

**“The Foundational Imperative:
 Love Because God Loves Us”**

INTRODUCTION: In First John 4:7-21, the apostle John reaches the climax of his first letter to the Churches in Asia Minor.

1. **Charles R. Eerdman:** *The General Epistles: 1 John; p. 170.*

The epistle here reaches a climax and is found to be no mere series of tests by which a fact is discovered or on which an assurance is to be based, but a practical message of encouragement. It is designed not only to give tests of life, but to urge the fuller manifestations of that life. It is intended to secure not a mental verdict but a moral resolve, not a surer belief but a deeper experience. “Beloved,” writes the apostle, “let us love one another.”

2. It is in this section of First John that the apostle’s most quoted statement appears: “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16)

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:8)

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:16)

3. There is, therefore, an inevitable comparison between Paul’s famous passage on love, in First Corinthians 13, and this passage.

- a. *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:4-13)

- b. The passage we preached through on Sunday nights to begin this year: *Love: The Third way.*
- c. An *exposition* (explanation) for what love is.
 - i. Eight verses, and some 15 words built upon the Greek word *agapē*
 - ii. All conveying the idea of love, in word and deed
 - iii. Reason: to inform the church about the proper (loving) way to use spiritual gifts
 - iv. “And I will show you a still more excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:31)

4. But John's passage on *love (agapē)* is not expositional but hortatory: an exhortation for the church to love God and especially one another.
 - a. In this passage, John brings all his **five themes** together and ties them in a grand knot.
 - i. The Central Message: *God is light*
 - ii. The Primary Command: *Walk in love*
 - iii. The Key Counsel: *Abide in the anointing (Spirit)*
 - iv. The Core Teaching: *Believe in Jesus Christ (truth)*
 - v. The Chief Duty: *Obey God's commandments*
 - b. For each one of these *key themes* is a dimension of love which John will explain in this passage.
5. Because love is the **foundational imperative** for the Christian; John calls the Christians, twice in this passage, "*Beloved*"
 - a. Both times as exhortations to love more, deeper, better...

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. (1 John 4:7)

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:11)
 - b. John uses the word *beloved* in a sparing manner in his three letters: 10 times
 - i. 6 times in First John
 - ii. None in Second John
 - iii. 4 times in Third John
 - c. Compared to Peter, Paul and Jude
 - i. Peter uses *beloved* 8 times in his 3 letters.
 - ii. Paul uses *beloved* 33 times in his 13 letters.
 - iii. Jude uses *beloved* 4 times in 25 verses!
6. But, John's use of this word *beloved* is strategic:
 - a. It introduces the **five messages** he intends for the church
 - i. *Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. (1 John 2:7)*
 - ii. *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)*
 - iii. *Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:21-22)*
 - iv. *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)*

v. *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.* (1 John 4:7)

vi. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* (1 John 4:11)

b. Five messages = five themes: *Light, love, truth in Christ, abiding and obeying.*

7. So, First John 4:7-21 (one paragraph) divides itself into **two exhortations**.

a. First Exhortation: Love Because of God's Nature (4:7-10)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:7-10)

b. Second Exhortation: Love Because We Need It (4:11-17)

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. (1 John 4:11-17)

c. A Summary: The Power and Value of Love (4:18-21)

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:18-21)

8. **John Calvin:** *First John: Commentaries: vol. 22; p. 238.*

No one can prove himself to be the son of God, except he loves his neighbours, and because the true knowledge of God necessarily produces love in us.

9. As John will say: *We love one another because God is love and has first loved us!*

1. **THE FIRST EXHORTATION: LOVE BECAUSE OF GOD'S NATURE** (1 John 4:7-10)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is

love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
(1 John 4:7-10)

1. John will make two definitive statements about God and His nature in this Epistle.
 - a. First: *God is Light* (2:7)
 - b. Second: *God is Love* (4:8, 16)
 - c. The light of God is only seen by men in the love of God!
2. God, we know, dwells in unapproachable light so that no one ever really sees God the Father –
 - a. ... *he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.* (1 Timothy 6:15-16)
 - b. *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.* (Revelation 4:1-3)
 - c. *Bless the Lord, O my soul!*
O Lord my God, you are very great!
You are clothed with splendor and majesty,
covering yourself with light as with a garment,
stretching out the heavens like a tent. (Psalm 104:1-2)
3. So John tells us, “The only way we see God through His light is to see His love, in action, in Jesus Christ.”
 - a. *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (1 John 4:9-10)
 - b. *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.* (John 1:14-18)
 - c. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16)
4. Put in Johannine language: *The children of the light are the children of love!*
 - a. First: They are loved by God
 - b. Second: They see the love of God in Jesus
 - c. Third: They are loving because God (Spirit) lives in them

- d. *“Love is from God... God is love... in this is love...”*
5. John is speaking about the **source of love**: God is love and true love is from God.
6. We need to be careful here, in how we interpret and apply this concept of *love*.
- a. *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)*
- b. Not all “love” is of God or a manifestation of God’s love.
- c. **Charles R. Eerdman**: *General Epistles: 1 John*; p. 172.
God is love, but love is not God. Not every manifestation of charity or kindness or benevolence or sacrifice is a sign of a new birth or of being a child of God. We must take our stand near the cross. When love is associated with faith and devotion toward Jesus the Son of God, then it becomes a proof of “life eternal.”
- d. Human love is only a manifestation of God’s love when it aims for the same thing, the love of God, and the Cross of Christ aims for: *salvation and sanctification of the redeemed.*
7. **Illustration**: When I was a young bachelor, I dated girls who were often “in love with love,” but not in love with me.
- a. i.e., they were infatuated with the romance of dating and the prospect of marriage – in theory.
- b. But they really did not want to live with and love me for my eternal good.
- c. In fact, they liked “being in love with me” because it made them feel good, feel loved, feel special.
- d. And **most human love** is like that: It is love that is a reflection of oneself and refracted back onto oneself:
- i. Patriotism can be like this; the love of one’s country is **not always** a godly love.
- ii. Devotion to a sports team can be like this; we “love” them only if they win.
- iii. The “love” between boy and girl is often like this: a selfish preoccupation with oneself.
8. **A Spiritual Fact**: Two people “making love” may be making anything but love!
- a. People in adultery, two single people sleeping together (fornicating), a romance between two gay men or an intimate relationship of two lesbians – *These “loves” can never be God’s love between the parties.*
- b. Why? Because God *hates* such immorality; He refuses to call it “love” (adultery, fornication, homosexuality, an “abomination,” immorality); and Jesus Christ died on the Cross to save us from such twisted loves!
- c. *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were*

sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
(1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

9. **I do not** say these things to pick on homosexuals, for I have mentioned heterosexual immorality, twisted patriotism, immature dating infatuations, and “love” for the Buckeyes football team – all inferior loves to godly love.
10. I say this to (a) recover the word *love* from its debasement, and (b) to spare us from the deep disappointments of cheap love. Cheap love is cheap grace!
11. Here’s an **interesting observation**. I’ll frame it for you in the form of a question: *How many times does John use the word “grace” in his writings?*
 - a. Paul uses the word “grace” 83 times in his 13 epistles.
 - b. Peter uses the word “grace” 10 times in his 3 epistles.
 - c. But John uses the word “grace” only 7 times in his Gospel, 3 letters, and Book of Revelation.
 - i. Twice as a greeting: “*Grace to you*” and once as a salutation: “*Grace be with you*”. (2 John 3: Revelation 1:4 and 22:21)
 - ii. Four times in 4 verses of his Gospel:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:14-17)
 - iii. Not once in First John!
 - iv. But he uses the word “love” 89 times in his five books of the New Testament!
 - d. **Hence:** For John, the *grace of God* is seen in the *love of God*, and both perfectly in *Jesus Christ!*
 - e. *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (1 John 4:9-10)
12. Here is what John is saying in these first 4 verses of this section:
 - a. We know the **source** of God’s love: His own nature

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. (1 John 4:7)
 - b. We know how to **know** God: To love like God loves

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:8)
 - c. We know the **goal** of God’s love: Life in Jesus Christ

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. (1 John 4:9)

- d. And we know the **measure** of God's love: The Incarnation of Jesus

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

13. This is of **essential importance** to you and me, to the church, to Christianity in the world and its witness: *How we know we are born again, of God, in Christ, by the Spirit, is that we are people who are characterized by the kind of love God has for us!*
- a. The grace of God is not a buzzword, a concept, a "cheap grace" focused on "loving" ourselves.
 - b. The grace of God is the love of God in action; it is redemptive, sanctifying, other-focused, sacrificial love.
 - c. We can claim the grace of God all we want; we can tell people we're born again all we want; and we can think that because we believe we are saved, all we want...
 - d. **But this is merely to take Paul without taking John** – grace without love...
 - e. Where the *grace* of God is the *love* of God will be manifested.
14. **Implications:** If we are characterized by the following things, how can we really be sure we are born again?
- a. **A harsh, black-and-white, angry, censorious spirit** – a graceless spirit, (*knowing truth without having love*)?
 - b. **Continue in self-indulgent sin**, always focused on our own feelings, our own passions, our own "needs", without thinking of the spiritual good of others (*claiming grace without practicing love*)
 - c. Year after year manifesting no service, no sacrifice, no stewardship for the good of others (*expecting love for self but not for others*)?
 - d. Then how can we say we know God, are born again, are under grace?
 - e. *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)*
 - f. *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:7-10)*
15. When Jesus spoke about being "born again", He spoke about the grace of God, the love of God and the light of God –
- a. *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:3, 5)*

- b. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”* (John 3:16-21)

- c. And St. John adds this postscript...

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (John 3:36)

16. If you're **not** a loving person, then you're not of God, not born again, and not under God's grace!

17. This is the focus of John's second exhortation...

II. THE SECOND EXHORTATION: LOVE BECAUSE WE NEED TO DO SO (1 John 4:11-17)

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. (1 John 4:11-17)

1. He repeats himself in verses 11 and 12: When we love one another, we prove to ourselves and others that we are truly Christians.
 - a. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.* (1 John 4:11-12)
 - b. If God loves us, we are duty-bound to love one another.
 - c. The only way for people to see God in His light is for Christians to show forth His light in their love.
 - d. If we love one another, the Holy Spirit abides in us.
 - e. God's love is "perfected" by our brotherly love:
 - i. *Perfect* is better translated "finished, completed, or 'fully developed'"
 - ii. **Robert W. Yarbrough:** *1-3 John: ECNT; p. 245.*

The root of the perfect participle means “to finish, complete, or bring to the desired outcome”. John speaks here not of perfect people but of God’s already pristine love finding its fullest possible earthly expression as people respond to the message of Christ and reach out to one another as a result.

iii. **NIV:** “His love is completed in us”

2. John is again concerned with the *Gnostic heretics* who promoted a self-indulgent life while adhering to cold philosophical ideas:
 - a. A salvation by knowledge, not by grace;
 - b. A practice of licentiousness not sacrificial love;
 - c. A lifestyle removed from the reality of God in us producing mature love in His church
 - d. John wants people to “see God” in Christ and in the love of the church!

3. **Robert W. Yarbrough:** *1-3 John: ECNT; p. 244.*

God’s otherness as signified by his invisibility lies at the heart of the Decalogue, which forbids the construction and veneration of idols. God tells Moses, “No one may see me and live.” Such a high view of divine transcendence and utter prohibition against physical representation of his being could easily create a religion highlighting the vast distance between people and God. Islam, whose ninety-nine names for God do not include “Father” and for whom “God’s many names do not describe his essence, only his will and law,” is a case in point. The OT’s insistence that God is invisible is fully endorsed in the New Testament. But in 1 John 4:12, John makes a very different point. He points to the importance of believers actualizing God’s love among themselves in view of God’s not being seen. God’s invisibility, then, is not only a reason to exalt and venerate him in his heavenly loftiness; it is at the same time an implicit mandate for God’s people to render his presence concrete by their response to him. Foremost in that response is the expression of love to others.

4. So...John revisits his 5 themes again: light, love, faith, abiding obedience.
 - a. But this time, it is **love** that actuates (makes real) all these truths, for us and others.
 - b. God’s invisibility, cloaked by His *Holy Light*, can be seen in how we love one another-
No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:12)
 - c. God’s abiding in us, by His Spirit, and our abiding in God is assured because we love one another. The abiding (indwelling) Spirit produces this love in us-
 - i. *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* (1 John 4:13)
 - ii. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* (Galatians 5:22-23)
 - d. Our faith in Jesus Christ is validated as saving faith by the brotherly love we experience in the church-

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (1 John 4:14-15)

- e. Our trust in the love of God for us is made more certain by God's love flowing through us to one another-

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:16)

- f. Our confidence of complete forgiveness, of no condemnation, of escaping the wrath of God at the last judgment is strengthened by our love that motivates us to obey God's commandments and live a holy, loving life, as Jesus did in this world-

By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. (1 John 4:17)

5. **All we believe, all we hope for, all we live for is undergirded and made more certain by the love of God manifested in our love for one another –**

- a. Light...love...faith...abiding...obedience...

- b. This is why Paul says what he does:

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

- c. Why Peter writes what he did:

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

- d. Why the author of Hebrews exhorts us as he does:

Let brotherly love continue. (Hebrews 13:1)

- e. And why Jude encourages us as he does:

...keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (Jude 21)

6. Brotherly love is **THE KEY** to the Christian life –

- a. Who we are, what we believe, how we live

- b. And love is the power of our witness

- c. *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35)*

7. So love is the **summary** of our faith...

III. THE SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH: TWO FACTS ABOUT LOVE (1 John 4:17-21)

By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do

with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:17-21)

1. Fact #1: The **Triumph** of God's invincible love:

- a. *By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* (1 John 4:17-18)
- b. God's love triumphs over all our sin so that, on the day of judgment, we can face God with confidence.
- c. All our fears, in life and in death, have been "cast-out" by God's *perfect love*: even the fear of judgment.
- d. The final judgment was very real to Jesus Christ, and therefore to John, in all his writings –
For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.
"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.
(John 5:21-29)
- e. But the *perfect love* of Jesus Christ, displayed on the Cross, banishes our fears of judgment and hell.
- f. How? For those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit sheds abroad this love of Christ.
Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
(Romans 5:1-5)

2. **John Calvin** explains this: *First John: Commentaries; vol.*

The meaning is, that as there is nothing more miserable than to be harassed by continual inquietude, we obtain by knowing God's love towards us the benefit of a peaceful calmness beyond the reach of fear. It hence appears what a singular gift of God it is to be favoured with his love.

It may, however, be asked, when does perfect love expel fear, for since we are endued with some taste only of divine love towards us, we can never be wholly freed from fear? To this I answer, that though fear is not wholly shaken off, yet when we flee to God as to a quiet harbor, safe and free from all danger of shipwreck and of tempests, fear is really expelled, for it gives way to faith. Then fear is not so expelled, but that it assails our minds, but it is so expelled that it does not torment us nor impede that peace which we obtain by faith.

3. **Application:** Just as you desire that your spouse, children, loved ones and dearest friends know for certain that you love them, so does God. If they fear that you do not love them, all the time and forever, then your love is *imperfect*, defective, lacking something vital. The *perfect* love of God casts away each and every fear.
4. Fearful people are simply those who doubt the perfect love of God.
5. Fact #2: the **Necessity** of Brotherly love:
 - a. *We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:19-21)*
 - b. We are only able to love one another because God has first loved us.
 - c. Our imperfect but earnest love flows out of God's perfect and infallible love.
 - d. If we fail to love our Christian brothers and sisters whom we can see, how could we ever love God, by faith, whom we can't see?
 - e. So...faith in God through Christ leads to love for others in the Spirit!
 - f. And God has *commanded* that we practice this love so as to strengthen the peace, assurance, fear-free love in others.
6. Gist: People usually discover the love of God from the love of others. As we love one another in a divinely-empowered way, we come to see and believe that God is love and God loves us.
 - a. *No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:12)*
 - b. It's just that simple: *People see God and grow in His love when we love one another in God's love.*
 - c. All of us need brotherly love to discern God's love!

CONCLUSION: Evangelical Christians, and especially reformed ones, place most of their orthodoxy (and salvation) on what they know...

1. The Gospel, justification by faith, reformed theology, knowing truth and having the right answer. *But too many of us are harsh, cold, black-n-white, and unlovingly smug. We run people off because we are not loving.*
2. Others place all their emphasis on love: *relationships, emotions and feelings, helping others, etc., but their lives have gaping holes between what they say they believe and how they actually live. We are ignorant (and therefore often unholy), and this turns people off as well.*
3. John will not let us be either/or: He demands that we both believe the truth and love one another.
4. The truth really is not an either/or, but a matter of **where and how you begin** to live with God and others.
5. **My wife** is a very, very loving person. The strength of Jane's soul, life and relationships is her kindness and compassion towards other people. Jane is easy to know and easy to love. But Jane also is committed to truth. But she arrives at that truth *relationally* – by knowing the love of God, the love of her husband, and the love of other people, Jane arrives at the truth. Jane's soul always moves from love to truth. Because she loves people, she wants to help them know the truth.
6. **Her husband** is her counterpart. He is not as easy to love, though he is easy to know. He is as dependable as a watch and predictable as the sun. His soul moves from truth to love, and always in that sequence. As he reads the Bible, theology, history, ethics and about the Christian life, God convinces him to love people by living out the truth of Christ. Michael focuses on the truth because he does care for people.
7. John is calling us to start where we are – people person or cognitive soul – and move in the opposite direction. His goal is the same for all of us: *That people might come to know the truth of God's love by experiencing the reality of brotherly love, and that all Christians might respond to this great truth:*
 - *So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:16)*
 - Believe...know...love...abide...
 - *"We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19)*
8. John's "bottom line" is the **heart** of Christianity: *"And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."*
9. This is, indeed, the **foundational imperative** of Christianity for all truth and all relationships rest on this one glorious exhortation. "Love!"