

1 John Chapter 4

1 John 4:1 "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

“Believe not every spirit”:

The mention of the Holy Spirit (in 3:24), prompts John to inform his readers that other spirits exist, i.e., demonic spirits.

Who produce false prophets and false teachers to propagate their false doctrines.

Christians are to have a healthy skepticism regarding any teaching, unlike some among John's congregations who were too open minded to anyone claiming a new teaching regarding the faith.

Christians are to be like the Bereans who, as students of the Word, examined the Scriptures to determine truth and error (Acts 17:10-12).

“Try”:

Or test is a metallurgist's term used for assaying metals to determine their purity and value.

Christians must test any teaching with a view to approving or disapproving it rigorously comparing any teaching to the Scripture.

“The spirits ... false prophets”:

By juxtaposing “spirits” with “false prophets” John reminds his readers that behind human teachers who propagate false doctrine and error are demons inspired by Satan.

Human false prophets and teachers are the physical expressions of demonic, spiritual sources (Matt. 7:15; Mark 13:22).

"Beloved":

Of course, is speaking to Christians then and now.

There has never been a time in history when there were more strange doctrines being taught than right now.

It is the obligation of believers to determine for themselves, whether the message being taught is of God or not.

The only way for us to be qualified to judge the message is to know the Bible.

We must search the Scriptures diligently to know the truth.

The devil is a counterfeit.

The false messages being brought forth are very close to truth.

They just change a word here and there, and change the meaning.

One of the most recent tricks being brought forth by the devil in the church, is a watering down of Jesus to where He is not God.

Another terrible teaching that is making the rounds is that Jesus did not become God, until He rose from the grave.

This is blasphemy.

Jesus was the Word of God in heaven.

He was there from the beginning.

He is the Eternal One.

He is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.

He is Eternal God the Word.

To teach that the devil, or his demons, ever had any control over Jesus is also a lie.

Jesus was not forced to die on the cross.

He gave His life willingly.

His flesh was the only thing that died on the cross.

From the cross, He (Jesus), dismissed His Spirit from His body, and then commanded it to go to the Father.

Jesus was Eternal Spirit in the body of flesh.

Anyone who believes Jesus to be less than God is teaching a false doctrine.

1 John 4:2 "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:"

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God”:

John gives a measuring stick to determine whether the propagator of the message is a demon spirit or the Holy Spirit.

“Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”:

This is the first test of a true teacher: they acknowledge and proclaim that Jesus is God incarnate in human flesh.

The Greek construction does not mean that they confess Christ as having come to earth, but that they confess that He came in the flesh to the earth, i.e., His human body was physically real.

Both the full humanity and full deity of Jesus must be equally maintained by the teacher who is to be considered genuinely of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit testifies to the true nature of the Son, while Satan and his forces distort and deny that true nature.

John accentuates the crucial importance of sound doctrine expressed in God's Word as the only absolute and trustworthy standard (Isaiah 8:20).

To confess Jesus as the Christ (Messiah), the Anointed One, is to have Him as your Savior.

This, to me, is saying, we must believe that the Word of God took on the form of flesh and dwelt among us.

He was not a man; He was just housed in the body of a man here on the earth.

Inside that flesh, dwelt the Spirit of God.

He was Immanuel (God with us).

Notice also, that people like you and me are spirits, as well.

The part of us that contains life is our spirit.

God had made a clay doll in the beginning from the dust of the earth.

We were mere vacant houses of flesh.

God breathed the breath of life in us, and we were alive.

He then gave us the ability to choose good and evil when He made us living souls.

We must know who Jesus is, before we can have faith in Him for salvation.

Man's blood (or an animal's blood), cannot cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

The blood of God cleanses us from our sins.

The blood of a child comes from the Father.

God the Holy Spirit hovered over Mary, and she conceived of God.

Mary furnished the body.

It was not Mary's blood that flowed through that body, but God's.

We must believe Jesus to be God manifest in the flesh to be saved.

1 John 4:3 "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

“That spirit of antichrist”:

These false teachers who denied the true nature of the Son are to be identified among the antichrists (in 2:28-29; 2 John 7).

The same demonic deception that will work to produce the final world ruler who rules as the false Christ is always actively seeking to distort Jesus Christ's true nature, perverting the gospel.

The final Antichrist will not be something new, but will be the ultimate embodiment of all the antichrist spirits that have perverted truth and propagated satanic lies since the beginning.

This is similar to (2 Thess. 2:3-8), where the man of lawlessness (Antichrist), is still to be revealed, but the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.

The terrible thing is that many churches teach that Jesus was nothing more than a man when He walked on the earth.

You can easily see this is a dangerous message to bring.

We cannot think of Jesus as just another man.

He is divine in nature.

The divinity of Christ has been a question for years.

That is what separates the true believers from those who would be against Christ.

The true believers believe Jesus was God manifest in the flesh.

Even to believe He became God at resurrection, would be classified as those opposed to God.

Philippians 2:10 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;"

This alone, makes you know He is deity.

1 John 4:4 "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

“Greater is he that is in you”:

Believers need to be aware and alert to false teaching, but not afraid, since those who have experienced the new birth with its indwelling of the Holy Spirit have a built-in check against false teaching (2:20, 27).

The Holy Spirit leads into sound doctrine for genuine Christians, evidencing that salvation has actually occurred (Romans 8:17).

True believers have nothing to fear, for even Satan hosts with their perversions can't take them out of the Lord's hand.

Here (as in 2:18-27), protection against error or victory over it are guaranteed by sound doctrine and the indwelling Holy Spirit who illumines the mind.

John is writing this to true Christians (children of God).

The He that is in us is Christ.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

With Christ in me, I can do all things. It is Christ in me that overcomes the enemy.

Verses 5-6

“Therefore speak they of the world ... the world heareth them:

John gives the second test of a true teacher; they speak God's word, following apostolic doctrine.

1 John 4:5 "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."

The “they” spoken of here, are those who follow after the flesh.

They are caught up in the world.

They have no hope, because they base everything that they believe on what they can see with their eyes.

They have eyes to see, and they do not see, and ears to hear, and they hear not.

They place their faith in this world and its trappings.

1 John 4:6 "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

“Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error”:

The Old Testament and New Testament are the sole standards by which all of the teaching is to be tested.

In contrast, demonically inspired teachers either reject the teaching of God's word or all elements to it (2 Cor. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19).

Christians will receive this message that John and the other true apostles are bringing.

Christians have ears to hear, and they hear.

Verses 7-21

True to his pattern to develop the same subjects, each time broadening, expanding, and enhancing their significance, John returns once again to the moral test of love.

These verses constitute one long unit describing what perfect love is and that it is now available to men.

In John's third and last discussion of love in this letter (see also 2:7-11; 3:10-14), he gives 5 reasons why Christians love.

1 John 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

“Let us love one another”:

This phrase (in verse 7), is the key to the entire section (see verse 21).

The original conveys the idea of making sure that love is a habitual practice.

He has already written that those who are truly born again do exhibit the characteristic habit of love (2:10-11; 3:14).

“Every one that loveth is born of God”:

Those who are born again receive God's nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Since God's nature exhibits love as a chief characteristic (see also verse 8), God's children will also reflect that love.

Since the importance of love is the subject here, He says beloved.

We Christians are the beloved of God.

One of the main things that separate the Christians from the world is the great love that we have for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

God not only loves, but is love itself.

When we are born of God, we are born of His love.

To explain the love of God for us would be like trying to explain life itself.

The word "loveth" means continues to love.

One of the great things I believe about the United States is the fact that we are concerned about the problems of people of every race.

When there is famine, we try to help.

When there is a devastating earthquake, we try to help.

We are a loving caring nation.

That makes me believe there is still hope for our nation to come back to God, and be the Christian nation we started out to be.

In (verses 7-8), we are told that love is from God and that God is love.

John introduces the reader to the first of 5 reasons why Christians love: because God is the essence of love.

The Gnostics believed that God was immaterial spirit and light, but never defined the source of love as coming from His in-most being.

As He is spirit (John 4:24), light (1:5), and a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29), so He is love.

Love is inherent in all He is and does.

Even His judgment and wrath are perfectly harmonized with His love.

1 John 4:8 "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

"He that loveth not knoweth not God":

Someone may profess to be a Christian but only those who display love like their heavenly Father actually possess His divine nature and are truly born again.

When you find a person filled with hate, you know that he, or she, has never experienced that great unselfish love that God has for each of us.

There is a need in every person to be loved.

Some have never realized that anyone loves them.

When you find a person in this condition, if you can make them understand that God loves them, they will change.

1 John 4:9 "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."

John introduces the reader to the second of 5 reasons why Christians love to follow the supreme example of God's sacrificial love in sending His Son for us.

The judgment of sin on the cross was the supreme example of God's love, for He poured out His wrath on His beloved Son in place of sinners (John 3:14-16; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 5:1-2).

"Only begotten":

Over half of the New Testament's uses of this term are by John (e.g. John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18).

John always uses it of Christ to picture His unique relationship to the Father, His pre-existence, and His distinctness from creation.

The term emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ, as the only one of His kind.

It was He whom the Father sent into the world as the greatest gift ever given (John 17:3; 2 Cor. 8:9), so that we might have life eternal (John 3:14-15; 12:24).

God loved all of mankind, one at a time from the very beginning.

If He did not, why would He have bothered to create us in the first place?

The greatest love ever shown was the love of God for us, when He sent His only begotten Son to save us from our sin and from ourselves.

Truly our life is hidden in Jesus.

Jesus is eternal Life.

If we have Jesus, we have eternal Life.

1 John 4:10 "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins."

“Propitiation”:

In this verse means appeasement or satisfaction.

An atoning sacrifice that Jesus bore in His body for the punishment due us for our sin; in so doing He propitiated God, satisfied God’s just demand that sin be punished."

“Propitiation for our sins”:

Hebrews 9:5 translates a form of this word as “the mercy seat.”

Christ literally became our mercy seat like the one in the Holy of Holies, where the High Priest splattered the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:5).

Christ did this when His blood, spilled on behalf of others, satisfied the demands of God's holy justice and wrath against sin.

The strangest and most wonderful part of all of this is that, Jesus Christ loved us when we were totally unlovable.

We were yet in sin, when God sent His Son to save us.

He did not wait until we had cleaned up our lives to save us.

He saved us, and then helped us clean up our lives.

We not only did not love God, we did not know that He loved us.

Propitiation, in this verse, means atonement.

In other words, He paid the penalty for our sins in full.

We have no debt to pay.

Our bill is marked paid in full.

The great love of God for man is made real to us in this.

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

God's sending His Son gives Christians not only salvation privilege, but obligation to follow this pattern of sacrificial love.

Christians love must be self-sacrificing like God's love.

God taught us by example the unselfish love that we need to have for each other.

If the world today needs one thing, it is love.

Take the time to hug someone and say you love them today.

Let the love that God has showed you shine through you and then make someone else's life a little brighter.

Do not confuse love with lust.

When you hug someone, make sure it is love, and not lust, you are feeling.

1 John 4:12 "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

John introduces the reader to the third of 5 reasons why Christians love: because love is the heart of Christian witness.

Nobody can see God loving since His love is invisible.

Jesus no longer is in the world to manifest the love of God.

The only demonstration of God's love in the age is the church.

That testimony is critical (John 13:35; 2 Col 5:18-20).

John's argument (in verses 7-12), can be summed up as: love originated in God, was manifested in His Son and demonstrated in His people.

We know that no one can look upon the face of God and live.

Moses came the closest, when he saw the back side of God as He passed by.

We see God by looking at Jesus, who is the image of the Father.

Jesus told the disciples, if they had seen Him, they had seen the Father.

This just meant that the Spirit of God dwelled within Him.

Jesus was the manifestation of the Godhead on the earth.

When we are full of God's love, we are full of Jesus.

The more “full” of Jesus we are, the more love we have for others.

Verses 13-16

John introduces the reader to the fourth of 5 reasons why Christians love: because love is the Christian's assurance.

1 John 4:13 "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."

When Jesus went to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to dwell within each of us.

The fact that we have the Spirit within us, tells us that He has never left us.

Romans 8:9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

1 John 4:14 "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son [to be] the Savior of the world."

The purpose of the presence of God in the form of flesh on the earth was therefore the salvation of all of mankind.

Jesus, who was the Word of God in heaven, had taken on the form of flesh as the Son of God to save us.

He took on the name Jesus, because it means Savior.

He is our Savior and our Lord.

1 John 4:15 "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

This refers to the doctrinal test (verses 1-6; 1:1-4; 2:23).

I have used them so much that I will not quote them here, but the greatest verification of this Scripture (is in Romans 10:9-10).

Another wonderful Scripture on this is:

Matthew 10:32 "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."

This is in the very words of Jesus Himself.

There is no question, when we confess.

Confess is to tell a truth.

We know in our heart, and confess with our mouth as verification that we are full of Jesus.

1 John 4:16 "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."

Our families and friends may turn against us, but we know that God loves us.

We need never be lonely or blue; we have the love of God filling us.

This is not just an occasional love, but a love that is forever.

If we are filled with God's love to this extent, it should spring forth from us to others we are in contact with.

There is such a peace and comfort that comes, knowing that God's love is always there.

Verses 17-20

John introduces the reader to the fifth reason why Christians love: Because love is the Christian's confidence in judgment.

1 John 4:17 "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world."

"Our love made perfect":

He is not suggesting sinless perfection, but rather mature love marked by confidence in the face of judgment.

Confidence is a sign that love is mature.

“As he is, so are we”:

Jesus was God's Son in whom He was well pleased on earth; we also are God's children (3:11), and the objects of His gracious goodness.

If Jesus called God Father, so may we, since we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6).

In (verse 18), the same truth is stated negatively.

The love that builds confidence also banishes fears.

We love God and reverence Him, but we do not love God and come to Him in love, and at the same time, hide from Him in terror (Rom. 8:14-15; 2 Tim. 1:7).

Fear involves torment or punishment, a reality the sons of God will never experience, because they are forgiven.

To know this love gives us perfect confidence to stand before the Judge of the world on judgment day.

Perfect love knows no fear.

Fear is the opposite of faith.

When this love and faith becomes more and more, we become more like Jesus every day.

The world will be able to see Jesus in us, when this happens.

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."

It is impossible to please God, if we fear.

Fear is of the devil.

Faith is of God.

When we are overwhelmed by the love of God for us and our love for God, then there is no place for fear.

If God loves us, He will take care of us.

We have nothing to fear.

Those who are overcome with fear, have not experienced that perfect peace that comes from the perfection of our love for God and His love for us.

1 John 4:19 "We love him, because he first loved us."

He taught us how to love when He showed us by example.

He loved us, and showed us how to love Him.

1 John 4:20 "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

When I see this Scripture, I remember what Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it for the least of these, ye have done it unto me".

We cannot express our love for God directly, except in praise.

We cannot buy dinner for Jesus.

We can, however, buy dinner for someone who is hungry in the name of Jesus.

To express our love for God, we must express it through His children.

When we love our brothers on the earth, we are in turn loving Jesus who made them.

1 John 4:21 "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

This verse summarizes (chapter 4).

One cannot love God without first loving his fellow believer.

A claim to love God is a delusion if not accompanied by unselfish love for other Christians.

When we are filled with the love of God, it proceeds from us.

Whoever we are near gets the blessings of that overflowing love.

Love and hate are opposites and cannot dwell in the same place.

It is impossible to hate, when we are consumed with God's love.

We love all of God's creation, and that includes the brothers.

1 John Chapter 4 Questions

1. Beloved, believe not every _____.
2. Try the spirits whether they are of _____.
3. Why should we do this?
4. Who are the "beloved" in verse 1?
5. Who is the obligation on to determine whether the message is of God, or not?
6. What makes us qualified to judge the message?
7. What are some of the names that let us know the eternity of Jesus?
8. What about Jesus, died on the cross?
9. Jesus was Eternal _____ in the _____ of flesh.
10. What are some other names for Christ?
11. What name makes us know He was God with us?
12. Whose blood flowed through Jesus' body?
13. What is the spirit that denies Christ called?
14. What is the nature of Jesus?
15. What are the Christians called in verse 4?
16. What do the people of the world believe?
17. Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of _____.
18. God is _____.
19. How was God's love manifested to mankind?
20. Do not confuse love with _____.
21. _____ hath seen God at any time.
22. The Father sent the Son to be the _____ of the world.
23. What does the name Jesus mean?
24. What gives us perfect confidence on judgment day?
25. There is no _____ in love.

26. What is the opposite of fear?
27. Why do we love Him?
28. If a man says that he loves God and hates his brother, he is a _____.
29. It is impossible to hate, when we are consumed with God's _____.