is ultimately nothing to fear. We learn that in this and other passages. All the bad things are **temporary** and under the oversight of a **sovereign omnipotent gracious Lord**. All the **good things** are eternal. So instead of living in fear of what

could possibly happen, we are **set free from that fear** and we call out to our Heavenly Dad who only ever loves us. We have confidence in Him and know He wants us with Him.

This is real Christianity. This is what it is really about. This is what it looks like in the day to day. We actually **believe** we are heirs and joint heirs. We **accept** that there is **suffering**. But it seems small in comparison to what **we get**. We get to share in the glory of Christ.

So the picture we get here is that, not only is there **no fear** about the future, there is **great anticipation**. The judgment is seen as a **gateway** to the blessings of God. **Hope** is a very Christian word. And it is **wonderful**. Hope sees the **judgment** as a wonderful event, not an obstacle. It is a day to **look forward to**, not a day to fear for the believer. It is the excitement of the **bride** seeing the groom coming down the road to **pick her up and take her away**. It is all the **good stuff**.

There is an element to all of this that actually does hold love and fear as being incompatible.

Matthew 10:28 (NKJV)

28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Our **proper fear** of God is not the kind where we fear His judgment as we are living by faith. But it can be the “shake in our boots” experience when we stand before **ultimate** power. It is a **reverential awe** that is intimidated by the very scope of the one we stand before. It has some of the traits of fear. If we were to be ushered into God’s presence we might quake in the presence of his “otherness”. He is Spirit. He is different. And He is majestic. And He is absolute power. His presence would instantly intimidate us. But if we are God’s, there need be no fear of punishment, because He has promised otherwise.

Here in Matthew we are told not to fear those who **threaten** us. And the reason is that we have a **different kind of fear** for the one who could do worse to us. But we **love** the one who has the power to throw us into Hell. We trust Him and know that He will not do us any harm. So we are **set free** from fearing the **lesser party** by properly fearing and loving the **greater party**. Fear is solved by love.

OK, then what about the fear we **should** have, the fear that is **good** for us to have?

Here are just 3 examples

Revelation 14:6-7 (NKJV)

6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the

everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people--

⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

1 Peter 2:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.
Hebrews 12:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.

It is very clear that we should have a **high regard** for God. We are to hold Him in the position of not being anyone to trifle with. He is not someone to play games with. We cannot reduce Him in our thinking to where we practice the things He hates. Being **afraid** to sin is a good thing. Being **afraid** to live in a way opposed to what God wants is good. It is smart. It is the first thing you do when you are starting to get wise. **Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.** No doubt it would have been better for all of us that we were **more afraid** of God in **some ways**. There are likely things we didn't even **search** for God's opinion about that we just flippantly decided to do. **Fear** would have been helpful. We chose to commit sins in attitude and action thinking, oh well God will forgive them. **Fear** was called for. We submitted to people and did what they wanted us to do without **consulting God** to find out what **He** wanted us to do. **Fear** would have benefited us. It would have been **appropriate**. When we are in **rebellion**, fear is appropriate. But when we are walking obediently to God's word and Spirit, we need not fear God's actions or attitudes toward us. They are all good.

OK, so we should have a reverential fear of God, an awe, a respect, an understanding of the great power of God to create and destroy.

At the same time we should not fear the judgment of God if we are living by faith, trusting in Him and trying to please Him. We can call out to Him as Father, much like the child of a Navy Seal can call out to His Father, who is very capable of doing harm, for sympathy and love and caring.

So what is our reasoning for not having fear in judgment? What is the basis for our thinking?

There are two.

Justification and Sanctification. Those are the truths we base our confidence at Gods Judgment seat on.

Justification- Love of Christ that came to us when He loved us first. He covers my sin

Sanctification- God has displayed his nature in me so that I am confident I am His.

We have seen over and over again that both are necessary.

One cannot divide **Justification** and **Sanctification**. One cannot divide **life** and **doctrine**. One cannot divide **belief** and **action**. One cannot divide **faith** and **works**. It cannot be done.

Martyn Lloyd Jones quote:

If I am not living the Christian life, and love is not perfected in me, I will have a constant sense of condemnation and fearfulness. I will spend the whole of my life in condemnation. My whole life will be lived in misery, and I am not meant for that. I am meant to live a life of joy and of peace and happiness; I am meant to have boldness as I contemplate the day of Judgment.

So what is the alternative? Live a submitted life. Follow the Lord. Obey His Word. Do what He says. And He will lead you into a life of loving others. It cannot be avoided. That is what God is like.

The more I am like Christ, the less I will fear the day of judgment, and the greater will be my boldness as I think of it and as I contemplate it.

So we close with this summary-

The natural man **should fear** the day of judgment.

The Christian **should not fear** the day of judgment.

Christians should not fear it for two reasons that necessarily exist with each other.

- 1 A Christian is justified by Christ through what Christ did for them on the cross.
- 2 A Christian is being sanctified by Christ and Christ is turning them into people **like He is**, lovers of God and of people.

And Christ has done both the justifying and the sanctifying so that He can share eternity with these people. If that is His goal for His people, why should we fear that **He will not accomplish it**? Remember, this is Christ, who does all things well.