

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON FEAR
LESSON FIVE: FEAR OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

by Sandy Harber

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." I John 4:18

John's first epistle was written to believers, people who had already accepted Jesus as their Savior. His purpose was to strengthen their faith and give them assurance of eternal life (I John 5:13). The word "love" is a prevalent theme throughout the book. Because of His love for man God provided a way for us to be saved from the penalty of sin (hell), power of sin (which includes lack of trust in God as demonstrated by our fears), and presence of sin (there will be no sin in heaven - no fear, either). We want to look closer at the second benefit of salvation: overcoming the power of sin in our lives as it relates to fear.

Read the passage in I John 4:7-18. It concludes with the assurance that there is no fear in love and perfect love casts out fear (verse 18). Since love seems to be a cure for fear we should take a closer look at what Scripture has to say about love. Verse 7 begins with John addressing his "beloved." Love is embedded in this name for John's readers. Believers are the object of John's love because they are also the object of God's love.

John urges believers to love other believers (v. 7), thereby proving we have been born again into the Family of God (John 3:3-6). This is not just a suggestion. Jesus commanded us to love one another (I John 3:23). God proved His love for us by sending His precious Son to take the punishment we deserved and die in our place (vv. 9-10). Love is sacrifice. John states that we should likewise be willing to sacrifice our lives for our brethren (I John 3:16).

When we accept Jesus as Savior we are given the indwelling Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:10), Who works in us perfecting our love (vv. 12-13). When we testify that Jesus is God the Son we prove that we possess the indwelling Holy Spirit (v. 15). Those who claim that Jesus was a prophet or a good man, but stop short of declaring His deity, do not possess God's Spirit or salvation. When we walk in love (habitually act in a loving way) we prove that the Holy Spirit indwells us (v. 16).

The life-long process of perfecting our love comes to an end when we transition from earth to heaven via death or the rapture (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). The test of the completeness of our love is seen at the Judgment Seat of Christ (v. 17). Can we stand boldly before our Savior as our works are judged (I Corinthians 5:10)? Note that a believer's sins were already judged at the cross and have no part in this judgment. It is the believer's works from the time he is saved until his death (or rapture) that is under review (I Corinthians 3:11-15). The result of this judgment will be the receiving of or loss of rewards.

The believer who has walked daily with his Lord, growing more like Christ along the way, will have no fear of judgment (v. 18). Fear is a product of guilt. And that guilt produces torment. Terror that God will not approve him because he lived his life for himself and not for his Savior. His good works are few, if any. His loss will be great (although he will not lose his salvation - I Corinthians 3:15).

Can you stand boldly before Jesus while He reviews your life's works? Or, are you afraid? It is not too late to change this. Perfect love is the cure. Daily walking with God and growing more like Christ is the key. Start today.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." I Corinthians 3:13