

Fearless Love

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[0 : 00] A little soul music there. Bye, bye. Huh?

Oh, I have a CD. Well, I used to have a CD. I don't know where it is now. Women of Gospel. Sing that song. And they take you to heaven when they sing me.

Yeah. All right. 1 John chapter 4. We finish this chapter this week. Lord willing.

Which means next week we'll actually begin the last chapter of 1 John. I'm kind of dragging my feet because I really like 1 John. So I'm just confessing if we take a little longer.

Plus, you know, I'm not sure where we're going next. So we're going Old Testament. Remember, we do New Testament, Old Testament. So we'll go to the Old Testament. Perhaps Habakkuk.

[1 : 04] Habakkuk. Habakkuk. Habakkuk. Yeah. All right. Get with it, Bill. Here we go. Feeling like family today. We've got the sharing going on. I feel a little informal.

So take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 John chapter 4. We're going to read from verse 7 through 21. We're going to focus on the last four verses of this chapter.

17 through 21. I think that's four verses. But I want to read the whole section because John's thought is progressing here as he comes to verse 7 in chapter 4.

Now he enters, remember, the test of love. At the beginning of the chapter, he was talking about the test of truth. Right? How do we know truth? And how do we test the spirits?

Right? How do we determine what's false, what's true? So in verse 7, now he segues to loving one another again. This is the third time he's talked about love.

[2 : 09] But now he's really digging in. In fact, in these verses, 14, 15 verses, 7 to 21, the word love occurs 27 times.

Just in these verses. 14 of those times, they are about us loving one another. So he's really taking it and emphasizing it.

But he's going to add some layers, as we've already seen. He's adding some layers to what he said before. The first time he talked about chapter 2, love versus hate.

Right? If we withhold our love, we're actually hating. And then chapter 3, he talked about what does love look like? It looks like laying down your life. And then, or closing your heart.

And there he talked about murder. He kind of adds another level. If you withhold love, you're not just hating, but you're like a murderer. You're robbing someone of life. And now in this chapter, he's just going to go a little further.

[3 : 21] And add some other dimensions to what love is. We saw last week, it's about abiding in God. We can't love. Love is a duty, but it's not a, you better love and you better stir up the strength to do it.

It's about abiding in God. The only way we can love like he loves is to abide in him, to draw from him. And, of course, once again, in the first few verses, he defined love, not from what Jesus did, but not from what the Father did.

How the Father loves us by sending his Son. Right? Jesus loves us by coming and laying down his life. So, it demonstrates a different kind of love, but here's the Father.

And then we saw the big punchline in verse 11 and 12 there, was that love not only lays down the life, but its purpose is to forgive sin.

And so, then he says, so, if God loved us in this way, you too. Not just lay down our life, but forgive. And so, we see another layer of what love is.

[4 : 37] So, we're going to add another layer today. In the last few verses, we're going to talk about fear. How love removes fear. And in fact, when love is perfected, there's no fear.

We are fearless. So, John, John's a thinker. John just, love this guy.

Alright, so, stop talking Bill, let's just get into the text. John, John chapter 4, verse 7. So, if you're able to stand, please. Stand as I read from 1 John 4.

Timer hasn't started yet, by the way, right? Right. I have still, it's all preface, it's all just, that was free. No, it's free as if it's not. Verse 7, 1 John 4, 7.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

[5 : 39] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world, so that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his spirit.

And we have seen and testified that the Father has sent his son to be the savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

So we have come to know, and to believe, that the love that God has for us, God is love.

[7 : 00] And whoever abides in love, is abiding in God, and God is abiding in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world.

There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

We love, because he first loved us. If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.

For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

And this commandment we have from him, whoever loves God, also loves his brother. So it reads, let us pray for understanding.

[8 : 19] Father, we thank you for John, we thank you for how long you kept him around on earth, so that he might develop this kind of wisdom, that we will benefit from. One who understands how much you have loved us, and one who then understood the application of that love.

So we thank you for his wisdom, that you have given to him, and he's passing to us. Help us to pick that up today. There's a lot that John is kind of pulling together here.

Help us, Lord, to see the core of it, and then, as we're able to add those layers, for deeper wisdom.

Teach us today, about your love, and our love, and how it casts out fear. This we pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Please be seated. Fear.

[9 : 26] Anybody have any fears? You'd like to just cast out? So the word in the Greek is phobia. Right?

Fear is a phobia. So what's a phobia? Anybody have a phobia? Anybody have arachnophobia? You know what that is?

Spiders. How about acrophobia? Like acrobats? So heights? Ladders.

Huh? Ladders. Ladders? Laddophobia. No fear, just stupidity with it. No fear. That's the problem. There was a fear of ladders, it wouldn't have an issue.

Yeah. Claustrophobia? Right? Know what that one is? Clauses? Clauses? Yeah. Closed spaces.

[10 : 27] Agoraphobia? Spiders. Huh? No, that's arachnid. Agorah is about market, about the marketplace and crowds.

Fear of crowds. Gomophobia. Any gomophobias here? Fear of marriage. Yes.

Yes. Glossophobia. Glossophobia is the tongue. Glossophobia. Fear of public speaking. Anybody have that? How about dentophobia?

Dentists. Anybody have a fear of dentists? No? Not anymore? Xeno. Xenophobia is fear of strangers.

Aliens. Here's one I found. This one's great. I gotta take a big breath for this one. Hippopotamostrosus' quipedadolia.

[11 : 35] Nope. I said it wrong. Hippopotamostrosus' quipedadiofobia. Any idea?

Big words. Yes. Fear of long words. So, they could have just said quipedadiofobia.

That's long words. But they wanted to add hippopotamus and monsters in front of that. To make it more fearful. I don't know. Then there's chrissophobia.

Not fear of chrissi. Crisis. Crisis. Crisis. Chrissi is the word for judgment. Fear of judgment. Particularly what John talks about here.

Fear of the day of judgment. Fear of eternal condemnation. So, John addresses in this section one of our greatest fears.

[12 : 39] And probably the greatest fear, if we even acknowledge it, is fear of eternal condemnation. I mean, that's the ultimate loss. Fear is about loss. Fear is about loss.

I'm afraid of certain things. I'm afraid I'm going to lose my balance. I'm afraid I'm going to lose something. My teeth. Dentist. My dignity.

So, he talks about this love and that love expels fear. And I think it's broader than simply that this love he's going to talk about. He's going to talk about a perfect love.

A fearless love. That casts out fear of the eternal punishment. But I think love, when he says in verse 18, there's no fear in love. And that love that is perfected expels fear.

I think that relates to all kinds of fears. So, that's what I hope to prove to you today.

[13 : 43] So, what kind of fear cripples us? Fear is crippling. It's enslaving. The Bible talks about the fear of man. He talked about certain secret disciples that Jesus had who, for fear of the Jews, would not expose themselves.

Right? You had Joseph of Arimathea was a secret disciple of Jesus. You had Nicodemus. You know, Nick at night. There was a couple of those Pharisees. That's how John described it.

Nicodemus came at night. Nick at night. It's not funny. Just teasing. Fear of man. Fear of others.

Judgment. There were others that did not want to say they believed in Jesus because they would be kicked out of the synagogue. So, that's a very natural fear. Fear of others and what they think. Fear of rejection.

There's fears in following Christ. Fears of suffering. Persecution. The mocking and the insults and ostracized. That's all part of Christianity. But we fear to speak up for it.

[14 : 47] We will suffer those things. Those are hard things. Those are losses. Are there any good fears in the Bible? Are fears all bad? There's one fear that the Bible says is the beginning of all knowledge.

Fear of the Lord. Fear of the Lord. So, there's a good, healthy fear. And then there are other fears that he says love will cast out.

Fear of the Lord. So, fear of the Lord is good because it doesn't mean I fear his punishment. Because John's talking about removing that kind of fear here.

So, fear of the Lord isn't about the punishment. But it's about recognizing who he is. It's like when the disciples in the storm, right? Jesus calms the storm. And then they were afraid of Jesus.

Not in a sense of getting away from him, but more than just awe. There was fear. Healthy fear.

[15 : 48] Fear of the Lord. So, it means taking him at his word. It means recognizing my life is really on loan.

The life that I have is a gift from him. I'm on loan. It's not my life. It's on loan. He's given me the breath. He's given me the gifts. All that's on loan from him. And the fear of God is recognizing that's who's God and who's not.

And if I reject all that and I dismiss God or I ignore God, then there should be fear of ultimate. Because the Bible says everybody knows.

Everybody knows. Everybody knows. You can suppress it. You can talk yourself out of it. But everybody knows. And everybody knows you're going to be held accountable in one day. At least that's what Paul says.

Romans 1. Everybody knows. So, what overcomes fear? What overcomes primarily the fear of final judgment?

[16 : 54] Well, John says love does. Love. Perfect love conquers. So, I want to break this into two. That's what I always do is break it into two.

Did you ever notice that? Nobody's picked up on my pattern yet, have they? Nobody's picked that up. It's always two sides of the thing. You know, when I first started preaching, it was three. Because maybe it was a trinity or something.

It's always three points. Now it's two. Because people said you preached, you look. So, I cut one point out. And now I go just as long. Two points. Anyway. I don't know.

To me, it's just simpler to break the text in half. It's one text that's kind of shown two sides of the thing. Yeah.

Here we are again. We'll break it in half here. Verses 17 and 18 give one answer. That love expels this fear of the end. Right?

- [17 : 51] It overcomes fear and brings confidence and assurance. It overcomes fear of the end. And the other way that love conquers is that in verses 19 through 21, now he turns it to focusing on loving one another.
- And so loving my brother not only means that I really love God, but it means I've expelled all fear. I fear no loss.
- I mean, think about this. If you're totally committed to Jesus, here's what I think John is saying. If you're totally committed to Jesus, in other words, to follow him means, right, deny myself, take up my cross.
- If I've done that, what do I have to fear? If I'm all in for Jesus, if I'm living for Jesus, not for me, what do I have to fear?
- See, I think that's where we're going. If I'm laying down everything, what do I have to fear? Now, of course, I still fear because I'm human.
- [19 : 04] But in the sense of being all in, a disciple of Jesus, what do I have to fear? All my best, all my good stuff's coming later. Okay, so that's where I'm going, just as a heads up.
- So if you don't want to hear it, tune out now. Don't do that. I prayed yesterday that I wouldn't say stupid stuff. Okay, so two things.
- So first of all, verses 17 and 18, I think, tells us this, that true love for one another is the perfect love that expels all fear of judgment. True love for one another.
- Genuinely loving one another. Genuinely, truly having a love for one another will expel all fear of future judgment. Okay, so first, verse 17, he talks about this perfect love.
- By this is love perfected. And then he's going to say again, verse 18, perfect love casts out fear. So what's love perfected? What is perfect love?
- [20 : 10] Okay, perfect. So we can read into that word. So the word itself is the Greek word *teleos*. So it's like looking through a telescope, seeing the other end, right?
- So the word means end or finish or completion. So I'm looking to the end. So love is completed. Love is finished. Love has reached its goal.
- That's what perfect love is. Love, so we might say it another way. Love is matured, fully developed, reaching its goal.
- That's what he means by perfect love. So what is that love? Well, he says a verse, and he said it before, verse 19, he says, we love because God first loved us.
- So where does love start? God. We learn love from that. God loves first. He's always the initiate. He sends his son. God loves first. Then what happens? Is he done? Is that it?
- [21 : 08] Is that all he wanted? No, he had a goal, didn't he? So his love goes to us. We receive the love. And what do we do? We love him back.
- Is he done? Is that it? Is that perfect? Perfecto, that's it. Good. Me and God, that's all he wanted. No. No. What's he aiming at?
- What's his intention? Why does he pour out his love on us? So that we might love him and love one another. And Jesus says, if you love one another, it'll impact the whole world.
- He's not saying don't love the world. Of course you love the world. As God puts you, puts, you know, Samaritans or whoever in your path, you love the world. You love your neighbor. But your primary focus, love God, love one another.
- Okay? That's perfect love. God the Father initiates. He sends his son who lays down his life for us.
- [22 : 11] We love God in return. If we've received that, if we've recognized that love, we love him back. And that doesn't stop there because then we love one another. That's perfect love.

I think that's what he means here. So, by this. What result comes from that? Look at the second part of verse 17. By this is love perfected with us or among us is probably more accurate.

So that. Why? So, love is perfected with us. By the way, by this isn't pointing forward. It's pointing back. By this relates to our abiding in love.

Right? So, verse 16, he's just said, God is love. Whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in us. By this. By what? By our abiding in God, abiding in love.

Love is perfected. Okay? Because remember, the perfected love isn't just God loving us. It isn't just us loving God. Perfected love is God loving us, us loving God.

[23 : 11] And now we love others. Or think of it as a circle of people. Right? God loves. We love. No, it can't be a circle because then we've got to go this way. Think about it as a cross.

Exactly. Oh, that's actually better, isn't it? Yes. Wow, brilliant. God loves us, we love him, and then it goes that way. Okay. That's perfect love.

Wish I had thought of that. So, what does that do? What does that provide? Verse 17 says, so that by this is love perfected among us.

What's the purpose? So that we may have confidence for the day of judgment. So that we may, if we're loving one another, if love has been fully received from God and given back to God and now spreading out to one another, we'll have confidence in the day of judgment.

Why? Because I'm demonstrating that I abide in God. I'm demonstrating, what are the tests? How do I know I have eternal life? I walk in light, not darkness.

[24 : 22] I love my brother, and I confess the truth. That's how I know. So I'm doing that second one really well. So it's, in other words, it's matured.

And I like this word perfected because it's, it takes process. It takes a while for me to learn to love one another. Especially that forgiving part, right?

So, so we have confidence. We have no shame when he returns. And then he says something kind of odd at the end of verse 17. It's kind of like, here's the reason.

So love's perfected so that we have confidence for the day of judgment. Why do we have confidence for the day of judgment? Why does this perfect love give us confidence? Because as he is, so also are we in this world.

Got it? What's that mean? Because as he is, so also are we in this world. Well, he's perfect and holy.

[25 : 28] I'm a mess. How am I like him in this world? How are we like Jesus in this world?

I'm not perfect. But what I, what am I that he is to? Huh?

Love him? Yeah. I, I, I, I have the same kind of nature to love. Confident. Confident. Because I'm walking in that light.

What? We have his righteousness. We have his righteousness. As he is righteous, I am righteous. Not because of what I did. Right. Because he gave it to me.

I have that standing. I'm set apart. I am holy. I am a saint who still sins. Right? I'm not a sinner who's called to save. I'm, Paul's trying to convince us.

[26 : 26] John's trying to convince us. We're, we're saints. That's our identity. We're saints by calling, by gift. So we're saying we have this new nature as him.

So what kind of confidence is this? He says now in verse 18, it's going to expel fear. So what's this confidence like? Love perfected. When we're loving, we have confidence because we're like him.

And finally, it results in fear being expelled. How does love do that? There's no fear in love.

But perfect love. By the way, every time he mentions love, there's an article in front of it. He's not talking about love in general. He's talking about a specific kind of love.

So in verse 17, it's by this is the love perfected. So it's a love that he's been talking about, which takes us to verse 16, which talks about that abiding in love.

[27 : 29] Takes us back to verse 12 that talks about love's perfected. It starts with God, comes to us, and then we give it to others. So it's perfected. That kind of love. Right? So in verse 18, so there's no fear in love.

Not just general love. Because if it meant love that God gives to us, can I receive God's love and still fear? Yeah, I do it all the time.

Right? So it doesn't mean that. That kind of love. Just the love. Now, it helps a lot. But what gives me confidence and what casts out fear is not just that I've received that love and I return it to him, but now I love others.

I sacrifice. I sacrifice. I give up my life for others. I give up my pain for others.

I give up my life for others. I give up my life for others. What others have caused me, I carry it for them. My Jesus, love forgives. Love bears.

[28 : 39] Love pays the price. So when I'm forgiving someone else, I'm paying the price for that. In other words, I'm taking the wound that they've given me and I'm not requiring them to pay it back.

Or extract it from them. It's that cost. It's that cost. So he says love expels fear.

This kind of love expels fear. Fear of punishment. And particularly in this kind of time, he's talking about punishment as the day of judgment. Right? Love sets me free from the day of judgment.

Because that love, like the test, it's proving that I have eternal life. It's proving God is abiding in me. It's proving that I'm the real deal. That I show this kind of love.

Okay? So I don't have fear. Because I know I'm good. I know I'll be okay. I know there's no more condemnation. So I don't fear. But I think it goes deeper than that.

[29 : 49] Love sets me free. So love sets me free. So God's love for us set us free. Did it not? God's love for us paid the price.

Set us free. He set captive free. He took the debt away. When I love like God loves, it sets me free from the fear of eternal punishment.

And I believe it sets us free from other fears. Because when I love, it's not about me. When I love, it's about you.

When I love, it's about others. I let go of me. Hang with me.

Because I'm going to try to explain this. I don't fear loss. Remember how Paul talked about all his losses. Right? I came to Christ.

[30 : 53] I lost my standing. I lost my, you know, I lost all these things. He lost his reputation, all this stuff. Remember what he said about that?

I consider it gain. I consider it gain. Everything I've lost. See, because he's got to the end. He has nothing left to lose.

Except his life. And if he loses his life, what does he say? More gain. So there's nothing left to lose anymore. If I'm losing, if I'm willing to lose everything for Christ, I don't have anything to be afraid of.

Really. Does that make sense? Because it's not about me. When it's about me, then I'm afraid. It's about me, then I'm afraid. Right?

Because, ow, that'll hurt. Ooh, I don't want to go there. I'm not climbing that ladder. I'm not getting up and speaking in front of people.

[32 : 03] Okay, think of this. So in Matthew 25, Matthew describes Jesus' description of the end. Remember Jesus said, in the end, right, the sun will return on the clouds of glory.

He will sit on his glorious throne. And he will separate the nations. Remember this? He will separate the nations as a shepherd separates sheep from goats.

Remember? He's describing the end, the final judgment. And what's the basis upon which he makes that decision? Who's the sheep and who's the goats? Right? So he describes, when I was hungry, you fed me.

When I was thirsty, you gave me a drink. When I was in prison, you visited me. When I was naked, you clothed me. Etc. Etc. Etc. Etc. Right? And the disciples say, Lord, when did we see you do that?

When did we clothe you? When did we feed you? When were you naked? When did we? And he says, when you did it, what? To the least of these. To the least of these who? Brother. My brother.

[33 : 04] When you did it to the least of these, my brothers. My family. You did it to me. That's the basis of judgment.

When you've shown love to my brothers. Your sheep. You're my followers. You did it to other sheep.

And that's the reverse for the goats, right? You didn't. You saw me naked and you didn't feed me. You saw me hungry. You didn't feed me. Etc. Etc. Etc. When did we see you do that? When did we not do that?

When you didn't do it to the least of these, my brothers. You didn't do it to my disciples. See, judgment's based on how do we display love. Of course it's about do I believe in Jesus?

John says that's one of the marks. It's about walking in the light. But Jesus talks about the final separation as having to do with how do I treat Jesus' people?

[34 : 04] How do I treat the church? It's not about just me and Jesus. Me and Jesus is about his church.

Right? That's how important this is. So how we live determines our fears or our confidence.

So how do we live? What do I live for? What is life about for me? I've got everything in little boxes. We are fearful people, right?

So we set up boundaries for ourselves because we're afraid to cross. Some of those boundaries are very important for us to have. Right? Because they keep us healthy. They keep us in the right road. Those kind of things.

But some boundaries we set up because that's as far as I'll go. And God says, oh, I go farther than that.

[35 : 07] So God sets the boundaries. God defines the terms. We want to define our own terms. We want to set our own boundaries because that's where we're comfortable. See, and John's pushing us.

So how we live determines our fears or our confidence. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 8, 12. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. Right? So if you live for yourself, if you live according to the flesh, if you just do what you want to do, you're going to die. But if you live by the spirit and you put to death the deeds of the body, those natural, those things God defines as crossing the boundary, you will live.

You will really live. See, how does following God have to do with fear?

We didn't receive when Jesus came and when he gave you the spirit. He did not give you that spirit that put you back under the law again. And if I keep the law, then I've got to be perfect and keep the law, then, you know, I don't have to fear death.

[36 : 30] He did not put you back into the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. But you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

And if children, then heirs, there's a promise later, heirs of God, of fellow heirs with Christ, provided by the way we suffer with him, in order that we may be glorified with him.

For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. How we live determines our fears and our confidence.

If I live according to the flesh, I will have fear. And I will die. If I live according to the spirit, I will have assurance.

And I will have freedom from fear. What is it that removes the fear?

[37 : 31] It's the spirit of adoption. It's the Holy Spirit who comes to me, who adopts me, not enslaves me. Who leads me and enables me to kill my flesh.

He talks about, we'll be fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him, in order that we might also be glorified with him.

What's he getting at? He's getting at, why am I willing to suffer with him now, so that I might be glorified with him later? Why am I willing to reject Joel's notion of best life now, for the ultimate life later?

Why am I willing to do that? Why am I willing to suffer now? Because it's not about now. And it's not about me. It's about later.

It is about now, but it's not about my best now. It's not about me now. I'm happy to suffer.

[38 : 39] Because right now, what's the hard stuff now? Not even comparable. Not even comparable. It's a temporary, what did he call it? A temporary, uh...

Sufferings of the front, not worth it. Okay. I was thinking of another passage where he talks about the eternal weight of glory. Yeah. It's perspective.

I feel like I'm rambling. Anybody following still? We're going to move on in a moment. There's still hope if I've lost you. So, in other words, if I... Bottom line, if I'm led by the Spirit, I'll deny myself.

I'll take up my cross. The fruit will be the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience. And I live for glory. I live for later. Suffer now, glory later.

Cross now, crown later. We follow the same pattern of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gave up everything. Who had no fear. Because he's ready to lay down everything.

[39 : 42] What's he got to lose? Well, what he's going to lose is what he loses intentionally. A gift. So we... So he can take us.

And so then we can be like him. So God's intention isn't just to love us and save us from our sin, so that then I can go and live according to my flesh. It's just...

It's absurd. He saves me from myself and my selfishness so that I might live like him and for him. And find a joy and a peace beyond what the flesh can ever be.

So... True love for one another. Right? This perfected love. This love that came from God flows through me to others.

This perfected love. This love that reaches its goal. Expels all fear. First of all, judgment. And I think it's more than that.

[40 : 47] Because the second thing he says now in verse 19 to 21 is... You know, it doesn't start with us. It starts with God. And you can't just love God and be okay.

It's about the big line... Big point in verse 21 is... If you're loving God, you're going to love his children. Period. So truly loving our brother proves we truly love God.

That's what I have on my notes here. Our second answer, our second assurance is... That our true, genuine love for one another... Proves that we truly love God.

Because he's going to make this point now... That I think a lot of people in our society have bought into. This lie that a lot of people have bought into.

That I just love God. It's just me and Jesus. I don't need to go to church. I don't need to hang around church people. Because, you know, they're a mess. A bunch of hypocrites. I just need to take care...

[41 : 50] I just need to just be in Jesus. That's my thing. And John's saying... Liar, liar, pants on fire. You can't do that.

If you really knew God, then you say you love Him. If you really knew Him... No. Uh-uh. Uh-uh. Nope. He'd be saying... What are you doing here? Remember Elijah? Elijah's life is threatened by Jezebel.

Right? He'll take on... What? 950 prophets of false... You know... No problem. And one evil woman. He's just trembling.

He's running. So he runs 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Sinai to meet with God. And by the way, what's God say when Elijah gets there? What are you doing here? You're back to work.

But I'm the only one. Dude, you're not the only one. Truly loving our brothers proves we truly love God.

[42 : 56] It's not empty words. So how it starts, verse 19, love's catalyst. It's not us. It doesn't start with us. We love because He first loved us.

The whole reason we ever love is because He first loved us. He initiates it. So why do we love? Why would we ever love so utterly?

Why would we deny ourself and sacrifice? Why would we not fear any... What I will lose for loving someone else?

Why would I lay down my soul for another? The only answer is because God first loved me. And by the way, who am I when God loved me?

I'm God's enemy. I'm undeserving. Unworthy. Still undeserving. Still unworthy, by the way.

[44 : 00] But He chooses to love me who doesn't love Him yet. And who's fighting against Him. Who hates Him in many ways.

Why would He love me? And His love came to the fruition of forgiveness. So how can...

Why do I love? How can I not? If I receive love like that. And then He talks about what if I don't love? What's the contradiction?

Verse 18. Remember, John's always got two sides to things. There's always, you know, light and darkness. He says... Verse 19.

If anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he who does not love God, love his brother, whom he sees, who's visible, cannot love God, whom he has not seen, who's invisible.

[45 : 04] How do you love an invisible God? How do you... Right? It's immeasurably easier to love somebody who's right in front of you. You can see what the need is, and you can meet the need.

But ultimately, he's saying, perfected love is not just a one-way thing.

It's not just God loves me and I love Him. It's not just this. That's not perfect love. That's incomplete. It's not just me and Jesus.

It's not... I can't do that. I can't... I can't say I'm a believer and never love Christians.

Never attend... So how am I going to love Christians by the way? Oh, that's whenever I run into them in the store or whatever. If I don't attend a church, if I'm not committed to the body of Christ, in some local assembly, whether it's a small group at the very least or something where there's a commitment of brotherhood together, how can I prove I love God if I am not demonstrating it with God's children?

[46 : 22] How can I do it? I just love God. I read His Word. Yeah, do you skip a lot of verses? Right? Which parts do you read?

You've got to kind of stay away from Jesus because He talks about that love thing all the time. And then Paul. Paul's got the love chapters. John.

John, you can't read John. Who are you going to read? Habakkuk. I don't know. We haven't gotten there yet. Probably if we go there, it'll be lights out.

That's his point. I mean, this is so strong. If you think your relationship with God is a private thing.

We actually had some folks come who were interested in joining the church. And one of the requirements we have to join the church is to share your testimony.

[47 : 25] Right? And tell us who you are. Tell us your journey. So we can kind of see that you have a credible testimony. And I remember this one person. No, that's between me and God. He said, no, it's not.

He said, no, it's not. He said, no, it's between me and God. It's a private way. Since when? That's just me and God. What verse did you get that from? Because Jesus says, if you don't speak about me in front of anybody else, I'm not going to speak about you in front of the Bible.

He says, you really want to go there? I'm not joining this church. No, you're not. I don't think you're a believer. It's not a private thing.

If you think it's just you and God, you think it's just you and Jesus. In other words, you're setting your own boundaries, right? I'm setting my own definition of who God is and how I relate to Him. That's how I'm comfortable.

You don't know God. You certainly don't know Jesus. I hope there's somebody listening today that hears that.

[48 : 36] I hope it makes a difference. Because, and the reason I'm stressing it is because you're in a very dangerous place. If you're comfortable with that, if you think that's Christianity, if you think that's okay, you are in a very, very dangerous place.

And I hope that God uses this to wake you up from that lie. So finally, he gets to the point, verse 21, right?

So here's the command. Here's the bottom line. Here's what perfect love looks like. It's whoever loves God must love his brother.

So what's the greatest command, right? What's the greatest commandment of all the commandments in the Old Scripture? In fact, what's greater than any of the Ten Commandments that were the covenant? What's the greatest commandment of all?

What is it? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your souls. Souls in here, right? Splatina.

[49 : 41] Splatina. Nepesh. And all your... All your everything. And the second sliket.

Love your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus, remember Jesus up that one. Jesus up that one. He said, oh, I got a new one for you. You heard it was neighbor. Now it's one another.

And not as yourself, but as I did it. A little higher bar. Now a little higher. Because if I love my neighbor as myself, how do I love myself?

Well, I probably got that wrong. Probably perverted that one. Should I really love it? Here's the real bar.

Here's the real boundary of what it is. Love God with everything I have, right? My heart, my soul, my ma'od.

[50 : 40] And then love my neighbor. And remember Jesus was asked, who's my neighbor? Well, it's just the people I like. And agree with. And live with. And Jesus tells the story.

Yeah, but what about, you know. What about that guy that the priest and the Levite walked the other side of the road to get away from? He's that guy. Right? He's your enemy.

He's your enemy. Anyway. Here's the point. God's intent in loving us is to liberate us from our sinful preoccupation.

God's intent was not just to love us so that we noticed him and love him back and just have this nice little fuzzy warm thing. God's intent was to love me so radically that it changed me.

It freed me from my self-preoccupation. My love of self. My never denying myself.

[51 : 43] Never taking up the cross. My protecting myself. God saved me to liberate me from that. From my utter self-preoccupation. Living for me. Wanting my best now.

He frees me from that so that I can love others. He sets me free to not fear. I'm afraid of loving.

Aren't you? Aren't you afraid to give everything? Aren't you afraid to lose everything Paul lost?

What if we love so radically? That kind of love.

If I'm all in for Jesus. If I really deny myself and really take my cross. and I live for the pain now. Not seeking it by the way.

[52 : 53] I accept and embrace the pain now. And live for later. I'm free. I'm free. What do I got to worry about?

I'm still going to have worries. I'm still going to worry about my daughter. I'm still going to worry about stuff. I'm still going to worry about the future. Of course. Because I'm human. But bottom line.

As I come and renew my mind every day. If I'm just. Whatever you want Lord. I lay down my life. I'm free.

I'm free. No fear. Fearless love. So was this a big deal to Jesus? Well let me just remind you a couple of his words in the upper room.

And John. John records. More than anybody else. Of the gospels. What Jesus spoke on that last night. In fact. John has. Chapter 13.

[53 : 50] 14. 15. 16. 17. So five chapters. John devotes five chapters to that one evening. Okay. Five chapters. So it's kind of a big deal to John.

His last words were. Pretty important. Talked about the Holy Spirit a lot. Talked about love a lot too. This is where John gets all this stuff. Right. So it starts in John 13.

34. After he's washed their feet. Right. He's washed their feet. And he said. I'm your master. I do this. You. You ought to do it. To one another. And then he says.

A new commandment I give to you. That you love one another. Just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another. By this. By your love for one another.

All people will know. That you are my disciples. When you love one another. It will prove you're genuine. John 14.

[54 : 45] 15. If you love me. You will keep my commandments. By the way. How did he say that? If you love me. Right. You'll keep my commandments.

Right. Is it kind of a threat? No. It's just. If you love me. If you love me. You'll keep my commandments.

That's right. He's not saying it. As a threat. He's. He's saying it as a reality. If you love me. Keep my commandments. No problem. Because you love me. Whoever has my commandments.

And keeps them. He's the one who loves me. And he who loves me. Will be loved by my father. And I will love him. And we will manifest ourselves. To him. Ooh. There's more to come. John 14.

21. Whoever has my commandments. And keeps them. He's the one that loves me. And he who loves me. And he who loves me. Will be loved by my father. And I will love him. And manifest myself. To him. Jesus is repeating himself.

[55 : 43] Why? Because he wants you to get it. And it's not just about the loving. It's about. We're going to come. We're going to come. You love. Like we love. We're going to come. Ho, ho, ho.

I will. He who loves me. We love by my father. And I will love him. And we will manifest myself to him. Judas, not Ascariot. Which apparently was important to differentiate.

Which Judas was talking about. Judas, not Ascariot. Said to him. Lord. How is it that you will manifest yourself to us. And not to the world. How is it that you're doing something special for us. And not to the world.

Jesus said. Repeat on him. Jesus said to him. If anyone loves me. He will keep my word. And my father will love him. And we will come to him.

And we will make our home with him. Got it yet? Judas. Anyone who loves me. Keeps my word. Third time now. I will come.

[56 : 43] Father will come. We will manifest ourselves. To you. Make ourselves. Real to you. And we will make our home with you. How are you going to manifest yourself to us.

And not to the world. Okay. Do I need to say it again? Making fun. Jesus is patient with Judas. Because. Judas is probably further ahead down the road than I am.

So. So. So he's just like. I can't. I can't get it. I'm still thinking. I'm still thinking literal. So. So Jesus patiently refers it again.

If you love me. Keep my commandments. If you keep my commandments. Oh boy. My father's going to come. I'm going to come. We're going to show ourselves to you. And we're going to make our home with you. And by the way.

Whoever does not love me. Does not keep my words. Whoever does not love me. Does not keep my words. Which kind of is about.

[57 : 45] I love Jesus. But I don't do what he says. This is where John gets the whole liar and liar. And he's on fire. Then. Jesus. And by the way.

Jesus said. In the word that I. That you hear. Is not mine. But my father's who sent me. This isn't my opinion. This is the father. This is what the father told me to tell you. So if you reject my word. You reject your father's word.

Final verse. John 15. 12. 14. Again. Jesus said. Right. How many times has he done this? In the upper room. Same evening. This is my commandment. That you love one another.

Just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this. Than you. Than someone lay down his life. His soul. For his friends. And you're my friends. If you do what I command you.

These things I command you. So that you will love one another. How important is that to Jesus? Right. And it's not just.

[58 : 43] It's not this. You better love. Or you don't love me. If you don't keep my commandments. It's. If you love me. Come in. Come in. It won't be the scary secret.

If you love me. You'll want to. It's what John's going to say. In the next chapter. His commandments are no longer burdensome. I want to do them. He's changed my heart. I want to do that. And I'm going to love like he loves.

That's kind of scary. Okay. But I'm abiding. I'm going to lay my life down. I'm going to be free of this fear. I'm really afraid to lay down my life like that.

I understand. Talk to Jesus about it. He's been there. Right. He was afraid too. Wasn't he? I mean momentarily.

I don't know if he was. He wasn't curpled by fear. But in the garden. He's still praying. Hey. Can I get out of this? Right. I mean three times. Let this cup pass.

[59 : 49] This is too hard. And if he does that without a sin danger. Right. He gets how hard it is for us.

He gets it. So don't beat yourself up. But learn to take the next step. And I can't do it if I'm not abiding.

I want abiding in God. Abides in love. That's the power. That's the secret. So this is the last night.

With his disciples. Jesus teaches what matters most. He kind of narrows down all his teaching. To focus on these 12 men. 11 men. Because he's leaving after this.

And it's everything. He talks about this love. Is what identifies his true followers. And that. Those who. Truly do love Jesus.

[60 : 54] Will do. What he says. Every word. Even the ones that are hardened. Hard.

Do you have a fear that's crippling you? If you're human. Do you? Do you have a fear that's crippling you?

Maybe it's the fear of the end. I imagine there's some here that are afraid of the end. Am I a genuine believer? Right. I'm not sure. I don't have that confidence.

Is. Maybe. More like. Like me. Do you have a fear that you're. That you're just not good enough? Or that you don't measure up?

You fear that you're too sinful. And too corrupt. And you're a Christian. You fear that?

[61 : 57] I got good news. Jesus came for people like you. And me. He didn't come for the people that had it all together. He came for the people that are a mess.

Came for the people that already recognize we're so sinful. I'm so undeserving. I'm so unworthy. That's who he came for. He did not come for the healthy.

He came for the sick. He did not come for the righteous. He came for the sinner. The broken. The unworthy. The unable. And he came.

He came out of love. Came from the father's love. He came in his own love. He came to set me free from my crippling fear. And he still lives to keep setting me free from my crippling fears.

He stands in heaven. The right hand of the father. And he still hears my prayers. He still hears my prayers. But. He'll always hear my prayers.

[63 : 02] Because I pray in his name. And he gives me. Progressively.

Gives me. The desire to live for. For a greater glory. Than what's here today. He keeps. Transforming my heart.

To break from. Sin's preoccupation. Self preoccupation. To. Christ's preoccupation. The later glory. And. Not the easy escape. Yeah. We often choose the easy quick escape.

Now. Which is. Usually something sinful. Right. To escape. What we fear. I don't want to think about. Something. Right.

I don't want to deal with something. Something. And. And. And I pray.

[64 : 01] That he just continues. Give me a little more. More over there. Just. To let that go. And. Grab on to that. Life that you promised. That will give me.

Real joy. Not temporary. And real peace. And. That incredible. Sacrifice.

To love others. Like Jesus loved me. Not just. Never mind. That's enough. Shut up. Okay. Let's pray. Father.

We thank you for your word. We thank you for John. Oh. I've so grown to appreciate. John.

I've always held. Paul. In such high regard. And still do of course. But. John. Wow.

[65 : 01] Your servant Lord. Your apostle. Your faithful. Martyr. Help us to hear his words. Because. We can clearly recognize.

The same words that Jesus spoke. John's just fleshing it out for us. We thank you for that. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.