

Perfect Love
I John 4:16-18

Introduction: Although first John is referred to as an epistle it is not written like one. It does not salute or send greetings to any one, neither does it indicate who it is written to, or who is it from. It looks more like a tract, a paper of sorts addressing some concerns that were affecting the Christian community in Asia Minor. Apparently, there seemed to have been a group that seceded from the Johanine community, claiming to have a superior teaching about Christ and the path to salvation. The letter was written to protect the remaining community against Christological and ethical errors that were being promoted. The passage of concern tonight draws us into the ethical obligation of loving with a depth of love that is described as perfect or complete.

I. We see the inspiration for perfect love v. 16 (See also vv.7-13)

- The incarnation v. 9
- The crucifixion v. 10
- Pentecost v.13 (Rom. 5:5)

II. The experience of perfect love v. 17

What does the beloved Apostle John have in mind by perfect love? The key to what he has in mind is the statement: ***“Because in this world we are like him.”***

He is not referring to the suffering and hostility Jesus endured when he was on earth. He is not referring to the future when he returns in his glorified state. The tense is present. We are like him now. He has imparted to us his righteousness.

I propose to you that it is that which he has spoke about in previous chapters: 2:29; 3:3; 3:7-10

Illust. Facsimile (Having the nature of, exact reproduction of)

- O.T. Deut. 6:4-5

Deut. 30:6

- N.T. Col. 2:11
- It is that which Jesus asks of us in the Sermon on the Mount.
(Matt. 5:48)

III. The Assurance of perfect love v. 18

- Perfect love casts off fear – Fear of Judgment
- There are those who have neither fear nor love
- Those with fear and no love
- Those who have love but yet fear
- Those with love and no fear, which John calls perfect love.
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Conclusion: God is not demanding something from us that is beyond our reach. This was not an experience unique to the apostles and the first century Christians. Charles Wesley captured the meaning of this love when he penned the words: “A heart in every thought renewed. And full of love divine, Perfect and right and pure and good, a copy Lord of Thine.” (1742 # 464 in the Nazarene Hymnal)

In another of his more familiar hymns he wrote: Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature’s night. Thine eyes diffused a quickening ray. I woke; the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off; my heart was free. I rose went forth, and followed Thee. Amazing love! How can it be That Thou, my God shouldst die for me?

We are to be holy because God is holy (Lev. 11:44; I Peter 1:15)

We are to be merciful because God is merciful (Luke 6:36)

We are to be loving because God is loving.