

1 John 4 – Abiding in God and His Love

Read 1 John 4

Vs 1 Notice how John is practicing what he preached in Chapter 3 – loving the brethren (he calls his readers “beloved”). What are we NOT to believe? Every spirit. We are never to assume every spiritual experience or every demonstration of spiritual power is from God. There are 3 basic types of spirits; Godly spirits, spirits of man and evil spirits. How do you know which one is operating in a situation? What are you to do? Test the spirit to see if it is from God. Having the Gift of Discerning of Spirits would be helpful (earnestly desire it 1 Cor 12:31, 14:1 and ASK for it James 1:5, 4:2). It is the responsibility of every Christian to test what you hear. According to 1 Corinthians 14:29 (let the others judge) and 1 Thessalonians 5:21 (Test all things; hold fast what is good), testing the spirits is the work of the body of Christ. All prophecy is to be judged by Scriptural standards. It is never to be received just because it is dramatic or given by a certain person. We trust in the principle that God will never contradict Himself, and we know what He has already said in His Word. 2 Peter 1:20-21 tells us true prophecy is never of any private interpretation. This means that there will be agreement and confirmation from the body of Christ for truth.

Vs 2 How do you know a spirit is from God? Jesus came in the flesh will be confessed. True prophecy, and true teaching, will present a true Jesus (fully God and fully man). In John’s day, the issue was about if Jesus had truly come in a real body of flesh and blood. Many Gnostic-influenced teachers said that Jesus, being God, could not have actually become a flesh and blood human being, because God could have no partnership with “impure” material stuff. Today it’s Jesus being God that is questioned (Jehovah Witnesses, Muslim, Mormon religions).

Vs 3 How can you tell a spirit is NOT from God? Any confession that Jesus was NOT God Who came in the flesh is NOT from God. What is this spirit? The spirit of anti-christ (*an adversary of or opponent of the Messiah*). It is the spirit which both opposes the true Jesus and offers a substitute Jesus. What do we learn about the spirit of anti-christ in this verse? It was active in John’s day and his readers knew the anti-christ was to come in the end-times.

Vs 4 John called his students “little children”. What incredible truths does John say of his students? They are of God and they have (past tense!) overcome the false Jesus’. How, by what power, have they overcome? The One in them is (present tense, which means *always*) greater than this false worldly evil spirit (including satan and all his minions). The child of God need not fear the spirit of anti-christ, even though they should be warned of it, because they have the indwelling Spirit of God (1 John 3:24). The believer has a resource for victory, the vital presence of the indwelling Jesus (Gal 2:20), which makes victory always possible – if we will rely on He who is in us instead of ourselves, the world or other men, etc.

Vs 5 Who is the “they” John is referring to? The anti-Christ. What do they say and who believes them? They speak worldly (as opposed to Godly) things and the world (those who are not true believers in Jesus) believes these lies. Matt 12:34,

Vs 6 What is the opposite of verse 5? Godly people speak Godly things and Godly people believe the truth. This is another way to test the spirits! True – God, False – not God. If someone hears (and believes) what God has said in the Bible, we know he has the spirit of truth. If he does not hear (believe) it, he has the spirit of error. John 14:6

Vs 7 What test is presented here? The love test. Love is from God (for God is love) and those who are His are to love one another. We love one another because we are loved by God, and have received that love, and live in light of it. We’ve already showed if a person says they are a believer yet hates another believer, they are a liar and the truth is not in them. Those who love (agape) are born of God and know Him. There are several different words in the ancient Greek language translated “know” in English. This specific word for “knows” (ginosko) is the word for a *knowledge by experience*. John is saying when we really experience God it will show by our love for one another.

Vs 8 What if someone fails the love test? They don’t know God. Once you know God, you love because He is love.

Vs 9 How did God demonstrate His love? By sending Jesus. Notice here it states Jesus is the only begotten (*single of its kind, unique*) son. This phrase is used 4 other times in Scripture and all by John (John 1:14, 1:18, 3:16, 3:18). We are adopted sons and daughters of God, but we are not of the same essential nature and being as God – we are human beings. But Jesus is the only begotten Son, meaning His Sonship is different than ours; He was and is of the same essential nature and being as God the Father. Why was Jesus sent (as a begotten son)? So we could live through Him. We passed from death to life when we got saved. John 5:24 Jesus made the way for us to live.

Vs 10 What is this verse saying? It is not our love for God that proves we are a believer. It's God's love for us, demonstrated by Jesus taking our sin debt for us, that marks us as one of His. Propitiation has the idea of a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God.

Vs 11 John finishes this "love test" by concluding what? We ought to love one another. Why? The proper way to love God in response to His love for us is to go out and love one another. God puts His love into our lives that it might flow out.

Vs 12 Has anyone living on earth seen God? No. 1 Tim 1:17, John 2:24 What is the greatest evidence of God's presence working in us? Love. Since no one has seen God at any time, and God is love, our love provides evidence for the presence of God. Where God is present and working, there will be love. If we love one another, then the love of God is mature and complete (perfected) in us.

Vs 13 What is the connecting thought ("by this")? We can know by experience that we live in God, if His love has been perfected in us. And we know that His love has been perfected in us if we love one another. What is the test John gives for God abiding in us and we in Him? John 15:4,7 The Holy Spirit in us, which is the abiding presence of Jesus – the presence of His Spirit is how He abides in us. The testimony of the Holy Spirit within us makes it possible for us to know that we abide in Him. Romans 8:16.

Vs 14 – 16 What is John's personal testimony? He saw and can therefore testify that God the Father sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. If you confess Jesus as the Son of God, what does that do? It proves you and God abide together. What else did John know? The love of God and what it does (causes a man to abide in Him). The Christian who has this kind of relationship with God will be virtually "immersed" in God's love.

Vs 17 What is the result of the completeness of this love we've been talking about? It gives us boldness (*free and fearless confidence*) in the day of judgment. Why can we have this boldness? Our identity is bound up in Jesus. Just as Jesus said "you've seen me, you've seen the Father" John 14:9, in the eyes of God, when He sees us, He sees Jesus. How is Jesus now? He is glorified, justified, forever righteous and bold, sitting at the right hand of God the Father. Spiritually, we can have that same standing now, while we are in the world, because as He is, so are we in the world. Mark 16:19, Eph 1:20,2:6

Vs 18 What is the relationship between fear and love? They are mutually exclusive, which means they can't both exist at the same time. If you love, you will have no fear. If you fear, God's love is not mature or complete in you. What happens to fear when complete love comes around? It is cast (*to throw violently*) out. What does fear involve (*possesses*)? Torment (*correction, punishment, penalty*).

Vs 19 Why/how do/can we love? Because He started it by loving us John 3:16 Some people imagine that Jesus loved us because He knew we would love Him and come to faith in Him. But He loved us before that, and even before the worlds were created. When our only existence was in the mind and heart of God, Jesus loved us. This verse tells us where our love for Jesus comes from. It comes from Him. Our love for God is always in response to His love for us; He initiates, and we respond.

Vs 20 John restates what he said in Chapter 2. If you say you love God but hate another Christian you are a liar and don't actually love God. Here he explains why this is true. Why? Because if you can't love someone you can see, how can you love someone you can't see?

Vs 21 What is John's conclusion? The commandment to love one another flows from our love of God. We can learn how to love God by loving people. One might say, "I want to love God more; I want to grow in my love for Him. But how can I love a God who is invisible?" God would say to us, "Learn to love Me, Whom you cannot see, by loving My children, whom you can see."