

FAITH—THE GROUND OF LOVE

I John 4:13-16

A. *The Text*

“Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. (14) And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. (15) Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. (16) And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.”

B. *Try to Discover*

1. How the Spirit of God in us is evidence that we are in Him and He in us.
2. The significance of John's reference here to his eyewitness experience with Jesus.
3. How confession of Jesus as the Son of God is evidence we are in God and God in us.
4. How can love be the object of belief?
5. Why John repeats here what he has already said in 4:8, that “God is love?”

C. *Paraphrase*

“Hereby perceive we—That in him are we abiding, And he in us, In that of his Spirit hath he given unto us. (14) And we for ourselves have gazed, and are bearing witness That the Father sent forth the Son as Saviour of the world. (15) Whosoever shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God in him abideth And he in God. (16) And we have come to understand and to trust the love which God hath in us. God is love; And he that abideth in love in God abideth, And God in him abideth.”

D. *Comments*

1. Preliminary Remarks

John presents a further synthesis of *love* and *belief* as evidence of continued fellowship with God. John appeals to his own experience with Jesus to re-affirm the fact of the incarnation. He then strongly re-asserts that Jesus, the man, is indeed the son of God and the Saviour of the world. If we believe this historic demonstration of God's love, then we continue in the divine fellowship which is life eternal.

2. Translation and comments

a. The presence of the Spirit and the memory of personal experience are assurance of continued fellowship . . . v.13-14

(13) "In this we are knowing that we are remaining in Him and He in us because of the Spirit He has given to us. (14) and we have seen and are bearing witness that the Father has sent His Son as Saviour of the world."

There is some question in verse 13 as to whether John intends to refer to the Spirit in all believers, as he has previously, or to the unique inspiration of the Spirit which was his as an apostle. His immediate referral to his own eye-witness experience may indicate the latter.

In either case, the testimony of the Spirit of God is to the deity of Jesus as the object of Christian faith. It is that faith which is the ground of the love we have for one another as the fulfillment of God's love for us.

In verse 14, John again employs the Greek tenses in such a way as to indicate vivid memory. What he has seen, as set forth in the prologue, (I John 1:1-4) is the basis of his faith and his testimony. When he walked and talked with Jesus of Nazareth, he came to believe that this Carpenter is indeed the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. That conviction has not mellowed with age. It is still the touch stone of his faith. It ought to be so with us today.

Voltaire set forth the following as tests by which any phenomenon may be confirmed as historic fact:

- i. *There must be witnesses*
- ii. *Witnesses must be in substantial agreement*
- iii. *The witnesses must have had opportunity to know, (ie. investigate)*
- iv. *The witnesses must be honest*
- v. *Hume adds: The more unusual the event, the greater the body of evidence needed to establish it as historical fact.*

The great events in the life of Jesus, which establish His claim to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world may be subjected to these tests. If they fail to meet the tests, then we are justified in questioning them, as some have. On the other hand, if they do meet the tests, then to be intellectually honest we must cry out with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Space will not permit us here to subject all the essential phenomena of Jesus' life to these tests. We shall consider the ultimate demonstration of His deity as an example. Can it be proven, as other facts of history are proven, that Jesus rose bodily from the dead?

Were there witnesses to the resurrection? Whom shall we call first? *The Roman guard?* These denied that Jesus had risen, but said that His disciples had stolen Him. They admitted the body was gone.

Mary Magdalene? She saw an empty tomb and ran to tell the others.

Simon Peter? He ran to the tomb in utter disbelief and stopped at the entrance. In the intervening forty days He was confronted with the bodily presence of Jesus until he became so convinced, his proclamation of the resurrection converted three thousand of those who had clamored for Jesus' blood!

John the Beloved? He ran past Peter, who hesitated at the door of the tomb. It was he who saw the grave clothes lying as though some huge moth had burst forth from his cocoon in full glory.

The two on the road to Emmaus? They were so completely disillusioned as they talked about the hopes that lay crushed on the hill of the skull. But their hearts burned within them as He revealed Himself to them at supper.

Saul of Tarsus? To him the death of the Nazarene was the just execution of a blasphemer who dared call Himself Son of God. But when Saul came face to face with history on the road to Damascus, the love of Christ constrained him with the conclusion that Christ had died for all, that all might live in Him.

The five hundred Brethren of I Corinthians fifteen? Paul challenged his doubting readers to go to them rather than take his word for the fact of the resurrection. There is no record that any one of the five hundred ever denied what he had seen.

Yes, there were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

Are the witnesses in substantial agreement? There are those who say that the Gospel accounts of the resurrection vary a great deal. None has

ever claimed, however, that the *substance* of what is reported is that the Galilean who was crucified actually rose from the tomb.

The witnesses *are* in substantial agreement!

Did the witnesses have opportunity to investigate? According to the record, Jesus appeared to them at various times and in various places. He not only gave them opportunity to investigate, but challenged them to do so. He ate fish in their presence to show that He was not merely an apparition. He challenged them to thrust their fingers into the nail scars and the spear mark and feel as well as see for themselves. Their conclusion from this investigation was voiced in the words of the greatest doubter of them all, "My Lord and my God!"

The witnesses had ample opportunity to know!

Were the witnesses honest? Not all of them were. The Roman guards, to save their own skins for sleeping on duty, accepted a bribe to say that the body had been stolen.

What about the others, and especially what about the ones who left the written record? Were they honest? How else can we account for the change that took place in them? When Jesus was led away to be killed they "followed afar off." They cringed in the shadows, afraid for their own lives. Fifty days later they stood up publicly and virtually dared the ones who had put Him to death to prevent them from telling that He is risen!

How can men who were cowards, when He was alive and in His moment of deepest need, suddenly become heroes when He is dead? Are we to conclude that, to the man, these all died for what they knew to be a lie? All they had to do to escape execution was admit they had lied about the resurrection. Not one of them did.

Yes, the witnesses were honest!

Is the body of evidence great enough? In a court of law, two or three eye-witnesses who are honest and in substantial agreement are all that is necessary to establish a thing as a fact. In the case of the resurrection, the event is so extremely unusual that an honest inquirer is justified in asking how many witnesses actually saw Jesus alive after His death. In I Corinthians 15, when confronted with those who doubted that He had risen, Paul challenged the doubters to contact *five hundred* individuals who were alive at the time of his writing and ask them what they had seen.

There were indeed sufficient reliable witnesses!

Any person who is intellectually honest can prove to himself the truth of what the apostles claim; even the most unusual claim of all. All he needs to do is subject their claims to the same tests by which he accepts other phenomena of the past as true.

John, in I John 4:14, concludes from what he saw that the Father has sent His Son as the Saviour of the world. He presents his testimony as evidence by which we may test our claim to fellowship with God. He who denies that which is historically true is living according to phantasy. His life is based on a lie. He cannot, therefore, have fellowship with God who is the author of all truth. To accept the deity of Jesus is to simply face reality.

b. Confession of Jesus, manifestation of Divine love, is evidence we are in God and He in us . . . v. 15-16

(15) "Whoever may confess that Jesus is the Son of God is remaining in Him and He in God. (16) And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and the one remaining in love is remaining in God and God is remaining in him."

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the source of all known truth about God is remaining in God and God is remaining in Him. Likewise, when we believe the love which His coming demonstrated among us, we move into the only area where the experience of God and the experience of man merge. As we saw in 4:7-9, intimate personal knowledge of God comes from sharing His experience of loving.

Since this love was first brought to light and then made available for us to experience by Jesus, His demonstration of love becomes the object of our faith. This coalescence of love and belief are here presented as evidence that we are intimately related to God. The one believing and loving is remaining in God. God is also remaining in him.

To keep this truth in perspective, we must remember that John is not discussing the *means* by which we come initially into this relationship with God. This is not intended as an answer to "what must I do to be saved?" He is rather, concerned with the evidences by which we may reassure ourselves individually that the relationship does in fact exist. However, whatever is necessary to the initiating of this relationship, or to put it simply, whatever one must do to be saved will in no way violate or contradict the essential role played by faith and love. On the contrary, the rudiments by which one begins the new life in God will be found to be the embryonic expression of precisely these very elements.

E. *Questions for Review*

1. What are the two alternatives concerning John's reference in v. 13 to "the Spirit He has given us?"
2. What is the essential testimony of the Spirit?
3. To what does John appeal in v. 14 as the basis of his claim that Jesus is God's Son and the Saviour of the world?
4. What are the tests by which phenomena of the past are established as historical?
5. How does the resurrection prove the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world?
6. Does the resurrection, as recorded in the New Testament, meet the tests of historicity? Explain your answer.
7. Can you suggest other events in the life of Jesus which may be put to the same test?
8. What is meant by "the area where the experience of God and the experience of man merge?" (See comments on I John 4:7-9)
9. The love which we share with God was first brought to light by _____
10. In what way is the love of God said to be the object of the Christian's faith?
11. Is John here discussing the means by which we come to salvation? Explain your answer.
12. Can the "steps to salvation" contradict the evidences that we are indeed in a saving relationship to God? Explain.

CHAPTER XIV

RIGHTEOUSNESS — DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE

I John 4:17—5:3

A. *The Text*

"Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement; because as he is even so are we in this world. (18) There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love. (19) We love, because he first loved us. (20) If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for that loveth not his brother whom