

1 John 4:12-16

“Fingerprints Of Fellowship”

“God, is love.” It’s more than simple scriptural doctrine; it’s true that it’s something that God has spoken *to* us, yet equally true is the fact that it’s something that God has done *for* us. But for all of that those things were preparation for the 3rd truth that God would have us to realize and that is this; it’s something that God does *in* us. He’s said it *to* us, He’s done it *for* us, but He wants it to culminate or crescendo *in* us.

That’s what Vs 12-16 are all about; (the point of it all); why did God speak of His love *to* us, why did He show His love *for* us? It’s because He wanted His love to dwell *in* us, that is, He wanted a relationship *with* us. Sometimes I think that’s sketchy for people, they wonder why God would reach out *to* us, why He would give His Son for us, what was the point of it all? These Vs shed light on that question.

A few years ago we were doing a “Pirates X-dead men” VBS. I was given a pretty hefty part and had a lot of lines to memorize (and so did several others); the tendency was to highlight my own lines, memorize them, perhaps be sorta familiar with the one that came before mine and that was about it. I didn’t really concern myself with the big picture, it seemed sufficient enough to get my own “act together.” ☺ and Such was the mentality of most of us; there was one particular scene (the last scene) that we were really struggling with, we couldn’t figure out how to make it happen, everyone would say their lines but it didn’t have any flow, no real cohesion. After awhile of painstaking practice we just weren’t getting it so Shannon came to us, shared the heart of the scene with us and put it all together for us (actually acted it out in front of us) and it was like, “Oh! That’s what this is about!” We could see the story, how it fit together, the big picture was communicated, it wasn’t simply a small focus on this part, or that part, but this is the heart of the whole. Vs12-16 are sorta like that; the heart of the whole, it brings the other things together, it’s the point of it. It causes you to go, “Oh! This is what that was about!” Salvation wasn’t simply so God could speak of His love *to* us, or show His love *for* us, He wanted an intimate relationship *with* us, He wanted to dwell *inside* of us.

When it comes to intimacy, there's no way that anyone could be closer to a person than if it be possible to literally be *in* that person. Now, please don't allow your mind to wonder in a polluted fashion with that, stay with me. Have you ever grabbed hold of your spouse, or perhaps one of your children and just gave them hug that was just filled with the effort of communicating your deep love for them? You're just really squeezing them because you want to be as close as you possibly can to them; and even though you're incredibly close to them there's still a bit of a barrier because of our bodies, you almost wish you could just melt *into* them, be *one* (as it were) *with* them, you want to be that close *to* them. But you can't, you're a physical being; listen, God can, and when God enters in to a relationship *with* you, He literally comes *into* you by the power of His Spirit.

As you survey the scriptures it's sorta interesting to see God's progressive steps toward a personal relationship with men. In the book of Genesis you find God *walking with* man. He walked with Adam, with Enoch, with Noah, and with Ab. In the book of Exodus you find Him *living* with man or dwelling in the midst *of* man there in the tabernacle in the midst of the camp of Israel. Unfortunately that didn't work out so well do to Israel's sin, so the glory of God departed from the tabernacle, from the temple, but returned again to the nation in the person of Jesus Christ Who's *body* was the temple of God (Jhn 2:19). Now, mankind took Him, beat and bloodied Him and nailed Him to the cross; they crucified "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8). Yet all of it was part of God's plan so that through Christ, now risen and at the right hand of God, He has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell *in* man. *Walking* with man, *dwelling* in the *midst* of man, *living inside* of man...

You see now the *glory* of God lives in the bodies of the *people* of God. Paul declares in 1 Cor 6:19 "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" You say, "Well all that sounds real great, but how can I know, what's the evidence of Christ in me, what substantiates or validates the fact that God lives in me?" Let's read shall we?

Vs12-16

I suppose I should point it out just in case you didn't notice it but the key word and key concept in this particular passage is that of "abiding." In these 5 brief Vs the word "abide(s)" is mentioned 5xs and it's alluded to 8 times. What does it mean then to "abide"? Literally it means to "continue with" or to "tarry" it speaks of "remaining" or living in a way or a place that doesn't change. It's a word that embodies relationship; to *abide in* God is to have an ongoing close and intimate *relationship with* God.

Ok, Vs 12 begins, “No one has seen God at anytime.” The word “seen” meaning “to view attentively” or “to study intensively,” no human being has ever got to look their eyes on God and study Him carefully or view Him attentively. As a matter of fact Paul the apostle in speaking of God said, “*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*” 1 Tim 1:17 God is *invisible* to the human eye, Jesus said that God is “Spirit” and as such we’re to worship Him *in spirit* and truth, that is genuinely from the heart; (not ritualistically or legalistically). Now Jesus said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.*” Matt 5:8 But that’s something that’s yet to happen, meaning that when you see Him you will be like Him, but that’s not going to happen on this side of heaven.

Now perhaps you’re thinking, “Well, what about Moses? Or Isaiah in his vision? What about Joshua, or Jacob?” It’s true that various men have had radical encounters with God, and that God would at times manifest Himself in different ways to men throughout biblical history. But Moses saw the “afterglow” of God, God told him, “*You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.*” Ex 33:20 Other guys saw what we call a “Theophany,” an old testament appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ, but as for the essence of Deity, no one has ever seen God at anytime.

Begs a question doesn’t it? The bible says, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” Heb 11:1

No one has seen God, but faith being the substance of things hoped for and the evidence things *not seen*, what then is the evidence that the invisible God lives with us and dwells *in* us? John says it like this (Vs 12) “If we *love* one another.” Now we took the time to define and discern the nature of love last week (if you weren’t here I highly recommend you grab a copy of that study), we spoke of submission, service, and sacrifice as seen in the life of Christ, humility, integrity, speaking truthfully and all the rest. Biblical love isn’t social, it’s not sentimental, it’s not sexual, it’s supernatural; and John says, “If we love one another, God *abides* in us.” That is, He continues *in* us and remains *with* us. Here’s what John is saying, “No one has seen the essence of Deity, yet they will bear witness of God’s reality as evidenced by the love that you show to the body of Christ (your brothers and sisters in the Lord).” Jesus said it like this, “*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” John 13:35

Remember the true test of God in me isn't my love for God, there's no way for you to validate my love for God, I can raise my hands during worship, bring my bible to church, say things like "Praise the Lord," and "glory to God" and O my how I love God. I can't really validate that in any tangible way, but what I can validate is how you love those around you, those who are in the body of Christ alongside you; and if God's love be *in* you it will fill you and flow *out* of you to those *around* you. You see men may not be able to see God, but they can see *us*, and the evidence that God offers to those around us is the reality of His love *in* us for one another.

Some might say that the evidence for God in us is *power*, where God is moving there's going to be healings, miracles, signs and wonders. Other's might say that the evidence of God is in *popularity*, wherever there are masses and multitudes gathered, God must be moving, big ministries, incredible popularity. Still others might say that where there's God there's true passion, people are stirred emotionally, they're worked up and motivated inwardly. Now, does God move in power? He can, He doesn't always, Jesus did, but He didn't always; can God do great things that attract lots of attention? He can, He doesn't always, Jesus did, but He didn't always; does God move in ways that stir us emotionally, that motivate us passionately? He can, He doesn't always, Jesus did, He didn't always, there were times that Jesus stood by in relative weakness, being beaten and bloodied for our sins, there were times that He wasn't all that popular, and other times that rather than spurring people on they were motivated to quit and cease following Him, but the one thing that was always apparent in Him and continually flowing through Him was love. The evidence for God being *in* us, moving in the midst *of* us, and being *with* us isn't power, it isn't popularity or passion, it's love. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

God's love is *proclaimed* in His word, it was *proved* at the cross, but it's *perfected* in you, (the believer). You are the tabernacle, the temple of God, and He reveals His love and is perfecting His love *in you*. That means we're to be constantly growing and maturing in Christ like love, submitting to one another, serving one another, and sacrificing for the benefit and blessing of one another. The mature Christian will be marked by love.

Vs13

One thing I want to point out right away in this Vs is the confidence with which John is able to encourage and assure us. As believers we don't live in a "hope so" we live in a "know so." John says, "By this we *know*." It's not "anybody's guess" it's not uncertainty or ambiguity, we *know*, the word "know" here means "to know by experience." You *know* you're saved, you *know* you're going to heaven, you *know* that God abides in you, and that you abide in Him. (By the way note that abiding is a mutual consent, it's not a one way road, it goes both ways, we abide in Him, and He in us.) Jesus said, "*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*" John 15:4 We abide in Him, He abides in us, it's interesting to realize that apart from the branch the vine won't bear fruit, but apart from the vine the branch *can't* bear fruit; there's a relationship there, an abiding (or remaining in) that needs to take place if there's to be fruit.

But notice the building blocks of confidence that John is equipping us with. 1st of all He tells us that *God abides in us* if His love is in us, which is to say that the love of God testifies to the fact of God in us. Here we're reading we know that *we abide in Him* because of the Spirit Whom He has given us. Paul said, "*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*" Rom 8:16 Now, Jesus said, "*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*" John 8:31 "What are you saying?" Here's what I'm saying, the bible builds our confidence, it provides us with assurance, you can know that you are in Him and that He is in you if these 3 things be a reality *to you*. #1 The *Love* of God abides in you, #2 The *Spirit* of God abides in you, and #3 The *Word* of God abides in you.

Here's something else to think about; in Vs 12 we're told that *God* abides in us, in Vs 13 we're told that the *Spirit* is in us, and as we read a couple minutes ago in Jhn 15:4 Jesus said that *He* is in us. Which is it? Is God the Father in us, God the Spirit, or God the Son? The answer of course is "Yes." There's only 1 God; and even though they're manifest in 3 distinctly different persons, they're still 1, so to have the Father is to have the Son, is to have the Spirit.

Now when it says that He has given us *of His Spirit*, more literally it says, "out of His Spirit." It's not that He's only given us a portion of His Spirit as though He's been dissected amongst the believers. What it's saying is that we as believers don't operate in the fullness of the power of the Spirit. Jesus was the only one given the Spirit "with out measure." As for the rest of us, we're limited in both the gifts of the Spirit and the degree of operations of those gifts in our lives.

Vs14

This Vs seems to be a condensed version of that which he said in the 1st 3 Vs of the 1st Ch. Look back at Ch 1, John writes (read Vs 1-3)

John says, you have the witness of the Love of God, the Spirit of God, the word of God, and we the apostles of God, that the Father has sent the Son of God to be the Savior of the world. He says, "We've seen Him." Now Peter would say to us, "Whom having *not seen*, yet we love."

John says, "But *we* (that is the apostles) have seen Him, we've touched Him, we've handled Him, God in the flesh." The word *seen* here is the same word "seen" in Vs 12. "No one has viewed attentively or studied intensively God the Father, but *we have* handled personally, studied intensively, and spent time extensively with God the Son; and we testify to you that the Father sent the Son as the Savior of the world."

Now back in Vs 10 we read that God sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins. That is, He is the satisfactory payment for the penalty of our sin; here we read that He was sent to be the Savior of the world. Here's the point; God sent Jesus Christ to be satisfactory payment for *sin* and the Savior of the *sinner*. One necessarily constitutes the other, He paid the penalty of *sin*, consequently He can save the *sinner*. How does that happen? How can that satisfactory payment be accredited to my account?

Vs15

More proof positive of the fact that you abide in God and God abides in you is your position concerning His Son. Confessing that Jesus is the Son of God constitutes you being a child of God and as such you have the Spirit of God in you Who is the seal of God's salvation upon your life. Christ paid the debt of your sin, the Holy Spirit in you is God's proof of purchase upon you, that He's begun a work in you and will be faithful to finish it until the Day of Jesus Christ.

Now this word “confesses” we talked about a couple of weeks ago. It’s the word, “homologeō” it means “to say the same.” “Homo” meaning “the same” “Logeo” meaning “to say” or “to speak.” To speak the same thing, to agree with; the idea here being that if God abides in you, you will speak the same thing *as* God concerning the *Son of God*. Meaning that He is King of kings, Lord of Lords the sinless, spotless Lamb of God sent to be slain for the sin of the world, that to get on my face (proverbially) before Him and surrender my heart and give my allegiance to Him, is to be saved *by* Him. That as I repent of my sin and turn toward Him, cry out to Him, He will both rescue and receive me. That He alone has the power to wash me, cleanse me, and forgive me of all my sin, that He’s the door, the way the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him and I trust in Him alone for the free gift of everlasting life. Confessing Christ carries with it the idea of all of that, that you’re no longer your own, but you belong to Christ, you’ve been bought at the purchase price of His shed blood. Now He’s free to have His way *in* you that He might be glorified *through* you; He’s your Lord, your Master, you trust *in* Him and will be obedient *to* Him. If that be your position it means that God abides in you, and you abide in Him.

Vs16

You see, John is giving us the fingerprints of fellowship with God. If we abide (or remain) in God’s *love* we abide in *God*, and God in us. The love of God, the Spirit of God, the Word of God, confessing that Jesus is the Son of God, that He’s the satisfactory payment for sin and the Savior of sinners.

These things are fingerprints of fellowship with God. Now before we close I want to highlight this phrase, do yourself a favor and underline it. “We have known and believed the love that God has for us.” “We’ve experienced God’s love and we believe the love that God has for us.” Why do I point that out? Because different people respond different ways to the love of God; some people respond in pride, as though God got a real jewel when He got them. “I’m so great, even God loves me!” Other’s respond with doubt and uncertainty, “I don’t know if God ever really *could* love me...” Still others have a wicked response to God’s love, “If God loves me I can do what I want, because God loves me.” The proper response is to experience it and believe it, to simply thank God *for* it, be humbled *by* it and offer our lives to Him as the result *of* it.

Because it's easy to be rattled and made uncertain of it; think about it, what would it take to make you *stop* believing that God loves you? In Roman's Ch 8 Paul said that he was *convinced* that nothing could separate Him from the love of God that was in Christ Jesus. Be it life, death, angels, principalities, height or depth, or any other created thing...but not everyone is so convinced or has that kinda confidence. Some people seem to have a threshold that should God cross it, they're persuaded that evidently He doesn't really love them after all. "Because if God really loved me He'd never allow this particular happening circumstantially, or why would I be devastated financially, or in poor health physically." I think we do well to consider soberly where we stand, can *anything* convince you that something can separate you from the love of God? God's love is "here" but now I'm "here" because of "this," I've been separated from the love of God. God's love for you is not circumstantial, it's eternal, it's not demonstrated through great health physically, or a windfall financially, but through the cross of Jesus Christ specifically. That's where God demonstrated His great love for you and for me. He poured out His life so that we might have everlasting life. You know David's life was a rollercoaster ride of circumstances at best. Pursued by Saul, living in caves, in fear for his life...for years! Yet he said, "*How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.*" Psalms 36:7-9

Have you experience the love of God? Do you believe (really believe) the love that God has for you? God *is* love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him...

Prayer Points:

Father, may the fingerprints of our fellowship with you be evident both in us personally and in the midst of us collectively. May Your love abound in us, may Your Spirit move in power through us and may Your word dwell richly in us. Teach us what it means to hide Your word in our heart that we might not sin against You. Jesus we confess that You are the Son of God, the Savior of the world, may that confession move beyond our lips and be evident in our lives. May our light so shine that people see our good works and glorify (Lord) Your Father who is in heaven.

If the love of God isn't real *to* you, if the Spirit of God doesn't live *in* you, than why not confess today that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world? Just repent of your sin, turn *from* your sin and surrender your life *to* Him. Jesus shed His blood *for* you and wants to give everlasting life *to* you.