

Understanding the Love of God

Fred R. Coulter—February 11, 1995

Today is quite a day. We just read an article concerning the demise of the auditorium—Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena California, which was originally suppose to be a house for God, is now closing because of financial situations. And before services began we reminisced a little bit about it. And all of those of us who have been longtime in the Church of God understood the beginnings of it, and all the things that went on there—the good and the bad and all that sort of thing. But I would like to read to you the dedication prayer by Herbert W. Armstrong, May 6, 1974. And I would assume that this was taken off of a tape recording because I know that Mr. Armstrong was not in the habit of writing out his prayers:

Great God, lifting up hands I want to thank You, Almighty God, from the bottom all of my heart for I know all these people are doing it the same way; they feel the same way toward You. Really this is not our gift to You, it is Your gift to us, and we're grateful that Your name is on it. And now we come to the time that I want to dedicate this in the name of the living Jesus Christ, to the honor and the glory of the great God. Almighty God, please grant that we may always use this building to Your honor and glory. That nothing will happen here that will be displeasing to You. I ask You, Almighty God, to honor prayers that go up from this building. I ask You to bless those who come in to it. I ask You to bless every one who will speak in sermons or Bible studies from this platform. I ask You, Almighty God, to bless it and protect it in every way and to preserve it because You are the great Creator and You are the Creator Who preserves that which You create. So we ask You to preserve this, immaculate and clean and beautiful. And to keep it clean to represent clean and honest and forthright character. May it be an inspiration to all who come in. And we ask every blessing, Father, to people that come. And we give You thanks as far as we humbly can, for allowing us to have such a beautiful place at Your headquarters church to honor You. Thank You in Jesus name. Amen.

I think that perhaps that's a more appropriate opening to the sermon that I'm going to bring today than the opening that I had. From the point of view that, that is a tremendous example for us to

understand that the best intentions, unless you follow God's way, are going to come to nothing. The auditorium is now closing its doors to any activities in the Ambassador International Culture Foundation. I would assume that they won't even have church services there pretty soon. I don't know what is going to happen to it, but as I mentioned for years, that when I go to Southern California to the Los Angeles area, I stay many times with a friend of mine who lives directly across the street on Orange Grove from the campus. I could look over there and see all of the buildings. And I remember when it was beautiful and filled with students, and on the Sabbath day the students would walk down through the gardens and see the flowers. It was very, very inspiring.

Now you drive by there, there aren't any flowers. You drive by there and all the apartments, where the people lived who worked at the campus are all empty. In some cases the drapes are all drawn back and you can see right through the building. You go down in the area where the cafeteria was, and the gymnasium, and the parking lot. The parking lot is all ruined because of the earthquake. It is really a testimony to the good intentions of men that have gone astray because of sin.

I know that I give a lot of sermons beginning with Isaiah 66; you know there's a reason for it, and there's something that we need really to learn out of this. There's something we need to grasp in our own lives. This is going to be perhaps one of the most important series of sermons I'm going to do (which is also part of the series of 1st, 2nd and 3rd John), which is understanding the love of God. So, here's just as good a place as any to begin.

Isaiah 66:1: "Thus says the LORD, 'The heaven *is* My throne, and the earth *is* My footstool. Where, then, *is* the house that you build for Me?... [You go through the Bible and every time someone builds a house for God they get in trouble, don't they? *They sure do!*] ...And where *is* the place of My rest?... [Anything you're going to do for God, you have to realize]: ...For all these things My hand has made, and these things came to be,' says the LORD...." (vs 1-2).

When they built the auditorium they got, supposedly, the best of everything. They even got gold overleaf, and at that time—believe it or not—gold was at \$42 an ounce. And they spent thousands, and thousands of dollars to gold overleaf the walls, and to put gold ceramics on the tile up underneath the roof. You would look at these pillars going up—

and I know a lot of people would come along and look at that—and almost break your neck looking up to that, and you can see the gold ceramic tile. Real gold up there!

In building the auditorium they tried to make it with the colors—as near as they could—as they found described in the Bible. And yet, *from day one* that Solomon finished the temple—and you might take this as an instructive thing to read; go back and read about Solomon—he started out with the best of intentions—didn't he? You read his dedication prayer; that's quite a prayer! Very similar to what I just read that Herbert Armstrong gave when the auditorium was opened, only much longer. God put His presence there, and God filled the temple with His Holy Spirit—with the visible cloud while the priests were trumpeting long and loud, and all the singers were singing. And there's every indication that that happened on the Feast of Trumpets; God came to His Temple.

Right after the Temple was dedicated and all that was done, and Solomon was done and dedicating, God began to bless him, and bless him with more and more. He became the wisest man in the entire world; he also became the richest man in the entire world. All the kingdom of Israel was the leading kingdom on earth, and they were bringing 666 talents of gold as tribute to Solomon every year.

Gold was so plentiful in Jerusalem that it was said that silver was counted as gravel in the streets, just stones to walk on. He had the best of everything. But what happened to Solomon and all of his best and good intentions? *He got carried away and didn't love God and didn't serve God!* Then he went after strange women; he got so obsessed with that, that he ended up with 300 wives and 700 concubines, and made leagues and alliances with those marriages.

Then as the master builder he went across from the temple over on what later was infamously called the Mount of Abomination, and he built temples to every one of the gods of the women he married and polluted Jerusalem with all of his wretchedness and pagan religions. So, it may be true that Solomon was the first Mason because he surely left God after he built the temple. We have something very similar to that repeated down in Pasadena, and we didn't learn the lesson.

Verse 2: "For all these things My hand has made ... [God says in another place all the gold is His, all the silver is His, everything that you make anything out of.] ...and these things came to be," says the LORD. "But to this one I will look..." This is what God is interested in, this is what God wants, and because God can show His love to this kind of

person—and this kind of person can receive the love of God back to them—we're going to see that love is so great, and love is so fantastic, and love comes from God. We don't have it brethren, we just don't have it; God has got to give it. We have to work at it once we begin to understand it. But unless we experience the love of God in our heart, and in our mind, and in our lives, soul and being, we're just like this auditorium that's being shut down.

This is why God says: "...But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word" (v 2). Then He shows if you don't have this attitude, everything you do is as if it's a great and giant sin.

People can be correct according to the Law, but if they don't have love what good is it? Is not Judaism a testimony of law without love? *Yes, it is!* That's why God has preserved it so we will know and understand. I'll have to say I'll be the first to confess, in our past church experience, brethren, *we never learned of the love of God.* We did not! We learned about the commandments, that's true. We learned about the Sabbath, that's true. We learned about the Holy Days, that's also true. But we also destroyed thousands of lives, and thousands of children, shattered emotions, and broke hearts, because we were all so keenly bent on authority—right? Remember that? Wasn't that taught to our families? Didn't we institute that in our families? Didn't we create a lot of problems? And I include myself there, too.

I'm here to tell you that *the administration of law and authority does not produce love.* You may understand some things, which are right, but being right does not necessarily mean that you love.

- love is supreme
- love is so great
- love is from God
- the perfection of love is the whole reason why we were created and made and put on this earth in the first place.

Because of all of His creation, we alone were made to receive and to give love, and to receive the love of God that He gives to us, and in turn to give that to other people.

What I'd like you to do, since this is part of the series in Epistles of John, turn to the *Word Studies from the Greek*, pg 19—First, Second & Third John—I have a section there concerning love.

Let me mention that in James 1:20: "Because man's wrath does not [equal or produce] work out God's righteousness." You can put anything in there you want: *wrath, authority, anger, schemes, devices, way of man...* does not produce the

righteousness of God. Likewise, it doesn't produce the love of God. Love is something that you come to understand when you realize how deficient you are as a human being. I think the older you get the more you realize how deficient you really are. The Apostle John was the apostle that Jesus loved. And, in fact, on the Passover night he leaned back on His chest and asked Jesus who it was that was going to betray Him. Can you imagine the shock of the disciples the next day when they found out that it was Judas Iscariot? Can you imagine that?

John and his brother James were pretty zealous. When they first started out with Jesus they were rough fishermen, the sons of the Zebedee, and they left their father and followed Jesus. During the course of the things that they were doing—watching Jesus, and so forth—James and John got real mad one day because some people weren't willing to except Jesus coming into their village.

They came to Jesus and they said, Luke 9:54 "...'Lord, will You have us to call fire to come down from heaven and consume them, as Elijah did?'.... [because they didn't 'receive You']...But He turned *and* rebuked them, and said, 'You do not understand of what spirit you are. For the Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*'..." (vs 54-56).

John had a long way to go to learn love. They were also called in another place, 'The Sons of Thunder'—which probably meant that they were loud-speaking, and whenever they speak there was a big booming voice going out, and they were very impressive. As a matter of fact, so much so that James and John, along with Peter, went up to the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17). They were close to Christ, and yet the Apostle John did not write until late in his life. I'm sure he did a lot writing before that.

Remember when we went through the whole Gospel of John verse-by-verse, and how much we began to understand about the love of God, the grace of God and the things that are there? How many years had we been in the Church before we did that? *Long time!*

Oh yes, we heard sermons on the Sabbath, and, yes, we heard sermons on childrearing—that you could beat them into perfection if you just beat the sin out of them—not knowing at that time being falsely taught that children are perfect until they learn sin from parents. *That's not true! That is an absolute lie!* And we based the whole doctrine of childrearing and discipline upon that—didn't we? *Yes, we did!* Did it fail? *Yes, it did!* It didn't work. I'm here as a testimony to tell you that it doesn't work. *You can't command love by law!*

John had to learn that! We all have to learn that! I'm here to tell you today, brethren, that the reason why things are going wrong in the Churches of God is because most of them do not even have a clue as to what the love of God is.

Someone just handed me a church news here, and right out of the whole thing they're hell bent on condemning people that water down the laws of God. They haven't come to the point to get out of the elementary things concerning the Gospel. The Gospel is not only a call to repentance, the Gospel is *a true relationship between you and God the Father, and Jesus Christ, so each one of us can come to know the love of God!* That's what it's all about.

In our lives and in the world today it says the world is like this: 'because lawlessness shall be multiplied, the love of many shall grow cold.' Even just the natural normal love that God built into human beings is so stifled, and squashed, and just crunched together—because of sin and iniquity—that who knows how to love?

- Do we not have topsy-turvy marriages?
- Do we not have topsy-turvy everything in the society?

And so perverse and so wretched that now homosexuality and every perversion under the sun is the ruling thing of the day. How do we, in coming to the Church of God, ever learn about the love of God if all we are doing is being beaten up by condemning and guilt ridden sermons and fear to smash your face into the fact that you are a sinner and that you've got to strive harder to keep the law. You got to be perfect because God is not going to except you unless you're perfect in the letter of the law. *Oh, that's just so much a lie, that's all it is, it's a lie!*

God the Father has reached down to call you. God the Father Himself *loves you*. That's why He called you. Oh yes, we need to be obedient to the Law, that's true. But *if you don't obey from the heart*, what good is it? Every religion on earth is a testimony to some kind of law, or rule, or regulation to try and make you a better person.

I hope that we're really going to learn the love of God, and that we can all experience one of the most profound things that God the Father wants us to have. That is to really *feel, and know, and understand the love of God*. Then we can begin loving each other. Then we can begin loving our neighbor as our self; not until then. People can even live and be married 40, 50, 60 years and still never know each other. They can still be like passing ships in the night, never love each other. Men have to exercise their authority, and women have to exercise their picky-unishness, and no one is ever willing to

say, 'I love you, just because you're you.' That's what it's all about brethren.

Then to come into the Church of God where the love of God is supposed to be taught and all you learn is authority and anti-love tactics. They *do not* work! They *will not* work! That's why God is doing what He's doing to the Church today. Because *if* in all the exercise of what we are doing, we don't learn the love of God, we haven't learned a thing.

Perhaps—concerning the Apostle John—he was able to teach and write about the love of God more deeply, and with more understanding, than any of the other apostles. In the Gospel of John, he wrote the most simple and yet most profound revelation about God the Father's love.

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world... [Even to the wicked and the unkind, God is still steadfast in His love to them at the level that He has promised that He would sustain it. Do you understand that?] ...so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life."

Then he wrote in 1-John 4:8 and 16 that **God is love**. That's what God is! God delights in love!. God is also Lawgiver, because love is going to produce law. But law is only the fundamental expression of love. The deep spiritual love that God wants us to have is not the love which is 'phileo,' which means *brotherly kindness*, which means you as people generating love from you. You can have that love toward people.

There are some people that you love, and some people you don't love, and some people you don't like. But Christ came to change all of that within our heart, our mind, our soul and our being. We're going to see that one of the hardest commands to follow, because I know there are people who say, 'Well hey, hate is the only way to go.' But we'll understand why God commands us to love our enemies. That's a hard one—isn't it? That is a difficult one—isn't it? *Yes it is!*

The main verb for 'agapao'—which means *a love greater than one's own life*, God the Father's and Jesus Christ's love to us. In the noun form that is called 'agape'—means *Godly, Divine love*. In the Church we were with before, the only thing we learned about love was that love is an outgoing concern. What do you mean? *Never defined! Never taught! Never gotten into!* God's love for us is so profound brethren, that the whole creation and His whole plan of salvation—even after Adam and Eve and our forefathers, sinned—that God still loved us and is going to provide a way back. Now, you think on that!

It is most profoundly expressed by the love of God the Father for Jesus Christ and the love of

Jesus Christ for the Father. That's why Jesus never did sin, though He had the capacity to sin by carrying the law of sin and death within His flesh. The reason He didn't sin was because He loved the Father and the Father loved Him, and He was full of the Spirit, and full of grace, and full of Truth. That's why! He didn't run around repeating the Ten Commandments in His mind. **He loved God!**

I'll guarantee you one thing, the way you're going to overcome sin the most, the way any of us are going to overcome sin the most—because sin starts in the mind—is *if you love God, and if you receive the love of God back!* It isn't going to work any other way, and anything else out there is just 'playing church.' That's all it's doing.

We've got all this stuff! We've gone through heresies! We've gone through why we need to keep the Sabbath, and all that. Look, if we don't understand that by now then where have you been? That's why God is weeding all of this out. This is the kind of love that God wants us to have. Through the power of the Spirit of God true Christians are to develop, because this is something *you grow into*. You are to develop this profound and deep love of God—for God and each other. We are to come to have God's very own love in us. This highest expression of spiritual love can only come from God because **God is love**.

Love is a gift! Love cannot come any other way. We as human beings do not have the love of God, which comes from His Holy Spirit, naturally within us. We do not! We cannot, as one church looked around and said, "Oh, we're lacking love in this church." Well, Jesus said the world's going to know that they know us, that we are Christians *if we love each other*, so therefore, let's all love one another. While the words sound true it's fatally flawed, because human beings cannot, from within their own selves, generate the love of God. It isn't going to work.

Let's understand some things. Let's see what kind of love it is that we are to strive for and obtain. There's an awful lot in here, and we're going to be coming back to 1-Corinthians 13 an awful lot, because this gives us the true value, the true definition and the true interaction of love.

1-Corinthians 13:13: "And, now, these three remain: faith, hope *and* love; but the greatest of these *is* love." Let's think on that, because that is the most profound thing—"...the greatest of these *is* love..." God has called us to grow into that love, brethren, to learn of that love. Not only to know the Word of God, but to receive the Spirit of God in your heart and mind that you feel and you experience the love of God in the most profound way. When you do, I guarantee it's going to change

your life. When you do, I guarantee it's going to change your prayers. It just will!

So, the greatest is love. We're going to talk about the greatest thing, the greatest attribute, and the greatest expression God can give to us. Not only is God looking to the one who has a contrite spirit and a humble heart, He's also saying in that: 'The greatest thing I can give you is My love. I could give you a temple. Hey, I've created the world for all of mankind.' But is that the greatest expression of God's love? *No! He made us with a mind; He created us with emotions; He gave us feelings—did He not? He wants us to know and feel His love.*

I want us to understand how this is going to come. It's not going to come because all of a sudden you say, 'I'm lacking in the love of God, got to have the love of God, have to show myself friendly and loving.' *No!* It has to come from within with God's Spirit. That's what repentance is all about—that you repent of *your* way, and ask God for *His* way. You repent of *your* thoughts, and ask God for *His* thoughts. When we get close to the Passover we're going to understand the tremendous and profound love that God had for us in sending Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:16: "That He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man." You have to have that Spirit of God first, and you must be strengthened in it first.

- When you do, *it is to grow!*
- When you do, *it is to develop!*
- When you do, *it is to produce fruit!*

Yet, all of that is from God.

Verse 17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; *and that being rooted and grounded in love...*" It does not say rooted and grounded *in law*. Law is all understood. That gives you the very basis for everything. Are you rooted and grounded in love? Are you growing toward that? Are you realizing that this alone can come from God?

"...may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints... [this is what God wants us to grow to, brethren] ...what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height, and **to know** the love of Christ..." (vs 18-19).

The word *know* is 'ginosko'—which means *to experientially understand it from having experienced it*. Have you experienced the love of God? Brethren, I want to tell you, when you do it's wonderful. I can't say that I've experienced the ultimate of it. I will have to say that after being, how many years in the Church of God, 32 years—29 of them as a minister—and I'm just coming to really begin to understand it. Have we not missed

something somewhere? Have I not missed something somewhere? *Yes indeed!* You can't go back and undo what you should have done way back when. There's nothing that can cover that except the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That's how loving God is. Think on that!

"...you may be fully able to comprehend... [v 19]: ...And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge..." (vs 18-19). There is no knowledge; there is no book you can go to. How many people have studied the Bible and still never have come to the knowledge of the love of God, because they're not willing to yield themselves to God.

You look back and you think of all the pride, and arrogance, and self-importance, and everything that the ministry in the Church of God has done. And you compare that with the love of God. What I want you to do—if you have old sermon notes—is count how many sermons that you heard on love. I want you to count how many Scriptures were actually read concerning the love of God. I want you to think about that! I want you to ponder that, and I want you to pray about it, because the only way we're going to get the love of God is go to God and say, 'God I don't know.' Because it is true, '...the way of man is not in himself to direct his steps'—it's just not!

Now let's go to 1 Corinthians 2, and what I want you to do when we're reading this, I want you to think about all of the stupidity that has been exercised in the name of God, in the name of religion, in all of the heresy, and all of the apostasy, and all of this sort of thing going on. It's even said, 'You know it's all right to work on the Sabbath now, because everybody sins a little bit every day.' *That is so far away from God. That is so twisting and perverting of the Scriptures, it can only come from Satan the devil.* That's not the Spirit of God!

Let's understand what is so important for us, 1-Corinthians 2:9: "But according as it is written, 'The eye has not seen...'" This ties right in with Isa. 66—doesn't it?

- What are you going to do?
- What is the greatest thing that you can accomplish?
- How good can you see?
- How well can you hear?
- How smart are you?

"... 'The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him' (v 9). You've got to love Him. Obedience is necessary, but you got to love Him beyond that. "...those that love Him." So grand! So glorious! So marvelous!—that

God would give us eternal life and the kind of existence that He has. Isn't that wonderful?

I know, brethren, that as we get older—and we've got a lot of senior citizens with us—I talked to a man who's 73, been in the Church 21 years, and I know that man has never truly experienced the love of God. I tell you what, when you get to be that age you know down deep inside in your own heart and mind, and your own soul, and down to the very marrow of your bones, the most important thing you want to know in your life is: **Does God love me?**

Everything of youth is gone: strength is gone, the eyes are gone, the teeth are gone—we may have false ones, we may have glasses, we may have hearing aids. The bones are decrepit and hurting; we may have replacement joints, or whatever. But out of it all when you get down to the innermost recesses of your very being, and the older you are the more this becomes true: **Does God love me?**

Do you love God? That's why so many senior citizens are taken advantage of, and bilked by smooth con artists. They think that this person is showing love to them, and they really need love. Do you not think that God wants that love shown to these people? Do you not think that God wants them to really grasp and understand what kind of love that He has for them? That they can face the end of their lives in love and assurance to know that yes, *they are safe in God and in Christ!* Isn't that the most profound thing we need to understand? *Yes!* God has to reveal it to us. We have to love Him. He will teach us the greatest and most profound things—won't He? *Yes, He will!*

Verse 10: "But God has revealed *them* unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things—even the deep things of God... [the deepest thing of God is His love] ...For who among men understands the things of a man except *by* the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way also, the things of God no one understands except *by* the Spirit of God. Now, we have received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that *is* of God... [or, out from God] ...so that we might know the things graciously given to us by God" (vs 10-12). That's what He wants us to know. So this is the greatest.

I think this is going to be most instructive at this time when we see what is going on, especially what is going on in the world and in the Church. You know the bottom line is, who cares what the world thinks. Are you ever going to please the world? *No!* But you can please God.

1-John 4:5: "They are of the world; because of this, they speak of the world... [that's what we're hearing coming in the Churches of God] ...and the world listens to them."

I talked to a man, that in their local church—in one of the biggest Churches of God (I don't think it will be the biggest one for very long)—what they're going to do is have an open house all during the month of March. They're going to invite all the public in, trying to increase numbers, trying and get more money. If isn't of God, what good is it going to do? My comment to that individual was, 'I guarantee you will hear very little about the Passover, and how to prepare for it if they're going to have that all through the month of March.'

Verse 5: "They are of the world; because of this, they speak of the world, and the world listens to them. **We are of God...** [brethren, understand that]: ...**the one who knows God listens to us**; the one who is not of God does not listen to us..." (vs 5-6).

It doesn't make any difference if you bring them in—right? God has to call the individual.

- Can God call anyone He wants? *Yes!*
- Can God not call anyone He doesn't want to call? *Yes!*
- Who makes the decision? *God does!*

We can just be thankful God has called us, and not say, 'Oh, we're better than the world. God has called us.' *No way!*

"...By this *means* we know the Spirit of the Truth and the spirit of the deception. Beloved, we should love one another because the love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God" (vs 6-7).

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It's interesting that much of the Bible is written in the present tense. It's not reflected that way too much in most of the modern translations, but in the original 1611 *King James* it was with the "eth" on it, as we have learned over the years. But the reason that is in the present tense is because what you are doing *now* is what is counting.

- what you did yesterday, that's fine even the good and the bad and the ugly.
- what you *did* that pleased God
- what you *didn't do* that didn't please God
- the sins that you *did do* which were very distressing to God

that's all gone yesterday—right? And you can't go back and undo it.

God does not want us have good intentions for the future, because 'what I did yesterday was so bad I will be better tomorrow.' God says *start now*. That's why it's in the present tense, that you *are loving*. Whenever there's great distress within the Church, which we are experiencing now, and the Apostle John was experiencing it when he wrote the

Epistles of John—that you must have the love of God—is how God expresses His love on the Sabbath to each of us in addition to pouring out His Spirit to us, while we convoke together and learn of God’s way. He gives us His love, that is true. But when you hug someone, or you shake hands with someone, or you look them in the eye and you ask, ‘How are you?’ and you have the Spirit of the Father in you, the Father is loving that person—are you loving them back?

This is something, brethren! This is so great! This is so profound that I feel most inadequate in even trying to bring the sermons. I’ve tried to bring this sermon for about a month. I’ve had to fight heresy for so long and so hard I finally said last week, *that’s it! If you don’t understand the Sabbath you don’t even have a clue!*

Verse 8: “The one who does not love does not know God, because **God is love!**” You think of that with your past church experience—right? *Yes!* Are not the minister’s charged with teaching the love of God? *Yes!* Have not too many ministers—not only in the Church of God, but in the world, and in every religion with their own arrogance, and authority, and vanity—choked off anything to do with love? That’s why they’re all called ‘cults.’

“...because **God is love**. In this *way* the love of God was manifested toward us: that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this *act* is **the love**...” (vs 8-10). We’re going to focus in on that when we come down toward the Passover time.

If you think you’ve loved someone; if you think you have given up for someone; if you think that you have wasted your life on something for someone; wait until you know what Christ did. And if you still feel like marching up to God in your prayer and asking for a merit badge because of what you’ve done, then you come and tell me about.

“...not that we loved God; rather, that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins...” (v 10). It has to come from God. God loved you when you were still a sinner. God called you when you were miserable, and wretched, and rotten, and foolish, and stupid.

Verse 11: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. *Yet*, if we love one another, God dwells in us, and His own love is perfected in us” (vs 11-12). And that’s a continuous ongoing process, brethren.

I think all of us, we look around and see the way things are, we have such a small window of opportunity now in the end-time, to truly understand

the deep and profound love of God. May God inspire us to learn it! May He grant us His Spirit to do so. May we grasp the meaning of all of these words that God has inspired to be.

Verse 13: “By this *standard* we know that we are dwelling in Him, and He *is dwelling* in us: because of His own Spirit *which* He has given to us. And we have seen *for* ourselves... [the apostles] ...and bear witness that the Father sent the Son *as the Savior* of the world” (vs 13-14).

I imagine that is one of the things that the Apostle John never, never forgot, and one of the things that he would always see in his mind. All of us have experiences like that—don’t we? That there is something that is so profound that happened in your life that you can close your eyes and you can see it over and over and over again.

John was the only one of the apostles to witness the death of Christ. All of the others ran away. Only the women stayed. I imagine that he could see Christ dying on that stake. I imagine, just like all the other apostles when they saw that happening, they thought: How is this the Son of God? Later he understood. So, when he wrote this, “...*as the Savior* of the world”—not a, but **the** Son, **the** Savior—there isn’t any other. That’s the way it is in the Greek.

Verse 15: “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God.... [to truly say that the way God means it to be said] ...And we have known and have believed the love that God has towards us. **God is love**...” (vs 15-16).

Everything that God does is based on love. Even to put away the wicked out of their misery, because you can’t live eternity without love. All it will do is end up just a repeat like this world. How would you like to live all eternity with the endless cycle of sin, and fighting, and warring, and stupidity, corruption? How would you like to live all eternity fighting a carnal nature? *No, that’s not love!*

“...**God is love**, and the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him” (v 16). Brethren, can we dwell in the love of God? Can we live in the love of God in our minds, in our hearts, and our innermost being? *That’s the only thing that makes everything in this world worthwhile*, brethren. And that’s the only thing that really makes the Church of God, **the** Church of God:

- not the name
- not the title
- not the person
- not the preacher
- not the people who are there

We, all together—*if we have the love of God*—then that truly is *the Church of God*. That's why God is scattering; it's a punishment, correction. Why? *Because God loves us!* He wants us to learn that He loves us. He doesn't want us to go out and repeat the same mistakes in the past. That's why God works out in everyone's life that you're going to come to a time that emotionally, mentally and spiritually speaking you're going to walk through the valley of your death.

When you understand the worthlessness of human nature, the abject sin that is so deep in your heart, and mind, and being, and then you see the Church of God falling apart all around you; you got a valley of death to walk through. All the brethren and ministers of God are now walking through the valley of death in their own lives, one way or the other. If they learn the love of God they're going to learn something, because God is love.

Here's the test that comes, v 17: "By this *spiritual indwelling*, the love of God is perfected with us..." John, when he wrote this, was a very old man. I imagine that truly if there was ever a life that the love of God was truly perfected in, it was his life. That's why he's the only apostle to truly write about the love of God, because he alone understood it—*perfected*.

"...perfected within us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because even as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in the love of God..." (vs 17-18). That's what is in the Greek, *the love*.

- Can you understand what a detestable thing it is to God to run His Church by fear?
- Can you understand what a detestable thing it is, and why God must correct the Church?

When the only thing the Church has ever done is preach law, and law, and law, and law! Not to do away with it, because they're so incompetent, and stupid, and elementary, and juvenile they can't understand the love of God. And brethren, that is a shame!

Verse 18: "There is no fear in the love..." Why should you run a church with fear? Every time something went wrong with the Church were not the brethren condemned?

- you weren't tithing enough
- you weren't praying enough
- you weren't doing this enough

All the while politics was going on, back-stabbing was going on, hatred and vehemence among the top

echelon of the minister's, so raging that they wouldn't even walk into the same room with one another. Then they have the gall to blame the brethren. May God have mercy on them, and God have mercy on the brethren.

"...rather, perfect love casts out fear..." (v 18) And this is what we need to come to, brethren. Perfect love is casting out fear. Cannot a Church of God be run that way? Can we not? Can we not all set our own goals, and priorities, and love of God that we can go to God and say, 'God, grant me Your love. Let it be perfected in me. I know I'm not worthy of it, but Christ died for me that it can be, that it can cast out fear?'

If truly we are the Laodicean Church, and what we are all going through is repentance, believe me no one is going to endure martyrdom the way God wants them to, *unless you love God!* We're going to see that's why Christ did what He did because He loved God, and loved us.

"...perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment..." (v 18).

- Have you ever gone to church with fear and torment?
- Have you ever had a minister come over to visit you and you're all nervous, and anxious, and fearful, and in torment wondering why he's coming to see me? Huh? *Yes!*
- Does God want that?
- Should it be? *No!*
- Did we run our families and our lives this way?
- Fear and torment, and discipline, and beating, and shouting, and anger?
- Did that accomplish the righteousness of God?
- Did it develop love from the heart? *No!*
- What did it create? *Anger, hostility, hatred, fear, and torment!*

"...And the one who fears has not been made perfect in the love of God.... [That's the whole goal brethren, to be made perfect in love.] ...We love Him, because He loved us first" (vs 18-19). When we understand that Jesus came down to be a human being, He came in the midst of His enemies. You think you've had a challenge for love? *We don't have a clue, brethren!*

Here's the test, v 20: ...If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar.... [Is it any wonder that the things are taking place in any church that professes Jesus Christ, if they're not doing this. Are they not misrepresenting God? *Yes!*] ...For if he does not love his brother whom he has

seen, how is he able to love God Whom he has not seen?"

Let's take this as a test. "...If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother..." Put in any name there you want: husband, wife, children, neighbors, even an enemy. We're to hate the sin that they do, but we're going to see what a profound thing it is to *love your enemy*. That doesn't mean be stupid and get in the way and get wiped out, like standing in front of an ongoing truck that's coming at you at 90 mph. *No!* Put any name you want there.

I never will forget the prayer that one man prayed when he was baptized. He said, 'Lord may there be love within the four walls of my house.' I think maybe that's a good prayer for everyone of us—isn't it? How are things within the four walls of your house? How are things within the four walls of my house? I think some of the things we've done in the past, I would have to say that within the four walls of my house it's not what it ought to be. And the only repair is what God can do with His love. Can't be any other way—can it? So, try that as the test.

Verse 21: "And this *is* the commandment *that* we have from Him: that the one who loves God, should also love his brother." How many times does this not save a lot of problems within the Church? You step back with the love of God and you look at all the arrogance, and the vanity and the little petty Hitlerian authority that so many people had. Isn't that stupidity, and against God? *Yes!*

1 John 5:1: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and everyone who loves Him Who begat also loves him who has been begotten by Him. By this *standard* we know we love the children of God: **when we love God and keep His commandments**" (vs 1-2). That's what is in the Greek.

- love is priority
- love comes first
- commandment-keeping is a result of love.
- love is not the result of commandment-keeping

Commandment-keeping will result because you have love, it's the first step of love, but it is not the totality or the perfection of love.

Verse 3: "For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome." That's the first expression of love; yes, it is. But should we always have childish and elementary love? Is that the perfection of God? *No!*

We've gone over this a lot, but you know there's so much there it's amazing what we can learn

from Matthew 22:34: "But after the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they came together *before Him*. And one of them... [A Pharisee is a real stickler of the Law—isn't he? *Yes, he is!*] ...a doctor of the law, questioned *Him*, tempting Him, and saying, 'Master, which commandment *is the great commandment* in the Law?'" (vs 34-36).

This means the whole overriding purpose of the law. This is a commandment over all the other commandments. If you operated all the commandments below this, you're not perfecting the love of God.

Verse 37: "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love *the Lord* your God with all thy heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" That's how you begin. How does God want it? *He wants all your heart!* That means:

- all your emotion
- all your feeling
- all of your capacity

that God has put in there that is known as the heart. It's got to have feeling, it's got to have meaning, it's got to have emotion and expression to it.

"...with all your soul..."—and your soul is your full physical being. Why? *Because that is the temple of the Holy Spirit*—is it not? Did He not say that 'you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you'—which brings us full circle back to where we started in Isa. 66:1-2? *Yes!*

"...and with all your mind..." That's why God has given you a mind, to love Him with every fiber of your being. That's what God wants from us.

Notice what then this will do, v 39: "...And *the second one is* like unto it: 'Thou shalt love your neighbor as yourself.'" "

The truth is *you can't love anyone unless you love God first!* Oh, you can from a human point of view, yes you can, with the 'phileo' love. But the deep profound 'agape' love, which is Divine Godly love that loves in spite of problems and difficulties.

There are certain requirements to be met, but God wants us to come to the point that our love for Him has absolutely no conditions at all.

- God, I will love You *if* you bless me.
- God, I will love You *if* you give me faith.
- God, I will love You *if* you give me understanding of prophecy.
- God, I will love You *if* You give me wisdom.
- God, I will love You *if* You give me knowledge of languages.

No! God wants you to love Him without reservation with all your heart. That's what God wants to give back to you—is that not true? God wants that to come back to you so that you will know how to express love, and you can't do it until you have experienced the profound love of God, and you give back to God that love with all your heart, your mind and your soul. Then you can love your neighbor as yourself.

Verse 40. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." That's something! **Everything that God has ever done flows from His love! Every law that God ever gave comes from His love!** So, the one who doesn't love God hates His laws—right? 'Not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be'—right? 'And His commandments are not burdensome.' Do you think that God ever gave us a command we couldn't fulfill? **No!** He wouldn't give it if we didn't have the capacity to do it. It's the same way with the love of God. He wants to give us of His Spirit

- so that we will be perfected in that love
- to grow in that love
- to let that be the whole, complete, absolute consuming thing in our lives

Why? *Because that's the foundation of eternal life, brethren!* That's what God wants to give us. Share His existence of eternity with us forever and ever, and to know that we love Him and He loves us, and all of us together in the Kingdom and Family of God are loving each other, and that is the whole purpose of it, brethren.

There's so much to say and if I get into something else I will be spending much too much time more than I ought to, so even though this is cutting it just a touch short, I think there's a lot there for us to work on and digest.

Let's see if we can take these things and ask God for that love. What you need to do is, when you pray:

- ask God for understanding of His love
- ask God to grant you His Spirit, to fill your heart and your mind with His love

He will! It will be a great and a deep and a profound experience, brethren. And that is something that God wants you to have repeated over and over again. **God created us to receive His love, and to give His love!** And as one man said, 'Yes, we were created to be lovers.' **Unless our love with God is fully established, then nothing else in this world matters!**

All Scripture from *The Holy Bible in its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred. R. Coulter

Scripture References:

- 1) Isaiah 66:1-2
- 2) James 1:20
- 3) Luke 9:54-56
- 4) John 3:16
- 5) 1 Corinthians 13:13
- 6) Ephesians 3:16-19
- 7) 1 Corinthians 2:9-12
- 8) I John 4:5-21
- 9) I John 5:1-3
- 10) Matthew 22:34-37, 39-40

Scriptures Referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 17
- 1 John 4:8, 16

Also referenced: Sermon Series:

- *Epistles of John*
- *Gospel of John*

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