

# 5 – 1 John 4:7–21 “Assured Because Our Love For Others”

## // Assured (1 John)

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### Announcement:

Summit: 2 things:

### All-In:

I just want to tell you what a good job you are doing with All-In—that’s our new one-fund approach to giving that funds the entire mission of the Summit Church here and around the world.

God is blessing us financially through your generosity and allowing us to take some aggressive steps in creating venues for people to hear the gospel in the Triangle. The **Chapel Hill campus**. The **renovations** that are taking place at N Ral; Brier Creek; and a facility for our Hispanic campus at the Summit; some **new things we are doing to reach our community**.

So, THANK YOU.

### Tullian:

- We have a unique thing happening this week: All of you are invited to join an event our college students are hosting this Friday night. **PUT SLIDE UP HERE.** Pastor Tullian Tchividjian. (Ahmadinejad).
- Our college students are hosting this, but it’s not just for students.
- Tullian is a friend of mine. Fascinating story: he is Billy Graham’s grandson; ran from God.
- Great speaker, Pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and best-selling author of *Jesus+Nothing=Everything* and *Glorious Ruin*.

- Come hang out—there will be some great worship, and hear Pastor Tullian talk about how Jesus is better than anything the Christian American Dream can offer you.
- This Friday night: Brier Creek campus. And invite your friends and family, because this is not something you want to miss!

### Introduction:

A few years ago I heard a story about a UNC student who was in an ornithology class at UNC: study of birds.

- He thought it was an Easy-A but it turned out to be harder than he thought. Failed a couple of his quizzes; knew he needed to kill the final.
- “You tell me, Professor, you tell me.”
- Some tests are unfair.

The book of 1 John is a series of tests to see if you really know God. But these tests, unlike the ornithology exam, are accurate; and I would say they are the most important tests you’ll ever take.

### *Is your experience with God genuine?*

- I told you the 1<sup>st</sup> week that 51% of the people in our culture believe they are right with God because they prayed a prayer, or got baptized, or confirmed or whatever your tradition called it.
- Plus, people in every religion say they know God?

How do you know your experience with God is genuine? In Matthew 7 Jesus warns about a lot of people who on the last day will say to him “Lord, Lord,” and expect to be received into heaven only to be turned away with the terrifying words, “Depart from me, I never knew you.”

- And they’ll say, “But **Lord, we prayed the sinner’s prayer.**” And he’ll say, “I never knew you.”
- They’ll say, “But Lord, we knew **lots about the Bible.** But he’ll say, ‘Yes, but I never knew you.’”
- They’ll say, “But Lord, but **we were in ministry.**” In fact, if you look at it, this group in Matthew 7 was even active in their church’s prayer ministry—that’s for the “**cream of the crop**”

people. When you are part of “**casting out demon**” squad in your church, that’s Varsity.

- They’ll say, “**But Lord, we were moral.**” And they were, but that didn’t prove that they knew Jesus.
- That scene is not far from my mind whenever I preach in a church and it shouldn’t be far from yours, either.

### *How do you know that you won’t be in that group?*<sup>1</sup>

1 John is written to answer this question. We’ve been in it for 5 weeks, and this is the last week.

#### 1 John 4:7–21

John gives us **2 final tests** in these verses.

Let’s begin in vs. [7] Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

OK, so what here is the sign here that you know God? If we love one another, for whoever loves has been born of God.

[8] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

- This is 1 of the only times where God is identified with one of his attributes. It doesn’t say, “God is loving,” but “God is love.” Now, don’t over-read that—he’s not saying the emotion of love is always God or that love is God’s only attribute. But what it does show you is that love is core to God’s being.
- Theologians point out this is **possible because** God is a Trinity, **meaning he is one Being in three Persons, and because of that, he has always existed in a loving relationship with Another.**

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<sup>1</sup> Peter warns us to make our calling and election sure. 2 Peter 1:10

- Now, if you think about it too long your head explodes, but this is the nature of God and the foundation of our universe.

*And if self-giving, self-sacrificial love is not at the core of our being, there is no way God is in us. **That’s John’s big idea.***

[9] In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him

- Now John goes to describing God’s love. God’s love was not just a feeling; it translated into an action in which he saved us, an action defined by grace.

[10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- God did the unthinkable.
- The **Creator God**, after having been **rejected** by his creation, and **who could have destroyed** us all and started over, **chose** (out of compassion) to take on the penalty for *our* sin and suffer in our place.
- A king dying for unrepentant traitors; a Creator dying for his creation; a betrayed lover offering himself as a sacrifice for the betrayer—would any of us have done that?
- He wasn’t obligated to do it, and he didn’t need to do it, but he wanted to. He didn’t need us; he wanted us.

***SO: The defining characteristic of God is love; and the defining quality of God’s love is the grace he showed to us.***

- That’s one of those things you should sit and meditate on for a while until it permeates all of your being.
- Charles Spurgeon said that if there were one subject he could always speak of, but one he felt utterly incapable of, it was the love of God. One of the greatest orators who ever lived said that the love of God “*makes me back from this platform utterly ashamed of my poor feeble words. This love of Christ is the most amazing thing under heaven, if not in (all of) heaven itself.*”
- **Martin Luther:** “If we had a full understanding of this love of God for men, a joy so great would come to us... that we would

promptly die because of it. From this we see... how truly (dull our hearts), that only few taste even a few drops of this immense joy, not to mention the whole ocean of it." ~**Martin Luther**

- **The hymn writer says:** Could we with ink the oceans fill, and were the skies of parchment made; were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade; to write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry, nor could the whole contain the scroll, though stretched from sky to sky.
  - When Kharis was with me at the ocean she was like 5 and we got to a point to where it was just a little bit over her head and she said, "Oh, Daddy, how deep!" And I thought, "Child, you have no idea..."

[11] Beloved, if God *so* loved us, we also **ought** to love one another.

- Ought. (**Can I go on a rabbit trail for just a minute?** The reason we ought to love one another is because that's what our Creator is like and he loved us first.
- This is the **Achilles' heel of atheism** or agnosticism or philosophical naturalism—or whatever you want to call it: a worldview without God can't provide a reason why we 'ought' to love one another.
- Most agnostics will say that **love is a good thing**, and **many of them are loving people**—sometimes they act more loving, if not more loving, than some Christians!
- But philosophically they can provide no "**ought**" for their love; no reason why love is good and right.
  - If we all evolved by purely natural processes from microbes, why "ought" we to love one another? Why not let 'the survival of the fittest' rule all of our dealings with one another? And why would we ever self-sacrifice for one another, or show grace to each other, at great cost to ourselves?
  - You could say, "Well, it's best for the species if we do that," but that's not an "ought," that's just a fancy form of self-interest.
  - And by the force of that logic, if I became convinced that killing you would be better for me and I was stronger

than you and could pull it off, then why shouldn't I do that?

- When you are talking with someone (like Sam Harris or Bart Ehrman) who says they can be moral without believing in God—certainly they can. **Because God created us in his image** we have moral impulses, and even an atheist can sense these impulses and obey them quite well—often better than some Christians, like I said; it's just that they can't provide a philosophical basis (an "*oughtness*," if you will) for their morality.
- The Christian says that we **ought** to love because that's the nature of God, in whose image we were formed, is, and how God has been toward us.)
- **And thus officially ENDS my RABBIT TRAIL**

[11] Beloved, if God *so* loved us, we also **ought** to love one another

*So the sign that you know God and have been born of God is that you love.*

**Now, let's go on to vs. 13, because here John backs up, and he makes this same point from a different angle.** He's going to make the **SAME** point from a different stance: 1 – 2 PUNCH.

[13] By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

- Here John says, "*We know that we know God because his Spirit lives in us.*"
- Well, **how do we know** his Spirit lives in us?
- Unfortunately, there is **no Spirit reader** (like a spiritual **Geiger counter**—umm... "the force is strong with this one, Obiwan").<sup>2</sup> You can't feel him kicking around in there like a pregnant woman can her baby. "Ooop. Feel that? That's a Spirit kick.").

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<sup>2</sup> Though the Scientologists have come up with one:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Scientology\\_e\\_meter\\_blue.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Scientology_e_meter_blue.jpg)

- There are **some people who say that the proof of the Holy Spirit** is some magical sign that proves the Spirit is in you, like speaking in tongues or some kind of Spirit-prophecy.
  - *(Ever met someone like that?)*
  - The Bible never says that. In fact, in Matthew 7, when Jesus identifies that group that had false assurance, one of the things they pointed to was their mighty acts in the Spirit. They did many mighty works and cast out demons...
  - So having spiritual gifts, or looking like you have them, is no proof.

Want to know how you know he's in you? John himself tells you, next verses: [15] **Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.**

So how do you know the Spirit is in you? You know the Spirit is in you because you recognize the truth about Jesus, that he is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. That is the sign.

- Now let me explain this for a minute, because you might say, *“Well, that’s not a very convincing proof—at least not to people on the outside.”*
  - *“I can prove to you that the Spirit is in me: I believe in Jesus!”*
- But it's kind of like this: Imagine you were blind and in a room full of blind people who had all been blind all of their lives and you'd never known anyone who could see, and you're not even aware there is such a thing as sight!
  - Suddenly you, and only you, are healed, and now you can see colors. And you're trying to describe them to everybody, but they are like, “colors”? They have no category for them. **How do you prove the existence of colors to someone who has never seen anything?**
  - You'd say to them, “Well, I don't know how to describe it... all you can do is hope that one day their eyes will get opened, too, so they can see what is now obvious to you.

- **That's what conversion is.** Conversion is **new eyes** to see; a **new heart** to sense your **sinfulness** and **God's glory and grace**.

[16] **So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.**

- We don't know how to explain it, but God has let our hearts sense it.
- That's the fullness of the Spirit.
- Let me show you where Paul makes this point. He said, *“I pray that you... may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:18-20)* The fullness of the Holy Spirit is being filled with the knowledge of the love of God.
- **That's what John is saying. The sign that you are filled with the Spirit is that you are filled with a sense of the love of God.** So then John returns to the point he was making in those first verses, basically repeating himself. [16]... **God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.** Makes sense, right?

[19] **We love because he first loved us. And so [20] If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar;**

- It is inconceivable that you could encounter the power of that love and grace and not be filled with love yourself.
- **Anyone who is given a glimpse by the Spirit** into the love of God walks away staggered, without words to describe it.
- **King David said, (Psalm 103) “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is God's steadfast, never changing love for those who know him...” *Think about that: as high as the heavens are above the earth.***
  - How do you measure that? That takes an awfully long tape measure. Think of it this way:
  - To get to the edge of our galaxy, the Milky Way, traveling at the speed of light, would take 100,000 years!

- Light travels at 186,282.2 miles per second, which is so fast that in the time it takes to snap your fingers, light circumnavigates the globe half a dozen times.
    - Traveling at that speed it would take you 100,000 years to get to the end of our galaxy.
  - And astronomers believe there are close to 80 billion galaxies in the universe (which amounts to more than 10 per person, by the way, most of which are bigger than our Milky Way, so I don't think you'll have to worry about running out of things to do in heaven).
    - To get to the edge of our universe, they say, if you were traveling at the speed of light, would take 15.5 billion years.<sup>3</sup>
  - **This is the analogy that God chooses to measure his love for you.** Does that not blow your mind?
- Paul said the love of God surpasses our knowledge, and if we could just get a glimpse of *the height, the breadth, the length, the depth of God's love for us...*
  - *I was thinking only about one of those this week: **the depth.***
    - ***And here's the thought I had:*** What if, when you were single, you had to wear a little label around your neck spelling out all your annoying character traits (like the label on a carton of cigarettes). ***Warning: Moody. Ferocious morning breath. Snores. Lazy. Anger problems. Occasionally lies.*** You'd probably never get a date. When we are looking for that one whom we choose to love, it's like a try-out. **No one goes into a date with unconditional love. By definition, dates are conditional.**
    - I've only experienced one love in my life that wasn't like that. When I looked at my child, I didn't say, 'Is this one worthy of my love?' No. I loved her because she was mine. At no point in

their childhood would I look at them and say, "Sorry, Kharis... this is just not working out. It's not you, it's me." **Actually, her faults, if anything, become something that make me love her more. I have compassion on her and want to help her with her weaknesses.**

- **That's how God's love is for us.** Tender, compassionate, unconditional. Like a father with a child, but a **few billion light-year times** more intense.
  - **Richard Baxter (Puritan):** *"Is it a small thing in your eyes to be loved by God – to be the son, the spouse, the beloved, the delight of the King of glory? Christian, believe this, and think about it: you will be eternally embraced in the arms of the love which was from everlasting, and will extend to everlasting – of the love which brought the Son of God's love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory – that love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, beaten, spat upon, crucified, pierced – love which fasted, prayed, taught, healed, wept, sweated, bled, died. That love will eternally embrace you."*
- It is inconceivable that you could encounter the power of that love and grace and not be filled with love yourself.
  - **Hit by a Mac Truck**
  - **Or here's another story: 10,000 talents**
  - Maybe how ingracious you are in your marriage shows you're not saved.

**Test 1: We know that we know God because we love others.**

*How much do you love people?*

*How much do you sacrifice for people?*

**[1 John 3:17] But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?**

<sup>3</sup> From Mark Batterson, *The Circle Maker*, p. 75.

Where would you if Jesus used his resources the way you are using yours?

**What is your giving like?**

**The whole trajectory of your life: is it to love and serve people or to promote yourself?**

**How quickly do you forgive?**

- Do you place more value on nursing your wounds or seeing someone come to good and restored to God?

**Whom have you told about Jesus recently?**

- We give a lot of really bad excuses for our lack of evangelism: 1. People say: I don't know how to. First of all, how hard is it? If you had been rescued from a burning building... not hard 2. Why don't you figure it out? All the other things we figure out. TV and your remote.
- The real reason we don't share Christ is we value our convenience more than their conversion!

*The sign that we are filled with God is that we love—like God loves, and that reveals itself in how we give, and self-sacrifice, and forgive others, like Jesus did for us.*

- **Now, that might send some of you into despair.** You say, "Do I love enough?" How do I know if I love enough?
- The **answer is no**, which is why the basis of your salvation is not in how much you love, but on what Christ accomplished.
- But as you believe that, you should see this **beginning** in you. **Do you see love growing in you?**

Which leads me to one more thing I want to point out before I close. There's one other thing that having our eyes opened to the love of God does for us, and it's really important test so I want to cover it really quickly: **[1 John 4:17] By this is love perfected with**

us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

**Test 2: We know that we know God because God's love has driven out our fear.**

See that phrase? "*Fear has to do with punishment.*"

- When you are afraid of death it is because you fear punishment.
- And that shows you haven't understood, or believed, or grasped the gospel, which is that all sin and judgment and condemnation have been removed.
  - Jesus finished the work of your salvation. God's perfect love, as high as the heavens are above the earth, took it all in your place!
  - **There is therefore now no condemnation**, Paul says, no reason for fear, for those who are in Christ Jesus.
  - **Nothing can separate us**, he says, from his love—"not death nor life, not heavenly angels nor earthly rulers, neither the mistakes of our past nor the pain of our future; not the heights of peril or the depths of despair; nor anything else in all creation, can to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>4</sup>

When you grasp that, fear vanishes.

Many of you walk around with a sense of fear and guilt. Fear has to do with punishment. Even if you haven't known what to call it.

- Franz Kafka, *the Trial*: doesn't know whom to seek forgiveness from; from marriage; from the academy
- Even if your mind denies guilt before God, your heart knows it is true.

The gospel drives that out. God took it in our place...

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:1; Romans 8:38–39, my paraphrase.

## ***When you believe the gospel, you have...***

*...No guilt in life*

- “Remember the duck”
- Jesus says, “I put the duck away forever!” You’re sins aren’t merely overlooked, they are put away forever.

*No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me. From life’s first cry, to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. (oh the width, the height, the breadth, the depth!)*

*No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from his hand! Nothing can separate me from the love of God*

*Till he returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ, I’ll stand!*

*In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe!*

*This gift of love, and righteousness, scorned by the ones he came to save.*

*(Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!)*

*Till on that cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied! For every sin, on him was laid, here in the death of Christ I’ll stand!*

## **Conclusion:**

- The two final things John identifies that prove you have genuinely experienced the one true God are both fruits of tasting of the love of God. Fearlessness and an overflowing sense of love toward others.
- *Are these things true of you?*
- Again, I’m not saying you’ll become perfect, by any means, but when you are born again you see the birth of these two things in your heart. Are they in your heart and are they growing?

**What do you do if they are not?** Believe the gospel. This is my mantra. Always has been; always will be. Whatever the diagnosis of what is wrong with you, spiritually, there is one prescription: believe the gospel.

- **The chair:** it is finished... rest in it!

That’s it. That’s the end of our series through 1 John. This is how God directs you to know for sure you are saved.

## **Invitation: (MUSICIANS)**

Bow heads. I have a couple of questions.

- How many of you would say, “*For the first time, I get it. I get it what it means to trust in Christ and surrender to him and during this series, for the first time, I am surrendering and believing.*”
- How many of you would say, “*I think I might have been saved before, but I’m not sure, but during this series I have gained assurance of it because I now understand how you can be sure*”?

## **Some of you need to be baptized. INDICATE THAT ON THE CARD**

“I still doubt?” In my book, chapter 8... free on my blog, *the City*. You can also get the book