



Perfecting Love

"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (I John 4:16).

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"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, 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. 19 We love him, because he first loved us. 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? 21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (I John 4:16-21).

The Apostle John revisited the theme of love in this text with a view to encouraging believers to strive for perfection in love. In these six verses he used the descriptive word "perfect" three times with respect to love, as a reminder of God's ultimate aim for believers. Although in this world, we may still have room for improvement, yet God always points us towards His ultimate target, and provides the grace to take us towards it, as evidenced in the following scriptures:

- 1) Matthew 5:48 - Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.
- 2) 1 Thessalonians 3:12 - And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:
- 3) 1 Thessalonians 4:9,10 - But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

By these God is reminding us to avoid the danger of settling on any plateau that we have arrived, but rather climb on towards the peak of attaining the perfection in love that will make us

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like He is. The key challenge is how we can achieve this in such a world as ours. Our text provide some clues that can help us on in this journey towards perfection in love.

- 1) Dwelling in love and allowing God to dwell in us (vs 16,17). It is often said that we are what we eat. In a similar way, it could be said that we become transformed into the image of who we allow to 'dwell in us'. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). The more we focus on God and obey His words, the more we become like Him.
- 2) Eradication of fear, shame and suspicion (vs 18). True love develops, grows and prospers in an atmosphere of trust, openness, transparency and integrity. The Bible says of Adam and Eve "... they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25).
- 3) Recognising the precedence and example set by God in loving us (vs 19). "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). When we were not qualified for it, God still loved us! We must not wait for others to qualify for our love before we love them!
- 4) Love must be practical and sacrificial in relation to other human beings (vs 20-21). "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18). We need to put ourselves in the 'shoes' of others in order to satisfy this condition.

The rewards of perfect love includes boldness, confidence and eternal life in God's presence (vs 17).