



1 John 4

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Tape #8235
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now to First John chapter four. John closes the third chapter by saying, "And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us" (1 John 3:24). But then he goes on to say in chapter four,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (4:1).

So we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit that He has given to us. But it's important that we try the spirits to see if they be of God. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount warned of false prophets. He said they will "come to you but they are wolves, but they are dressed in sheep's clothing." And He said, "By their fruit ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:15,16). Throughout the New Testament, each of the writers warned of the false prophets that would come. Jesus said, "In the last days, many deceivers would come." And so it's important to try the spirits to see if they are really of God. And what is the test by which we try the spirits?

Hereby we know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God (4:2):

The word Christ is the Greek for Messiah. So every spirit that confesses that Jesus the Messiah is come in the flesh is of God. In those days, there was a sect that arose in the early church that was known as the Gnostic sect. They were people who pretended to have a greater understanding in the mystery of God. There was a spiritual pride with these people. If you did not agree with them, you were just sort of considered spiritually illiterate. And thus their appeal was to the flesh of man and it was sort of like the emperor's new robe--only the wise could see it.

This sect denied that Jesus had come in the flesh. They said that the Spirit of God actually left Him in the garden of Gethsemane because it was impossible that God could die. They developed all kinds of fantasies and fanciful stories. They said that if Jesus walked along the beach, He wouldn't leave footprints because He was really a phantom, rather than a man. Sort of an illusion. And there was the denial that He had come in the flesh because the Gnostics felt that everything that was material was evil. And God could not have created the material universe because material is evil. Thus God could not have come in the flesh because the flesh is totally evil.

This had sort of a reverse twist to it. They said because the flesh is totally evil and all things that are material are evil, it really doesn't matter what you do in the flesh. You can live however you want. It really doesn't matter because the flesh is just evil. So you can live after the lust of the flesh and all and that really doesn't matter because the material things are evil.

And so John is saying that if they deny that Jesus is the Messiah, and He is come in the flesh, they are not of God. "Hereby you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:"

But those that confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: this is the spirit of antichrist (4:3),

It's interesting, we hear a lot about antiChrist. And to us, this name has come to be identified with the man of sin that is going to arise in these last days. Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God. Who will one day stand in the rebuilt temple of God and declare that He is God.

John is the only one who calls him the antiChrist. And he does four times in his letters. Not in the gospel but four times in the letters, he makes mention of the antiChrist or the spirit of antiChrist. This man is in other passages is called the beast. He is called the son of perdition, the wicked one. Many other names given to him but it's interesting, the name that John gives to him is the name that sort of sticks and it is a definition of the man. He is anti-Christ. That can mean one of two things.

He is opposed to Jesus Christ or he comes as a substitute for Christ. And they are both correct with this man of sin that is going to come into the world. He will be opposed to Jesus Christ.

And that spirit is already in the world today (4:3).

The growing opposition that we see against Jesus Christ, it is something that is growing in our society. It is growing in America. People who are wanting to live a life of sin, following after hedonistic pleasures are opposed to the teaching of Jesus Christ--His teaching of purity and righteousness. And thus they have set themselves against Him. And thus the spirit of antiChrist is already at work, John said, in the world. But this substitute Christ, when the antiChrist comes, he is going to come disguised as the Messiah or the Savior. And the world as such will hail him as the savior.

During the early part of his reign, there will be tremendous economic benefits, prosperity. And we have already learned how that a person can live a very wicked life but as long as the nation is in an economic period of prosperity, we're willing to accept any kind of behavior. That's been manifested. It only means that the atmosphere and all is already prepared and set to receive this man though he is diabolical in nature, they will receive him because he will bring peace and prosperity, the things that the world are looking for today.

So "don't believe every spirit," John says, "try the spirits. See if they are of God: because there are many false prophets gone out into the world." And you can know them by their confession of Jesus Christ. Jesus the Messiah. It's a little more than that.

The Bible teaches that the Messiah will be God manifested in the flesh. "For unto us a child is born, unto us the son is given: the government will be upon his shoulder: and His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is God who came in human flesh. And this is what John is talking about here. The denial of the deity of Jesus Christ. It was John who wrote in his gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God" (John 1:1). You can tell the false prophets because of the denial of the deity of Jesus Christ, the denial that He is God come in the flesh.

There are many groups that sort of disguise themselves or masquerade as legitimate kind of religious groups, that have wonderful practices, great values, but there is the denial that Jesus is God come in the flesh. And they would make Him something less than that. They would put Him in the category of an angel, such as the Jehovah Witnesses who declare that He is actually Michael the archangel. Or as the Mormons would declare, He is a brother to Lucifer. Something other than God in the flesh. And John said, By this you know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. "Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: this is the spirit of antichrist whereof you've heard it shall come, and is already in the world." John said,

You are of God, little children, and you have overcome them (4:4):

Now he's talking about the false prophets, the prophets of the enemy, the antiChrist. "You are of God, and you have overcome them."

because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (4:4).

It is interesting, we read in the Bible both in Daniel and in Revelation that when the antiChrist comes, he's going to make war against the saints and prevail against them. Now John says here, "You are of God, and you have overcome them." That is, the antiChrist. "Because greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the world." Is the Bible contradictory in that it says that he will make war against the saints and overcome them? No. The saints that he makes war against are the nation of Israel who will, many of them, be converted during this last seven year period of time that God is going to be dealing with the nation of Israel. They are not the church, that is defeated by the antiChrist. The saints are not the church.

Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). A lot of people make a mistake there because they interpret the saints to be the church. Not so.

They are of the world (4:5):

That is, this spirit of antiChrist that is at work, that opposition to Jesus Christ. "They are of the world:" *therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them (4:5).*

We see today how the world is opposed to Jesus Christ. And those that speak against the Lord, those forces that have put themselves against the Lord, they speak and the world listens to them. I have sought to make a study of the evolutionary theory so that I can understand just what people believe. I do understand the theory, what they believe. But what I can't understand is why they would believe that folly. Without any real evidence or proof but yet you see, they speak and the world hears them.

I did hear, however, on the news yesterday as I was in the car listening to the radio that they have made a discovery in Argentina of dinosaur eggs, the largest field of eggs that have ever been discovered. Not hundreds, there are thousands of dinosaur eggs down there. And the mystery, they say, is how all of these eggs that are there, the thousands of them, why they didn't hatch. Why are they still just eggs? Fields of them down there. And they said they are exploring why they didn't hatch and it says, they are exploring what may have happened that they didn't hatch and they said possibly a great flood. I thought, You're getting close, you're getting warm.

It'll be interesting what their theories will be actually when they try and put the pieces together. But you see, when they speak these things, the world listens to them, because they're of the world.

We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God does not hear us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error or deception (4:6).

If a person believes the word of God and follows the word of God, he is believing and following the truth. But to deny the word of God is the spirit of error. There are some, and actually, unfortunately, many men who have graduated from seminaries and are pastoring in churches throughout the United States who do not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. That is the spirit of error because to deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is then to deny that He is the Son of God and thus, it is to deny the value of His atoning work on Calvary.

It isn't just a slight deviation to say, Well, I don't believe in the virgin birth. That's not a slight deviation. That's hitting at the foundation of the gospel that Jesus was born of a virgin, as was prophesied. That He is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. And because He was God, His death upon the cross made atonement for our sins.

Now John sort of switches gears from the warning of false prophets and how to identify them, to the subject that is really the heart of the Bible. The subject of God's love. And again he is saying, and it's in the context really of try the spirits to see if they be of God, and the first test is their testimony of Jesus Christ. But the second is love.

Do they really have the love of God? Are they walking in the love of God? Are their lives manifesting the love of God? Try the spirits. And the second test is, the test of love.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God (4:7).

The word that John uses is the word *agape* throughout this text. There is in the Greek a word *Eros*, a word for love. It's not used at all in the New Testament or in the Bible. It is the word that is used by the world today when they say, Let's make love--the erotic or the *Eros*. And when he is talking about love here, he is not talking at all about physical love, physical attractions. Man is a threefold being--body, soul, spirit. The Greeks had three words for love: one of physical love, body love, *Eros*; one for emotional love, or soulish love, *Phileo*; and one for spiritual love, divine love, the *agape*. And when John is talking about love, he's talking about this love in the Spirit.

Again, this is where a lot of people become deceived because they think of love in the physical realm or the emotional realm. Love in the physical realm, *Eros*, is totally self-centered. It is seeking self-gratification. It's really a love of self, seeking to gratify self and often at the expense of someone else. Many times it is just the opposite of love. I read somewhere concerning prostitutes that generally they hate men. And yet men go to receive love. No, they go to have their lust satisfied. That's *Eros*.

Phileo is a deeper level of love than *Eros*. *Eros* is extremely shallow. *Phileo* is a reciprocal kind of love. I love you because you love me. I love you because you love classical music and I love classical music. We have things that we can share in common, delights and joys that we can share. And so it is a love on a deeper level, certainly than *Eros* because it's the sharing of mind, the sharing of ideas, the sharing of our likes.

Thus we have an enjoyable time when we're together because we can share so many things that are similar to both of us.

This love, however, on the spiritual level, the *agape*, is a totally giving love. It demonstrates itself in giving, especially giving of itself. The object of it is that other person. So in love with them, I'm only interested in their best welfare. I'm only interested in what is good and best for them and their needs. Or the paramount thing in my own mind is giving to them. And I'm not looking for something in return--as God's love. He so loved the world that He gave. And so this *agape* is a giving kind of a love. Love on the spiritual level.

And when we get into this passage where John is going to talk so much about love, we must not think of love on the physical or emotional plane but on the deepest plane, the plane of the Spirit. "Beloved, let us love one another with this divine self-sacrificing, giving love: for this love is of God; and every one that loveth with this divine self-sacrificing love, is born of God, and knoweth God." You cannot have the *agape* apart from God. There are a lot of substitutes. But when you get down underneath, what seems oftentimes to be a very generous gift and the diamond ring or whatever, or the diamond necklace, there's a hook to it. They are wanting something in return.

It is only by God that a person can experience this love in the realm of the Spirit. Because you see, it is only by God that your spirit is even alive. Before you came to Jesus Christ, your spirit was dead. The world knows nothing of *agape*. "He that loves is born of God, and knows God." But if you're not born of God, you cannot experience the *agape* love.

He that loveth not knoweth not God; because God is love (4:8).

That is the essence and the nature of God's being. That's what it's all about. God is *agape*. Or as we said this morning, *Theos agapa estin*, Love is God.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him (4:9).

There is the manifestation. God is love and how did He manifest that love? By sending His Son into the world that we might live through Him.

This week as we gather on Friday to remember the death of Jesus Christ, the suffering, the pain, the agony, it is all a demonstration to you of God's love. It is interesting that the Bible really doesn't seek to prove God's love to you apart from the cross. Whenever the Bible is wanting to show and demonstrate the fact that God loves you, it's always pointing to the cross. "For God has manifested His love towards us," Paul said, "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:8).

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son as a propitiation for our sins (4:10).

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). And so always to demonstrate or to show the fact that God loves you.

You see, you don't learn that in nature. Nature can only bring you to the awareness and consciousness of the existence of God. And so throughout the world, in every culture, there is that consciousness and awareness of the existence of God. People know that God exists because nature has given a very powerful witness of the existence of God. "The heavens have declared His glory; the earth has shown His handiwork. And day unto day they utter their speech, and night unto night their voice goeth forth. There is not a speech nor a language, where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3). They declare to you that God exists.

But the nature that we see is a fallen nature here on earth. You look at the marvels of creation. You look at the design of the gazelle. You see the gracefulness with which it can run. The speed at which it can run. And it testifies of marvellous design. But you see the lion as it takes that gazelle and wrestles it to the ground and begins to devour it. You see nature can't tell you that God is love. There's a bloody tooth and a claw in nature, many times.

It is only in the Bible that we get the real revelation that God is love. It's interesting that in many other religions, in the Greek mythology, you don't get the concept that God is love. Greek mythology tells you that god is lust. It's interesting that in many religions, there is the promotion of hatred. I look at the Moslem

religion and I see how it engenders hatred in people. You meet them and there's just hatred that pours out from them. The idea of, If you don't believe, we'll kill you, kind of a concept. You conquer with a sword. It is only in the Bible that we get the revelation that God is love. And the endeavor to prove it is the cross. There, God manifested His love for us.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." That is, live a life in the Spirit. And you hath he made alive "who were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). It is through Jesus that we come into spiritual life. We are born again by the Spirit of God, our spirit comes alive and as it does, we know God and we love. "He that loves is born of the Spirit and knows God."

"Herein is love, not that we loved God." Now that's no big deal. Many people say, I love God. Oh, big deal. That's not necessarily love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us." Now that's a big deal to think that God loves us in all of our imperfections, in spite of all of our failures! We look at God's love for the nation of Israel! We look at God's love for us! And we stand amazed. *How marvellous, how wonderful, and my song shall ever be. How marvellous, how wonderful, is God's love for me.* I stand amazed. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

This word propitiation is an interesting word. It actually is the same as the Hebrew word, *Kaphar*, which is a covering. And it was used to describe the mercy seat. In the tabernacle when they constructed the ark of the covenant, a golden box made of acacia wood covered with gold, on the top of that box was called the mercy seat, the lid of the box. And on that lid there was carved two golden cherubim facing each other. And that was to be an earthly model of what heaven is like. God in the mercy seat surrounded by the cherubim, there in heaven.

Inside of the box, the ark of the covenant, were the two tables of stone upon which God had engraved the ten commandments. Interesting that God would cover the ten commandments with the mercy seat. And once a year, the high priest would come into the holy of holies before the ark of the covenant and he would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat. Very symbolic and very powerful because there was where they made the covering for the sins, as the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat that covered the law. The people had violated the law. And so the sacrifice being brought. The blood put on the mercy seat. The covering, the forgiving of the violation of the law.

And so as John says, "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation or the mercy seat for our sins." He became the covering for our sins. He took our sins upon Himself and God's justice is satisfied in the fact that Jesus bore our sins in His own body there on the cross. There's love! That God made provision for sinning man to be able to have fellowship with God. But it was necessary that God's righteousness be protected so that it was necessary that there was a means by which our sins could be covered, put away. And that means was by Jesus Christ, the propitiation for our sins. There is love. And thus John said,

Beloved, if God so loved us (4:11),

To send His Son to take our sin, to make it possible for us to live in fellowship with a holy God, then surely,

we ought to love one another (4:11).

John tells us that,

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us (4:12).

We ought to love our brother and why would he associate that with, No man has seen God at any time? Because we see our brother. We can say, I love God. And you've never seen Him. Here is your brother, you do see him. You say, I hate him. It can't be that you love God.

What does he mean, No man has seen God at any time? Didn't Moses see God? Didn't Abraham talk with God? Didn't Adam talk with God? In the gospel of John chapter one, John makes that same statement. "No man has seen God at any time;" But he said, "the only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has manifested Him" (John 1:18). No man has seen God the Father because God is a spirit. You can't see a

spirit. But He was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. And thus we have seen the manifestation in Jesus Christ of God. And so John said, No man has seen God at any time, but the only begotten of the Father, He hath manifested Him.” “And we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

And thus Jesus was able to say to Philip when he said, “Lord, if you’ll just show us the Father, we’ll be satisfied. He said, Have I been so long a time with you, Philip, haven’t you seen Me? Don’t you realize that if you’ve seen Me you’ve seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Show us the Father” (John 14:9)?

“He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and even greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. Believe me that I am in my Father, the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:11,12). If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father. So John tells us here, “No man has seen God at any time, but if we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us.” Complete love. As we dwell in love, God dwells in us. We dwell in God. God is love. That’s His essence. And if you dwell in love, you’re dwelling in God and God is dwelling in you. And His love then is perfected in us.

It is a wonderful thing to see how God’s love becomes perfected in our lives. We know that we’re to love one another. We’re commanded by the scriptures. And Jesus said, If you love those that love you, that’s no big deal. Worldly people do that. The real test is loving the unlovely. And there is such a thing as incompatibility. People that just grate on you. And in the natural realm, it’s impossible to love those kind of people. Oftentimes God puts them in our lives to test us and to develop in us, a love.

As I look back in my own life experiences, some of the greatest experiences that I’ve had in my Christian life is having God’s love perfected in me for people that naturally I couldn’t stand. But yet to have God give such a deep love for those same people that at one time I thought I could never get along with this fellow. And yet through the work of God’s Spirit, to give me the love. To join me together with that man and to make him one of the most dear, lovable fellows I have ever known. Oh how wonderful it is when God’s love is perfected in us!

Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us the Spirit (4:13).

What is the fruit of the Spirit? Love. Because I love, the fruit of the Spirit, I know that God dwells in me and I’m dwelling in Him. He’s given me the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is love. The real evidence that your life is filled with the Spirit is not your ability to speak in tongues. It is not your ability to prophesy. It is not your ability to work miracles. It isn’t your ability to understand deep, spiritual mysteries. But it is God’s love is manifested in you.

As Paul writes to the Corinthians about this *agape*, this love, he said, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, if I don’t have this agape, this love, it profits me nothing. Though I prophesy and I understand all mysteries, I have all knowledge; if I don’t have love, it profits me nothing. Though I sacrifice and sell all I have and give to the poor, offer my own body to be burned, if I have not love, I am nothing.” And then he begins to describe what love is and how love reacts and responds. “Love suffers long, and is kind; envies not; vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, doesn’t seek its own way, is not provoked, thinks no evil; Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:1-7). The kind of love that I want to dwell in and God wants me to dwell in.

And thus He gives me the Spirit that I might have that kind of love. As I said, it’s the love in the realm of the Spirit but you can’t have it apart from the Spirit. You can’t manufacture that. You can’t make that up. You can’t develop that. You can’t say, I’m going to love. And come into an *agape* kind of a love. It just is beyond us and our own human efforts or nature.

We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (4:14).

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, God loves us and sent His Son to be the propitiation.” John was an eyewitness. And so John says, “We have seen and we do testify concerning Jesus that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” Jesus said, “I have come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). They were finding fault with Jesus because He hung around with sinners.

When He came to Jericho, there was a tax collector everybody hated, a short little fellow. He wanted to see Jesus. He was curious but he didn’t dare mix with the crowd. In a crowd they would elbow him to death.

And so he climbed a tree that he might see Jesus pass by. And to his amazement and especially the amazement of the crowd, when Jesus came to the tree, He looked up and He said, Hey Zacchaeus, come on down. I want to come over to your house and eat. Zacchaeus came down and Jesus went to the house of Zacchaeus. And they criticized him. They said, He is eating with sinners and with publicans! And it was then Jesus more or less as an apology said, "The Son of man has come to seek and to save those that were lost."

John said we are witnesses. We bear witness to you that He came. The Father sent Him to be the Saviour of the world.

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God (4:15),

This is how we're saved. You remember Paul in writing to the Romans said that you don't need to think that salvation is some experience that is difficult, far away, hard to attain. That it is some way where way off in the universe where we have to say, Who can go and bring it down to us? Or found in the depths where we have to say, Who can bring it up to us? But he said salvation is very near to you. It's as close as your mouth. "For if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and just believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

John here tells us, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God,"

God dwells in him, and he in God (4:15).

That is, He has the Spirit of God.

God is dwelling in him and he that dwelleth in God, dwelleth in love. Herein is our love made perfect (4:16,17),

How? By our dwelling in God, and God dwelling in us. You cannot have God indwell you without your love being perfected. And so "herein is our love made perfect," and the result of this kind of love is,

that we have assurance, boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world (4:17).

One day the world is to be judged. Paul tells us in Romans chapter one that "the wrath of God shall be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). Peter warns about the coming judgment. And he said, "If the righteous barely are saved, scarcely are saved, then where shall the ungodly appear" (1 Peter 4:18)? Time of great judgment. But we have great boldness. No fear of judgment, because we dwell in Him and He dwells in us. And His love is made perfect in us. I've experienced God's love. God in love, has received me as His son. God in love has cleansed me from all of my sin because of the work of Jesus Christ. And thus my sins are wiped out. They've been obliterated. *My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought. My sin, not in part but the whole. Has been nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. It is well, it is well with my soul.*

O thank God, boldness in the day of judgment! Now judgment fears no more alarm! I dread not death nor Satan's power. Jesus Christ bore my sin and the judgment for my sin!

There is no fear in love (4:18);

No fear of judgment, no fear of the future and no fear of the present. God loves me. God is watching over me. I am a child of God. He loves me completely. And whatever He allows to come into my life, He allows through His love for me. He will not allow anything to come into my life that would be detrimental or eternally harmful to me. He may allow pain. He may allow disappointment. But it is only for my eternal good and welfare because He loves me! If I go astray, He might have to use painful processes to correct me. Now He doesn't want to.

And how many times have you experienced that with your kids? I hated spanking my kids. I hated it. I would do everything to escape having to spank them. I just didn't like to do it. But sometimes they forced me and they wouldn't relent or give up until I did spank them. I mean, I hated it.

Now God said, Don't be like a mule that you have to put a bit in its mouth in order to direct the thing. Don't be stubborn. God is saying, I don't want to use painful processes in getting you in the right way. Be obedient. Look at the problems that Jonah got into because he didn't want to obey God, follow the will of God. He thought he was in hell there in the belly of the whale, seaweed wrapped around him, hot, dark, miserable, seasick. And he sat there for three days and three nights saying, I won't go. Talk about stubborn. This guy has to be the prime example of all of stubbornness. That's the hardest part I have with the story of

Jonah. Not that God created a great fish to swallow, I have no problem with that at all. God can do anything.

Problem I have is how stubborn this guy could be. Sitting there in that miserable condition for three days and three nights. But he learned his lesson. But a painful way. He didn't have to learn it a painful way. He can have learned it the easy way. He learned the lesson that "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies" (Jonah 2:8). In other words, what God has for you is the very best that it could ever happen to you. And for you to think, I want to run from God's will. I want to get away from the presence of God. That's a lying vanity and you just make it tough on yourself.

God said, I don't want to use a bit in your mouth. I don't want to guide you with painful processes. I want to guide you with my eye. But sometimes we won't listen and God loves us so much and knows that the path that we are choosing to take is so dangerous and so destructive that He isn't opposed to painful practices if that is necessary to keep us on the straight and the narrow path that leads to eternal life.

"There's no fear in love;"

but perfect love casts out all fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love (4:18).

If tonight there are things that trouble you. You're fearful, you're worried. You find yourself not able to sleep. You haven't yet committed that fully to the Lord and recognize, My life is bound up in Him. He's going to take care of me. I'm His child. He loves me. And if this has come along, it is not outside of His love, it is in His love. He's allowed it. And He's going to take care of it. John said,

We love him, because he first loved us (4:19).

That's the incentive for love. To know and to understand God's love for us. It hits a responsive chord in my heart to realize that someone loves me that much. It causes my heart to respond and I love Him because He first loved me.

If a man says, I love God, and he hates his brother (4:20),

And John's very blunt. He said,

He's a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? This is the commandment that we have from him (4:20,21),

Jesus said, He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me. And "he that loves Me will be loved of my Father, and We will come, and manifest ourselves to him" (John 14:21).

In the previous chapter, John said, "This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23). So John closes this section by saying, And "this commandment have we from Him,"

That he who loves God love his brother also (4:21).

If you love God, love your brother also. You remember there came to Jesus a lawyer and he said to Him, What is the greatest commandment? And Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. And in these two are all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:35-40). This sums it all up. Love God completely with everything! Pre-eminently, above everything else! And love your neighbor as yourself! The rest is all taken care of. They're all fulfilled, all of the law is fulfilled in these. As Paul, talking about the love, said "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). The law is fulfilled in love.

So this is basically the commandment that we have from Him. That he who loves God, you say you love God? The commandment is then, "Love your brother also." You can't love God and hate your brother. If you confess that you love God and yet you do hate your brother, you're being deceived. That's a lie. The truth isn't in you. The commandment is, Love God. If you do, love your brother.

Lord, help us to love. Help us to dwell in love. May the Spirit of God dwell in us and may the fruit of the Spirit be manifested in our lives. That we might be, Lord, everything that You would have us to be. And Lord, we ask that You would perfect Your love in us in order that all fears might be dispelled. That we might have confidence and boldness, not only in the day of judgment but in each day of our life as we face the uncertainties of tomorrow. And as we face the antagonism of the world, that we Lord, will have that kind of confidence that our lives are in Your hands and that You love us. You manifested that. May we live in that love. May we walk in that love. May we abide in that love. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.