



In 1 John 4: 17-18. John is answering the question ‘How can we be confident before God?’ The reason is that God has given us his Spirit and a Christians will confess that Jesus is the Son of God. Also, we can look ahead to the day of judgement without fear. John’s message in these verses is that we need not fear!

Love. John returns to the theme he set out in verse 12. “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us”. Then he reverts back to the idea of complete love in us but with a slight twist. Verse 17 words it as love being made complete “among us.” Love is not just a fruit of the Spirit in the life of an individual believer, but a fruit which must be seen corporately as the local church: love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. What John is not saying here is that our love is perfectly flawless. Even when we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are still tainted by sin and will be until the day we reach glory. That’s why in churches we have conflicts and disagreements. Our love is developing and maturing towards a goal that is both towards God and our church family. John’s argument is that love for God and our church family is tightly linked. A church cannot claim to love God while not being a community that loves each other or doesn’t look out for each other’s needs.

Where does this love come from? This is not a love which we can stir up by ourselves. We, by nature are far too sinful for that, and we have no love for God as we are, but when the Spirit of God works in us, drawing us by grace to faith in Jesus Christ, we are moved to love God and therefore his people. Love begins with God.

How does this love show itself? This love is modelled on the self-giving, self-sacrificial love of Christ himself. He is the ultimate example of what this complete love among believers looks like. Jesus Christ displayed this love for us through his atoning death on the cross. “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends...” but also going to the cross was the ultimate act of perfect (flawless) loving obedience to his Father. And so, if you are doubting God’s love for you, look no further than the cross of the Lord Jesus. And if we are asking the question, ‘How can I love? What does this complete love look like?’ Look no further than the cross of the Lord Jesus. Stand before the cross and be amazed by the love on display there. It will fill us and change us. That’s why we never move beyond the cross, (Jn:3:16). John is saying that we must be willing to lay down our lives for one another. Now, we might not be called to such a radical act of love but what about our time, our energy, our money, the surplus resources God has blessed us with? We must talk, pray, laugh, cry, offer hospitality and accept hospitality, listen with interest. When we find it difficult to love, we have to remember that the local church is just redeemed sinners doing life with other redeemed sinners, while being transformed by the Holy Spirit, into the image of Jesus. And when we are fully amazed by the love of Christ, when our saving faith is genuine, we will love. Love across diversity, across, disagreement, is evidence of the reality of our shared faith, and the grace of God at work in our lives. Loving is being true to who we are in Christ as a body of believers. This should then produce confidence in us.

Confidence This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement. (v17) The mark of this complete love among us is confidence. The Christian can have confidence before God. The word confidence here is the Greek word *Parresia* used to describe the Christian’s state of mind. He uses it in 2:28 speaking about the confidence we can have at Christ’s coming and in 3:21-22 writing about the confidence we have as we approach God in prayer. We don’t know when Jesus will return, in fact, both in Jesus’ words recorded for us and in the rest of the New Testament it explicitly warns us that we aren’t meant to know. The day of judgement follows Christ’s return. Judgement, it’s a very terrifying

thing. But it doesn't have to be. People redeemed by Christ, can have confidence before the judgement seat of God, if love is complete among us, because that love is proof of God's love among us. So, when we approach his throne on that day we can do so with boldness.

During the American Civil War a young soldier was unsuccessful in his attempts to be exempt from the war. He was sat outside the Whitehouse weeping. A little asked him what the matter was. He explained to the little boy that his widowed mother had lost three sons and he was the last who could help her run the farm. The boy grabbed the soldier by the hand and walked straight into the grounds of the Whitehouse, past the armed guards, through the corridors, and eventually they burst into the Oval Office. Why was this young boy be so confident that he could just burst into the presidential office of Abraham Lincoln. This young lad was the president's son. He was confident both of his father's love for him, and in his love for his father. And for the same reason we can have confidence. In this world we are like Jesus by our status. God now sees us as sons and daughters adopted into his family through Christ. Everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to him by nature. He is the eternal Son of God divine, perfect, and without sin. We belong only by grace because by nature we are sinful and far from perfect. When he looks down from heaven, he does not see condemned sinners, he sees beloved children who believe in Jesus. Christian confidence does not rest in our own perfection, but in God's perfect love toward us in Christ.

Fear "There is no fear in love." Fear and love are incompatible. Proverbs 1 :7 tells us that 'the. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' if the Bible describes someone as God-fearing, it's always a good thing. But here we are being told that Christians shouldn't fear because it's incompatible with love. In the Bible there are two types of fear. The first one is called filial fear. If we're Christians, we will have a reverent fear for God (fear of offending or hurting him) that motives us to love and obedience. We are to fear!

The second type of fear is a fear of punishment. It's a fear that anticipates judgement. On that day when we stand before him, we need not fear that God will be disappointed with us or that our constant failure has ruined our standing with him. Just as light drives out darkness, love drives out fear because fear is to do with punishment. If we are in Christ, there is no reason to fear judgement because our sin is dealt with, Christ has been punished in our place.

A slave approaching their cruel master approaches with fear and trembling. We need not do that! A child approaches a loving father with boldness. "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again, rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry Abba, Father". (Rom. 8:15) Many people struggle with doubts and anxieties. John's point is that fear no longer has the final word, because God's love among us is greater than our trembling hearts, and so too is his love for us in Jesus.

Augustus Toplady wrote, "Now why this fear and unbelief?/ Has not the Father put to grief/ His spotless Son for us?/ And will the righteous Judge of men/ Condemn me for that debt of sin/ Now cancelled at the cross." Fear is out of place for those who have received Christ and are filled with the love of God. Faith in Christ then, expressing itself in love, is the mark of the true child of God and no child need fear in the presence of a loving Father.

Conclusion. Friends, if we experience and express the love of God among us, we have no need to fear judgement. If we know we are loved by God and his love flows out from us, we know Jesus will be pleased to see us when we stand before him, and we will be able to approach him boldly. We might be here tonight confident in God's love for us and our love for each other, if that is you, rejoice!

Maybe you're here this evening and your love has gone stale and cold, then go back to the cross. The place where the love of God was expressed at its fullest in the suffering and death of Jesus! if you're here this evening, and you don't know the love of God, simply, accept the love on offer for you through Jesus. And let his love overflow from you, so you too can have boldness on that day!