

# (Through the Bible) 1 John 4

by Chuck Smith

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*In this sermon, Chuck Smith emphasizes the importance of discerning true and false spirits through the witness of Jesus Christ and the manifestation of love in our lives.*

**Duration:** 45:54

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:14-15, Matthew 19:21, Revelation 7:4

**Topics:** "Through The Bible"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the love of God as demonstrated through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. He highlights that God's love is not based on our love for Him, but rather on His own love for us. The preacher uses the example of a parable on forgiveness to illustrate the importance of showing love and forgiveness to others, just as God has shown love and forgiveness to us. He also explains that true life, according to the Bible, is having a deep fellowship and oneness with God, rather than simply physical existence.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn now in our Bibles to 1 John chapter 4? As we go back to verse 24 of chapter 3, the latter portion, Hereby we know that He abides in us by the Spirit which He has given us. I know that God abides in my life. How do I know? Because He has given me the Holy Spirit.

Paul said the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. We've been sealed, he said, with this Holy Spirit of promise. The seal was God's mark of ownership.

I belong to God. He's placed His stamp of ownership upon me. That is the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of our redemption or the down payment.

God's showing that He is sincere in His intention of total redemption for you has given you His Holy Spirit as sort of the down payment, earnest of our redemption until the redemption of the purchased possession. Now, as he begins chapter 4, he said, Don't believe every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God. Because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount, chapter 7 of Matthew's Gospel said, Beware of false prophets who will come to you as sheep or as wolves in sheep's clothing. And so it's hard to tell a false prophet by his looks.

He looks like a sheep.

One of the deceptive things is that we think that a false prophet is going to be false in everything he says. When oftentimes a false prophet will tell 90% truth. That's what makes them deceptive.

They say so much that is true. Satan came and he said a lot of things. Did God say that you can eat of all of the trees that are in the garden? Is that what God said? Yes, all the trees, but the one in the midst of the garden.

Jesus, when He was tempted by Satan, Satan said, Hey, it is written He will give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all of thy ways. But He took the Scripture out of context. Beware of false prophets.

How can I tell a false prophet? Basically, it comes down to what is their witness or testimony of Jesus Christ and what is the fruit of their ministry. Now, we are told not to believe every spirit, to try the spirits to see if they are of God, because there are many false prophets that are gone out into the world. There's a lot of false doctrine.

There are a lot of false prophets, and unfortunately, there are a lot of people following these false prophets. Beware when someone says, Now look, the Scripture is sort of a difficult book to understand. It's best that you not read the Bible.

Just read our books that explain the Bible for you. Because if you don't have our books to explain the Bible, it's just such a difficult book, you'll never understand it. So whenever they're peddling books and discouraging you and just going to the Word of God, beware.

We encourage you to get into the Bible and read the Bible, and I'm not afraid of anything. You'll come to believe by just reading the Bible. But you read some of these books, and I'll tell you, you're going to be led out into left field.

Sometimes people come up to me and they'll start off and they say, Have you ever thought about this? And they'll start off on some, you know, weird tangent. And I said, Where did you get that? Well, I was reading the Bible the other day, and I just thought, I said, Come on. Where did you get that? You didn't get that by reading the Bible.

And of course, it's some doctrine that's being espoused by Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons or something else. And their minds have started to question because they brought up a seeming problem or they've gotten hold of some of Herbert W. Armstrong's stuff. And I was just thinking, No, you weren't.

Someone planted that stupidity in your mind. You'd have never gotten that just reading the Bible. Now, God didn't say anything weird.

And if your interpretation of a Scripture is weird, then you've got the wrong interpretation. Mainly, God said what He meant. And if you just read the Bible, the Spirit of God will teach you the truth.

And you don't have to be worried about getting all a field of the truth when you just stick to the Word of God. But these people who have these weird twists, the reason why they say, Oh, don't read the Bible, you read our books, is you'll never come to these same weird twists that they have unless you read their books. You know, it's so outlandish.

You know, you read in Revelation, for instance, chapter 7, God seals 144,000 of the tribes of Israel. And then He begins to name the tribes, the tribe of Asher 12,000, Zebulun 12,000, so forth and so on. And so, because they do not want to recognize that God is going to be working with Israel again, they say, Oh, well, that is spiritual Israel.

That's really the church, you see, because we're spiritual Israel. Well, what spiritual tribe are you from? I mean, you see, you wouldn't get spiritual Israel by just reading Revelation, chapter 7. You've got to read that into it or have someone read it into you and then tell you, Well, that's what it really means. Oh, well, that's interesting.

I never saw that, you know. So try the spirits to see if they be of God. And basically, what is their testimony of Jesus Christ? And what is the fruit? Hereby do we know the Spirit of God.

Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. Now, that is more than just what meets the eye on the surface. Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, but Jesus is His name, which is a contraction of the Hebrew Jehovah-shuah.

Jah-shuah. Jah is the Hebrew contraction for Jehovah. Jah-shuah.

Shuah in Hebrew is salvation. Jehovah has become our salvation. Christ is the Greek for the Hebrew Mashiach, or the Messiah, the Anointed One.

So the testimony is that Jesus is Jehovah, our salvation, the Anointed Messiah, and that He is come in the flesh. And so it is a witness or a testimony of God coming in the flesh. And if that is not their witness, then they are a false prophet.

Now, they may say a lot of truth, and they may have a lot of fanciful stuff, but they are a false prophet when they deny the Deity of Jesus Christ, that He is indeed God come in the flesh, Jehovah-shuah, the Mashiach, who is come in the flesh. And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of Antichrist, wherever you have heard that it should come, and even now already is in the world. There is a great spirit of Antichrist in the world today.

A lot of people opposed to Jesus Christ. Now, you are of God, little children, you've overcome them, because greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world. You see, going back to verse 24 of chapter 3, God has given to us the Holy Spirit, who abides within us.

And greater is He that is in you than the spirit of Antichrist that is in the world. Now, they are of the world. Therefore, they speak of the world and the world hears them.

Their message is a popular message that the world enjoys hearing, but they deny the real power of God. Now, we are of God and He that knoweth God hears us, and He that is not of God does not hear us, and hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of air. First of all, we know it by their witness of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God, and he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. The second way I know the spirit of God is the fruit of the spirit in my life will be love. Love for one another.

Beloved, let us love one another. Love is of God, and it is the proof that the spirit that dwells in me is the spirit of God if the fruit is love coming forth from my life. Now, you say, well, I know I have the spirit of God because I speak in tongues.

You don't know any such thing. Tongues is not a proof that the spirit of God is abiding in you. Satan is able to counterfeit tongues.

The real proof that the spirit of God is abiding in you is love. The fruit of the spirit is love, and if I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and I have not love, it's no more meaningful than taking a cymbal and clanging on it and making a noise. It is a meaningless noise.

The proof is the love. So, Jesus said, when the Holy Spirit has come, He will bear witness of me. I know it is the spirit of God because of the witness that He is giving of Jesus Christ.

I know that it is the spirit of God because the fruit, the effects of it within my life is love. A great love for my brothers and sisters in Christ. A great love for the family of God and the things of God.

And if you can love me, you know you've got the spirit. Let us love one another for love is of God. Everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.

Now, this is the agape love. It isn't the gushy Hollywood junk that is passed off for love. It isn't even the phileo that we have within the strong family units.

But it is the agape. There is the love which is the eros. There is the love which is the phileo, deeper, emotional.

Whereas the eros is pretty much fleshly. The phileo is more involved with the emotions. But then there is a love that is of the deepest level and that's the agape and that's love in the spirit level.

Many people who fancy themselves to be in love are actually in eros. And it's too bad that in the English language we don't have a broader word. As do the Greeks.

You know, we have love and look what the word has to cover. Everything from peanuts to my grandkids or my wife. Hot fudge sundaes.

I love them all. But what I feel for a hot fudge sundae is far different than what I feel for my wife. But I've got one word.

Love them. Now, in the Greeks they had the different words for the different types of love. You have a, well, my love for hot fudge sundae I suppose would be eros.

It's a fleshly love. And it's too bad that we can't really define our love when we're communicating with each other. Because some of these young fellas that are going out with these girls, they whisper in their ear, I eros you, baby.

I have a strong sexual drawing to you. The eros in reality is pretty much self-centered. I like the relationship for what I get out of it.

I don't care what you get out of it. It's what I am getting. The satisfaction that I feel.

The phileo is a little deeper and it is more of a give and take reciprocal. I love you because we agree on so many things. And we can share and you can add to my understanding.

And you're interested in what I have to say. And it's a give and take. Like someone said, marriage is a 50-50 proposition.

I've never found that to be so, but that's what they say. It's more of a 75-25, but I won't tell you who has a 75. But agape is giving.

Now, because it is a word that was not used in classical Greek, a word pretty much coined for the New Testament by Jesus Himself. It is a word that then needed definition. You ever make up a new word, you've got to define the word so people will know what you're talking about when you use the word.

And that's what language is all about. It's a mutual agreement that a certain sound conveys a certain concept or idea. So, the word agape.

Two places in the New Testament this word is defined for us. The fruit of the Spirit is agape. What's agape? Joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, trust.

They're all evolved with agape. Paul defines it also in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Where he said, love suffers long and is kind.

Love envies not, bonds not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, doesn't seek its own. You see, it's not self-centered, it's other-centered. Believes all things, bears all things, hope all things.

It never fails. This is the agape love. It is that love that is reaching out and giving, not looking for the return.

Phileo looks for the return, agape doesn't look for the return. It doesn't keep an account. Well, you owe me one because, you know, I had you over to my house for dinner twice and I'm not asking you again until you ask me to your house, you know.

Reciprocal. No, that's not love. It doesn't keep the records.

It gives. Not keeping track of it. It gives because that's its nature of giving.

And that's the love that God wants us to possess. And that love proves to me that the Spirit that I have within me is indeed the Spirit of God. Because you can't love that way apart from God's Spirit.

And so, try the spirits to see if they're God. What is their witness of Jesus Christ? Does the spirit bear witness to me of Jesus? That he indeed is God manifested in the flesh? Does he bring forth fruit of love in my life? That indeed it is the Spirit of God. That's something that Satan can't really counterfeit.

Now, he that loveth not knoweth not God, because God is love. And so, this word is used to define the nature of God. God is love.

In this was manifested the love of God towards us. Because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. How do you know that God loves you? Oh, I go out and I commune with nature.

Does nature tell you God loves you? When you're out communing with nature, do you see the coyotes? Jumping on that poor little rabbit and tearing it to pieces. Oh, God is love. Nature tells me so.

I see the lions tearing at the gazelles. God is love. I see the rattlesnake coiled, ready to strike.

God is love. Well, nature doesn't tell me that God is love. Because you see, I am looking at fallen nature.

I see nature as it is cursed by sin. I don't see nature as God created it. I don't see the lion lying down with the lamb, eating straw like the ox.

I don't see nature as it was created by God. I see it as it has fallen as the result of man. Cursed.

So fallen nature cannot testify or tell me of the love of God. Then how can I know God loves me? God does not seek to prove His love to you except in one place, and that's sufficient. It is sufficient so that you should never ever doubt the love of God again.

If ever Satan questions, and he often does challenge, well, if God loves you, then why did God allow this? If God really loves you, then why would God, you see, and he often is challenging the fact of God's love. And often he can put forth some pretty powerful evidence that God doesn't love me because look at the mess I'm in. So whenever Satan begins to challenge the love of God and you start to go under, look at the cross.

For therein God demonstrated His love for you once and for all. And he says, hey, you question my love, just look at the cross. God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son.

Here in His love, not that we love God, but that God loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. God manifested His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. And this was manifested, the love of God towards us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.

And so there is where God manifested His love. In sending His Son into this world, He loved you so much. He desired fellowship with you so much that He sent His Son into this world to die in your place, to take away your sins in order that you might have fellowship with God.

And so herein God has manifested His love there at the cross. And the whole purpose of God is that you might live. And again, the biblical definition of living is actually having fellowship or being one with God.

If you are one with God, you're living. If you're not one with God, you're dead. Now, man has a different concept.

If you're breathing, you're living. If your brain is working, you're living. So you go in the hospital, you lapse into a coma, the stroke has damaged a portion of your brain that controls your breathing, and so they connect up the oxygen.

They put on the EEG. They watch the monitor. They see little flickers.

Now, you're lying there. People say, Oh, speak to me. How are you? Tell me.

No response. They pinch you. Nothing.

But the monitor says, Hey, yeah, when they pinched, look, registered on the monitor. They felt it. Oh, they're still alive.

But when the monitor goes flat, pinch them, nothing happens. No brainwave activity. No consciousness.

Doctor says, well, they're gone. The consciousness has left the body. They're dead.

Not so from the Bible. You may be going through all the functions of life tonight, but if your consciousness is separated from God, the Bible says you are dead. Jesus came that we might have life.

That is, that we might have that oneness with God, that life of God, which is real life, age-abiding, eternal life. Now, herein is love. Not that we love God.

And some people think that they're doing such a big favor and a big deal when they say, Oh, I love God. So what? The only thing that it proves is you're not a fool. Because you have every reason to love God.

And that's no big deal that you should love God. He's so lovable. What is the big deal is that God loves you when He knows you so thoroughly and so completely.

As David said, Lord, you have searched me, you have known me, you know my down-sittings, my uprisings, you understand my thoughts and their origins. Such knowledge, you said, is too wonderful for me. I can't attain it.

What? Self-knowledge. I don't know myself. But God knows me.

He knows me completely. And yet He loves me. Herein is love.

Not that we love God, but that He loved us. And that He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He sent His Son to take the guilt of our sins that had separated us from God and to bear in His own body our sins on the cross in order that God's righteousness might be propitiated in order that God could receive the sinful me one with Himself.

That's love. That God would make Him to be sin for me who knew no sin that I might be made the righteousness of God through Him in order that being now the righteousness of God that I can have fellowship with God and can become one with God and have life through Jesus Christ. Now, if God so loved us, then we ought to love one another.

We are often exhorted in the Scriptures to Christ as our example in forgiveness and Christ our example in love. And that we are to love as He loved and forgive as He forgave. Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

What should be my measure of forgiveness? God's forgiveness for me. Jesus said, love one another even as I have loved you. Now that's a pretty big order.

And yet that is what God requires of us and that's what God's Spirit will do in us as we are filled and I can know that it is the Spirit of God because of the love that He has given to me. So here in His love, not my love for God, but God's love for me in sending His Son to take my sins and to die for my guilt in order that God's righteousness might be propitiated and He can receive me in fellowship. If God so loved me, then I ought to love one another.

Jesus gave a parable on forgiveness of this certain man who had a servant that owed him 16 million dollars. And he called him in and he said, your note's due. Pay me what you owe me.

And he said, oh, I don't have it yet. I need some more time. Could you give me some more time? And he says, oh, that's alright.

Forget it. I'll forgive your debt. He went out and got a fellow servant that owed him 16 bucks.

He said, hey, you promised to pay. Now time's up. Pay me what you owe me.

And the fellow said, oh, I don't have it right now, but if you give me a few days, I'll get it for you. Oh no, you've had enough time. And he had him thrown in debtor's prison.

And the Lord of that servant heard of what he had done and he called him in and he said, hey, how much did you owe me? 16 million bucks. Didn't I forgive the debt? Yeah. Oh, I appreciate that.

How is it then that I hear that you had a fellow servant thrown in jail for a 16 dollar debt? Oh, well, he owed it to me. And Jesus is using the ludicrous amounts to illustrate how much God has forgiven me. The whole debt of sin.

God has forgiven me. And yet, someone has done me some wrong and I'll tell you, I'm not going to forget it. And I'm going to get even the first chance I get.

And I'll not forget that. And here I'm holding this against my brother because he slighted me or he's done me some injury and I just can't get over it, you know. And God says to me, how much did I forgive you? Oh, parcel, Lord.

A load. Well, how is it then that you're holding ought against your brother because of this little offense against you? Love as he loved. Forgive as he forgave.

That's the lesson that we learn. If God so loved us, then we ought to love one another. Now, no man has seen God at any time.

What about Moses? Well, I have to believe that no man has seen God at any time. And what about Moses? Well, he saw the afterglow. God says, hey, you can't see me and live.

You get here in the rock, I'll pass by. And when I pass by, then you can look out and see, you know, the afterglow. And that radiated him to the extent that he had to put a veil over his face.

The blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. But before I can see God, I've got to have a new body. This old body just couldn't take it.

No man has seen God at any time. But if we love one another, God dwells in us. And his love is perfected in us.

And that is the work of the Holy Spirit within our lives, perfecting in us the love of God. And as I yield to the Spirit, and as I am filled with the Spirit, that work of the Spirit in me ultimately is to perfect God's love within my life. That I will indeed love as He loved.

And hereby we know that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit. That was the same thing He said basically in verse 24 of chapter 3. Hereby we know that He abides in us by the Spirit which He has given us. Hereby we know that we dwell in Him.

We know that He abides in us by the Spirit, and we also know that we dwell in Him by the Spirit that He has given to us. Now how do we know what we know? And so here we're coming across several of these hereby we know's. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the

world.

Now you remember pre-Christmas out of chapter 1 dealt with the purpose of the coming of Jesus Christ to bring us into fellowship with God. That was from the beginning, which we have seen, which we have heard, which we have touched. We declared unto you that you might have fellowship with us.

And truly our fellowship was with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. The purpose of His coming. Chapter 3, to take away our sins.

Now here again He gives you another purpose of His coming that He might be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in Him and He in God. The confession that Jesus is indeed the Son of God.

Not a son of God. As the Mormons would make Him one of many. The Son of God.

Or as the Jehovah Witnesses would make Him a son of God. But if your testimony is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God dwells in Him and He in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

For God is love. And He that dwelleth in love dwells in God and God in Him. So, dealing with the proofs.

How can we know the Spirit? There is a lot of false prophets in the world. Believe not every spirit. Satan is able to come as an angel of light to deceive.

How can I know it's the Holy Spirit dwelling in me? The fruit, the love. God is love. His Spirit in me will be manifested in love.

And herein is our love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment because as He is, so are we in the world. Again, Christ our example in love. As He is, so are we.

How is He in the world? Loving. How many times do you read Jesus looked upon them and had compassion upon them? And rather than looking and turning away with a cold, calloused indifference, if Christ is really dwelling in us, we also will be moved with compassion over the needs of people. Herein is our love made perfect we might have boldness in the day of judgment.

When God's love is perfected in me, I don't have to fear the judgment seat of God at all. Boldness in the day of judgment. Why? Because I'm in Christ.

I'm secure. Now there is no fear in love. If fear has gripped your heart, it's because God's love is not perfected in you.

You're not totally assured that God loves you. I'm not really sure that this is going to work for good. This may destroy me.

This may be the end of my road. This may be all she wrote. This looks bad.

I don't see any way out. What am I going to do? Well, you see, if God's love were perfected, if you really knew that God loved you, so totally loved you, that whatever and anything that may happen to you can only happen because God allows it to happen and He loves you supremely, then I don't worry about what happens to me. Man, what a mess.

But I know God loves me, and so He's going to work it out some way or other, you know. They just foreclosed, took away my house, but you know, God loves me and He's going to work out something, you know. Oh, the confidence that comes when I know that God loves me and His love is perfected in me.

I can accept what comes without fear. Perfect love casts out all fear. He that fears experiences this torment.

Fear is a very tormenting thing. And he that fears is not yet made perfect in love. Now, we love Him because He first loved us.

Again, God is the initiator and man is the respondent. Beware of teaching that would make man the initiator and God the respondent. And that is a very popular teaching within many churches even.

I heard that teaching for years. In fact, I taught it for a long time. We should initiate so that God can respond.

We need to fast so that God can respond to our fasting. We need to praise the Lord so that the Lord can respond to our praises and blesses. We need to give to God so that God can respond and give back to us.

And we make man the initiator and God the respondent. But in reality, God is the initiator and I am the respondent. And so my praises are not to bring a blessing of God upon my life.

My praises are because of the blessings of God that are so abundant and bountiful I can't handle it. Oh, Lord, You're good. I love You.

Lord, I praise You. Oh, thank You, Lord. And you see, I am responding to the grace of God that I have experienced.

God has initiated His love and His grace towards me. I love Him because He first loved me. I'm only responding to this love.

But I must know God if I'm going to be able to respond to Him. I must know the love of God. I must know the grace of God.

I must know the goodness of God. I must know it all in Christ. And then when I know it, I respond to it.

But it's hard to respond to something that you're not aware of. So, God the initiator. God loved us first.

I respond to that. I love Him because He first loved me. Now, if a man say, now, this is the seventh thing we've found that men are prone to say.

And this is a great thing. If a man say, I love God. Isn't that beautiful? We ought to all be able to say that.

We all should be saying that. I love God. We should be able to say that.

I'm not putting down saying that. We all ought to be saying that. But if a man says it and hates 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? Like Snoopy said, I love the world. It's just people I hate. But I can't say I love God and yet hate my brother.

That's an inconsistency. This commandment we have from Him that he who loves God love his brother also. Jesus was questioned by a lawyer as to what the greatest commandment was.

And Jesus said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. And the second is likened to the first. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

And on these two are all the law and commandments. But you see, Jesus tied immediately in the love of my neighbor for my love for God. Remember when this rich young ruler came to Jesus and knelt at His feet and said, Good Master, what good thing must I do to inherit age-abiding life? And Jesus said, Why do you call me good? There's only one good and that's God.

But keep the commandments. Which ones? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery and so forth.

Lord, all these I've kept from my youth up. What do I lack yet? Well, he said, if you're going to be perfect, then go sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor. Come and follow me.

You'll have great treasures in heaven. And he went away sorrowful because he had great riches. Now, he had just said, Lord, I've kept all these commandments from my youth up.

You know, I haven't stolen. I haven't committed adultery. I haven't lied against my neighbor and so forth.

Kept all this from my youth. All right, now, what is the real commandment? Love your neighbor as yourself. Now, here you are.

You're very wealthy. You have more than what you can eat. More than what you need.

And here's your neighbor and he's starving. But you're not willing to help him. Well, you then don't love your neighbor as yourself.

So, you may say, oh, I love God and I keep all the commandments. But when you come down to a practical example, no, you're not keeping the commandment. So, it isn't what I say.

But it is my deed that expresses the reality of my experience.

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