

## 1 John 4 – Part F

### 1 John 4:7-11, Part 1

It appears that John has completed his main teaching and now begins to reiterate and reinforce what he has already taught. It is also important to appreciate that one of John's goals is to give assurance to his readers regarding salvation. So, as has been his methodology and approach up to this point, he will simply restate what are some of the indicators regarding an individual's salvation. From [1 John 4:7](#) through [1 John 5:3](#) John clearly states that the ultimate test and the ultimate proof of someone's salvation is twofold. It is their love for God and their love for other Christians that proves that they are saved. Anyone reading this portion of Scripture has to notice the use of the word "love". In the next 18 verses John uses the word "love" or a form of it 32 times. That is almost twice in every verse and is the greatest concentration of the use of the word "love" or a form of that word anywhere in the Bible. What John does is to make a number of candid declarations and assertions regarding "love". His obvious goal is to provide meaningful biblical evidence to the believer of how they can actually know that they are saved. In fact, in the last three chapters John uses the term "we know" twelve different times (3:2, 14, 16, 19, 24, 4:6, 13, 5:2, 15, 18, 19, 20). One obvious aspect of these repeated words and repeated phrases is that the more that John keeps repeating himself, the more vital and important the content is to him. There is something very crucial to John, and something vitally critical to his readers.

What should stand out in this passage is the fact that after John has completed all of his very strong doctrinal teaching that he returns to the principle that the real evidence of genuine salvation is best demonstrated and ultimately confirmed by a believer's love for other believers. So within that context, it would be very difficult to read these two chapters and not appreciate that John is talking about assurance in a very conclusive manner. There is no doubt in his understanding that every believer needs to know that they are saved. John is fully convinced of the outcome of having this supernatural certainty working within the believer. Believers who are constantly struggling with assurance will find it difficult to be effective in living out the Christian life simply because they have not yet gained confidence in the Word of God regarding the most essential element of their salvation.

Very often people will make a statement that they do not believe that it is possible to actually know that they are saved. However, John says the exact opposite and declares that the believer can indisputably know that they are saved. In [1 John 5:13](#) he says,

**<sup>1Jn 5:13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe* in the name of the Son of God.**

Then, just to reinforce that reality, he concludes the entire letter with three statements from [1 John 5:18-20](#) that begin with the words "we know".

**<sup>1Jn 5:18</sup> We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. <sup>19</sup> We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one*. <sup>20</sup> And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.**

What John says in those three concluding verses should provide great assurance to a true believer. In v18 he says that those who are born of God do not live in habitual sin. In v19 he says that the believer knows that they are of God. Then in v20 he says that Christ has given the believer a supernatural internal understanding that confirms the fact that they know God. So John's conclusion is that the believer can know and does know that they are truly saved. These are very strong declarations that John makes, and they are designed to provide great assurance to the believer of their actual salvation.

Now, as John begins this new thrust in his letter, the first thing that he says in [1 John 4:7-11](#) is that the more that a believer demonstrates love, then the more they will know that they are of God. For instance, [1 John 4:7](#) says the following,

**1Jn 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.**

This is a very positive statement – “**everyone who loves is born of God and knows God**”. The more that the believer loves other believers, the greater will be their assurance. Then to reinforce this truth, John states it in [1 John 4:8](#) in a negative way,

**1Jn 4:8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

Each of the verbs of the primary statements of v7 and v8 are in the indicative mood which indicates a fact or what would be called a spiritual reality. If someone claims to be a Christian, but they never demonstrate a meaningful love and affection for other believers, then John simply says that individual “**does not know God**”. The particular verb for “**does not know**” is in the aorist tense. The aorist tense speaks of an action that was completed in the past at a particular point in time and is having an impact on the present. So what John is communicating is that the individual that does not presently demonstrate a meaningful love for other believers was never actually saved. The only translations that seems to really capture this are the AMP and YLT.

**1Jn 4:8 He who does not love has not become acquainted with God [does not and never did know Him], for God is love.**

**1Jn 4:8 He who is not loving did not know God, because God is love.**

That really is a very important distinction because what the use of the aorist verb tense is indicating is that when someone is saved that God supernaturally implants within them a spiritual propensity to love and to care for other believers. John's basis for this encouragement is given in [1 John 4:11](#),

**1Jn 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

In other words, if God has loved believers with all of their shortcomings, all of their failures, and all of their sins, then certainly it would be spiritually inappropriate for believers not to demonstrate that same kind of love to those who are a part of God's family. It is the nature of God to love believers in spite of their failures and their sin. [Romans 5:8](#) says,

**Ro 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

It is important not to lose sight of the particular spiritual reality that John is communicating. John is making a very strong declaration. In his mind there is no uncertainty regarding this issue that true

believers consistently demonstrate genuine love for other believers. This is such a strong conviction of John that he declares that someone who does not demonstrate the love of God for other believers simply “**does not know God**” (v8). All through this section John will repeat this truth in various ways. For instance, [1 John 4:12](#) says,

**<sup>1Jn 4:12</sup> 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.**

[1 John 4:16](#) says,

**<sup>1Jn 4:16</sup> 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.**

[1 John 4:20](#) says,

**<sup>1Jn 4:20</sup> If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?**

[1 John 5:1](#),

**<sup>1Jn 5:1</sup> Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.**

John could not be more definitive and absolute in what he is declaring – true believers genuinely love other believers. Just think for a moment of how Christ communicated this to his disciples in [John 13:35](#),

**<sup>Jn 13:35</sup> By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

One of the most powerful witnesses that believers have is a deep and abiding love for those who are a part of the family of God. In all likelihood a person could be very orthodox in their beliefs, but fail at this most crucial point. In terms that we have consistently utilized throughout the study of [1 John](#), it certainly would be appropriate to say that this section of Scripture is the most critical test that John will provide. This is the final exam so to speak. This is where the rubber hits the road and the reality of the Christian life is the most severely tested. It is whether or not an individual who claims to be a Christian is able to sincerely, earnestly, and genuinely demonstrate the love of God to other believers. Paul, who probably wrote the most profound chapter on love, states the following in [1 Corinthians 13:2](#),

**<sup>1Co 13:2</sup> And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.**

Paul says that even though an individual could have the kind of faith that is able to accomplish the most extraordinary events, if that individual does not have the kind of love that John is referring to, then everything that the individual does by faith has no value whatsoever. Notice how Paul reiterates in [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#) the qualities that should characterize every believer.

**<sup>1Co 13:4</sup> Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

Why would Paul use such descriptive terms to describe genuine love? It is because God's love is most pointedly demonstrated under the most adverse and difficult circumstances, and generally with the most antagonistic and unpleasant people. Certainly it is an easy thing to love those who love us, but that is not what is being addressed either by Paul or by John. When confronted by someone who is very difficult, God's love is decidedly patient, longsuffering, and exercises a forbearing sympathy and understanding towards that individual. God says that the believer has to bear up under and endure things that they may not want to do. However, that is how they demonstrate the love of God for another believer who is somewhat unlovable. To become ill-tempered and antagonistic toward that individual is generally a strong indication that the person reacting to them does not understand or appreciate how the love of God actually works through their life. There has to be forbearance. There has to be patience. There has to be a recognition that the unlovable person needs God's love to be demonstrated towards them. The tendency for the person who feels offended by someone else is to actually feel sorry for themselves. It is the idea that they do not deserve a particular kind of treatment, therefore they have the right to be upset. In a situation like that, which is really very normal in most Christian settings, the person being irritated needs to become detached from what it is that is hurting them so that they can have compassion on the individual who apparently needs God's love to be demonstrated to them.<sup>1</sup>

What John is communicating is very serious simply because it has a way of exposing a believer's lack of love for other people. It is very easy to say that we love other believers, but the reality of that will be the most deeply tested when we feel personally attacked by another person's lack of respect towards us. It would seem that of all of the attributes that a believer can demonstrate in their life that the attribute of demonstrating love for other believers who are often very unlovable may provide the greatest moments in their life when they are the most like God. Why? It is because this kind of love only comes from God. It literally flows from the very heart of God into the heart of the believer. Absolutely nothing could better demonstrate the love of God in a believer's life as does their loving another believer who is extremely difficult to love. If a believer sincerely wants God to develop this kind of love in their life, then their expectation should be that God is going to bring some very difficult people into their life. It will be a test to let the believer who wants this to know exactly where they really are in their Christian life. If the truth were known, most likely the normal reaction to someone who may be disrespectful is to simply ignore them and remove ourselves out of their life. No one enjoys being treated in a rude and insolent way, but that is exactly what creates the test. Just think for a moment of how God must feel. Men have literally spurned and demeaned the very love of God as being worthless, pointless, and of no value to their life. Yet God has demonstrated love for those people by sending His Son as an offering and as a sacrifice to remove and forgive their very sin of hating God so intensely. [Romans 5:6](#) emphatically declares that "**Christ died for the ungodly**".

As John opens up more of this teaching on "**love**", what will become readily apparent is that of all of the things that indicate and reveal the believer's true nature, it will be the act of loving the unlovable which most fully proves that the individual is born of God. This is not something that anyone can just do. This is not something that the natural man can just accomplish and execute on his own. Certainly he can have a natural love for those who love him in return, but the moment that someone turns on him and begins to take advantage of him, then that is exactly when his lack of salvation will become very evident. The kind of love that John is addressing is a divine love, and it is what will be demonstrated in the life of a

genuine believer. Certainly this is something that every Christian grows in. None of this is just automatic, but it is inevitable in the life of a true believer. It is something that must be demonstrated and manifested in the life of anyone who genuinely claims to know God personally. Someone may have all of the right answers, may be orthodox in their doctrinal beliefs, and may claim faith in Christ, but if they never demonstrate God's love to other believers then they simply are not saved. That is John's whole point in this section of Scripture. [1 John 4:8](#) states it this way,

**<sup>1Jn 4:8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

Please appreciate that what John is addressing is not just a kindly exhortation to the readers, but to the contrary it is John's declaration and proclamation of the evidence of genuine salvation. To read this and not take it seriously would be a terrible miscalculation. Within the church at large, there are many people who are extremely unloving, unkind, always criticizing, backbiting, and who have almost nothing good to say about other believers, yet they claim to be saved. That individual is greatly deceived. Their life and their actions are constantly shouting that they do not know God and that they are living outside of His life. Unless they repent and turn to Christ, they will perish in their sins. If someone has been born again, then they have the very nature of God resident within their very being, and it is that truth that proclaims that the life of God will be demonstrated through their life.<sup>2</sup> [1 John 4:7](#) says,

**<sup>1Jn 4:7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.**

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd-Jones, 422-423.

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd-Jones, 426.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Lloyd-Jones, Martyn. *Life in Christ - Studies in 1 John*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2002.