

Title: **PERFECT LOVE**

Text: 1 John 4:7-18

Subject: *The Love of God*

Date: Tuesday Evening — October 15, 2019

Readings: *Lindsay Campbell and David Burge*

Introduction:

I want to talk to you about **PERFECT LOVE**. That is the title of my message — **PERFECT LOVE**. You will find my text in 1st John chapter 4. God the Holy Ghost inspired his servant John to write this short epistle of love to assure believing sinners of God's love, God's perfect love which "*casteth out fear.*" **Four times** in this epistle John mentions perfect love (2:5; 4:12, 17, 18).

- In chapter 2, verse 5, we read, "*Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*"
- In chapter 4, verse 12, John tells us that **God's "love is perfected in us."**
- Then, in verse 17, he says, "**Herein is our love made perfect.**" I'll have more to say about that in a few minutes; but for now just glance over to the alternate translation given in the margin of

PERFECT LOVE

your Bible. The text would be better translated, “Herein is love with us made perfect.” John is telling us that God’s love for us is made perfect in us in the sweet experience of his saving grace in Christ.

- Then, here in chapter 4, verse 18, we are told that “perfect love casteth out fear.”

What a statement that is. I sure would like to know more about that. Wouldn’t you? PERFECT LOVE — That’s my subject. I want to talk to you about that perfect love that casts out fear, that perfect love which, if it is ever known in the soul, forbids fear. Let’s begin in verse 7 — 1st John 4:7.

LOVE MADE PERFECT

First, John tells us about love made perfect. — “*Herein is our love made perfect.*” He has been telling us about God’s marvelous, infinite, eternal love for us in Christ. God’s love for us is revealed in the salvation of our souls by the sin-atoning sacrifice of his dear Son for us as our Substitute

PERFECT LOVE

and by our union with our blessed Savior (1 John 3:1-3; 3:16; 4:9-12).

(1 John 3:1-3) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (3) And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

(1 John 3:16) “Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.”

That is John’s subject throughout this epistle — the love of God for his elect. He continues it here in chapter 4 (1 John 4:7-18).

(1 John 4:7-8) “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is

PERFECT LOVE

born of God, and knoweth God. ⁸ He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”

(1 John 4:9-12) “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. (10) Herein 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 ought also to love one another. (12) No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, **and his love is perfected in us.**”

The apostle tells us that **if we are born of God we love one another** (vv. 13-16).

(1 John 4:13-16) “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ **Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.** ¹⁶ And **we**

PERFECT LOVE

have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

If we are born of God we love one another. That is an indisputable fact, plainly revealed throughout the Scriptures. God’s saints truly love one another. — *“He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.”* — *“If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”* That is to say, **our love to one another is the reflection and fruit of God’s love to us;** and, therefore, our love to one another demonstrates the truthfulness of our professed love for God. **God’s love is made perfect in us** (v. 12), it is made known in us, when we are born of God and given faith in Christ. Then it is that *“the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 5:5). When the love of God is known and experienced in the heart, love flows from the heart.

Then we read in verse 17 — **“Herein is our love made perfect.”** Look at the translation given by our translators in the marginal of your Bible again. The

PERFECT LOVE

text might be better translated, “Herein is love with us made perfect.” ——— John is telling us what he meant in verse 12, when he said, “his love is perfected in us.”

- The Syriac version translates these words, “Herein is his love with us made perfect.”
- The Latin Vulgate reads, “Herein is God’s love with us made perfect.”

John is not talking about us loving God perfectly, or loving one another perfectly. Our love is anything but perfect love. John is talking to us about the knowledge and revelation of God’s perfect love for us in Christ in the sweet experience of his saving grace. He is here describing the “*grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*” Look at Romans 5:1-5.

(Romans 5:1-5) “Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4)

PERFECT LOVE

And patience, experience; and experience, hope:
(5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

God’s love toward us, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the saving revelation of Christ, is made perfect in us when we are made to see and experience and enjoy the fulness, completion, and perfection of our salvation in Christ.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

The *second* thing John mentions is the Day of Judgment. But he says something that appears, at first glance, to be a very strange thing about that day. — “*Herein is God’s love made perfect in us, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment.*” — There is a day appointed when God shall judge the world in righteousness and strict justice. In that day, though the wicked and unbelieving tremble and fear, the saints of God will have confidence, joy, and boldness.

PERFECT LOVE

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who ought to my charge shall lay,
While through Christ’s blood absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous guilt and blame?”

The wicked and unbelieving fear the Day of Judgment. Some of you have nightmares about it. **But God’s saints love it, long for it, and anxiously await it; at least we ought to.** In that great day, we shall stand fearless, without the least dread, while the rest of the world cries for the rocks and mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of God and the Lamb. In that great day, when God shall judge the world in righteousness by Christ Jesus, God’s elect will have boldness. In that day we will...

- Speak to him who sits upon the throne freely and without fear.
- Ascribe all praise, honor, and glory to Christ alone as our Savior.
- Express our love and adoration to our God forever.

Would you have this boldness in the Day of Judgment? What is the basis of it? Where can it be

PERFECT LOVE

found? Read the next line. “*Herein is our love (God’s love with us) made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: **because** (Here is the cause of that boldness.) as he is so are we in this world.*” What an astounding statement!

AS HE IS

Here is the *third* thing I want you to see. — “**As he is so are we in this world.**” Are you a believer? Are you a child of God? Are you redeemed by the precious blood of Christ? If so, this text applies to you. If at this very moment you trust Christ, if you have just this moment been born of God, this text is talking about you. As Christ is so are you in this world! **It is our union and identification with Christ that will give us boldness in the Day of Judgment.** — Everything that the Lord Jesus Christ is, in his office capacity as our Mediator, Representative, and Substitute before God we are in him. — That’s astounding!

- His obedience is my obedience.
- His death is my death.
- I am one with him!

PERFECT LOVE

Near, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son
I am as near as He!

Dear, so very dear to God,
Dearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son
I am as dear as He!

NO FEAR

Here is the *fourth* thing John tells us in our text. —
“*Perfect love casteth out fear*” (v. 18).

(1 John 4:18) “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

What is that perfect love that casts out fear? What is that love that forbids fear?

- It is not our love for God.
- It is not our love for one another.

PERFECT LOVE

What is this love that casts out fear? What is this love that forbids fear? What love keeps a person from being afraid? Turn to **John 17**, and I will show you.

Proposition: That perfect love that casts out fear is God’s love for us; but it is more than that. — It is the love of God in us.

FIVE STATEMENTS

While you are turning to John 17, let me make five statements about the love of God.

1. **“God is love.”** — That is who God is and what God is. — *“God is love!”*
2. **God commends his love toward us** in the Sacrifice of his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:8).
3. **The Triune God acts in love for us** in all his works of grace and providence. — The nuptial chariot in which our blessed Savior carries his Bride through the ages of time is *“paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem”* (Song of

PERFECT LOVE

Solomon 3:10). — *“In love having predestinated us!”*

4. **God sheds abroad his love in** us in the gift of his Spirit (Romans 5:5).
5. **God’s love is made perfect in us when by his gift of faith in Christ we are made to know and are assured of his love for us.**

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Here in John 17 the Lord Jesus is about to leave this world. He is going back to the Father.

- He has told his disciples that they must abide on the earth for a while, that they must endure unceasing trials, heavy troubles, and great tribulation.
- He has promised to send his Holy Spirit to comfort them.
- He has promised to help them.
- He urged them to simply trust him.

But he knew their hearts were heavy, anxious, troubled, and fearful. He knew that they were full of doubts and questions. So, just before he goes out from them, just before he goes to die in their room

PERFECT LOVE

and stead, the Son of God tenderly takes them by the hand, as it were, and says, “Let’s go to God and pray.”

It is this great, high priestly prayer that is before us in John 17. **In these 26 verses our Master prays for the complete and perfect salvation of our souls** (the salvation of all God’s elect).

- Preservation (v. 11, 15)
- Joy (v. 13)
- Sanctification (v. 17)
- Union (vv. 21-23)
- Heavenly Glory (v. 24)
- Complete Gratification (v. 24)

Let’s read just the very last part of this great prayer together. What a treasure we have before us here!

(John 17:24-26) “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. (25) O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known

PERFECT LOVE

thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. (26) And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

“I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” — With those words our blessed Savior tells us the meaning of his life, death, and resurrection as our Substitute.

Here our Savior speaks about what he had done, what he would do, and why. In a word, he here declares in the hearing of his disciples the entire purpose of his existence in human flesh, summarizes the whole of his work, and asserts that the purpose of all is this: — *“That the love wherewith thou has loved me may be in them, and I in them!”*

IN US

The very last word of our Lord’s prayer is concerning the love of God for us. But the love of

PERFECT LOVE

God for us is made manifest and is known only by the love of God in us. This is the last petition which he offers, the very last thing our dear Savior asked the Father to do for us in his great, high priestly prayer. — “*That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*” **He means for us to know and enjoy the love of God for us!** But there is more here than that. He prays that the love wherewith the Father loved him may itself be in us! He could ask nothing greater than this. **He asks that we might be filled with all the fulness of the love of God. In that great request, our dear Savior asked that we might be filled with all the fulness of God himself, for God is love.** — God is love, and he in whom loves dwells dwells in God and God in him.

It is my prayer that, this very hour, the Lord God will graciously grant this request of his Son for your soul! — O great God of grace, shed abroad your love in the hearts of chosen, redeemed sinners, for Christ’s sake. — **That is the very beginning of the experience of grace. When God comes to sinners in saving power and grace, he puts his love in them** (Romans 5:1-5).

PERFECT LOVE

This is where the prayer of our great High Priest ends. — “*That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.*” This perfect love, perfect love that “*casteth out fear!*” — **John never got over what he heard th Lord Jesus pray that night. When he was an old, old man it was still ravishing his heart. Anticipating eternity, he was thinking about this perfect love...**

(1 John 4:17-18) “Herein is our love made perfect, (*Herein is God’s love made perfect with us*) 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 casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

Hear now that which the Lord Jesus asks the Father to put in his elect, that for which the Son of God prays on behalf of every redeemed, blood bought sinner in this world. This is that perfect love that casteth our fear. Oh, may God make it yours, for Christ’s sake! — “*I have declared unto them thy*

PERFECT LOVE

name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26).

Our Lord’s prayer **is not that the Father’s love may be set upon us, or moved toward us.** God does not love us because we know him. He loved us long before we knew him. Paul speaks of — “*His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.*” Christ did not come to set his Father’s love upon the chosen. Oh, no! He did not die to get the Father to love us. **He came here and died because God loved us!**

‘Twas not to make Jehovah’s love
Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from His throne above
A suffering man became.

‘Twas not the death which he endured,
Nor all the pangs He bore,
That God’s eternal love procured,
For God was love before.

PERFECT LOVE

He loved the world of His elect
With love surpassing thought;
Nor will His mercy e'er neglect
The souls so dearly bought.

John Kent

FOUR THINGS

“I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” — I cannot begin to tell you all that is included in this statement. (A man cannot tell what he does not know, and shouldn't try!) But it is certain that our Lord would have us understand at least these four things.

A REVELATION — *First*, our Lord Jesus here prays that the love of God for us would be shed abroad in our hearts, assuring us of the Father's love for us (Romans 5:5). **Our blessed Savior would have us enjoy a deep, continuous, undisturbed assurance of the love of God for us.** It is this revelation of the love of God that is both the cause and the fruit of faith in Christ.

PERFECT LOVE

A REALIZATION — *Second*, our great Savior would have us constantly realize that the love the Father has for us is that same love which he enjoys! — *“That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.”*

- Special, Covenant Love
- Eternal Love
- Free Love
- Deserved Love (John 10:16-18) — *“Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me!”*
- Distinct Love
- Indestructible Love

Oh, wonder of wonders, I feel more inclined to sit down and roar with rapturous laughter than to stand here and talk! The love wherewith the Father loved his Son is his love to you and me! —

Did you hear me? You are, my brother, my sister, the object of God’s delight, even as Christ is, because you are in Christ! — I cannot state this more clearly or more wondrously than Spurgeon did, when preaching on this same subject. **Here is what**

PERFECT LOVE

Spurgeon said to his congregation in London 50 years ago...

“Do not tell me that God the Father does not love you as well as he does Christ. — The point can be settled by the grandest matter of fact that ever was. When there was a choice between Christ and his people which should die of the two, the Father freely delivered up his own Son that we might live through him. Oh, what a meeting there must have been of the seas of love that day, when God’s great love to us came rolling in like a glorious springtide, and his love to his Son came rolling in at the same time. If they had met and come into collision, we cannot imagine the result; but when they both took to rolling together in one mighty torrent, what a stream of love was there! The Lord Jesus sank that we might swim. He sank that we might rise and now we are borne onward forever by the mighty sweep of infinite love into an everlasting blessedness which tongues and lips can never fully set forth. Oh, be ravished with this! Be carried away with it; be in ecstasy at love so

PERFECT LOVE

amazing, so divine: the Father loves you even as he loves his Son; after the same manner and sort he loveth all his redeemed.”

C. H. Spurgeon

A REFLECTION — *Third*, our love for Christ is a reflection of the Father’s love. What a poor word I have chosen to express what I want to say — “reflection!” But how else can I say it? — **That love which we have for our Savior is the Father’s love for him.** It is the love of God in us, created in us, born in us for his Son! The love is mine. I love him. Yet, it is his. He gave me the heart to love him, and put the love in it! He took away the cold the stony out of my flesh and gave me a new, feeling heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). Therefore, I can truthfully sing,

“My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine;
For thee all the follies of sin I resign.

A ROCK — *Fourth*, we are given a rock of assurance for our souls. Look at the last line of this great, great prayer. Our Savior came here to make God known to men, that the love of God might dwell

PERFECT LOVE

in us. But there is more. He came here to make God known to us, that the love of God might dwell in us, **that he might dwell in us!** — *“I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, **and I in them.**”* — **The Lord Jesus Christ dwells in his people, assuring us of God’s perfect love for us!**

What can this possibly mean? Obviously, we cannot now apprehend it. But soon we shall.

(John 14:20) “At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

For now, it is enough to know that Christ dwelling in us is the assurance of God’s love for us and of our hope of glory yet to come (Colossians 1:27).

Ephesians 3:14-21 “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) That he would grant you, **according to the riches of his glory,** to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner

PERFECT LOVE

man; (17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know **the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge**, that ye might be **filled with all the fulness of God**. (20) Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, (21) Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.”

Christ in you is the hope of glory because Christ in you is the assurance of God’s perfect love which “casteth out fear” (1John 4:8).

1 John 4:18 “There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casteth out fear**: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

O sinner, would you be assured of God’s love for you? Would you have God’s perfect love in you, that

PERFECT LOVE

perfect love that “*casteth out fear*” and will give you boldness in the Day of Judgment? — Come, trust my Savior. — “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!*” — “*He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life!*” O Holy Spirit, come now, by your omnipotent, irresistible grace, and shed abroad the love of God in our hearts afresh, and shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of poor, lost, perishing sinners in this place, for Christ’s sake!

(1 John 4:16-18) “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ Herein is our love made perfect (*Herein is God’s love made perfect with us*), 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 casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Amen.