



- (4) God is greater than our heart.
 - a) He knows all things.
 - b) He can use the heart to show a man that he does not have assurance of salvation.
 - b. If our heart condemn us not (1 John 3:21)
 - (1) The absence of condemnation brings confidence toward God.
 - (2) We must be careful that this not our sole assurance. The conscience of man can fail.
 - a) A weak conscience (1 Corinthians 8:7, 12)
 - b) A defiled conscience (Titus 1:15)
 - c) A seared conscience (1 Timothy 4:2)
- 2. The confirmation in prayer (1 John 3:22)
 - a. Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him (1 John 5:14; John 9:31; John 14:13; John 15:7).
 - b. Because we keep His commandments and do those things pleasing in His sight. Note: This is one of several requirements given for prayer. The scriptures mention faith (James 1:6-7), praying in Jesus' name (John 14:13-14), abiding in Christ (John 15:7), obedience (1 John 3:22), and praying in the will of the Lord (1 John 5:14).

IV. THE COMMANDMENT OF SONSHIP (1 John 3:23-24)

A. The Commandment Identified (1 John 3:23)

- 1. Notice the singularity of the commandment.
 - a. "[T]his is his **commandment**."
 - b. There is only one requirement for sonship—"that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."
- 2. Notice the natural outcome of obedience to the commandment—"and love one another."

B. The Assurance of the Commandment (1 John 3:24)

- 1. The mutual dwelling
 - a. The man dwells in the Lord.
 - b. The Lord dwells in the man.
- 2. The assurance of the Spirit
 - a. The possibility of assurance
 - (1) By the word of God (1 John 5:13)
 - (2) By the person of Christ (2 Timothy 1:12)
 - (3) By the examination of self (2 Corinthians 13:5)
 - b. The practical proofs of assurance
 - (1) Inward—the witness of the Spirit (Romans 8:16; 1 John 4:13; 1 John 5:10)
 - (2) Outward—love of the brethren (1 John 3:14; John 13:34-35)
 - (3) Upward—keeping God's commandments (1 John 2:3-5; 1 John 3:7, 10)



The First Epistle General of John

The Children of God Identified

1 John 4:1-21

I. THE DISCERNING OF SPIRITS (1 John 4:1-6)

A. Trying the Spirits (1 John 4:1-3)

1. The necessity of trying the spirits (1 John 4:1)

a. The call to discernment

(1) A call born out of love—"Beloved"

a) John often addressed the saints with a term of endearment (1 John 3:2, 21; 1 John 4:1, 7, 11).

b) John delivered the message of God with love for those to whom he was called to preach.

i) A doctrinal message (1 John 3:2)

ii) A message of comfort (1 John 3:21)

iii) A message of warning (1 John 4:1)

iv) A message of exhortation (1 John 4:7, 11)

(2) A call to skepticism—"believe not every spirit."

a) The diligence of a believer

i) Believers are not to be gullible.

ii) We are to be convinced only by the truth.

iii) We must refuse to believe error (Revelation 2:2-3).

iv) At times, this is difficult (2 Corinthians 11:12-15).

b) The identity of the "spirit"

i) Possible meanings of the word *spirit*

(a) An evil spirit (Matthew 12:45; Acts 8:7; Acts 19:13; Revelation 16:14)

(b) The spirit of man (Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; Ecclesiastes 3:21; Ecclesiastes 8:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)

(c) Other miscellaneous uses (2 Kings 2:15; Luke 1:80; Romans 11:8; Galatians 6:1)

ii) The most likely interpretation

(a) The spirits are tied to false prophets (1 John 4:1).

(b) Some of these spirits confessed that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh (1 John 4:2), but some did not (1 John 4:3).

(i) This point, in and of itself, should narrow the choice of interpretation down to evil spirits or spirits of men.

(ii) The next verse seems to contrast these spirits with the "Spirit of God" (1 John 4:2),



leading us to think the right interpretation would be evil spirits.

- (iii) Yet, it is very likely the only viable interpretation is the spirits of men, because devils had no trouble confessing Jesus Christ had come in the flesh (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41; Acts 19:15).
- (3) A call to trial—"try the spirits whether they are of God" (see Revelation 2:2).
- b. The danger ahead
 - (1) The presence of false prophets
 - a) These false prophets were not a fear of the future (Matthew 24:5; 2 Peter 2:1; 2 John 1:7).
 - b) They were a warning of the present (1 John 2:18).
 - (2) The plurality of false prophets—"many" (1 John 2:18; Matthew 24:5; 2 John 1:7)
 - (3) The place of work for the false prophets—"into the world"
 - a) They were not shy with their message.
 - b) They went where the people were (Acts 20:29; 2 Peter 2:1; 2 John 1:7).
- 2. The evidence a spirit is of God (1 John 4:2)
 - a. At first glance, this verse seems awkward.
 - (1) In the first portion, we are told that we will be given evidence whereby we might recognize "the Spirit of God."
 - (2) In the latter portion, the focus is turned to "Every spirit."
 - b. The purpose of the passage is to give man a measuring stick by which he can "try the spirits."
 - c. In doing so, man thinks he is looking to find the spirit that is of God; but, in reality, he is looking for "the Spirit of God." When a man is saved, the Spirit of God's influence is obvious in that man's confession (John 15:26; John 16:13-15; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Matthew 16:16-17). In fact, it is the Spirit of God in that man that makes the confession.
 - d. When the Spirit of God is in a man, he has no trouble confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.
 - (1) This may seem troublesome at first since there are people who acknowledge that they are lost, but will readily admit that Jesus came in the flesh.
 - (2) Yet, there are several key words that resolve any possible conflict.
 - a) Confesseth—the word *confess* can be broken down into *con* + *fess*. The prefix *con* means *with*, and the word *fess* means *to say*. To confess something is to say it with, or in agreement with, someone else. This confession accepts God's word as true and acknowledges total agreement.
 - b) Jesus—this is the earthly name given to the Lord when He took on a body of flesh (Matthew 1:21).



- c) Christ—this is a title given to the Lord and acknowledges Him as deity (Matthew 16:16, 20; John 4:42).
 - d) Flesh—this suggests that the individual accepts the fact that Jesus (a man) Christ (God) took on a body of flesh (Romans 8:3; 1 Timothy 3:16).
- (3) This confession is an agreement with God's word on the fact that Jesus Christ came to this earth in a fleshly body in order to redeem mankind from hell. It not only agrees with His purpose for coming but also the terms by which He came.
- (4) This identifies the spirit as being "of God."
- 3. The evidence a spirit is not of God (1 John 4:3)
 - a. The confession
 - (1) This person rejects the truths concerning the nature and purpose of the incarnation.
 - (2) This confession identifies that a person "is not of God."
 - b. The spirit of the confession
 - (1) The spirit of this confession is the "spirit of antichrist."
 - a) This could mean that it is *against* Christ.
 - b) It could also mean that it is the foundation of the Antichrist's doctrine (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8).
 - c) Most likely, the first possibility is the interpretation, but both would be true (1 John 2:22; 2 John 1:7).
 - (2) The future is now (1 John 2:18).
 - a) They had heard that it should come.
 - b) Even now it was already in the world.

B. Distinctions of Spirits (1 John 4:4-6)

- 1. The distinction of John's audience (1 John 4:4)
 - a. They were of God.
 - b. They were vulnerable, and yet victorious (1 John 2:13; 1 John 5:4).
 - c. Their victory was based upon the One that was in them (Romans 8:37; John 10:28-30).
- 2. The difference in audiences (1 John 4:5-6)
 - a. The fellowship of error (1 John 4:5; John 15:19)
 - (1) The false teachers were of the world (John 3:31; John 8:23).
 - (2) They spoke of the world (John 3:31).
 - (3) The world heard them (2 Timothy 4:3).
 - b. The fellowship of truth (1 John 4:6)
 - (1) John and his fellowservants were of God (John 17:14-16).
 - (2) Those that knew the Lord heard John's message (John 10:27; John 13:20).
 - (3) Those that did not know the Lord did not hear John's message (John 8:47).
 - c. The two fellowships (1 John 4:6)
 - (1) The spirit of truth
 - (2) The spirit of error



II. THE DECLARATION OF LOVE (1 John 4:7-21)

A. Love and the New Birth (1 John 4:7-8)

1. The responsibility of love (1 John 4:7)
 - a. The call to love one another—"let us love one another."
 - b. The foundation of all love—"love is of God."
 - c. Note: The capacity to love is found in God, but man still has the responsibility to practice love—"let us love."
2. The association of love (1 John 4:7-8)
 - a. Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God (1 John 4:7).
 - b. He that loveth not knoweth not God (1 John 4:8).
 - c. The love of God separates the saved from the lost.
 - (1) The lost do not have the love of God in them (John 5:42).
 - (2) The man who loves God is known of God (1 Corinthians 8:3).
 - (3) Salvation involves knowing and believing the love of God (1 John 4:16). Love comes to us by faith (Ephesians 6:23).
 - d. The love of God and the believer; God desires believers to know the shedding abroad of the love of God in their hearts (Romans 5:5).
 - (1) The word *shed* means *to cause to flow*. God enables His love to flow in and out of us (compare John 7:38-39).
 - (2) The present tense of the verb ("is shed") indicates a continual, living flow of the love of God in our hearts.
 - (3) This shedding abroad of the love of God is a work that occurs in the hearts of believers (2 Thessalonians 3:5).
 - (4) This shedding abroad of the love of God is increased through tribulations (Romans 5:3-5).
 - (5) The love of God is to be shed **abroad**. That is, it flows out of the believer's life to touch the lives of others (Colossians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 4:7-11).
 - e. How believers grow in the love of God
 - (1) Faith enables the love of God in us (Ephesians 3:17-19; Galatians 5:6).
 - (2) Tribulation perfects God's love (Romans 5:3-5).
 - (3) Obedience perfects God's love (1 John 2:5; 1 John 5:3).
 - (4) Loving others perfects God's love (1 John 4:12).
3. The identification of love—"for God is love" (1 John 4:8)
 - a. The connection of God with love
 - (1) He is the "God of love" (2 Corinthians 13:11).
 - (2) God is love (1 John 4:8, 16).
 - (3) We are blessed by the love of God (Romans 5:5; Romans 8:39; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Titus 3:4; 1 John 3:16-17; 1 John 4:9).
 - (4) Love is of God (1 John 4:7).
 - b. The meaning of love
 - (1) Feelings of strong personal attachment (Genesis 22:2)
 - (2) Preference for one over all others (Genesis 29:29-30; Mathew 10:37 with Luke 14:26; Romans 9:13)



- (3) A willingness to sacrifice personal good for the benefit of another (John 3:16)
 - (4) A readiness to show love before love is shown to the lover (1 John 4:19)
 - c. The identity of the Trinity with love
 - (1) The Father is love (1 John 4:8, 16).
 - (2) The Son is love (Romans 8:35; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Ephesians 3:17-19).
 - (3) The Spirit is love (Romans 15:30).
 - d. An understanding of God as love
 - (1) Negatively, God is not love alone.
 - a) God's love must operate in conjunction with His righteousness and His demand for justice.
 - b) To love all without any demand for justice is to hate the just.
 - (2) Positively, God loved so much as to give His Son as a sacrifice for sin (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10).
- B. The Love of God for Man (1 John 4:9-10)
 - 1. The manifestation of love (1 John 4:9)
 - a. Manifested in an event—"In this" (1 John 3:16)
 - b. Manifested toward men (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4-5)
 - c. Manifested for a purpose—"that we might live through him" (John 3:16; Romans 5:9-10; 1 John 5:11)
 - 2. The identity of love (1 John 4:10)
 - a. True love is demonstrated by actions—"herein."
 - b. True love gives when nothing is received (1 John 4:19).
 - c. True love gives for the benefit of others.
- C. Our Love for the Brethren (1 John 4:11-13)
 - 1. Patterned after God's love (1 John 4:11)
 - a. If God SO loved us
 - b. We ought also to love one another.
 - c. Note: The extension of the pattern
 - (1) The Father loved the Son (John 15:9).
 - (2) The Father's love for the Son became the pattern of the Son's love for us (John 15:9).
 - (3) The Son's love for us became the pattern by which we ought to love one another (John 13:34).
 - 2. Evidence of salvation (1 John 4:12-13)
 - a. No man hath seen God at any time (1 John 4:12, 20).
 - b. Our brotherly love is evidence God dwells in us (1 John 4:12-13).
 - c. Our love proceeds from the Spirit God has given us (1 John 4:13).
 - d. The Spirit within us is evidence of salvation (1 John 4:13).