

The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 4:11-12

Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone read 1Jn 4:1-6

Someone else read vv7-12

Verse 11 is the answer to every lame excuse on our part which says, "Oh, I just can't love that person. You don't know what she's like. If you had to live with her (or him) as I have to, you wouldn't be able to love her, either." No, no. "Beloved, if God so loved us ..." If you have experienced this kind of love, if you have been to the cross and have felt the overwhelming cleansing of God's love for you, despite the antagonism and hatefulness you have shown him, and your loving of your own way and wanting to do what you like; if you have felt the cleansing grace of God wiping that all out without any recriminations or calling up of the past, forgetting and forgiving it all, then as **John** says, you not only can love someone else but you "ought to" -- you owe it. That is where the word *ought* comes from: owe it. You "owe it" to love one another.

Οφειλομεν (*opheilomen*)

to owe

1a) to owe money, be in debt for

1a1) that which is due, the debt

Matt. 6:12 sin is specifically equated with debt. Jesus uses the illustration of debt to explain the human situation vis-à-vis God. The debt is so great that no good deeds can offset it. We are totally dependent on the divine mercy. Remission is a matter of grace, but it imposes a corresponding obligation to forgive others. Refusal to do this brings with it the severe judgment of God. (TDNT)

Who do we "owe"?

Someone read Ro 1:14. Paul says, "I owe something to everybody."

Someone else read Romans 13:8.

We owe it, because we have within us the fountain of love in the life of God. Now if you do not have the life of God, of course, you cannot love one another like this. Do not even try -- admit that you can't.

Above all, do not come up with the shabby, shoddy, sleazy imitation of love that is nice to another's face and cuts him to death behind his back. That is not love. Or merely to tolerate another for a time. That is not love. Unless you have the life of God, you cannot love. But if you have the life of God – and this is the heart of the matter -- you can love like this and you ought to do it. God, in you, can love through you and will love through you. All he is waiting for is the acquiescence of your will, your willingness to love; then he will do the loving.

“If God so loved us...”

There are 4 “conditional” IF .;. THEN phrases in Greek

1. First Class – the IF clause is assumed to be true
 - a. Col 3:1
2. Second Class – the IF clause is assumed to be false
 - a. Luk 7:39
3. Third Class – the IF clause is probably true, but it is uncertain
 - a. 1Cor 13:2; Heb 6:3
4. Fourth Class – the IF clause is possibly true, but it is also uncertain
 - a. 1Pet 3:14

So, which class do you think is meant here?

So, "if God so loved us (and He does), we also ought to love one another" with this kind of unjudging love, not basing it on the qualities we see in the other person, but loving just because he is a person.

BTW, both the words “us” and “we” are emphatic in the Greek. What do you think this fact signifies?

That we should love others as God loves us.

Verse 12 declares a great and daring concept: It recognizes that God is invisible and no man has ever seen God. See John 1:18a for another example of this phrase, using almost the same language.

Even in the Old Testament days, though there appeared manifestations of God in human form, these were but God in human disguise. It was not God made visible.

What are some examples of “Theophanies” (or Christophanies) in the OT?

John 4:24; 1Tim 1:17, Even if He were visible, Ex 33:20

Because God is invisible, the love of God cannot be demonstrated in nature, cannot be made visible in God's creation.

See the last half of John 1:18.

And where else is it made visible?

Let me quote from Ray Stedman:

John says, "If we love one another. God abides in us and his love is perfected," i.e., reaches its final end, "in us." That is where men see God's love, and it is the only place it can be seen. The fact of an indwelling God becomes visible only when we manifest love one to another, the kind of love that we have been talking about. As long as we are nice only to our friends or to those who are nice to us, no one has any idea that God is around. But when we start being nice to those who are nasty to us, when we start returning good for evil, when we start being patient, tender, thoughtful and considerate of those who are stubborn, obstinate, and selfish, and say difficult things to us, then people get the sense that God is somewhere around, close at hand, that he is in the situation. Then God's dwelling in us becomes visible to them."

People today are not acquainted with the *Gospel according to Matthew*, or Luke, or **John**, but every man is somewhere reading the *Gospel according to ME and YOU*. If they cannot read it clearly, it is because there is not much manifestation of the love of God in your life as a Christian. But it is there, if God's life is there. So the appeal of the Apostle **John** is, "let us" do this. This is not an automatic thing; it demands also the agreement of our will: Let us deliberately love one another. Let us make opportunities for this life to be manifested. Let us allow it to be expressed in deliberate activities of kindness, thoughtfulness and consideration, one to another, and of understanding, patience and tolerance of each other's views. And then note what he says here. The result is such a daring thing that actually some of the commentators are so staggered by it they refuse to accept what it says.

"God abides in us.."

What does "abide" mean?

To remain, to abide, to dwell amicably

That is a staggering concept: The God of the Universe literally lives in and through us – His people.

And through what Agency does He "abide" in us?

The HS.

The dove story.

A young missionary couple moved into a little cabin in Switzerland. They were pleased when they learned that they shared their cottage with a dove. It would fly in and out during the day, but return at night. Then, one evening the couple were cleaning up after dinner, and one of them dropped a dish, which shattered loudly when it hit the floor. Then, they started arguing. When the argument subsided, they noticed that the dove wasn't there anymore. Somewhere between the loud crash and the loud argument, she had flown away. The couple hadn't realized how accustomed to the dove they had become. They literally were mortified that their argument had driven the dove away.

Then, after several days, the dove returned. The couple was elated! They vowed never again to make loud noises in their cabin again, lest they frighten the dove into leaving.

So, we all have to be careful that we don't scare away the dove from our hearts! See 1Jn 4:13.

The word "God" is without the article, signifying God as He is in Himself – His divine qualities.

Now, there are almost as many views on what John writes next as there are commentators: *His love is perfected in us*

What does the word "perfected" signify?

"perfected" = *teteleiōmene*

Thayer's Definition:

- 1) to make perfect, complete
 - 1a) to carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end
- 2) to complete (perfect)
 - 2a) add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full
 - 2b) to be found perfect
- 3) to bring to the end (goal) proposed
- 4) to accomplish
 - 4a) bring to a close or fulfilment by event

Question: Does God's love need to be "perfected?" Of course not. What is the key phrase in this verse?

"In us"

So, what does this verse mean?

The 4 most popular views are as follows:

1. It denotes man's love for God (so Alford, Plummer)
2. It denotes God's love for man (so Stott, Bruce, Lenski, Thomas, Marshall and Brown)
3. It denotes the love which is God-like in nature (so Westcott, Law)
4. It denotes the mutual love which exists between God and Man (so Marshall and Hiebert, the latter of whom writes: "it is possible the second and third view combine in John's thought since the operation of God's love in the hearts of believers inspires and develops a love in them like His own.")

In this case, I think Hiebert and Marshall have it right.

What **John** says is that God's love, this love pouring out from an awesome Being whose concern for the vast millions on earth is particular to each one of us, each one wrapped in his amazing love; this love is perfected: only when it becomes visible in us. Isn't that absolutely glorious?

Quoting again from Ray Stedman:

"God's love reaches its ultimate and final conclusion when it becomes visible in us. It is an abortive thing, incomplete, and, therefore, unreachable, incomprehensible, until it finds its manifestation in a living human being, in flesh and blood, incarnate again in you and me. Here is a world dying for love. The word is on everyone's lips, they are talking about it on every side, thereby indicating the vast, surging hunger of the heart. And we are the only channels by which the love the world is searching for can ever be loosed among humanity. Therefore, brethren, above all else, put on love. Let us love one another and be known as people who love one another. For, your concern for another, or my concern for another, completes God's love."

To claim that we can have a private vision of God – as the Gnostics may well have taught – is completely opposite of what John writes here. God is invisible, and only by loving God and letting His love flow through us to others, even when to an objective observer, they do not deserve it (or, really, especially when they don't deserve it!), that we are closest to God.

How are people going to see God today? How are people going to experience God's love today? It must be through His people! We must be willing to love our enemies, as God loves them. This is our assurance. This is how we know that we are in fellowship with the God who is love!