

# CHAPTER 4

In this chapter the apostle exhorts to try spirits (v. 1), gives a note to try by (v. 2, 3), shows who are of the world and who of God (v. 4-6), urges Christian love by divers considerations (v. 7-16), describes our love to God, and the effect of it (v. 17-21).

## 1 JOHN 4:1-3

### CONCERNING ANTICHRIST

The apostle, having said that God's dwelling in and with us may be known by *the Spirit that he hath given us*, intimates that that Spirit may be discerned and distinguished from other spirits that appear in the world; and so here,

**I.** He calls the disciples, to whom he writes, to caution and scrutiny about the spirits and spiritual professors that had now risen.

**1.** To caution: "*Beloved, believe not every spirit; regard not, trust not, follow not, every pretender to the Spirit of God, or every professor of vision, or inspiration, or revelation from God.*" Truth is the foundation of simulation and counterfeits; there had been real communications from the divine Spirit, and therefore others pretended thereto. God will take the way of his own wisdom and goodness, though it may be liable to abuse; he has sent inspired teachers to the world, and given us a supernatural revelation, though others may be so evil and so impudent as to pretend the same; every pretender to the divine Spirit, or to inspiration, and extraordinary illumination thereby, is not to be believed. Time was when the spiritual man (the man of the Spirit, who made a great noise about, and boast of, the Spirit) was mad, <sup>390E</sup>Hosea 9:7.

**2.** To scrutiny, to examination of the claims that are laid to the Spirit: *But try the spirits, whether they be of God*, v. 1. God has given of his Spirit in these latter ages of the world, but not to all who profess to come furnished therewith; to the disciples is allowed a judgment of discretion, in reference to the spirits that would be believed and trusted in the affairs of religion. A reason is given for this trial: *Because many false prophets have gone out*

*into the world*, v. 1. There being much about the time of our Saviour's appearance in the world a general expectation among the Jews of a Redeemer to Israel, and the humiliation, spiritual reformation, and sufferings of the Saviour being taken as a prejudice against him, others were induced to set up as prophets and messiahs to Israel, according to the Saviour's prediction, <sup>4223</sup>Matthew 24:23, 24. It should not seem strange to us that false teachers set themselves up in the church: it was so in the apostles' times; fatal is the spirit of delusion, sad that men should vaunt themselves for prophets and inspired preachers that are by no means so!

**II.** He gives a test whereby the disciples may try these pretending spirits. These spirits set up for prophets, doctors, or dictators in religion, and so they were to be tried by their doctrine; and the test whereby in that day, or in that part of the world where the apostle now resided (for in various seasons, and in various churches, tests were different), must be this: *Hereby know you the Spirit of God, Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (or that confesseth Jesus Christ that came in the flesh), is of God*, v. 2. Jesus Christ is to be confessed as the Son of God, the eternal life and Word, that was with the Father from the beginning; as the Son of God that came into, and came in, our human mortal nature, and therein suffered and died at Jerusalem. He who confesses and preaches this, by a mind supernaturally instructed and enlightened therein, does it by the Spirit of God, or God is the author of that illumination. On the contrary, “*Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (or Jesus Christ that came in the flesh) is not of God*, v. 3. God has given so much testimony to Jesus Christ, who was lately here in the world, and in *the flesh* (or in a fleshly body like ours), though now in heaven, that you may be assured that any impulse or pretended inspiration that contradicts this is far from being from heaven and of God.” The sum of revealed religion is comprehended in the doctrine concerning Christ, his person and office. We see then the aggravation of a systematic opposition to him and it. *And this is that spirit of antichrist whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world*, v. 3. It was foreknown by God that antichrists would arise, and antichristian spirits oppose his Spirit and his truth; it was foreknown also that one eminent antichrist would arise, and make a long and fatal war against the Christ of God, and his institution, and honour, and kingdom in the world. This great antichrist would have his way prepared, and his rise facilitated, by other less antichrists, and the spirit of

error working and disposing men's minds for him: the antichristian spirit began betimes, even in the apostles' days. Dreadful and unsearchable is the judgment of God, that persons should be given over to an antichristian spirit, and to such darkness and delusion as to set themselves against the Son of God and all the testimony that the Father hath given to the Son! But we have been forewarned that such opposition would arise; we should therefore cease to be offended, and the more we see the word of Christ fulfilled the more confirmed we should be in the truth of it.

## 1 JOHN 4:4-6

### CONCERNING ANTICHRIST

In these verses the apostle encourages the disciples against the fear and danger of this seducing antichristian spirit, and that by such methods as these: —

**1.** He assures them of a more divine principle in them: “*You are of God, little children, 5:4. You are God's little children. We are of God, v. 6. We are born of God, taught of God, anointed of God, and so secured against infectious fatal delusions. God has his chosen, who shall not be mortally seduced.*”

**2.** He gives them hope of victory: “*And have overcome them, v. 4. You have hitherto overcome these deceivers and their temptations, and there is good ground of hope that you will do so still, and that upon these two accounts:*” —

**(1.)** “*There is a strong preserver within you: Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world, v. 4. The Spirit of God dwells in you, and that Spirit is more mighty than men of devils.*” It is a great happiness to be under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

**(2.)** “*You are not of the same temper with these deceivers. The Spirit of God hath framed your mind for God and heaven; but they are of the world. The spirit that prevails in them leads them to this world; their heart is addicted thereto; they study the pomp, the pleasure, and interest of the world: and therefore speak they of the world; they profess a worldly messiah and saviour; they project a worldly kingdom and dominion; the possessions and treasures of the world would they engross to themselves,*

forgetting that the true Redeemer's *kingdom is not of this world*. This worldly design procures them proselytes: *The world heareth them*, v. 5. They are followed by such as themselves: the world will love its own, and its own will love it. But those are in a fair way to conquer pernicious seductions who have conquered the love of this seducing world.” Then, 3. He represents to them that though their company might be the smaller, yet it was the better; they had more divine and holy knowledge: “*He that knoweth God heareth us*. He who knows the purity and holiness of God, the love and grace of God, the truth and faithfulness of God, the ancient word and prophecies of God, the signals and testimonials of God, must know that he is with us; and he who knows this will attend to us, and abide with us.” He that is well furnished with natural religion will the more faithfully cleave to Christianity. *He that knoweth God* (in his natural and moral excellences, revelations, and works) *heareth us*, v. 6. As, on the contrary, “*He that is not of God heareth not us*. He who knows not God regards not us. He that is not *born of God* (walking according to his natural disposition) walks not with us. The further any are from God (as appears in all ages) the further they are from Christ and his faithful servants; and the more addicted persons are to this world the more remote they are from the spirit of Christianity. Thus you have a distinction between us and others: *Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error*, v. 6. This doctrine concerning the Saviour's person leading you from the world to God is a signature of *the Spirit of truth*, in opposition to *the spirit of error*. The more pure and holy any doctrine is the more likely is it to be of God.”

## 1 JOHN 4:7-13

### BROTHERLY LOVE

As *the Spirit of truth* is known by doctrine (thus spirits are to be tried), it is known by love likewise; and so here follows a strong fervent exhortation to holy Christian love: *Beloved, let us love one another*, v. 7. The apostle would unite them in his love, that he might unite them in love to each other: “*Beloved*, I beseech you, by the love I bear to you, that you put on unfeigned mutual love.” This exhortation is pressed and urged with variety of argument: as,

**I.** From the high and heavenly descent of love: *For love is of God.* He is the fountain, author, parent, and commander of love; it is the sum of his law and gospel: *And every one that loveth* (whose spirit is framed to judicious holy love) *is born of God*, v. 7. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of love. The new nature in the children of God is the offspring of his love: and the temper and complexion of it is love. *The fruit of the Spirit is love*, ~~482~~ Galatians 5:22. Love comes down from heaven.

**II.** Love argues a true and just apprehension of the divine nature: *He that loveth knoweth God*, v. 7. *He that loveth not knoweth not God*, v. 8. What attribute of the divine Majesty so clearly shines in all the world as his communicative goodness, which is love. The wisdom, the greatness, the harmony, and usefulness of the vast creation, which so fully demonstrate his being, do at the same time show and prove his love; and natural reason, inferring and collecting the nature and excellence of the most absolute perfect being, must collect and find that he is most highly good: and *he that loveth not* (is not quickened by the knowledge he hath of God to the affection and practice of love) *knoweth not God*; it is a convictive evidence that the sound and due knowledge of God dwells not in such a soul; his love must needs shine among his primary brightest perfections; *for God is love* (v. 8), his nature and essence are love, his will and works are primarily love. Not that this is the only conception we ought to have of him; we have found that he *is light as well as love* (~~485~~ 1 John 1:5), and God is principally love to himself, and he has such perfections as arise from the necessary love he must bear to his necessary existence, excellence, and glory; but love is natural and essential to the divine Majesty: *God is love*. This is argued from the display and demonstration that he hath given of it; as,

**1.** That he hath loved us, such as we are: *In this was manifest the love of God towards us* (v. 9), towards us mortals, us ungrateful rebels. *God commandeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*, ~~488~~ Romans 5:8. Strange that God should love impure, vain, vile, dust and ashes!

**2.** That he has loved us at such a rate, at such an incomparable value as he has given for us; he has given his own, only-beloved, blessed Son for us: *Because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*, v. 9. This person is in some peculiar distinguishing way the Son of God; he is the only-begotten. Should we suppose him begotten

as a creature or created being, he is not the only-begotten. Should we suppose him a natural necessary eradication from the Father's glory or glorious essence, or substance, he must be the only-begotten: and then it will be a mystery and miracle of divine love that such a Son should be sent into our world for us! It may well be said, *So* (wonderfully, so amazingly, so incredibly) *God loved the world.*

**3.** That God loved us first, and in the circumstances in which we lay: *Herein is love* (unusual unprecedented love), *not that we loved God, but that he loved us*, v. 10. He loved us, when we had no love for him, when we lay in our guilt, misery, and blood, when we were undeserving, ill-deserving, polluted, and unclean, and wanted to be washed from our sins in sacred blood.

**4.** That he gave us his Son for such service and such an end.

**(1.)** For such service, *to be the propitiation for our sins*; consequently to die for us, to die under the law and curse of God, *to bear our sins in his own body*, to be crucified, to be wounded in his soul, and pierced in his side, to be dead and buried for us (v. 10); and then,

**(2.)** For such an end, for such a good and beneficial end to us — *that we might live through him* (v. 9), might live for ever through him, might live in heaven, live with God, and live in eternal glory and blessedness with him and through him: O what love is here! Then,

**III.** Divine love to the brethren should constrain ours: *Beloved* (I would adjure you by your interest in my love to remember), *if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*, v. 11. This should be an invincible argument. The example of God should press us. *We should be followers* (or imitators) *of him, as his dear children.* The objects of the divine love should be the objects of ours. Shall we refuse to love those whom the eternal God hath loved? We should be admirers of his love, and lovers of his love (of the benevolence and complacency that are in him), and consequently lovers of those whom he loves. The general love of God to the world should induce a universal love among mankind. *That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust,* <sup>4055</sup> Matthew 5:45. The peculiar love of God to the church and to the saints should be productive of a peculiar love there: *If God so loved us, we ought surely* (in some measure suitably thereto) *to love one another.*

**IV.** The Christian love is an assurance of the divine inhabitation: *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us*, v. 12. Now God dwelleth in us, not by any visible presence, or immediate appearance to the eye (*no man hath seen God at any time*, v. 12), but by his Spirit (v. 13); or, “*No man hath seen God at any time*; he does not here present himself to our eye or to our immediate intuition, and so he does not in this way demand and exact our love; but he demands and expects it in that way in which he has thought meet to deserve and claim it, and that is in the illustration that he has given of himself and of his love (and thereupon of his loveliness too) in the catholic church, and particularly in the brethren, the members of that church. In them, and in his appearance for them and with them, is God to be loved; and thus, *if we love one another, God dwelleth in us*. The sacred lovers of the brethren are the temples of God; the divine Majesty has a peculiar residence there.”

**V.** Herein the divine love attains a considerable end and accomplishment in us: “*And his love is perfected in us*, v. 12. It has obtained its completion in and upon us. God's love is not perfected in him, but in and with us. His love could not be designed to be ineffectual and fruitless upon us; when its proper genuine end and issue are attained and produced thereby, it may be said to be perfected; so faith is perfected by its works, and love perfected by its operations. When the divine love has wrought us to the same image, to the love of God, and thereupon to the love of the brethren, the children of God, for his sake, it is therein and so far perfected and completed, though this love of ours is not at present perfect, nor the ultimate end of the divine love to us.” How ambitious should we be of this fraternal Christian love, when God reckons his own love to us perfected thereby! To this the apostle, having mentioned the high favour of God's dwelling in us, subjoins the note and character thereof: *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*, v. 13. Certainly this mutual inhabitation is something more noble and great than we are well acquainted with or can declare. One would think that to speak of God dwelling in us, and we in him, were to use words too high for mortals, had not God gone before us therein. What this indwelling imports has been briefly explained on <sup>1</sup> John 3:24. What it fully is must be left to the revelation of the blessed world. But this mutual inhabitation we know, says the apostle, *because he hath given us of his spirit*; he has lodged the image and fruit of his Spirit in our hearts (v. 13), and *the Spirit that he hath given us* appears to be his, or of him, since it is *the Spirit of*

power, of zeal and magnanimity for God, of love to God and man, and of a sound mind, of an understanding well instructed in the affairs of God and religion, and his kingdom among men, ~~500~~2 Timothy 1:7.

## ~~604~~1 JOHN 4:14-16

### THE DIVINE LOVE

Since faith in Christ works love to God, and love to God must kindle love to the brethren, the apostle here confirms the prime article of the Christian faith as the foundation of such love. Here,

**I.** He proclaims the fundamental article of the Christian religion, which is so representative of the love of God: *And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*, v. 14. We here see,

- 1.** The Lord Jesus's relation to God; he is Son to the Father, such a Son as no one else is, and so as to be God with the Father.
- 2.** His relation and office towards us — *the Saviour of the world*; he saves us by his death, example, intercession, Spirit, and power against the enemies of our salvation.
- 3.** The ground on which he became so — by the mission of him: *The Father sent the Son*, he decreed and willed his coming hither, in and with the consent of the Son.
- 4.** The apostle's assurance of this — he and his brethren had seen it; they had seen the Son of God in his human nature, in his holy converse and works, in his transfiguration on the mount, and in his death, resurrection from the dead, and royal ascent to heaven; they had so seen him as to be satisfied that he was the *only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*.
- 5.** The apostle's attestation of this, in pursuance of such evidence: “*We have seen and do testify*. The weight of this truth obliges us to testify it; the salvation of the world lies upon it. The evidence of the truth warrants us to testify it; our eyes, and ears, and hands, have been witnesses of it.” Thereupon,



**II.** The apostle states the excellency, or the excellent privilege attending the due acknowledgment of this truth: *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*, v. 15. This confession seems to include faith in the heart as the foundation of it, acknowledgment with the mouth to the glory of God and Christ, and profession in the life and conduct, in opposition to the flatteries or frowns of the world. Thus *no man says that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost*, by the external attestation and internal operation of the Holy Ghost, ~~418~~ 1 Corinthians 12:3. And so he who thus confesses Christ, and God in him, is enriched with or possessed by the Spirit of God, and has a complacential knowledge of God and much holy enjoyment of him. Then,

**III.** The apostle applies this in order to the excitation of holy love. God's love is thus seen and exerted in Christ Jesus; *and thus have we known and believed the love that God hath to us*, v. 16. The Christian revelation is, what should endear it to us, the revelation of the divine love; the articles of our revealed faith are but so many articles relating to the divine love. The history of the Lord Christ is the history of God's love to us; all his transactions in and with his Son were but testifications of his love to us, and means to advance us to the love of God: *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, ~~419~~ 2 Corinthians 5:19. Hence we may learn,

**1.** That *God is love* (v. 16); he is essential boundless love; he has incomparable incomprehensible love for us of this world, which he has demonstrated in the mission and mediation of his beloved Son. It is the great objection and prejudice against the Christian revelation that the love of God should be so strange and unaccountable as to give his own eternal Son for us; it is the prejudice of many against the eternity and the deity of the Son that so great a person should be given for us. It is, I confess, mysterious and unsearchable; but there are *unsearchable riches in Christ*. It is a pity that the vastness of the divine love should be made a prejudice against the revelation and the belief of it. But what will not God do when he designs to demonstrate the height of any perfection of his? When he would show somewhat of his power and wisdom, he makes such a world as this; when he would show more of his grandeur and glory, he makes heaven for the ministering spirits that are before the throne. What will he not do then when he designs to demonstrate his love, and to demonstrate his highest love, or that he himself is love, or that love is one of the most

bright, dear, transcendent, operative excellencies of his unbounded nature; and to demonstrate this not only to us, but to the angelic world, and to the principalities and powers above, and this not for our surprise for a while, but for the admiration, and praise, and adoration, and felicity, of our most exalted powers to all eternity? What will not God then do? Surely then it will look more agreeable to the design, and grandeur, and pregnancy of his love (if I may so call it) to give an eternal Son for us, than to make a Son on purpose for our relief. In such a dispensation as that of giving a natural, essential, eternal Son for us and to us, he will commend his love to us indeed; and what will not the God of love do when he designs to commend his love, and to commend it in the view of heaven, and earth, and hell, and when he will commend himself and recommend himself to us, and to our highest conviction, and also affection, as love itself? And what if it should appear at last (which I shall only offer to the consideration of the judicious) that the divine love, and particularly God's love in Christ, should be the foundation of the glories of heaven, in the present enjoyment of those ministering spirits that comported with it, and of the salvation of this world, and of the torments of hell? This last will seem most strange. But what if therein it should appear not only that God is love to himself, in vindicating his own law, and government, and love, and glory, but that the damned ones are made so, or are so punished,

- (1.) Because they despised the love of God already manifested and exhibited.
  - (2.) Because they refused to be beloved in what was further proposed and promised.
  - (3.) Because they made themselves unmeet to be the objects of divine complacency and delight? If the conscience of the damned should accuse them of these things, and especially of rejecting the highest instance of divine love, and if the far greatest part of the intelligent creation should be everlastingly blessed through the highest instance of the divine love, then may it well be inscribed upon the whole creation of God, *God is love*.
2. That hereupon *he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*, v. 16. There is great communion between the God of love and the loving soul; that is, him who loves the creation of God, according to its different relation to God, and reception from him and interest in him. He that dwells in sacred love has *the love God shed abroad upon his heart*, has the impress of God upon his spirit, the Spirit of God sanctifying and

sealing him, lives in the meditation, views, and tastes of the divine love, and will ere long go to dwell with God for ever.

## 1 JOHN 4:17-21

### THE DIVINE LOVE

The apostle, having thus excited and enforced sacred love from the great pattern and motive of it, the love that is and dwells in God himself, proceeds to recommend it further by other considerations; and he recommends it in both the branches of it, both as love to God, and love to our brother or Christian neighbour.

**I.** As love to God, to the *primum amabile* — *the first and chief of all amiable beings and objects*, who has the confluence of all beauty, excellence, and loveliness, in himself, and confers on all other beings whatever renders them good and amiable. Love to God seems here to be recommended on these accounts: —

**1.** It will give us peace and satisfaction of spirit in the day when it will be most needed, or when it will be the greatest pleasure and blessing imaginable: *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment*, v. 17. There must be a day of universal judgment. Happy they who shall have holy fiducial boldness before the Judge at that day, who shall be able to lift up their heads, and to look him in the face, as knowing he is their friend and advocate! Happy they who have holy boldness and assurance in the prospect of that day, who look and wait for it, and for the Judge's appearance! So do, and so may do, the lovers of God. Their love to God assures them of God's love to them, and consequently of the friendship of the Son of God; the more we love our friend, especially when we are sure that he knows it, the more we can trust his love. As God is good and loving, and faithful to his promise, so we can easily be persuaded of his love, and the happy fruits of his love, when we can say, *Thou that knowest all things knowest that we love thee. And hope maketh not ashamed*; our hope, conceived by the consideration of God's love, will not disappoint us, *because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given to us*, <sup>485</sup>Romans 5:5. Possibly here by the love of God may be meant our *love to God*, which is *shed abroad upon our hearts by the Holy Ghost*; this is the foundation of our hope, or

of our assurance that our hope will hold good at last. Or, if by the love of God be meant the sense and apprehension of his love to us, yet this must suppose or include us as lovers of him in this case; and indeed the sense and evidence of his love to us do shed abroad upon our hearts love to him; and thereupon we have confidence towards him and peace and joy in him. He will give the crown of righteousness to all that love his appearing. And we have this boldness towards Christ because of our conformity to him: *Because as he is so are we in this world*, v. 17. Love hath conformed us to him; as he was the great lover of God and man, he has taught us in our measure to be so too, and he will not deny his own image. Love teaches us to conform in sufferings too; we suffer for him and with him, and therefore cannot but hope and trust that we shall also be glorified together with him, <sup><302></sup>2 Timothy 2:12.

**2.** It prevents or removes the uncomfortable result and fruit of servile fear: *There is no fear in love* (v. 18); so far as love prevails, fear ceases. We must here distinguish, I judge, between fear and being afraid; or, in this case, between the fear of God and being afraid of him. The fear of God is often mentioned and commanded as the substance of religion (<sup><302></sup>1 Peter 2:17; <sup><304></sup>Revelation 14:7); and so it imports the high regard and veneration we have for God and his authority and government. Such fear is constant with love, yea, with perfect love, as being in the angels themselves. But then there is a being afraid of God, which arises from a sense of guilt, and a view of his vindictive perfections; in the view of them, God is represented as a consuming fire; and so fear here may be rendered *dread*; *There is no dread in love*. Love considers its object as good and excellent, and therefore amiable, and worthy to be beloved. Love considers God as most eminently good, and most eminently loving us in Christ, and so puts off dread, and puts on joy in him; and, as love grows, joy grows too; so that *perfect love casteth out fear* or dread. Those who perfectly love God are, from his nature, and counsel, and covenant, perfectly assured of his love, and consequently are perfectly free from any dismal dreadful suspicions of his punitive power and justice, as armed against them; they well know that God loves them, and they thereupon triumph in his love. That *perfect love casteth out fear* the apostle thus sensibly argues: that which casteth out torment casteth out fear or dread: *Because fear hath torment* (v. 18) — fear is known to be a disquieting torturing passion, especially such a fear as is the dread of an almighty avenging God; but perfect love casteth out torment, for it teaches the mind a perfect

acquiescence and complacency in the beloved, and therefore *perfect love casteth out fear*. Or, which is here equivalent, *he that feareth is not made perfect in love* (v. 18); it is a sign that our love is far from being perfect, since our doubts, and fears, and dismal apprehensions of God, are so many. Let us long for, and hasten to, the world of perfect love, where our serenity and joy in God will be as perfect as our love! 3. From the source and rise of it, which is the antecedent love of God: *We love him, because he first loved us*, v. 19. His love is the incentive, the motive, and moral cause of ours. We cannot but love so good a God, who was first in the act and work of love, who loved us when we were both unloving and unlovely, who loved us at so great a rate, who has been seeking and soliciting our love at the expense of his Son's blood; and has condescended to beseech us to be reconciled unto him. Let heaven and earth stand amazed at such love! His love is the productive cause of ours: *Of his own will* (of his own free loving will) *begat he us. To those that love him all things work together for good, to those who are the called according to his purpose*. Those that love God are the called thereto according to his purpose (<sup>ROM</sup>Romans 8:28); according to whose purpose they are called is sufficiently intimated in the following clauses: *whom he did predestinate* (or antecedently purpose, to the image of his Son) *those he also called*, effectually recovered thereto. The divine love stamped love upon our souls; may the Lord still and further direct our hearts into the love of God! (<sup>2</sup>Thessalonians 3:5).

**II.** As love to our brother and neighbour in Christ; such love is argued and urged on these accounts: —

**1.** As suitable and consonant to our Christian profession. In the profession of Christianity we profess to love God as the root of religion: *“If then a man say, or profess as much as thereby to say, I love God, I am a lover of his name, and house, and worship, and yet hate his brother, whom he should love for God's sake, he is a liar* (v. 20), he therein gives his profession the lie.” That such a one loves not God the apostle proves by the usual facility of loving what is seen rather than what is unseen: *For he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* v. 20. The eye is wont to affect the heart; things unseen less catch the mind, and thereby the heart. The incomprehensibleness of God very much arises from his invisibility; the member of Christ has much of God visible in him. How then shall the

hater of a visible image of God pretend to love the unseen original, the invisible God himself?

**2.** As suitable to the express law of God, and the just reason of it: *And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also*, v. 21. As God has communicated his image in nature and in grace, so he would have our love to be suitably diffused. We must love God originally and supremely, and others in him, on the account of their derivation and reception from him, and of his interest in them. Now, our Christian brethren having a new nature and excellent privileges derived from God, and God having his interest in them as well as in us, it cannot but be a natural suitable obligation *that he who loves God should love his brother also*.