



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The First Catholic Epistle of St. John

Chapter 4

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Introduction

- St. John cautions his readers not to believe everyone who claims to be led by the Spirit, but to test them (1-6)
- He then exhorts them to manifest brotherly love
- Love is a proof that we are born of God
- They need to keep with the character and example of God's love
- This has been demonstrated in the sacrifice of His Son (7-21)



Trying the Spirits (4:1-6)

- The last chapter has closed concerning the Holy Spirit, but some are moved by other spirits than that of Christ
- Test the spirit that moves teachers and see whether it be of God 1 John 4:2 tells how to test
- There were many false teachers in that age as well as in ours, and some claimed to be inspired
- He who confesses that Christ has come in the flesh shows that he has the Spirit of God



Trying the Spirits (4:1-6)

- In the flesh: One of the heresies was that Christ had come but that there had been no incarnation
- If Christ is denied, it is not God's Spirit, which always speaks truth, but that of antichrist
- The saints had overcome these false prophets, because they were of God
- Greater is He who is in you, and the Spirit in you is mightier than he that is in the world, the evil spirit of Satan, which was in the false prophets



Trying the Spirits (4:1-6)

- The false teachers are of the world. They are not of God
- The world hears them because they are of its spirit and speak of it
- We are of God hence we speak God's message, and those that know God accept the message
- By the principles given in 1 Jn 4:2-5 we can distinguish between the spirit of truth (the Holy Spirit) and that of error

Knowing God Through Love (4:7-11)



- He that is born of God must love because the Father is love; hence love shows that we are of Him and know Him
- He who does not know God does not love
- God is love and the source of love in our hearts
- The Son existed before He was "sent into the world," otherwise, too, He could not have been our life (1 Jn 4:9), our "propitiation" (1 Jn 4:10), or our "Savior" (1 Jn 4:14)

Knowing God Through Love (4:7-11)



- It is the grand proof of God's love, that He has sent His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him
- He is the Life who has redeemed our forfeited life; and it is also the grand motive to our mutual love
- Not that we loved God; though so altogether worthy of love
- He did not only send Him, but offered Him to be the propitiation for our sins; a sin offering for us

Knowing God Through Love (4:7-11)



- God's love to us is the grand motive for our love to one another (1 Jn 3:16)
- If: as we all admit as a fact
- We also as being born of God, and therefore resembling our Father who is love, should love one another
- As we appreciate God's love to us, we love Him and also love the brethren, the children of the same God, the representatives of the unseen God

Seeing God Through Love (4:12-16)



- God is invisible to mortal eyes, yet we may have a sense of His presence in us, if we love each other He dwells in us
- Love is made complete by our loving each other
- It is incomplete unless His love for us is supplemented by brotherly love
- This love in us is the proof that God is in us
- We know that God dwells in us by the fruit of the Spirit given us
- The first one is love, Gal 5:22

Seeing God Through Love (4:12-16)



- V. 14 is St. John's personal Apostolic testimony
- Confession of Jesus Christ in word and life is declared proof of the indwelling Spirit in 1 Jn 4:2
- We know and have believe the love of God toward us because we have confessed the coming of His Son to the world
- Love of God is a matter of experiential knowledge (life) and was a matter of faith
- Love binds us to God

The Consummation of Love (4:17-19)



- When love is perfected in us we will have no fear of the judgment day
- Those who love God supremely will not be terrified at His presence
- The ground of boldness is that we are as Christ; purified, made sinless, and filled with love like Him and also appear at judgment in His likeness
- This transformation begins when we were baptized, hence, in this world

The Consummation of Love (4:17-19)



- There may be reverential fear, but there is no terror. Fear of God gives way to love
- Fear fills us with uneasiness
- Perfect love is incompatible with such a self-punishing fear
- His wonderful love in Christ fills every redeemed soul with love
- He was the first to love us: this thought ought to create in us love casting out fear



Obedience by Faith (4:20-21)

- No one can claim to love God while hates his brother
- We cannot love the unseen God when we hate the brother who is in God's image
- It is God's will that he who loves the Father should love the children also
- We should love every one purely, regardless of his opinions or mode of worship, because he is the child, and bears the image, of God



Conclusion

- Why should one not believe every spirit?
- If one is truly led by the Spirit of God, what will they confess?
- What did St. John say about the coming of Antichrist?
- What did John write about their ability to overcome?
- How does one discern between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error?



Conclusion

- Why should we love one another?
- How was God's love for us manifested?
- How can we ensure that God will abide in us?
- When we love one another as we should, what does it give us?
- If we claim to love God, but hate our brother, what does that make us? Why?