

1 John

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish
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1 John 4:15-18

Vs. 15

- Our Salvation begins when we confess that Jesus is the Son of God. "THE" Son of God. Not just "A" Son of God. John wants to end that senseless speculation here. Jesus and Jesus alone has a relationship to God which no one else can know. He alone can show us the Father. In John 14:8, Philip asks Jesus to "show us the Father." Jesus' reply put Philip back on his heels: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father..."
- And when you make that genuine confession, something happens. A door opens up within you and God comes to live there. But He doesn't stay locked inside you. Paul said to the Athenians that God is He IN who "we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28). We live IN Him. When we confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God comes to live in us and wraps Himself around us. It is not unlike being in the womb. Through the umbilical cord the mother's life is pouring INTO the baby while at the same time she is all around the baby. The mother is in the baby and around the baby at the same time. Thus our very existence as confessors of Christ, as Christians, makes us different than the rest of the world who do not know God, for we live in Him and He in us.

Vs. 16-17

- Here is the most simple, yet most important and most complex statement in Scripture on the nature of God: God is love. These three little words help us to understand so much. Why did God create us when we seem to be constantly bringing Him pain? Love fosters creativity. The greatest music, poems, and artwork all grew out of someone's heart. Love is a powerful creating force and God is love. He cannot live in lonely isolation. Love requires a recipient. Love at its best is given to another and the other returns love in due course. God created you in order to love you and be loved by you. Nor did God create the world only to

send it off spinning on its own for us to manage without Him. Because God created out of love, He remains intimately involved in His creation. Similarly is the question of free will. Why would God give us free will that we may choose against Him? Because love cannot be compelled. For love to be love, love must be given freely. Just as contract signed under threatening coercion is not valid, so too love is not valid if it is forced. So God gives us free will knowing we may choose against Him, but also knowing we cannot genuinely return His love any other way. Further, Jesus Himself tells us that He came into the world for the purpose of salvation because of God's love (John 3:16). Thus by believing in Christ, confessing that Jesus is the Son of God, we are able to have absolute confidence on the day of judgement. And therefore because of God's great love for us, the Father makes a way for us to overcome death and live eternally with Him. It is love, not death, that has the last word.

Vs. 18

- The guilty live in fear. Those who are the forgiven, in whom God abides and who abide in Him, who love the Father and *KNOW THEY ARE LOVED BY* Him and walk in that love every day, do not live in fear. If we do not know God as love and think of God rather as some Greek-type god, sitting on top of a cloud ready to zap you whenever you step out of line, then we will live in constant fear. But knowing God's perfect love casts out fear. Many believe the opposite of love is hate. No, hate is merely a by-product of fear. The opposite of love is fear. Fear inspires the idea that God is out to get us, that God is actually against us. This is because a parasite of fear is punishment. If we say, "I believe I am not a good person, so God must want to punish me", then fear is all that is left to us. Fear is how we will live out our life. So we exaggerate every small pain, every disappointment, every failure to say that God is punishing me. In living such a life we are incapable of realizing that God loves us even in our fear, even in our sin, even in our suffering and in fact He shows us His greatest love we are hurting the most. Yes, our suffering is not where we experience God's great punishment, but rather there in the darkest corners of the Valley of the Shadow, in our greatest suffering, it is here God shows us His greatest love.