

Perfect Love 1 John 4:16b-21

Introduction

In **verse 12** of **1 John**, John says, “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” What he is saying here is that in order to see God in action, the world looks at the fruit of the believer. The biggest thing that they see is how we love one another. Within that love for one another, they will see that God abides in us and how that our love is perfected in us. We looked last week at God abiding in us and the world will see God through us and it is always shown in us loving one another.

Today we are looking at the perfect love, but before we do that, let us look at **verse 16**: he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. This is a profound statement because John is saying that a person who loves one another has relationship with God. In **verse 20**, John says that a person who says he loves God but hates his brother is a liar and that God is not in him. For John, we cannot separate the love for God and the love for believers. People say that they love God, but the true test is manifested in their love for one another, and John calls this the perfect love or complete love. John says that we love one another because of the love that has been perfected in us. What is this perfect love? How do we obtain it and how do we identify it? John anticipates these questions and answers it in **verses 17-21**. He looks at how the perfect love begins with God and how it gives confidence and how it results in us loving one another.

I. Perfect Love Begins with God

- God is love (**16b**)
 - His character and attribute

Note: John says this twice (here and in verse 8). John is saying that love is God’s attribute and everything He does is tempered by love. He judges in love. He blesses in love.

- He is the source of love

Note: We cannot love others without His love in us. John says that we love because He first loved us. Love comes from God.

- His demonstration of love

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

- Meaning of perfected love

Note: Perfect love does not mean that our love is flawless (perfect) expression of God’s love. The word perfect means finished, accomplished. All actions had attained its goal. John is saying that God’s love has been put into action into the human heart into practical human love. What this means that in the past, we have not the capacity to love the way God loves until we were born again and placed our faith in Christ Jesus. Our love is from God through Christ Jesus. The word perfect is also used for mature believers.

Philippians 1:6 *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*

Hebrews 13:21 *make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Our love is not yet completed, but He will complete it to His satisfaction as we grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Transition: What does this perfect love look like? How can we identify it? John gives us two things about perfect love: it gives us confidence and results in loving one another.

II. Perfect Love Gives Confidence

Note: Before we can talk about perfect love gives confidence, we have to talk about fear.

- Fear

- Day of judgment
 - The terror of that Day

Note: Jesus talks about that the Day of judgment or rather the result of the judgment. He uses the imagery found in Isaiah:

Isaiah 66:24 *And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.*

He talks about the unquenchable fire and the worms that do not die (**Mark 9:44**) and the gnashing of teeth (**Matthew 8:12**). The horror is the eternal separation of God from people where they will never again see His goodness, grace, and His light...total absence of God from their lives. Today, not many people are afraid of hell, but there will be a time that this will happen, and when it does, there will be punishment. This is what John says “fear involves punishment.”

- Certainty of that Day
 - It will happen

Ecclesiastes 12:14 *For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.*

- Jesus will be the judge

John 5:22 *For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.*

- Man die once, then judgment (**Heb 9:27**)

Hebrews 9:27 *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,*

Note: Unbelievers will face judgment and they will taste the full fear before the Lord Jesus when He sits on the Great White Throne Judgment. Fear (cowardly) toward God is the sign that nothing is well about our relationship to Him, and we know it (i.e. Adam/Eve in garden).

- Love

- Drives out fear
 - God drives out the fear (**2 Tim 1:7; v 19**)

2 Timothy 1:7 *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

1 John 4:19 *We love because He first loved us.*

- We are no longer condemned

John 3:36 *He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*

Note: As Christians, we do not face judgment of the wrath of God and that’s a blessing.

- Gives confidence

Note: Love has no warning signals because it needs none. Love fulfills every aspect of the law.

III. Perfect Love Results in Loving One Another

- Loveless unbelievers

- Character—full of hatred
 - Cain

1 John 3:12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

- Hatred in action

Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Transition: Love is the controlling factor in the believer, not in unbelievers.

- Loving believers
 - Character—loving (both God and people)
 - The law of love

Mark 12:28-31 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" (29) "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. (30) Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' (31) The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

- The law of Christ

Romans 13:8-10 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. (9) For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (10) Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

- Love in action

1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Conclusion

Perfect love or complete love is in the attitude and activity of a Christian expressed in loving one another because of God's love within him. John is saying here that if you are a Christian, you will love one another, and when you love one another, you are showing perfect love. Perfect love banishes fear because everything you do fulfills the law of Christ. If you have fear in your life, fear of judgment, look at your attitude and your actions. Do you show love for your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you love them in private, lifting them up and praising them? If so, the perfect love of God is in you and come enter in the joy of the Lord.