

Love's work in us, drives out fear - 1 John 4:13-21

1 John 4:13-21 NIV 13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 17 In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.
(1 John 4:13-21 NIV)

Introduction:

Love is dynamic. It is a living thing. Love is a force for change. Love drives out fear and replaces it with the confidence of one accepted, respected, appreciated!

Anyone touched by true love will never be the same again. Love has the power to transform us. Its very presence in our lives changes us in many ways. The dynamics of love produces many things in our lives that set us apart from people who have not experienced love.

Christians should be different. Often this difference is defined in outward and shallow ways, such as the keeping of rules and regulations. But the unique characteristic of a true Christian is not simply going through the proper motions on the outside, but rather displaying the proper disposition on the inside. What sets us apart should be that we reflect the character of Jesus Christ. The distinguishing characteristic of this character, is love.

So what is love doing in us? How is God changing us by this power of love? What resources are being shaped in us through experiencing the love of God? What difference does love make in our lives?

Love transforms us

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Love transforms us. It is impossible to be come across the love of God and be left unchanged. We have all felt the power of human love and have been impacted by it. Our lives have been transformed by even simple acts of love and kindness. Think what the renovating power of God's love does in us.

Firstly, love transforms us into the likeness of Christ. John says in verse 16, *God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him?* This is what God is after in each of us. This is, in fact, the goal for every Christian life: To be transformed into the image of Christ is the purpose God has for your life. The power of the Holy Spirit living in you is focused on transforming you into the likeness of Christ.

This is not something that God does before He accepts you. God doesn't change you so that He can love you. God loves you in order to change you. It is the transforming power of His love that makes this change possible. As you respond to his love, the life of God shows through more and more. It is as if it becomes more apparent that Jesus is living His life in you.

Secondly, love gives us confidence, because it testifies of Christ's life in us. In verse 17, John says, *in this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment, because in this world we are like him.*

Experiencing the love of Christ as He lives His life in us assures us that God is at work in us. This gives us great confidence. If God is at work in us, it is because we are God's children. We have been made part of His family. God loves us! There is nothing to fear in the Day of Judgment, because God loves us. Love gives us this confidence.

Thirdly, love drives out fear, **because it assures us that we have been accepted** by God. In verse 18, we read, there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, **because fear has to do with punishment**. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Love drives out fear. We don't have to be afraid anymore, because we have been accepted. The punishment of God is reserved for those who reject Him. We have received Him. We have responded to His love. We have been accepted into His family. That acceptance causes us to be able to live in peace. We are at peace with God and at peace with ourselves. We can make peace with others. We can relax. God loves us! Our relationship with God is not based on fear of punishment, but on the heartfelt knowledge of His love for us.

We are transformed from people who live in fear of punishment and rejection, into people who received the confidence of those who are loved.

Love empowers us to love

19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:19-21)

Love not only inspires and transforms us; love empowers us. There is something about love that we must never forget. Always remember that love is found in God. To say it in a different way: the source of love is God. In verse 19, we read, *we love because he first loved us*.

Love is displayed by loving. The evidence of love received, is loving one another. In verses 20 and 21 we read, *if anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother*.

What John is saying, is that true love is not manifested in words, it is shown by deeds. He gives us the illustration of someone claiming he loves God on the one hand and on the other hand, he hates his brother. He tells us this person is nothing but a liar. The reason why this is so, is because love is displayed by loving. Love is displayed by respect and acceptance. Love is displayed by doing good to those who are difficult to even like. God has given us His love, not simply that we can love Him, but that we can love each other. We must start with the brother or sister we can see. We must start with our spouse, our children, those working with us and even the difficult neighbour...

Appeal:

This is the challenge for us. What are the practical ways in which we can begin to show our love to one another? What acts of kindness can we do? What encouraging word can we say? What act of service can we perform? Think about that person you've had a hard time loving. Is there something you can do to show your love to that person in a practical way? If we accept this challenge, God's love will make a difference in our lives. God is at work in us through the power of His love.

Fear of rejection leaves those who are loved. We are loved by God. We need not fear rejection anymore. The gift of acceptance that we give to others will make God's unconditional love known to them too. *This is the Word of God.*

Amen.

Any comments regarding this sermon outline may be mailed to andries@centurionwest.co.za