

The author inserts personal comments when quoting Scripture which are indicated by square brackets. All biblical references are quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Please turn to 1 John 4 beginning at verse 7. We are reading down to John 5:5 on the love of God. This is a subject so vast, it is as the songwriter penned the words, “Could we with ink the ocean fill—were every man a scribe by trade, it would be impossible to write the love of God above (from the Hymn, *The Love of God*, F.M. Lehman, paraphrased). It is so boundless. It is so measureless. His love has no limit. His grace has no measure. His power has no boundaries known to man. So when we attempt to discuss the love of God, we are on a subject that is just vast and immense and we can only hit the highlights. There are some wonderful words in 1 John 4 to direct us.

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

12 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.

13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

20 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

## CHAPTER 5

1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith.

5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Will you please join me in prayer?

Father, I would ask in these few moments together that You would show us the marvel of Your love. The world craves it, desires it, longs for it. God help us to see where it comes from and how we can experience it. Thank You, Lord, for Your wonderful love for us. In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen.

Perhaps the greatest evangelist from the past, outside of the current ones that are living, is Dwight L. Moody—that is in terms of American history. Dwight L. Moody was born in 1837, and he was born again in 1854 at the age of seventeen, through the instrumentality of a man named Edward Kimball. He was in business until age twenty-three and he entered the ministry, really, as a lay preacher. He was not well educated and yet he established schools that still stand to this day. He was successful, to a point, in his early years of ministry which began about 1860. And as you can well imagine from hearing the date, you know the turbulent times that were going on in America. This was during the Civil War.

Moody made a missions trip in 1867 to England when he was thirty-seven years old. He met a man named Henry Morehouse. Morehouse wanted to preach for Moody, but Moody kept putting him off. One day he invited himself, literally, saying that he was going to be in Chicago. Morehouse came and the year was 1867. Morehouse preached on John 3:16 while Moody was gone. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Moody came back from a trip and asked what Morehouse was preaching about. The congregants said, “John 3:16.” Moody thought it was rather elementary and he said, “Well what is he going to preach on next?”

They said, “John 3:16.”

“Well, is it a two-part message?”

“No. He said he is going to preach on John 3:16 until we learn it.”

Morehouse continued for weeks on John 3:16. I am now reading the words of Dwight L. Moody, who sat there and listened to this man who preached on John 3:16.

I never knew, up to that time, that God loved me so much. This heart of mine began to thaw out. I could not keep back the tears. I just drank it in. I tell you there is one thing that draws above everything else in the world and that is love. I took up that word love and I do not know how many weeks I spent in studying the passages in which it occurs, till at last I could not help loving people. I had been feeding on love so long that I was anxious to do everybody good I came in contact with. I got full of it. It ran out my fingers. You take up the subject of love in the Bible, you will get so full of it that all you have to do is open your lips and a flood of the love of God flows out. The churches would soon be filled if outsiders could find that people in them loved them when they came. This love draws sinners. We must win them to us first. Then we can win them to Christ. We must get people to love us and then turn them over to Christ. If you haven't got love in your heart, (Moody said), you should throw your hope to the four winds and go and get a better one. There is nothing greater than the love of God.”

Well, history records what happened from that moment on, as Moody described what his baptism of love was all about. His evangelistic endeavors were so incredible that over a million people came to know the Lord through the preaching of D. L. Moody, long before television and radio. And God used him mightily and people were overwhelmed with the simplicity of the man and the love of the man.

How we need the love of God! But I am asking today, “What is the love of God?” And then I want to ask, “What is required for us to experience it?” People want love. It is so obvious. There is a great need for love among married people today. Most of those who are not married are not too anxious to get married in light of what they have seen. Instead of love dominating, there has been a hostility and anger. As one sociologist says of the American home, “It is filled with hostility and anger.”

Families need love. Parents need to love their children as never before. There are so many children that are rejected. Older people need love. Go on one little trip to a convalescent hospital, that will tell you about love and the need for love.

I remember well the prison psychologist at a federal prison who told me that there was not a single man on death row who had known the love of both father and mother. We need to wake up to something. Our world is in desperate need of love. So they are trying all kinds of things. They have been heavy into the physical and found it pretty empty. That type of love is filled with many, many consequences which they never anticipated or dreamed of.

Some of you reading this right now wonder if anybody really loves and cares about you at all. It is easy to get in that mode; after all, we do live in a narcissistic culture that has said we are important. Please tell me how. Please tell me why. Show me that I am loved. We have been dominated by feelings of self-importance and self-esteem and self-worth. And all of it, I suppose has its place. But folks, we have missed the One who loves us more than anyone has ever loved us and that is God Almighty. God loves you. God *is* love.

Let me tell you about the love of God. I just want to give you five simple statements from 1 John to describe and answer the question: what is the love of God? According to the Bible it is a divine resource that human beings need but are not born with. Let me repeat it again. What is God's love? It is a divine resource that human beings need, but they are not born with it.

How many people in our world think that by just a little set of obligations or duties, or a little list of things to do, that somehow we can all of a sudden love with God's love. Yet the Bible tells us that "love is of God," (1 John 4:7). Love is of God. The Greek is more powerful. The preposition "out of" is dealing with the source. The source of the love that we desperately need is out of the heart of God. It does not come from anywhere else. It is not found anywhere else. The love that we really need, the only kind of love that truly satisfies and brings meaning and purpose and hope and strength and courage to our hearts, comes from God and God alone. It is a divine resource. It is out of God.

God is not merely love. When it says, "God is love" though, don't weaken that by saying that "it is merely love." God is not a force, although He is very forceful. God is not simply an influence in the world giving us vibes and fuzzies towards each other. No, God is more than that. God is a real person, as real as you are. But the truth is that His whole character, His nature, His attributes and all that He is—I like to say—is "baptized or bathed with love." He never operates without love. He is love. Everything that love is or should be, that is what God is. It is a divine resource.

And human beings need it desperately. We all want it and we search for it. We try to get it in several ways; yet we are not born with it, according to the Bible. It comes from the heart of God Himself.

Number two. I learn in this passage about the love of God that it is not only a divine resource, but it is a needed relationship which believers must have with each other. There is not one thing that should characterize us better, as believers in Jesus Christ, than our love for one another.

Please look again at verse 7. The passage begins, “Beloved ones.” You are loved of God. “Beloved, let us love one another.” I read down in verse 11, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought”—the Greek is a particular verb there for “obligation and duty” and it is in what we call the present tense. There is a continual obligation that we have because of God’s love for us: to love one another. It is not a creative alternative. Some of us have chosen to put people on our list that are like us, and those that we like, into the love category. People that we do not like and that are not like us are in the category where we say, “We will pray for you.” Amen? Do you understand me? I mean, we always naturally find in our hearts a tendency to love those that we like, or who love us and respond to it. But those in the category who are not like us, we are not able to say, with good Christian conscience, “Well, they don’t like me, so how can you expect me to like them?” No, love is an obligation. The Bible says we continue to have this obligation to love one another. That is not a creative suggestion for any of us. That is a command from God Almighty. We are to love one another.

In our generation, because it is so feeling oriented, you get this response: “Well, I can’t just make it up. I don’t feel like it.” “Hey, I don’t feel like getting up in the morning, but I have to.” Do you understand? A lot of us are operating on the basis of whether we feel it or not. God’s love comes from God. And though it creates wonderful feelings in our heart, it is in obedience to what God says. We are not having a suggestion here. We are commanded by God; therefore, to not obey is clear disobedience.

Turn please to 1 John 4:20. If someone says, “I love God”—let’s suppose you are a believer this morning—you may say, “Well I love God.” After all, it is dangerous not to say that. Amen? You have to say it, “I love God.” But if you hate your brother, the Bible says, you are a liar. Nobody likes to be called a liar. “He who does not love his brother [as a habit of life] whom he has seen, then how can he love God whom he has not seen?”

You know, the writings of John are what I call simple and profound at the same time. I remember the first time I was in Greek class, the very first semester. They were teaching us about Greek and I remember the first passage we ever could experiment in, in that first semester, was in 1 John. The reason is that it is probably the simplest Greek you can read in the New Testament. It contains very simple words.

As I was preparing this message, in going over the passage again, I could almost quote it verbatim, not for any other reason, except we translated this over and over again in Greek class. I taught Greek for many years. I made students translate 1 John. Well, it is easy Greek; but the problem is that this easy Greek, which also becomes very easy to read in English, is also profound. It is very profound.

The theologian of the early church was not the apostle Paul. If you read church history, you will find out that it was John. He was the only one who outlived the others. He was the one to whom Jesus entrusted the care of His mother after His death. John was the only one who died a natural death. It was John who lived clear through the first century and it was John, who was exiled on the island of Patmos by Domitian, who ruled from 81 to 96,

AD. John lived into the nineties because he was released after that exile. He actually died at the church of Ephesus. His birthplace and Mary's are in the city of Ephesus. They called John the theologian.

His writings are heavy duty stuff, but never difficult to understand at first. It is like you've got to go into it. And what John says is so simple to hear. If you do not love your brother whom you see, then how can you love God whom you do not see? Rather simple statement, but the more you think about it, the deeper it sounds.

When I say in my heart, "God, I love You," maybe I am saying it because I want to make sure I am on my way to heaven. Maybe I want to make sure that nothing serious happens to me. But do I really love God? And God's Word says in such powerful and blunt and simple language, "Well, I'll tell you David. Do you love your brothers and sisters in the Lord? And if there is somebody that you do not love, then how in the world, if that's a person you see in your life, how can you love God whom you do not see?" Something is wrong.

Please look at 1 John 5:1. John takes it deeper when he said, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him" You say you love Jesus Christ? Do you love Him who is begot [because we're born of God] then you will also love him who is begotten of Him. How in the world can you say that there is somebody that you do not love who is a Christian?

I was talking with a believer down South several years ago when I was first exposed to the problem of racism. I tell you, I was a city kid from California, a beach bum who knew nothing about racism. Hey, I grew up with blacks, played with blacks and the whole thing—talking to blacks and staying at their homes. They were in my home too, so I did not understand racism. I went down South and all of a sudden I saw a problem. And I am not here to simplify a major problem, but I am here to tell you that God is not into skin color, folks. There is something wrong. And I went down South and I found people who said they loved God but they could not love somebody who had a different skin color. I did not understand that. Then as I got older and began to travel, I discovered people all over the world who supposedly love God, but because of cultural differences or language differences or whatever, all of a sudden instead of loving, they are hating. Something is wrong, God says. Something is wrong.

And in our own little world we have developed comfort zones of people who we like to hang around with and we like to talk to. It is kind of in our little system and we do not like those who are outside of the system. My dear friends, how can you say you love God and do not love somebody who is born of Him? This is the needed relationship which believers must have with each other.

Turn back to the Gospel of John, please, to chapter 13. What is the love of God? It is a divine resource that human beings need but we are not born with. And it is also a needed relationship which believers must have with each other. And I guess that is where the rub

is. It is frustrating. It is almost as though our relationships with each other show how much we need the Lord. Amen?

Is there somebody who comes to your mind by the sheer mention of this subject? Is there someone you do not like? Make that plural—are there people who come to your mind? You know, we all have those people, those little thorns in the flesh. When we think of people who we do not like, it is as though at that moment, we discover whether or not we know anything about the love of God. It is easy to love people who like you. But if there is somebody that rubs you the wrong way and you know they are Christians, you have no other excuse. They are born of God and you are supposed to love them. And you are finding out whether or not you really love when you are faced with that situation.

I read in John 13:34-35—this is the same writer who wrote 1 John—“A new commandment I give you, that you love one another.” It is not new from the standpoint of time, but it is fresh, a fresh commandment. This is because it was in the Old Testament where the Ten Commandments were given. “As I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another.”

Look at John 15:12-17

12 This is My commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends. For all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

16 You did not choose Me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give it you.

17 These things I command you that you love one another.

Romans 13:8 says, “Owe no man anything except to love one another.” We are under a divine responsibility, an obligation, accountability to God, to love each other.

I was watching the unfolding of this with a couple kids on a school playground several years ago. And the teacher had just discussed the whole subject of loving one another. And as they went out to recess, the two kids were really arguing and fighting over the use of a tetherball. And the school, this Christian school was on the property of the church where I was pastoring. I happened to be standing there watching it and I love what this little kid said: “I love you, but I just don't like you!” And it seemed to me that that kind of summarizes what a lot of us want to feel.

“I love you. Okay God, I understand. I love you. I don’t like you though.” You know. Wait a minute! That is like telling your wife, “You know, I really love you honey. I just don’t like being with you.” What? Come on. Something is wrong and I think we need to learn, by our relationships with each other, that this love that comes from God can only be in our hearts through the Lord. That is why a lot of these conflicts happen, because it proves to us our need of the Lord. It helps us to see it.

Go back to 1 John again. What is the love of God? It is a divine resource that human beings need but are not born with. It is a needed relationship which believers must have with each other. But it is also a divine response to human depravity and need. And I like this. This probably helps me to understand it more than anything else. What is the love of God? It is a divine response to human depravity and need. Look at 1 John 4:9-10 again, in the light of this. What beautiful words of encouragement. “In this, the love of God was manifest.” You may say, “Show me the love of God.” Okay.

9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.  
10 In this is love, [here’s the explanation] not that we loved God, but that He loved [past tense, moment of time] us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

What is the love of God? It is a divine response to human depravity and need. He came to be a propitiation for our sins.

Turn back to John 2 and look at verses 1 and 2. There perhaps is no point about the love of God that explains it any more to us than that one truth that it is a divine response to human depravity and need. In 1 John 2:1 it says,

1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.  
2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Now what is propitiation? It could also be translated mercy seat. It is a Greek word that would translate that item of the furniture in the temple and tabernacle, which originally appeared in Hebrew. It is a Greek word that is used for that to describe an actual place and a setting. It is the holy of holies in the temple, the tabernacle. A veil, called the “second veil,” is in front of it. Only the high priest can go behind the veil once a year. Whenever the tabernacle was even set up, there was a group of priests who would carry that veil and they would go backwards. They could not even look into it. The high priest

goes in once a year. Inside of that holy of holies is the Ark of the Covenant, a box overlaid with gold. There were two cherubim, angels in gold, looking down on the ark. Now the ark has a lid of gold. It is not an actual chair. When it says “mercy seat,” it’s a lid. And the angels are looking down on it. Once a year the high priest put blood there to emphasize propitiation.

Now folks, there is a difference between propitiation and redemption. If you are Jewish you understand it. If you are Gentile you struggle with it a little bit more. Propitiation means to satisfy the wrath of God. These angels, made out of solid gold on the lid of the ark, remind the children of Israel of the Passover. And when they left Egypt they had to put blood on the top of the door and on the side post. And when the death angel passed over the home, if he saw the blood he would pass over. If there was no blood there, then the first born son would die in that home. “When I see the blood I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13). The Passover season represents propitiation.

Then on the Day of Atonement the high priest goes in once a year and puts the blood there. The angels are like angels of judgment. And because the blood is there, God’s wrath is appeased or satisfied.

Now folks, according to the Bible, propitiation is not only for our sins—we who are believers—but also for the whole world. If you ask me, did Jesus Christ die for the whole world? Yes, if you mean propitiation. Was His death sufficient to satisfy all the righteous wrath of God against sin? Yes. The Bible teaches that all the wrath of God was put on Jesus Christ when He died for our sins. That is propitiation. Does that mean that the unbeliever who winds up in hell has already had his sins propitiated? The answer is yes. That is why it is such a tragedy to reject the love of God. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for sins” (1 John 4:10). How interesting!

Now when it says “for our sins,” it uses a Greek preposition, not only in 1 John 4, but also in chapter two. The word “for” is a Greek preposition called *huper*, which means “in the behalf of.” And we would say in English a word like “sufficiency.” Stay with me. I know this sounds like, you know, where are we going here? Hang in there because fortunately, I know.

I want you to take your Bible and put your finger in two passages to compare them, Matthew 20:28 and 1 Timothy 2:5-6. And I want to show you something about God’s love that maybe you have not seen as it applies to both the unbeliever and the believer. The Bible says, “In this is love, not that we love God” and then we reap the benefits. That is not the point. The point is that God loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And as 1 John 2:2 says, it is not just for the sins of the believer, but for the whole world—even the unbeliever. He is the Savior of the world, even if they do not respond to Him.

Now I told you there was a difference between propitiation and redemption. Before we look at these two words, I want to explain something. When a Jew thinks of the Day of

Atonement, he thinks of the nation. The whole nation of Israel is being dealt with and God's wrath needs to be satisfied. Now if the high priest does that for the nation, does that mean that every single Jewish person would go to heaven? No. Does that mean that every Jewish person would be saved or redeemed? No, only propitiated. If an individual Jew sins during the course of the year and does not bring an individual sacrifice for his sin, the Bible says he is cut off forever. That is called sinning willfully, which is mentioned in Hebrews 10.

If we sin willfully, after we have a knowledge of the truth that the only way God will save us is through the sacrifice of His Son—if we sin willfully, the Bible says, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain anticipation of the fiery judgment of God. Every Jew understands that. He has to bring an individual sacrifice for his sin all during the year. Thousands of animals are killed, but once a year the high priest takes the blood of an animal and makes an atonement, a covering, for the sins of the whole nation. But that does not mean they are saved.

Listen folks because Jesus died on a cross for the whole world does not mean that everybody is going to be saved. Propitiation deals with satisfying God's wrath against sin. And Jesus' death was sufficient for that; but redemption, which means you are bought out from the slave market of sin, death and hell and set free—redemption applies only to those who believe. Did Christ die for only the believers? Yes, in the sense of redemption, but He also died for believers and unbelievers in the sense of propitiation. Is everybody with me?

People often ask me questions like: Do you believe in limited atonement. Yes, but I also believe in unlimited atonement. I always have something for everybody. Know what I mean?

You may say, "I believe in unlimited atonement."

"Well, I do too. God bless you."

And someone else may say, "I believe in limited atonement."

"Well, I do too. God bless you."

"You can't believe both."

"Yes, you can, if you know your Bible." Jesus died as a propitiation for the sins of the entire world, but redemption only refers to those who believe.

Now I want to show you from Matthew 20:28, Jesus says, "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom" [What does it say?] "for many." It says, "a ransom for many."

Now turn to 1 Timothy 2:5-6, while keeping your finger in Matthew 20.

5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and  
men, the Man Christ Jesus,  
6 who gave Himself a ransom [what?] for all.

Now wait a minute! Matthew 20:28 says, “a ransom for many.” 1 Timothy 2:6 says, “a ransom for all.” Which is it, for all or for many? The little preposition “for” is different in the Greek in those two verses. In Matthew 20:28 it is the word *anti*, which means “in the stead of.” We would say “substitution.” In 1 Timothy 2:6, it is a preposition *huper*, meaning “in the behalf of.” We would say “sufficiency.” Watch this carefully. His ransom, His payment for our sin, is substitutionary payment for the many who believe in Him and it is only for them. But it is sufficient as a ransom for all, whether they believe or they do not.

When we read in 1 John 4 that this is the love of God, here is the way to understand that: when God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, it is not “in the stead of” them. It is “in the behalf of them.” The issue is sufficiency. Was His coming into the world a sufficient demonstration of God’s love for even those who would never believe in Him? The answer is absolutely, yes.

Now I understand something about God’s love. See, you may be listening to this and not buying a thing here. You have never really come to know Him as Savior. You have never been born again. You are just listening and you may think, “I don’t believe that.” I just want you to know He still loves you anyway. And that helps me to understand love. Love is a divine response to human depravity and need. God loves you even when you do not care about Him.

Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” You cared nothing about Him; He still loves you. You may say, “I don’t want anything to do with this.” I see kids that way, rebelling against the values of their parents and walking away from the things they might have learned. And they say, “I don’t want all that stuff. I got more friends out here who don’t believe that.” Hey listen, you just keep roaming around doing your thing. I just want you to know, God loves you. God loves you. He is never going to stop, even when you are rebellious. Even when you want to do your own thing and you want to go your own way, God loves you. He cannot do anything else because God is love. That is what He is.

I tell you I have never seen a more clear demonstration of what love is than the divine response to human depravity and need. When we do not care about Him, when we are filled with sinful junk in our lives, He still loves us. The greatest thing a sinner can hear is that God loves him. God loves you. I tell you there are some people you have to beat over the head to get them to understand that they are sinners. You know what I mean? They feel they are so good that they deserve heaven. They are looking forward to giving a personal testimony when they get there about how wonderful they are. But listen, God saves sinners. And the greatest thing a man who knows he is a sinner can hear, is that God loves him even though He knows how rotten that person is. Nothing is so strong in building my self-esteem or yours than the fact that God loves me and He knows what I am like. Isn’t that wonderful? God loves you right where you are. You may say, “You don’t know how I’ve blown it.” God loves you, whether you have sinned a thousand times or fifty. God loves you. Why are you trying to run away from the One who loves

you more than anybody else could ever love you in your life? Where do you think you are going? He loves you.

Now turn back to 1 John 4, please. What is the love of God? It is a divine resource that human beings need but are not born with. It is a needed relationship which believers must have with each other. Number three, it is a divine response to human depravity and need. And in that we see the love of God more than any other point. Number four, the love of God is also a divine reassurance that eliminates fear. It is a divine reassurance that eliminates fear.

Look at 1 John 4:17. “Love has been perfected [It has come to a mature point among us] in this, that we may have boldness, [confidence] in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” By the way, that word “He” in Greek is a demonstrative pronoun. And it is John’s favorite title for Jesus. “You know who I am talking about—that One. As that One is, so are we in this world.”

We are in Christ, amen? His love for us takes away all fear. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). Let me tell you that a performance-oriented Christianity always fears.

The other day, up in Canada, I was talking with a pastor who, I think, leans towards performance orientation. At least he was constantly harping on how we need to be careful. “We need to be careful,” he said.

So I was listening to him. You know, and he said that there are no guarantees. I did not quite understand what he was talking about.

And I said, “Let me clear this up for a moment. Are we talking about heaven, or what?”

He said, “That’s a simplistic answer.”

I said, “I know, but I need it right now. What are we talking about?”

“Well,” he said, “we have no guarantee of heaven.”

“Man, I don’t see it that way.”

“We need to be careful.”

“We need to be careful?” I said, “I believe in walking with the Lord and having a lifestyle that pleases Him. But I am not sure you and I are on the same wavelength.” I said, “I just want to ask you, do you believe there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ?”

He didn’t answer me. He just looked stern.

I said, “Well let me give you another one. The Bible says that ‘nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’”

He said, “You’re a Calvinist aren’t you?”

“Calvinist, Arminian? I think maybe a *Calminian* would be better. I don’t know. I just want to believe the Bible.”

Are you insecure? Then you are not looking to the love of God, you are looking to yourself. You are not looking to the cross of Jesus Christ; you are trusting your own performance. I thank God He died and paid for all my sins. Amen? I could not pay for

one of them! There is nothing I can do to handle them. Only He can handle them. You talk about security! There is no fear in that love, it is completely cast out. And let me tell you that fear involves torment. You can live on the edge and be scared to death that you are going to make one false move and that God will hit you with a proverbial bat from heaven and you will never see heaven!

I watched a television show and I was so angry, I did not know whether to destroy the TV or call the station or what. It was a Christian television program. And I watched a guy discuss how, if you are not walking with the Lord when Jesus comes again, “You aren’t going,” he said. He described it. He even used the blackboard and put up more nonsense on the blackboard.

My dear friends, security is resting in the Lord’s love for you. And Paul said,

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38)

I can go to sleep at night with real peace in my heart. Perfect love casts out fear. Fear has torment.

And number five, turn to 1 John 5. What is the love of God? It is also a personal resolve to keep the commandments of Jesus Christ. Talk about balance. We just really blasted into human performance and now we are back on it again. I read in 1 John 5:2—

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. [Now here’s a definition.]

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

We have already learned that it is tough to say that you love God if you cannot love the guy that you see. We are trying to love this invisible One who loves us and promises to take us to heaven. Well, how do we know when we do love Him? If He is invisible and we cannot see Him, we cannot relate to Him like we do people (person to person), then how in the world...? God’s answer is to keep His commandments.

Turn to the gospel of John, chapter 14. Now a lot of you are going to be frustrated with this because some of us approach this with a legalistic mind. “Do what I say,” parents tell their kids. “Just do it.” It is interesting, isn’t it, how we grow up thinking about how there are conditions for love. Every true child of God who really is in love with the Lord, has no hassle on this. The Bible says His commandments are not burdensome. And every child of God who tells me this is a hassle, is revealing that he is a little short on loving

God. What is the love of God? If you say you love God—great! Do what He says. It is simple. Or is it? Are you with me?

8 “If you love Me [Do what? What did Jesus say?] keep My commandments. [If you love Him then do what He says.]

9 As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

11 These things I have spoken to you.

So you may be unhappy the rest of your life and have a sour face like you were eating pickles—wait—that is not what it says. It says, “My joy will be in you.” Why are people not filled with joy? Why are they so unhappy? It is because they are not loving God in the sense of keeping His commandments. They are not doing what He says. If you did what He said, you would be happier. So why are you trying to be unhappy by not doing what He says? Also by the fact that you say you love God and you don't do what He says, something is wrong. Do what He says and you will be very happy. You will be filled with joy.

Turn to 1 John 2 again and look at what it says in verses 3-6.

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected [or made mature] in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

What is the love of God? It is a personal resolve to keep the commandments of Jesus Christ. And it is no heavy trip to anybody who loves Him. Never.

The second question I will deal with quickly is, what is required in order to experience the love of God? If I am reading 1 John 4:7 correctly, a spiritual birth is required. A spiritual birth. It says, “Everyone who loves is born of God”—literally, has been born. There is a point at which it happened and it never changes. Are you born again? If I understand my Bible correctly, it is not only a spiritual birth that is caused by God, but it is a personal knowledge of God. Look at 1 John 4:7-8 carefully.

7 Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.  
[Literally continues to know God]  
8 He who does not love does not know God. [He never did  
come to know Him.]

All true believers continue to know about God. It is an experiential knowledge, a spiritual birth, and a personal knowledge. What else is required? Well, according to this passage the presence of the Holy Spirit is required. Look at verse 13.

13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us,  
because He has given us of His Spirit.

Galatians 5:22 says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” Romans 5:5 says, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”

How in the world can I experience the love of God? You need the Holy Spirit. You never get the Holy Spirit until you are born again. And you cannot love anybody with God’s love until the Holy Spirit of God is in your life and beginning to control your life. That is why we have to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What else is required? If I am reading this text carefully—I am just looking at what the Bible says—then I need a personal confession that Jesus is the Son of God. Look at John 15:4, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Look at John 5:5, “Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

The Bible says “he that does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed that Jesus is the Son of God” (John 3:18).

A man born blind one day was trying to figure out who healed him. Jesus eventually found him after he had been interrogated by the Pharisees. And Jesus introduced him to Himself. “Do you know who it is who healed you?” “Tell me who it is, Lord, that I might worship Him.” Jesus introduced him to the fact that He was the Son of God. And he said, “I believe that You are the Son of God.” Is it necessary to believe that? You bet. You will never experience the love of God until you confess that Jesus is the Son of God.

And one other thing. Look at John 5:1. Again, if I am reading my Bible, taking in each statement, then a personal belief that Jesus is the Messiah is necessary. It says that whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, is born of God. I have to believe Jesus is the Messiah.

Look back at 1 John 2:22 please. It says,

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either. He who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

You must believe Jesus is the Messiah.

Flip back to the Gospel of John chapter 4. Is it necessary to believe that Jesus is the Messiah in order to experience the love of God? God's answer is "Yes." In John 4:25, Jesus met a Samaritan woman who had an immoral lifestyle. And I read at verse 25,

25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things."

26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men,

29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did."

40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.

41 And many more believed because of His own word.

42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of [What?] the world."

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Praise God for His love!

Let's close with prayer.

Father, You know how easy it is for us to say the words but not to show it in our life. And there are a lot of us who struggle with the love of God for many reasons. You tell us You love us, no matter what—whatever we do, whoever we are, whatever we say—You love us. And Your love was

demonstrated when Jesus died on a cross for our sins. God, I pray for those right now who are not sure that if they died today they would be in heaven. They are not really sure they have ever been born of the Spirit of God. And life has been frustrating in terms of experiencing love. God help us to see Your wonderful love for us. Now I pray Lord, that those of us who say we know You, may once again understand that Your love needs to be shown, demonstrated one to another. We need to trust Your Holy Spirit to fill us and control us, in order for us to really show the love of God—to experience it. Help us, Lord, to see that. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.