

First John 4:20-21

You cannot separate love for God from love for one another

- 1) Condemnation of one's character—(then) *he is* [pres. act. ind. εἰμί] *a liar* [ψεύστης];
 - a) The unbelieving opponents—²⁰ *If* [ἐάν, 3rd class condition] *anyone* ...
 - i) A¹—Has a claim about loving God—*should say* [aor. act. subj. λέγω] *that* [ὅτι] ...
 - (1) *"I am loving God* [pres. act. ind. ἀγαπάω],"
 - ii) B¹—But a hateful lifestyle toward Christians—*and (yet) is hating* [pres. act. subj. μισέω] *his brother*,
 - (1) Consistently demonstrates a lack of sacrificial love for other believers
 - iii) Cf. 1st John 2:9, 11; 3:14-15; 4:8
 - b) Why? *because* [γάρ] ...
 - i) B²—If he has no love for the visible Christians—*the one who is characterized by not loving* [pres. act. ptc. ἀγαπάω] *his brother whom he has seen* [pf. act. ind. ὀράω]
 - ii) A²—he has no ability to love the invisible God—*is not able* [pres. dep. ind. δύναμαι] *to be loving* [pres. act. infin. ἀγαπάω] *the God who he has not seen* [pf. act. ind. ὀράω].
 - (1) "The inability is rooted in the moral contradiction of seeking to harbor love and hatred in the same heart." (Hiebert)
 - c) "The failure to love the brother who is seen demonstrates that no relationship with the loving God exists, no matter what is claimed." (Magill)
 - d) "The nature of His love demands that we love those sort of fellow recipients of God love.... We always reveal what we are by what we do." (Hiebert)
- 2) Command to obey—²¹ *And this is the commandment we are having* [pres. act. ind. ἔχω] *from* [ἀπό] *Him* (God the Father through Jesus) ,
 - a) Content and aim of the command—*that* [ὅτι] *the one characterized by loving God* [pres. act. ptc. ἀγαπάω] *should also be loving* [pres. act. subj. ἀγαπάω] *his brother*.
 - i) Cf. 3:23
 - b) "The command to love one another is justified by the fact that no other course is possible for those who know Him. If God's love is not flowing through us to others, then we have no relationship with Him." (Magill)
 - c) A claim to love God is a delusion if not accompanied by unselfish and practical love for one another.
 - d) "This love is a quality of the new nature and therefore a normal part of the spiritual life." (Hiebert)