

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH 9-20-15 AM NOTES
 "PERFECTED LOVE"
 1 JOHN 4:12-21
 #13 in Series, "Absolute Assurance"

1 John 5:13a (NKJV) "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..."

1 John 2:3a (NKJV) "Now by this **we know** that we know Him..."

1 John 2:5b (NKJV) "By this **we know** that we are in Him."

1 John 3:14a (NKJV) "**We know** that we have passed from death to life..."

1 John 3:19a (NKJV) "And by this **we know** that we are of the truth..."

1 John 3:24b (NKJV) "And by this **we know** that He abides in us..."

1 John 4:2a (NKJV) "By this **you know** the Spirit of God..."

1 John 4:6b (NKJV) "By this **we know** the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

1 John 2:4 (NKJV) "He who says, 'I know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'"

Romans 5:5b (NKJV) "...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Perfecte—to complete, to accomplish the intended purpose, to reach a prescribed goal

I. The Perfected Love of God and Our Abiding (vv. 12-16)

Abide—to remain, to stay, to dwell in, or to continue in; to keep an intimate connection to Christ, to live in constant conscious dependence on Him, and to constantly be available to Him; to abide in Christ is to be **desperate** for His supply because we realize that without Him we can do nothing.

A. The Enabling of Abiding—God the Spirit (vv. 12-13)

John 4:24a (NKJV) "God *is* Spirit..."

John 10:30 (NKJV) "I and *My* Father are one."

John 14:9b (NKJV) "He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

1 John 4:8b (NKJV) "God is love."

Galatians 5:22a (NKJV) "But the fruit of the Spirit is love..."

John 13:35 (NKJV) "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

"God's love is *proclaimed* in the Word ('God is love') and *proved* at the cross. But here we have something deeper: God's love is *perfected* in the believer. Fantastic as it may seem, God's love is not made perfect in angels, but in sinners saved by His grace. We Christians are now the tabernacles and temples in which God dwells. He reveals His love through us."

B. The Confession of Abiding—God the Son (vv. 14-15)

C. The Assurance of Abiding—God the Father (v. 16)

II. The Perfected Love of God and Our Future (vv. 17-18)

A. We Face the Future with Confidence (v. 17)

Genesis 3:8-10a (NKJV) “⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where *are* you?’ ¹⁰ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid...’”

Romans 6:6 (NKJV) “knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NKJV) “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NKJV) “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and **righteousness** and sanctification and redemption.”

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—Edward Mote (1832)

B. We Face the Future Without Fear (v. 18)

Romans 8:32 (NKJV) “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

Romans 8:37 (NKJV) “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

III. The Perfected Love of God and Its Origin (v. 19)

Romans 5:5b (NKJV) "...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

IV. The Perfected Love of God and Our Fellow Man (vv. 20-21)

A. We See Ourselves as We Are

"...when I see myself as I really am, nobody can insult me. It is impossible because they can never say anything that is bad enough about me. Whatever the world may say about me, when I know myself, I know that they do not know the truth about me – it is much worse than they think. When we really see ourselves in the light of this glorious gospel, no one can hurt us, no one can offend us. We see ourselves in the dust, and we are so low that no one can send us lower."

☐Martyn Lloyd-Jones

B. We Look at the Other Person

C. We See the Other Person as Joint Heirs of the Same Glory That Awaits Us

"Instead of looking at them as possible enemies, I see them as men and women who were one with me in sin, but who are now one with me in the great salvation that God has sent in the person of His Son. We see one another as pilgrims traveling together towards the same country, and by the eye of faith we look into it and we say, 'I am going to heaven and so is that person; we are going to be there together.' How can we then look at the face of God and remember that we hated one another on earth?"

Lloyd-Jones

☐Martyn

Sermon 13: Perfected Love

Series: Absolute Assurance

1 John 4:12-21

The obvious theme of 1 John is that every person in Christ can, and should, have assurance of salvation. Will there be people who have struggled with doubt about their salvation in Heaven? Without a doubt there will be! However those who struggle with doubt will be going to Heaven in the coach seats when they could have been going first class! I heard about one man who had wanted to go on a cruise as far back as he could remember. He saved and saved and finally saved enough money to pay for a cruise. The problem was that after he paid for the cruise, he had only a few dollars left and really wanted to use that to buy some souvenirs at some of the stops. He decided to pack his suitcase full of crackers and peanut butter so that he wouldn't have to spend his meager funds on food. As the cruise was coming close to the end, the smell of all the wonderful food coming out of the dining area was getting to him. He was so tired of peanut butter and crackers that he could hardly stand the sight of them. He had only a small amount of money left, but one day as he walked by the dining area the smell of the food was just more than he could handle and he pulled one of the stewards aside and said, "Sir, how much would just one meal in the dining room cost me?" The steward looked at him with a puzzled look and said, "Sir, the meals were included in the

price of the ticket.” That story reminds me of a person who truly knows Christ and is headed for Heaven and yet is struggling with doubt about whether their salvation is real.

John says that the reason God inspired him to write this little book was so that those in Christ can *know* that they have eternal life. 1 John 5:13a (NKJV) “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...”

It is interesting to look at all the times in 1 John that we see the phrase “we know.” Here are some examples:

- 1 John 2:3a “Now by this we know that we know Him...”
- 1 John 2:5b (NKJV) “By this we know that we are in Him.”
- 1 John 3:14a (NKJV) “We know that we have passed from death to life...”
- 1 John 3:19a (NKJV) “And by this we know that we are of the truth...”
- 1 John 3:24b (NKJV) “And by this we know that He abides in us...”
- 1 John 4:2a (NKJV) “By this you know the Spirit of God...”
- 1 John 4:6b (NKJV) “By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

You can *know* that you know Him. However, every evidence given concerning assurance also serves to reveal those that have a false assurance and aren’t Christians at all. If these evidences aren’t the pattern of your life, then you do not *saveingly* know Christ. John has not been timid about telling us that!

John is once again (for the third time) focusing in on the evidence of a supernatural, God enabled, unexplainable love that flows out of those who truly know Christ. This love, that John says will characterize a true believer’s life, is not some kind of amped up, human generated love; it is God’s love (*agape* is the Greek word) supernatural love, powerful love, that is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5b (NKJV) “...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” The Greek word translated “poured out” means to “gush forth,” “to flood.” When the Spirit came to indwell us after we were born of God He flooded us with the love of God and is still flooding us and that love will flow out from us onto others – even our enemies. It is not our love; it is God’s love, *agape*.

John uses the word “perfected” referring to love (verses 12 and 17). *Perfected* is an important word. It means to complete, to accomplish its intended purpose, to reach a prescribed goal. John tells us how this love (*agape*), that the Spirit has flooded our hearts with, reaches its intended goal and how it accomplishes its God ordained purpose. Let’s examine God’s perfected love – that is one of the most important of the evidences of a genuine salvation.

I. The Perfected Love of God and Our Abiding (v 12-16)

It is obvious that the word *abide* is a key in these five verses. It appears in one of its forms five times in five verses. The word *abide* or *abides* is used twenty times in the short five chapters of this book. Let’s examine this concept of abiding once again. The word itself means to remain, to stay, to dwell in, or to continue in. To abide in Christ is to keep an intimate connection to Christ, to live in constant conscious dependence on Him, and to constantly be available to Him. To abide in Christ is to be *desperate* for His supply because we realize that without Him we can do nothing. We are abiding in Christ when we see every

demand on us as being a demand on Christ in us and we look in faith to Him to supply that demand out of His fullness. Let's see how this abiding perfects the love of God. We will see that the Trinity is involved in this perfecting of God's love.

A. The Enabling of Abiding – God the Spirit (v 12-13)

No one has ever seen the fullness of God the Father with physical eyes. John 4:24a (NKJV) "God *is* Spirit..." Moses and Isaiah had revelations and visions of God, but they did not see His complete splendor and His unveiled glory and majesty. Any human being this side of Heaven who saw His unveiled glory would die! The clearest revelation of God is Jesus Christ. He was and is God in a human body. Jesus said in John 10:30 (NKJV) "I and *My* Father are one." He said in John 14:9b (NKJV) "He who has seen Me has seen the Father..."

Follow the logic of verses 12-13. We were told in 1 John 4:8b that "God is love" (*agape*). God in His essence is love and all genuine *agape* love comes from God. How do we observe this love? It is one thing to describe this *agape* love but how do we see it? We saw it in Jesus Christ. However, after His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus ascended to the Father and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father in a glorified body. How do we see that supernatural *God kind* of love with our own physical eyes today? How does the world see a demonstration of that love? It is through Christians who have the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9) indwelling them. God the Spirit is the source of love and when we abide in Him and He abides in us, *agape* love flows from our life and is visible to the world as the world sees our lives. We read in Galatians 5:22a (NKJV) "But the fruit of the Spirit is love..." That is *agape* love, God's love. Jesus told us that it was this love on display that would set us apart as His disciples. John 13:35 (NKJV) "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love (*agape*) for one another."

God sent His Spirit to live in us to manifest His love through us. The world cannot see God, but the world does see us and we have the Spirit of God in us to enable us to love with God's love. Warren Weirsbe summarizes it well.

God's love is *proclaimed* in the Word ('God is love') and *proved* at the cross. But here we have something deeper: God's love is *perfected* in the believer. Fantastic as it may seem, God's love is not made perfect in angels, but in sinners saved by His grace. We Christians are now the tabernacles and temples in which in which God dwells. He reveals His love through us. [Warren Weirsbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, page 519]

The perfected love of God is enabled by His Spirit.

B. The Confession of Abiding – God the Son (v 14-15)

If God's love is to be perfected in us, we must confess the true Christ. To confess that He is the Son of God is to confess His humanity and His deity. To confess is to agree with God. In both the Gospel of John and 1 John one of the burdens of John is that we confess the true Christ. In the Gospel of John, his emphasis is the deity of Christ (He is God) and while His deity is taught in 1 John, the emphasis is that He is also fully man. The only Jesus that we can abide in is the one who is truly God and truly man.

C. The Assurance of Abiding – God the Father (v 16)

Since God is love, He is the source of all genuine love. If we are *abiding* in love, we are abiding in God because He is the originator and provider of all love. We have assurance; we have evidence of salvation when we abide in love, because there is no genuine *agape* love apart from God giving it to those who are His.

II. The Perfected Love of God and Our Future (v 17-18)

A. We Face the Future with Confidence (v 17)

If God's love has been perfected in us, we will have boldness, confidence, and assurance when it comes to the future day of judgment. Remember the word translated "perfected" means to be complete and whole. It means to bring something to its intended purpose. To paraphrase, he is saying that love has accomplished its intended purpose in us when we face the day of judgment with confidence.

There is something naturally within mankind that lets us know that there is a final reckoning, a final judgment. We see that innate knowledge of a final judgment from the moment that sin came into the world. In Genesis 3 after Adam and Eve sinned, they were fearful about giving an account to God for their sin. Genesis 3:8-10a (NKJV) "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where *are* you?' So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid...'" There is still great fear of death and judgment to come in most people.

For those who have experienced the perfected love of God, instead of dread and fear there is boldness and confidence. The word translated "boldness" or "confidence" means that fear and anxiety are removed. Final judgment brings no anxiety or fear to those who have experienced the perfecting love of God. How can this be? The key is found in that phrase, "...because as He is, so are we in this world." What does that mean? He is referring to the blessed truth of our identification with Christ and the imputation of His righteousness to us. We can stand in confidence without doubt and without fear as we look to a future judgment because Christ has taken our sins, and the judgment for those sins, the wrath of God those sins deserved, and paid the debt in full on the cross.

Furthermore the old us in Adam, that is worthy of nothing but judgment, was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6) and the Holy Spirit has baptized us into Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) and we are "in Him." We have been declared righteous before our Holy God because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us (put on our account). 1 Corinthians 1:30 (NKJV) "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." How is Christ Jesus in relation to the Father and judgment? He is perfectly righteous. Where do we who have experienced the saving love of God in Christ stand before this holy One? "As He is, (totally righteous), so are we in this world."

The song writer Edward Mote said it well back in 1832:

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,

Faultless to stand before the throne.

As He is in relation to judgment, so are we in the world and that is why we face death and judgment with confidence.

B. We Face the Future without Fear (v 18)

This is really just a continuation of the truth in verse 17. The natural man should fear judgment, but there is something wrong when someone who has *savingly* believed in Christ and still fears final judgment. When John speaks of *perfect love*, he means mature love or love that has reached the state to which it was intended. Perfect love and fear cannot coexist. When we begin to comprehend and appropriate by faith what God's love has accomplished for us and in us, there is no more tormenting fear concerning the future and especially the future final judgment.

When John speaks of fear here, he obviously is not speaking of the fear of God that is to be desired and cultivated. He is talking about the fear that is the root of anxiety and doubt and that kills joy. We have no reason to fear any situation because He has said in Romans 8:32 (NKJV) "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" We have no reason to fear any enemy because He has said in Romans 8:37 (NKJV) "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

When love is perfected in us, there is no cause or room for fear. We have often defined faith as acting like God is telling the truth, but fear acts like God is lying. Fear of final judgment acts like Jesus' precious blood was not enough to propitiate God's wrath. Perfect love casts out fear.

III. The Perfected Love of God and Its Origin (v 19)

This verse is saying that all true love (agape love) originates with the Father. We cannot love with this supernatural love apart from the Father first loving us and doing a regenerating work in us making us partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). We would have no true love for God, or others, had He not first *savingly* loved us. His love was uninfluenced by any worthiness in us. He loved us because He sovereignly chose to love us and because of who He is and not because of who we are or what we may have done. Our response to this sovereign love is to love God and others with that same love. That is the message of Romans 5:5b (NKJV) "...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

IV. The Perfected Love of God and Our Fellow Man (v 20-21)

This is some very strong and sobering language. If a person has experienced God's saving love, they have become a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) and God's nature is love. They have also experienced God's supernatural love overflowing their heart, and with these two things being true, it is impossible to live in a pattern of hating, or refusing to love a brother or sister in Christ. It is not that it would be unusual; it is impossible! As a test of

salvation, if anyone says that He or she loves God (synonymous with “I am a Christian”) and habitually hates another person then the one claiming to love God is a liar, is deceived, and does not love God at all. I hasten to say that the tense of the Greek word in verse 20 translated “hates” is the present continuing tense and is not referring to a momentary flare-up of hatred but to a settled hatred of another person.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones gives us steps to loving difficult brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. The first step is to see ourselves as we are. Does it amaze you that God could love you? It does me. We look at ourselves and if we are honest we see self-will, self-trust, self-exaltation, self-centeredness, self-indulgence, self-seeking, self-pity, self-defense, and on and on! Yet in spite of all this and more God poured out His love on us. That has a way of tempering how we should view hard to love people. Listen to Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

...when I see myself as I really am, nobody can insult me. It is impossible because they can never say anything that is bad enough about me. Whatever the world may say about me, when I know myself, I know that they do not know the truth about me – it is much worse than they think. When we really see ourselves in the light of this glorious gospel, no one can hurt us, no one can offend us. We see ourselves in the dust, and we are so low that no one can send us lower.

[Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in Christ: Studies in First John*, page 447]

The next step in dealing with difficult to love people is look at the other person. If it is after you have already looked at yourself, they don't look so bad. When we really look, we see the person rather than the thing that person is doing. Oh what a difference that makes. We see them as being loved by our same Father. We see that they are in process as we are and have not yet arrived. We ask the Lord to love them through us with His love. Sometimes that love will involve confrontation and even formal church discipline, but never hatred.

When we have looked at ourselves and then looked beyond attitudes and actions to the person, we are ready for the third step. We now see them as joint-sharers in the same salvation, joint heirs of the same glory that awaits us.

Listen to Martyn Lloyd-Jones again:

Instead of looking at them as possible enemies, I see them as men and women who were one with me in sin, but who are now one with me in the great salvation that God has sent in the person of His Son. We see one another as pilgrims traveling together towards the same country, and by the eye of faith we look into it and we say, “I am going to heaven and so is that person; we are going to be there together.” How can we then look at the face of God and remember that we hated one another on earth?
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When you have truly experienced God's saving love, you cannot live in hatred of a brother or sister in Christ. It is an impossibility.

Conclusion

Is the love of God being perfected in you?

