

Ministry From 1 John 4

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of discerning truth from error through the lens of God's love and sound doctrine in his sermon on 1 John 4.

Duration: 45:27

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 2:1, 1 John 4:6-7, 1 John 4:18

Topics: "Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of love and giving in the Christian faith. He contrasts love with lust, stating that love is manifested through giving, while lust is focused on getting. The preacher highlights the ultimate act of love by God, who gave His only Son for the salvation of the world. He also addresses the fear of judgment at the moment of death, reassuring believers that if they have faith in Christ, they do not need to fear judgment because His love casts out fear. The sermon concludes with a reminder to test the spirits and discern false prophets, emphasizing the importance of confessing Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh.

Transcript

Chapter 4. I hope you all have a Bible to follow along. If you don't, maybe some of your neighbors will share one with you. 1 John, chapter 4, and verse 1. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming and is now already in the world.

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world, that is, the false teachers. They are of the world, therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.

We are of God. He who knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us.

By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. And this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

We have seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us.

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.

But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love, we love him, because he first loved us. Someone says, I love God and hate his brother.

He's a liar. For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen? This commandment we have from him, that he who loves God must love his brother also. When John says in verse 1, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, that word spirit, when we think of a spirit, we think of some intangible, mystical thing floating around in space.

But the word spirit here refers to people, it refers to men especially. How do you know? Because it says many false prophets have gone out into the world. So when he writes, we do not believe every spirit, don't believe every teacher that comes along.

First of all, you have to test them, because this world is filled with people who are teaching false doctrines. How do you know? Well, of course, this is a great test. You test people according to the word of God.

And if their teaching corresponds to the word of God, then you know that they're of the truth. For instance, if you turn on your radio someday and you hear a man preaching that salvation is by grace, by the grace of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and apart from works, you know that he's true. You know that he's a true servant of the Lord.

How would you know a false teacher? Well, there are a lot of ways you'd know a false teacher. Let me go over some of them. First of all, many false teachers deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They deny that he is God. They preach a gospel of works. They preach that you get to heaven by things that you do, or by your character.

And, of course, this is the greatest heresy in the world today, that man reaches heaven by his own efforts. What it really means is that Jesus didn't have to die on a cross. If you can earn your own salvation or deserve your own salvation, it means the Lord Jesus wasted his life.

He threw it away at the cross of Calvary. You'll find, generally speaking, that false teachers downplay sin. Sin is not a popular word with them.

I remember standing at the door of a place where a seminar was being given one day, and a man said, pointing his finger with Shakespearean flourish, he said, if you make people feel guilty because of their

sin, you have sinned, he said. Well, that's typical of a false teacher. A false teacher wants people to have a good self-esteem, you know.

He wants them to feel good about themselves. And many of them will even tell you that you have God, you know, almost you are gods. Some even teach that today, which of course is utter nonsense.

False teachers generally downplay moral obligations. That is a life of holiness. They generally do.

And something that is very typical of false teachers is they mix truth and error. This is one of Satan's greatest ploys. He mixes truth with error, and that makes it very confusing for people.

Well, they say, he said that, and we know that's true. Yeah, but a lot of the other things he said aren't true as well. A false prophet generally promises prosperity in a time of spiritual declension and moral evil.

That was typical like of the prophets in the Old Testament. I mean, the nation was on the skids in the Old Testament. The nation of Israel was going down, down, down into idolatry and every other form of sin.

Even to the extent they were taking their babies and offering them to a false god in a furnace. That's how low they got in the Old Testament. And the prophets rose up and they said, peace, peace, you know, nothing but good ahead for us.

We're on God's side, and God is going to bless us. It's typical of false teachers to promise prosperity in a time of spiritual declension. It's typical of false teachers to have an awful lot to say about money.

And, of course, that's what gives the church today a very, very bad name by men arising. And you don't blame people for saying all the church wants is your money, you know. It's typical of false teachers.

It says in Philippians chapter 3, whose God is their belly. Whose God is their belly. Many of them are in the ministry, so-called, for what they're going to get out of it, you know.

Whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things. Somebody said, their life is all kitchen and no chapel. It's true.

It's true of many false teachers. Their life is all kitchen and no chapel. And then, of course, an awful lot of false teachers add to the Word of God.

We've seen that before as we've been going through. The Word of God for them is not sufficient, and so they have to add certain things. We believe that we have in this book the complete Word of God.

God has spoken in this book. And so, John is telling his readers and us, and I believe everybody that comes along, you have to test them by the Word of God. One of the great tests, of course, when a false teacher comes to your door, is to ask that question, is Jesus God? It would be interesting to see them squirm when you ask them that.

Is Jesus God? They say, well, he's the Son of God. I didn't ask you that. Is Jesus God? And if they're honest, many of them will have to say, no, he's not.

He's not God. Those are some of the marks of a false teacher. Beloved, do not believe every spirit.

Test the spirits. That means try them. Put them to the test, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

And incidentally, the Lord Jesus predicted that as the time of his coming drew near, that the number of these people would multiply greatly. And false messiahs would come. People professing to be the Christ, you know.

And so he said, if you hear a rumor that he's out in the wilderness, don't go out looking. He won't come that way. He won't come the way Jesus.

By this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. Of course, this is the great doctrinal test.

Once again, when it says every spirit, it means every person. Every person who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. What is this confession? Well, first of all, it's not just saying something with your mouth, not doing that.

You know, in order to become a Muslim, you have to say, there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet. That's all you have to do is say that. I just said it, but I'm not a Muslim.

And what I'm trying to point out is, a confession must mean more than the word of your lips, you know. It must mean your whole heartfelt belief. That's what John is speaking about here.

It's not just saying, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I mean, the devils believe and tremble, it says in James, doesn't it? They know. The devils know.

The demons know all of that truth. And you can say those things, but God wants the heartfelt confession of the whole person. This is what I stand for.

Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Now, there are two things, there are two great truths here. Jesus stands for his humanity.

And that means the confession must agree that the Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly human. Perfectly human. And then Christ is the word for Messiah.

That means the anointed of God. And of course, the Old Testament scriptures predicted that the Messiah would be God. The mighty God.

The everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. And so, in this confession, I believe you have the humanity and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And of course, primarily here, the humanity that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Remember, we mentioned earlier in some of the messages that many of these false teachers in John's day, they made a separation between Jesus and the Christ. They said Jesus was the man and the Christ was a spirit being that came out from heaven and landed on Jesus.

But John is saying Jesus and the Christ are one and the same person. And what he's saying is that that baby born in Bethlehem was the anointed of God, the Messiah. The Savior of the world, the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

Then he goes on to give the opposite, which we've come to expect in 1 John. Here you have the positive. Next you have the negative.

Verse 3. Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. So, what you believe is very important, isn't it? Very, very important. That's where God begins.

God begins with your doctrine. Get your doctrine straight. Then pattern your life after your doctrine.

But if your doctrine's wrong, your life will be wrong too. Now, he says this denial that Jesus is the Christ, that's the spirit of antichrist. And that's what's going to happen.

After the church is taken out at the rapture, a great world leader is going to arise known, we call him the antichrist or the man of lawlessness. He's going to be a ruler who is the very embodiment of sin. He's going to be energized and powered by Satan.

He'll be able to perform miracles. And he will demand worship in the place of Christ and against Christ. He will profess to be the true Christ.

And so John is saying that spirit is already in the world. It doesn't say that the man is already in the world, although he could be. He could be a baby in the world today.

But it's the spirit of the antichrist which you heard was coming and is now already in the world. And now he speaks a word of comfort to those true believers to whom he was writing, You are of God, little children, and have overcome them. Overcome whom? Overcome the false teachers.

How did they overcome them? By refusing to listen to their teachings, that's how. By refusing to be duped by them. You have overcome them.

By what power did they overcome them? Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. In other words, when you're saved, you receive the Holy Spirit of God. And the Holy Spirit of God enables you to distinguish between truth and error.

Using the word of God, of course. Using the word of God. It's not just subjective, but it's the definite testimony of the word of God.

He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. So the power of victory, in verse 4, is the indwelling Holy Spirit. And by refusing to listen to the false teachers, these little children, that's a designation for true believers, they have overcome the false teachers.

When he says in verse 5, they are of the world, the they refers to the false teachers. This is very interesting. They are of the world, therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears.

What that's saying is that their message really conforms very well to the spirit of the age. They're saying to people what people want to hear. They don't rattle people's cages in that sense.

They don't come preaching that judgment is coming, and if you don't trust Christ as your Savior, you will stand before God naked and be judged for your sins and for your refusal. They don't preach like that. They speak as of the world.

And it's worldly wisdom, too. It's not divine wisdom that they preach, and the world hears them. That's an interesting thing, isn't it? That in our unsaved condition, we're more apt to receive error than we are to receive truth.

That's part of the result of the entrance of sin into the world. That error is really more appealing to us in our unsaved state. When you say, how does anybody ever get saved? By the spirit of God working in his life.

It's a miracle of the spirit of God, a miracle of the spirit of God, to get a person to refuse that type of thinking and then accept Christ as his Savior. We are of God. Now, when it says in verse 6, we are of God, John is speaking of one of the apostles.

One of the apostles. Why? Well, because it was the prophets and the apostles of the New Testament period that gave us this. And I think it's kind of important to see this.

It doesn't mean that anybody who professes to be a Christian can take this verse, say, we are of God, he who knows God hears us, he who is not of God does not hear us. We are only trustworthy, we ourselves are only trustworthy when we declare the word of God. When our message is based upon the word of God.

But these are the men that we, that's the men who gave us the New Testament. And when they gave us the New Testament, they wrote down the very words that God gave them to write down. That's what we mean by the inspiration of the scriptures.

That word inspiration means God breathed. It means breathed of God. And that's what the scripture teaches us.

The Bible is the God breathed scripture. Holy men of God, Peter says, spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. That's wonderful, isn't it? And then Paul in 1 Corinthians 2 says, which things we speak, not in the wisdom which man teaches, but which God teaches, comparing spiritual things.

And he says it's the very words that they wrote down. And the original manuscripts were the words that God gave them to write down. So this is the word of God.

Somebody said to me recently, it would be interesting to have a sign out in front of the chapel on Sunday and say, God will speak here next Sunday. Well, if the word of God is taught, that would be true, wouldn't it? That would be true. Whenever the word of God is read, God is speaking.

God is speaking to our hearts through the word of God. So although the sign would be rather shocking, it might arouse interest. So John says, speaking as one of the apostles, we are of God.

He who knows God hears us. Why? Because they were giving the truth of God, that's why. They were giving the word of God.

And we have it. We have it in the scriptures. Incidentally, we don't need apostles today because we have their ministry enshrined for us in the New Testament scriptures.

We believe that the apostles have largely passed off the scene. There are men today who carry on what we might call an apostolic ministry. But in the first sense of the word apostle, sent ones, they have gone after they finish their work of giving us the New Testament.

He who knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

How do you distinguish between truth and error? Go back to the word of God every time. It's the only way you can ever know. It's really interesting to listen to a talk show on the radio nowadays, isn't it? And maybe some subject will come up.

And everybody is giving his own opinion, and they don't all agree, do they? I mean, it becomes confusion, worse confounded when you listen to one of those programs. Because everybody thinks what's right in his own eyes. Human opinion.

Well, we turn away from human opinion. We want to go to the word of God and believe what the scripture teaches of absolute importance. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

By what? By the word of God and by the spirit of God who teaches the word of God to us. Did God intend the word of God for everybody or just for people who wear ecclesiastical garments? He intended it for everyone. That little expression there, little children, refers to all the family of God.

Everybody in the family of God. God did not want this book to be bound by chains. He wanted it to be the inheritance of all the people.

Thank God. Beloved, let us love. Now he changes it.

He's going to the subject of love. And as we said before, love is the hallmark of a true believer in the Lord Jesus. Let me just explain a little about love.

Because you might read that and say, well, I love. People do love. Everybody loves in a certain sense.

But when love is used in 1 John, it's a supernatural love. It's an otherworldly love. It's something that an unsaved person cannot do.

It's something that a Christian cannot do in his own strength. It's something you can only do as empowered by the spirit of God. Love here in the New Testament is more a matter of the will than of the emotions.

When we think of love today, you think, well, it's an emotional thing. It's something like the flu. It comes on you.

Something like that. But that's not the way it is here. Love is a matter of the will here.

And we are commanded to love one another. So that shows that it's within our power to do it if we are born-again believers. The marvelous thing about this love is that it doesn't depend on any quality or response in its object.

For instance, when God loved us, there was nothing in us that would call forth his love. There was no reason why he should love us, to tell you the truth. He didn't love us in hope of gaining something.

He loved us because he loved us. That's the only explanation you'll ever get for God's love. He loved us because he loved us.

The love that John is talking about here is a love that goes out to the unlovely. Human love can go out to the lovely. God's love goes out to the unlovely.

And not only that, it goes out to one's enemies. Now it's getting tough, isn't it? I mean, it's okay to love your friends, but to love your enemies, to love your persecutors, that's really love, isn't it? Love thinks of others and not of self. And it repays insults with kindness.

Well, that's not natural, friend. No, of course it's not natural. Of course it's not natural.

And this is what will make an impact upon the world. Love hides the faults of other people. Hides the faults of other people.

And Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians, it's more wonderful than the most spectacular gifts that you can have. Now, people talk today in the evangelical world about gifts. Gifts of healing, gifts of miracles, and all of this.

Gifts of tongues, isn't it? Well, my Bible tells me that love is more wonderful than any of those things at all. And it's the thing, as I say, that will make an impact on people. It's contrasted to lust.

Lust cannot wait to get. Love cannot wait to give. And love manifests itself in giving.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. So frequently in the New Testament, when you have the word love, it's quickly followed by the word give.

Give and it shall be given unto you. In one of the greatest sections on the subject of love, Luke chapter 6, it says, Give and it shall be given unto you, a good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over. It's really wonderful.

The concept that the world wouldn't know anything about. It makes a tremendous impact on the world when they see this kind of thing. I'm sure I've told you the story of Paul Sandberg.

Paul lived down in Southern California. He's a great singer, and he sang for many years with the Haven of Rest Quartet. One day, dear, Paul went into a diner, and he sat down on a stool there in the diner and ordered his coffee.

There was a young fellow next to him named Freddy. And Paul struck up a conversation with Freddy. And Freddy needed the Lord.

He knew he needed the Lord. And Paul Sandberg witnessed to him. And in the course of time, Freddy trusted the Lord Jesus as his Savior, and he was saved.

And after that, he was stricken with a terminal illness. And Paul kept in touch with him. He was constantly in touch with him.

Finally, Freddy had to go to a convalescent hospital. It wasn't too nice. There was a bad smell when you went into the hospital.

The bedding wasn't kept clean. I guess the poor people were just overworked. I don't know.

So Paul used to go there. I mean, he's kind of a famous singer down in Sony, Cal, and throughout the country, Haven of Rest Quartet. He used to go to the convalescent hospital, and he'd take care of Freddy.

He'd change the sheets and his clothes and all the rest. And the night Freddy died, Paul Sandberg was holding him in his arms, whispering verses of Scripture into his ear. I want to tell you, that's love.

That's love. He won this dear fellow to the Lord and ushered him into eternity. That's what the Lord is speaking about here.

It's so easy to read these verses, you know, and say, oh, yes, yes, that's what we always do. But is it? Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God.

Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Like father, like son, is what John is saying here. If you have the divine nature in you, you have the capacity for doing this, and now he is urging you to do it.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. Now, you have to realize, when you read a verse like that, he's not talking about just natural affection. Because everybody has natural affection.

I mean, even that man that they put to death in San Quentin, he had natural affection. But that's not what he's speaking about here. He's speaking about the divine, supernatural, otherworldly love that only a believer can do as empowered by the Spirit of God.

In this, the love of God was manifested. I'm just going to give you an example of the love. In this, the love of God was manifested toward us that God sent his only begotten Son into the world.

That we might live through him. Wow. That's love, friends.

That's the ultimate in love. When it says his only begotten Son, it means his unique Son. His unique Son.

God has many sons. All believers in the Lord Jesus, men and women, are called sons of God. We're all sons of God by faith in the Lord Jesus.

That is all believers. But Jesus is a Son in a unique way. He's his Son from all eternity.

And God sent his only begotten Son into the world. We might live through him. That expression, sent his only begotten Son, implies the pre-existence of the Lord Jesus.

Doesn't it? He didn't begin at Bethlehem. But God sent him into the world. That we might live through him.

What does it mean, live through him? It means have eternal life through him. That trusting him as Lord and Savior, we have everlasting life. And this is love.

Not that we love God. We didn't. If you think back to your unsaved state, you didn't love God.

That's interesting. I was thinking of that this morning. When you meet somebody and want to witness to them, an interesting question to ask them is Do you love God? And you might as well hit them with a two-by-four.

Now that's funny, isn't it? That's funny that a simple question like that would arouse such... Before he's saved, he doesn't. And he's kind of shocked that you would ask him such a question as that. Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

What does that mean? Well, it is deep language, I know. But all it means is that when the Lord Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, he died to perfectly satisfy God's claims against us. In other words, his death paid

the penalty for our sins.

But we have to accept it. We have to accept it. It's not just enough that he did it.

His sacrifice was adequate. His sacrifice was enough. But that doesn't mean that everybody's saved.

Each of us has to come individually and say, I do accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. And that must be the confession of our whole life, not just of our lips. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another.

That follows as night follows day. No, this is interesting. No one has seen God at any time.

If we love one another, God abides in us and his love has been perfected in us. No one has seen God at any time. Of course, that's true.

God is spirit. Jesus taught that to the woman at the well, John 4. No one has seen God. That expression is only used two times in the New Testament.

The other time is in John 1.18. Would you turn back to John 1.18? It says, no one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him. Now, that's interesting.

In John 1.18, it says, nobody's seen God at any time. But when men looked on the Lord Jesus, they saw God. He has fully declared God.

Fully declared what God is like. Now, it's quite a different thought in 1 John 4. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love has been perfected in us.

You see, the Lord Jesus has left. He's gone back to heaven. And now, the way that the world sees God is through believers.

They saw God when Jesus was here on earth as a man. He's not here on earth as a man anymore. He's in heaven.

And now, God wants it that we're the ones that tell the world what God is like. How? By these lives of love. And if we love one another, God abides in us.

That is, we are manifesting God so that people look at believers and say, There's something different about them. I remember what that guy was like before he was saved. Man, the difference that has come into his life since he's been saved.

He's just a different person. That's what it's saying. God abides in us.

We are manifesting his love and his love has been perfected in us. What does that mean, perfect? That word perfect so often in the Bible means mature. It doesn't mean sinless.

But it means that God's will is reaching its goal in us when we love one another. This is part of God's will for us. And God's will has been perfected.

It has reached its goal in us when we love one another. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit. Given us of his spirit.

Probably the new nature that he has given to us. And we have seen and testified that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. I love that verse.

First of all, it teaches the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it teaches that he lived from all eternity. Father sent the Son as Savior of the world.

And this is our testimony as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. One who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.

Now once again, it's not just saying the words. That never saved anybody, just saying the words. But it means the committal of my life to him as the Son of God, as the unique Son of God.

As the one who died as my substitute on the cross of Calvary. And so God abides in him and he in God. Well, you can hardly describe a closer relationship than that, can you? This is true of every born-again person.

Everyone who's been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love.

He who abides in love abides in God and God in him. John is ringing the changes on this. Show the importance of love.

We've seen love in two previous chapters in this epistle. And now he's going over it all again to remind us how very, very important it is. Now I just want to point especially to verses 17 and 18 because I think they're wonderful.

Love has been perfected among us in this. Once again, it's reaching its goal in us. And incidentally, that doesn't mean your love.

It means his love. That's very important to see that. It's not my love for God.

My love for God is not worth talking about. But God's love to me has reached one of its goals. It has many goals.

But it has reached this goal in me. That I may have boldness. That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.

What does it mean? It means I know that God loves me. I know he sent his son to die for me. I know that the Lord Jesus paid the penalty for all my sins on the cross of Calvary.

I know that he bore the judgment that my sins deserved. And what does that do? It gives me boldness in the day of judgment. What does that mean? It means that I know that there's no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

I know that God will never require payment for my sins because Christ bore the penalty for my sins. Christ paid the penalty for my sins. That's what it means to have boldness in the day of judgment.

Because as he is, so are we in this world. What does that mean? Well, as he is, that means judgment is all behind him. Calvary is all past.

He's never going to die again. That gives me great boldness in the day of judgment. I can say there is no condemnation.

There's no hell for me. The torment and the fire in my eyes will never see. I'm in Christ, and as he is, so are we in this world.

This is what gives the believer confidence with regard to the future. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. In other words, when I know that God loves me the way he loves me, and he's paid such a price for my eternal salvation, I don't have that fear.

I'm just in a peaceful condition with God. I don't have to have any fear. When it says perfect love casts out fear, once again, it's his perfect love, not mine.

It's his perfect love to me, manifest in the cross of Calvary. That's what casts out fear, because fear involves torment. Now, I have a clipping here from Time Magazine some years ago, and it made me very sad to read this.

The heading says, as Paul, that is, Pope Paul, turns 80, bishops speculate on the future. It may have been a birthday celebration, but the words were tinged with melancholy. And he said, this is what the Pope said, We feel the fragility of human life.

Pope Paul VI told a crowd of 100,000 in St. Peter's Square last week on the day before he turned 80. And this is a quote, and this is what really saddened me, The fear of God's judgment at the moment of death is always present and full of mystery. My word, I wish I could have got to that man before he died and read 1 John 4, verses 17 and 18.

And just hold him in love. You don't have to have fear at the time of death. If you know that Christ is your Savior, if you know that he has paid the price, you don't have to fear about judgment.

Judgment's behind you. Grace and glory lie before all the billows rolled o'er Jesus. There they spent their utmost part.

He says, the fear of God's judgment at the moment of death is always present and full of mystery. Well, read that now, and in contrast, read verses 17 and 18. Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness the day of judgment.

Because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love. His perfect love casts out my fear.

It's nice to put the pronouns in there, isn't it? I think it helps to clarify the meaning of the verse. His perfect love casts out my fear, because fear involves torment. And it does, you know.

The only possible way of salvation, where you don't have to have fear, is when your salvation is a gift of God, by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and apart from work. If your salvation depends on you, just even that much, you've got plenty of reason to fear. But when your salvation depends on God entirely, there's no reason to fear.

Because Christ cried on the cross at Calvary, it is finished. He finished the work for our redemption. Don't try to add to a finished work.

He who fears has not been made perfect in love. If you look at death with a terrible fear and a judgment volume, love hasn't reached its goal in you. And what you really need is to bow your knee to Jesus Christ and say, as Thomas said, my Lord and my God.

And then John says we love because he first loved us. And that's certainly true. We didn't take the initiative in this matter, did we? If God had just left us to go our own foolish way, we'd have all ended up in hell.

But he loved us, sent Christ to die for us. If someone says, I love God and hate his brother, he's a liar. You can't love God and hate your brother.

You can't be a saved person. You can't be a true-born-again Christian and hate your brother. He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? There's a certain amount of logic to that, isn't there? This commandment we have from him, that he who loves God must love his brother also.

This is what God wants in the lives of people. We should be ingenious in thinking of ways to manifest the love of God to those about us. I think most of you have heard me tell this, but I'll just tell it once more anyway.

Thema Cully, his son was martyred for the faith down in Ecuador some years ago. Some Ouka Indians speared him to death. He told me that his son never caused him a moment of needless anxiety.

Never a moment. He was an ideal son. He gave up a career in law to go down there with the gospel to Ecuador.

He was killed by the Ouka Indians. One night I was praying with Thema Cully. While he was praying, he began thinking of that terrible massacre.

And he said, That's the kind of love that we're talking about here, isn't it? He's a father of a son that never caused his parents a needless anxiety. He said, The Lord let me live long enough to see those fellows saved who killed our boys, that I may throw my arms around them and tell them I love them because they love my Christ. And he did.

He lived long enough. And you know, those Ouka Indians have since professed to be saved, and Thema Cully went down there and he threw his arms around them, told them, I love you because you love Jesus. Shall we pray? Father, we just thank you for your word.

It is a sharp two-edged sword. It makes us feel how far we've come short of your standards. But we thank you for the glorious gospel of redemption that is ours, that salvation is not by doing, it's not by trying, it's not by turning over a new leaf or joining a church or anything of the sort, but by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who finished the work on the cross of Calvary.

We pray that you remove the blinders from the eyes of people. Work on their will. Tickle their will, Lord, today, that they might come to the Savior and trust him as their only hope for heaven, and then that they might have no fear of judgment, knowing that Christ bore the judgment, knowing that your love casts out fear.

We ask it as we give our thanks in the Savior's name. Amen. Now, I think there's Charlie here.

We're closing hymn.

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