

MAY 13, 1990

## FEAR AND LOVE

One day is going to be Judgment Day. One day, every human being is going to stand before the God of all creation. It is truly going to be awesome. We will know at that point what is meant by the "fear of the Lord". There will not be any doubt at that time whether or not God exist! Just the thought of it should bring up emotions ranging from sobering humility to terrifying fear. Which end of the spectrum of emotions we find ourselves depends and will depend on our experience of the Love of God.

**I JOHN 4:7-12** John is writing to believers concerning their conduct of life. How should we live as children of God in a world that is still in rebellion against God? It is a question that people have wrestled with for ages. It is the subject of our laws and regulations and yet it can be consolidated into one commandment that, if it were followed, would eliminate the need for laws and regulations. The commandment is simple and yet effective and can be stated in just two words: "love others". That precept will solve the problems of interpersonal relationships, if practiced, wars would cease, and crime would disappear. "Love one another" is the divine prescription for the problems of the world. The source of selfless love is found in God Who demonstrated that love in sending His only begotten Son into the world to be sacrificed for our sins. The only way to exercise that kind of love is to receive it from God and then to pass it on to others. The only way to become a channel for such blessings is to become a true child of God via the new birth.

The kind of love that John is writing about is not a love that merely reacts to return love that is offered but is a love that take the initiative to love first even when no sign of lovableness is present. Paul also wrote about this kind of love when he stated in Romans 5:8 "But God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If God had waited for us to make the first move, then nothing would have happened. We were already under the sentence of death: The wages of sin is death; the soul that sins, it shall die. God's righteous and holy nature demands payment for sin; however, His mercy and grace causes Him to pay the price for us. This is an unselfish love that God has demonstrated for our benefit and a sure sign that we have received this love is that we show the same kind of love to each other. When we do this, then we are showing the nature of God to others. People cannot see God; however, they can see the effect that God has on the lives of those He has touched through the love that is shown to others.

**I JOHN 4:13-16a** Another point of confirmation that God dwells in us and we in Him is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is in us? First and foremost, we know by faith in the word of God that "If we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are obedient to Him then we shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." We learn from the writings of Paul that we have an inner witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God. Paul also tells us that the Holy Spirit prays for us in groaning that are too deep for words. We also find that the Spirit teaches us and make the word of God meaningful to us. We are also empowered to do the work of the kingdom of God by the Gifts of the Spirit. And finally we bear the fruit of the Spirit of Love, Joy, Peace, etc. John mentions another way we know that the Spirit of God dwells in us: knowing that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world. This knowing is more than just accepting what someone else has told us, but an inner knowledge that is beyond our intellectual understanding.

**I JOHN 4:16b-21** Again, John tells us that God is Love. Therefore, if we live in love (an attitude and lifestyle), then we are dwelling in God. That is important; however, the more important fact is that God dwells in us. It is because of His being in us that our love matures and grows. Our love is imperfect and the more we walk in love the better and more mature it becomes because God is in us. We want our love to mirror that of Jesus--to be free of selfish motives so that we will not be ashamed to have the deepest secrets as to our motives revealed on the Day of Judgment. If we, in our daily walk and relationships with other people, behave as Christ would, then we will have a holy boldness at the Judgment.

The fear that John writes about is that terrifying emotion that people experience if they seriously consider standing before God at a time of Judgment when they know that they have no defense and that all of eternity is on the line. Most people don't want to think about that. It makes

us uncomfortable; and well it should. That fear torments us and we run away from the reality of it by refusing to think about it. The Good News is that we can be free of the fear of Judgment IF we are walking in the love of God that is available to us through the completed work of Jesus Christ to die for us to pay the penalty for our sins. His love was perfect and it casts out our fear. Our love can be perfected as we continue to abide in Him. A measure of our maturity is the fear that we experience when considering the Judgment. If we still have uncertainty and fear regarding this, then we are not mature in our love.

This unselfish kind of love is not something that we have to create within ourselves but is a result of a faith response to the love that God directed toward us. He is the Source of such love. Our first response is that we love God for His goodness to us. This is a natural typically human response. We respond in kind. The real test to see if the God-kind of love is functioning in us is that we show that love to those that don't love us first or love us at all. After all, God loved us before we loved Him. It is inconsistent for us to think that God's love is operating in us just because we feel love for God if we don't also love our fellow human beings.

Our love for others is more than a good feeling toward others but must be communicated and interpreted by our actions toward others.