

**Reading:** 1 John 4:13-5:1

**Theme:** Fearless in God's Love.

Last week we saw that as believers we can have **C. Confidence through God's Love** (v17) concerning the Day of Judgement. We noted this was one of the consequences of living in God's love and coming to maturity, completeness in and through God's love. As the evidence of God's love would be revealed in us, we would then have a growing assurance, boldness, confidence concerning the Day of Judgement. That statement in v17 is the positive - we have boldness, confidence, comfort. This is a tremendous blessing and to emphasise the point John in v18 states the negative *"There is no fear in love..."* John Calvin wrote *"he now commends the excellency of this blessing from its contrary, saying that we are always tormented until God frees us from that wretched torture by the remedy of His love for us."*

John here is writing of fear, a cringing, terrified, dread of the events and outcome of the Day of Judgement that he has just mentioned. There are those who anticipate it with a dread, a tormented fear. There are those who couldn't care less about that Day as they never or seldom ever give it a thought and if they did, it would be with a gung ho, couldn't care less attitude.

Yet, for Christians, the Day of Judgement must be included in their thoughts - not with a fearful dread, or an agonising torment concerning ourselves, but the fact that all must stand before the judgement seat of God and the awesomeness of that time will act as a spur to cause us to pray and witness to people so they too might believe on our Saviour. Not only that, but as we know, we as believers will stand there also, but for us it is not a judgement in a court of law but will be our heavenly award ceremony and we are to conduct our lives in the light of it and it is to affect our lives here and now.

John did not want his 1<sup>st</sup> readers to be crippled, paralysed, hamstrung and limping Christians with tormented consciences, but to see they could have confidence and not be tormented by fear, dread of that Day. To have any such tormenting fear indicated they were not being made complete, mature, perfect in and through the love of God.

Let's get something clear at this point, for this verse does not mean that Christians are never to be afraid of fear anything. Some fear, are afraid of various things - birds, butterflies, moths, open spaces, enclosed spaces, the dark, feathers, spiders, blood and a whole host of what sometimes could be

considered irrational fears. Men and women of God have themselves been afraid, feared many things e.g. Charles Wesley feared going to sea. Regrettably fears, phobias are part of our fallen human nature and while we can know help and even freedom from such, we are not immune or isolated from our fallen human natures and psyche (*temperament*). What John is specifically writing of here, is the tormenting fear of the coming of the Day of Judgement and its awesome events. We are moving on to our next point: **D: Fearless in God's Love (v18)** - I want us to note 3 things to try to open up and apply this verse.

### **1. Fearing Ones.**

John clearly writes that Christians, those who know the love of God, who dwell in love and show that love, are to be bold and have an absence of this tormenting, cringing fear. This shows that those who **do not know the love of God in Christ Jesus** are the ones who **should** have a real fear and dread of the Day of Judgement (*yet so often do not*). Until such ones know God's love through trusting the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour, a person, no matter how nice, good, kind, moral or religious, is under the condemnation of God and faces God as their Judge. Men and women, boys and girls who do not know God's love are those who should fear, dread God and their meeting Him as their Judge. Perhaps someone listening now is in that position and sadly, you like so many people, you couldn't care less, or perhaps you do...

Some, when we speak of the Day of Judgement will, if not openly, then in their own minds and hearts, laugh it off, dismiss it. They reason "*If there is a God, then He is a God of love and I will be ok, for I'm not as bad as some, quite good really!*" In this way they dismiss these things as notions of a former ignorant generation. Others are not afraid of the Day of Judgement because they have never given it a moment's thought. They live for the here and now, for life, for the latest project or pleasure. There is nothing wrong with such - wanting better for ourselves, families and even society. Yet, people can be ignorant of God and the Day of Judgement and it does not worry them at all as it has never occurred to them there is such a Day coming.

Occasionally people may think about death - after the death of a loved one, a tragedy, as ill-health comes upon them, or a near miss accident and they usually resolve to live life to the full, but very few consider having to stand before God and be faced with His judgement. Yet, the Bible clearly declares that when we exit this life, which is a time appointed for us all to do one day,

then our next appointment is judgement! Death is not the end. If people listened to God's word seriously, they would see the awesome reality of this truth - death is not the end and those who do not know God's love in the Lord Jesus should tremble at the prospect of the Day of Judgement.

People may mock what the Bible says, especially when it says "*Prepare to meet your God*" - not with clever arguments; or with sacks of stinking good works - as all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; not with our religious rites or by our doings but prepare using the way God has provided for us to get right with Him - through the Saviour He has sent. God will judge and judge fairly, justly, perfectly and in holiness. There will be no miscarriages of justice on the Day of Judgement. All those judged and found guilty will agree God is perfectly correct and just. Does anyone listening need to fear to meet this holy God as your Judge, for you have ignored His provision of the Saviour and have to face Him in your sin? It does not have to be so.

## **2. Fearless Ones.**

John says that it is Christians who should be free from the tormenting fear of the Day of Judgement. Here is a glorious reality and truth which the gospel declares and it should affect the lives of every believer and constantly be transforming the way in which we live in this world. Sadly, some feel godliness = miserableness! Yet a Christian should be possessed with a growing joy and assurance, even in the trials of life that they have, because we are free from the fear of the Day of Judgement. We are to be those who live with an assurance - no matter our temperament - it should affect us. The coming of the Saviour and His salvation is to affect us - in Hebrews 2:15 we are told we are free from the fear of death as we are no longer in slavery to sin and its consequences on our death; 2 Peter 3:11-13 - we can look forward to the assurance of a new heaven and earth for us and we are safe and secure on that awesome day; Romans 8:15, 23-24 - the Spirit of God is to make us fearless as we await that day, which will be our public day of adoption.

This is not presumption but is true of every believer and we are entitled to such. If saved by grace, then we are destined for Glory and the Day of Judgement will not harm us at all. This does not remove a reverential fear and respect of God in our lives - 1 Peter 1:17 "*Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*" The fear John refers to here in v18 is a cringing, tormenting dread and fear of the Day of Judgement. As this love grows, develops,

matures and more and more completes our experience of His love, it is to give us growing assurance and comfort. John Calvin describes the effect of this love of God as it *“tranquillizes the heart”* and Christians can go to the Day of Judgement *“confidently and cheerfully, because they feel assured of His paternal love”*.

This love and fear are opposites as there is no or fear (*cringing, condemning, servile fear*) in love; they are mutually exclusive. The love of God is perfect and true love - a positive, wanting the best love and His wisdom always works for our eternal and true best - even if we cannot see or understand it is so! He's not there waiting with a big stick to hit us if we step out of line, nor will He wait and drag things up we did years ago and accuse us again. The devil will have us think like that, as will our sensitive consciences and minds, which often may be conditioned by our upbringing and we can even question if we really are Christians at all! Yet, if we have been to the Saviour to forgive us, He has forgiven us all our sins - our big, little, remembered and even our forgotten sins; our sins past and present, also our future sins - all their guilt and deserved punishment are gone. We are loved as children of God, unconditionally loved and God wants us to have confidence and be fearless in His love - that is why it is good to read **chapter 3:1-2** often and dwell on these verses as they tell us what our future is!

If we know and have experienced that love, why do we then fear His judgement? We **were** objects of His wrath but **now** are objects of His love and we are to constantly, habitually live in, abide in His love and enjoy doing so and not feel guilty about enjoying doing so! Such truth is to be applied practically to our lives. If it is true that *“The terrors of law and of God, With me can have nothing to do, My Saviour's obedience and blood, Hide all my transgressions from view.”* - why then do we think, feel, doubt as if that is not true for us?

Yes, we are to have a reverential fear of God above all, a desire that “hallowed be Your name”. We are to be those who have a holy love and a holy fear - not because God will punish us, but because we do not want to hurt and grieve the One we love and who loves us so much. The amplified Bible translates this part of v18 as *“There is no fear in love <dread does not exist>, but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror!”* The love of God should turn out of doors and expel the fear of punishment - the Day of Judgement punishment - from us. Regrettably the

theory is easy and wonderful, but it is much harder to be achieved, worked out in our lives and we need to see:

### **3. Fear-Free Ones.**

I've mentioned some things in passing that need to be opened up and applied by us if we are a Christian. We often think the devil's most effective work is achieved by putting things in our minds and hearts, but that is not the case, for his most effective work is causing us not to remember things, especially the truth of what Christ has done for us and exactly who we are in Christ.

We to consciously remember the love of God to us and how it came to us v9-10 *"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."* We are to recognise what God has done for us in and through the Lord Jesus and we are loved by God, are justified by faith (Romans 5:1). Our salvation does not depend one little bit on how we feel, whether we are fearful or not, but exclusively on what Christ has done and accomplished for us.

The only way we can stand safe and secure on the Day of Judgement is to be in Christ, to have trusted Him as our own Saviour and all our sin and its guilt in its entirety will be dealt with for ever by Him. Picture ourselves before the Judgement throne, what will we plead? Not our morality, or our religiousness, or what we have achieved, but our plea will be *"Jesus has lived, has died for me"*. This is our only hope and plea, for it means that His perfect righteousness would have been eternally given to us and it covers who we were in and of ourselves. This is what the love of God brings about in our salvation. We are to delight in that, we are to understand what it means to be saved and justified by faith.

When we are justified by faith, our salvation is secure and we are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). God dwells in us and we in Him and we are to dwell in and show His love and nature - *"because as He is, so are we in this world"* v17. Yes, we recognise we are weak, unworthy, unlovely in and of ourselves, but because God has loved us and made us His child, we want to know Him better, show His love to others, tell of Him, know Him more by prayer, by reading and hearing His word.

We will find we have changed, for it is a work of God and as His child we have His love and so we become less fearful, less afraid. In fact, we find we delight in God, the things of God and even the thought of the Day of Judgement, although awesome, becomes to us a day when our loving Father will have us with Him and we delight most fully in all He is and has done for us. More and more we will find we want to be like Him as we are in the world.

This is our sanctification - as He is, so are we in the world and our growth in Christ likeness, even our love for brothers and sisters are to be encouragements that we are God's for we are becoming more like our Saviour. One writer questions "*can we now imagine Jesus with a cringing fear of the Father?*" Not at all, of course not! We are sons and daughters of God and we should not have a cringing, tormented fear.

We are to take the work of God in our justification and sanctification together and then use them both to calm, to quiet, to remove and to throw out of doors our fear of judgement. Both are needed - our justification is the direct way - it is what God has done, what God has said and promised and He will not go back on His word or undo His eternal work in us. Because of this we have boldness, confidence and become fear-free. We can also use the evidence of His working in our lives - sanctification - as we see our lives showing, evidencing His eternal work in us being revealed day by day.

If there is little evidence of that new life being shown, then we are likely to have little confidence! This is not "*do and be saved*", but "*if saved, we will do*". Life will out and has to evidence itself, especially in the area of loving God, loving other believers and living to please the God we love and who loves us so much. The more we are like Christ, the less we should fear the Day of Judgement and will have more boldness in the light and sight of it.

We are to make sure we're right with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, then live it out, as we live in the love of God and so we will know what it is to be **Fearless through God's Love.**