

7. Through the love of God

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Time certainly has changed. Nowadays, just about every ship in the oceans is equipped with GPS – Global Positioning Systems, so that they know exactly where they are and where they are heading to.

But the ship navigators of older ship about a hundred years ago used to depend on a compass to help him determine his course. But why a compass? Because it showed him his directions. And why does the compass point north? Because it is so constituted that it responds to the magnetic field that is part of the earth's makeup. The compass is responsive to the nature of the earth.

So with Christian love. The nature of God is love. And a person who knows God and has been born of God will respond to God's nature. As a compass naturally points north, a believer will naturally practice love because love is the nature of God. This love will not be a forced response. Rather it will be a natural response. A believer's love for the brethren will be proof of his sonship and fellowship in Christ.

Before apostle John teaches us about knowing our Lord through His love, he gives us a clear instruction about how to handle the doctrines that come our way.

A. TEST EVERY SPIRIT AGAINST THE WORD OF GOD

1 John 4:1-3 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

Apostle John warned against believing every spirit. The Lord never contradicts His own Word, the Bible. So if there is anyone comes to you and say that he had a personal revelation from God, but it is contrary to the Bible in context, do not believe it.

How many Christians embrace new winds of doctrines just because they were mentioned or taught by somebody well known! They assume that these doctrines are granted from the Lord as is. They don't even check them against the Bible. They just go for it in hook-line-and-sinker. Good examples of these are 'Holy laughter movement,' 'Prosperity Gospel,' 'Kansas City Prophets,' and '88 reasons for '88,' to name a few.

After while, they get confused because the false doctrines reveal their bottom lines and the people get frustrated and some even walk away from the Lord. If they have taken the advice from apostle John, they would not have to go through those difficulties in the first place.

Today, there is a lot of curiosity about the "true Jesus." Many university and college professors say that they want to discover the "true Jesus". But they say, "The true Jesus is not the Jesus of the Bible. The Biblical Jesus is make-believe. We need to discover the true Jesus behind the myths of the Bible." A great example of that is the 'Da Vinci Code.' It is nothing more than another trick from the pit of hell.

B. THE ONE INSIDE OF YOU IS THE MOST POWERFUL

1 John 4:4-6 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. 6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

1 John 4:4 is one of the most important verses for any born-again Christian to memorize for the sake of comfort and peace in our hearts. Knowing that we have the third person of Trinity in our hearts wherever we go is totally awesome. All the demons and enemies can not do one thing against us unless it is allowed by our Almighty God.

The believer has a resource for victory, the vital presence of the indwelling Spirit of God, which makes victory always possible – if we will rely on He who is in us instead of in ourselves.

Whether you'd like to agree with me or not, anyone who is not the children of God is against Him like many of us once were before we accepted Jesus into our hearts. Did you notice that you as born-again believers no longer have many common subjects to talk about other than weather and sports and family stuff with non-believers? You no longer see eye to eye in many things with them. Because they belong to the world and satan, you belong to Jesus.

Before we go to the next verses, I must talk about the doctrine of Christian demonization. In late '80s, the idea of angels and demons was very popular, some silly person came up with a doctrine that Christians also can be demon possessed. There is not one place in the Bible to support that ridiculous doctrine, but many people bought that story.

People of God, our Holy Spirit does not share our hearts with any demonic things like we would share a duplex with our neighbors. Either we are for God or against God. Christians can be oppressed by demons or harassed by them, but not be possessed by them, because we are already possessed by the Holy Spirit which is a very good thing.

C. KNOWING GOD THROUGH LOVE

1 John 4:7-11 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.

This is the third of three expressions in John's writings that help us understand the nature of God: "God is spirit" in John 4:24. "God is light" in 1 John 1:5 and now "God is love." None of these is a complete revelation of God, of course, and it is wrong to separate them from Him.

God is love. This does not mean that "love is God." Love does not define God, but God defines love. God is love and God is light. Therefore, His love is a holy love, and His holiness is expressed in love. All that God does expresses all that He is. Even His judgments are measured out in love and mercy.

The typical concept of love around the world has no resemblance or relationship to the holy and spiritual love of God.

Love is a valid test of true Christian faith. Not only have we been “born of God,” but we also “know Him” through our love for Him.

In the Bible, the word ‘know’ has a much deeper meaning than simply intellectual acquaintance or understanding. For example, the verb ‘know’ is used to describe the intimate union of Adam and Eve in Genesis 4:1. To know God means to be in a deep relationship to Him – to share and enjoy His love. This ‘knowing’ is not simply a matter of understanding facts. It is a matter of perceiving truth.

True love is never static or inactive. God reveals His love to mankind in many ways. He has geared all of creation to meeting our needs. But the greatest expression of God’s love is in the death of His Son.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Sending of Christ into the world and His death on the cross were not prompted by man’s love for God. They were prompted by His love for man. However, the world’s attitude toward God is anything but love.

When we realize what we have in Christ and what we receive from Him, it is not that difficult for us to love one another, especially to the brothers and sisters in the Lord.

D. SEEING GOD THROUGH LOVE

1 John 4:12-16 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.

Apostle John relates a basic principle about God the Father – that no one, no human, has seen God at any time. Anyone claiming to have seen God the Father is speaking – at best – from their own imagination, because as the apostle plainly states, no one has seen God at any time. But for those who insist that they have seen the face of the Father in heaven, here is a special Greek word for them – “Bologna”.

Did you notice one particular word keeps on popping up in this portion six times? “Abide.” It refers to our personal fellowship with Jesus Christ. To abide in Christ means to remain in spiritual oneness with Him, so that no sin comes between us.

Some people think the greatest evidence of God’s presence or work is power, or popularity, or passionate feelings. But the greatest evidence of God’s presence and work is love. Where God is present and working, there will be love. In our case, the love of God is shown through us to other members of God’s family whether that person deserves to receive it or not, just like we don’t deserve His love from the first place.

There are two things our indwelling Holy Spirit does for us:

- 1) He helps us abide in the love of God through the Word of God.
- 2) He bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and gives us this assurance.

E. NO FEAR IN LOVE

1 John 4:17-21 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.

If you are like me, I am sure that you've heard somebody mentioned, "When I get to heaven, I am gonna have God to answer my questions." I don't think so. By mercy and grace of God when we get to heaven through Jesus Christ, we will be busy worshipping the Lord, not demanding answers from Him with our puny questions.

The only way we can have boldness in the day of judgement is through receiving Jesus into our hearts now. Because there will not be another chance once we die.

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment

We have adopted the Greek word for fear into our English vocabulary: phobia. We are familiar with 'Acrophobia': fear of heights, 'hydrophobia': fear of water. But apostle John is writing about 'krisisphobia': fear of judgment.

If people are afraid, it is because of something in the past that haunts them, or something in the present that upsets them, or something in the future that they feel threatens them. Or it may be a combination of all three. A believer in Jesus Christ does not have to fear the past, present, or future, because he has experienced the love of God through Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice and this love is being perfected in him day by day.

We can never forget v19. It is not because what we could offer to God, because we have nothing. But in His wonderful and glorious grace, God extends His love to us.

Jesus loved us when we lived carelessly, when we neglected His Word, when our knees were unbent in prayer. He even loved some of us when we were deliberately against Him. Yes, He loved us when we were at hell's gate, and drank every damnation to the last drop. He loved us when we could not have been worse or further from Him than we were.

Some of you might feel good for yourself now, since you didn't do anything that terrible. But you are thinking that you really don't need this Jesus to get to heaven, because you are a pretty good person. You think that God should be grateful to have you in heaven. Or you might even be ridiculing what has been said so far. While you are denying God and His truth right now, He still loves you and wants you to have eternal life in heaven through Jesus Christ.

There is only one way to get to have an eternal life in heaven. It is through Jesus Christ, nothing else, nobody else.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) The better we know God's love, the easier it will be to live as a Christian.

Bible knowledge alone does not take the place of personal experience of God's love. In fact, it can be a dangerous substitute if we are not careful.

2) Unless we love the non-believers, our verbal testimonies to them will be useless.

The Gospel message is a message of love. This love was both declared and demonstrated by Jesus Christ. The only way we can effectively win others is to declare the Gospel and demonstrate it in how we live. Too much "witnessing" today is a mere mouthing of words. People need an expression of God's love.

3) When we realize what we have in Christ and what we receive from Him, it is not that difficult for us to love one another, especially the brothers and sisters in the Lord.