

1 John 4:9 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[INDEX FOR ALL VERSES ON 1 JOHN](#)

- [1 John 4:1](#)
- [1 John 4:2](#)
- [1 John 4:3](#)
- [1 John 4:4](#)
- [1 John 4:5](#)
- [1 John 4:6](#)
- [1 John 4:7](#)
- [1 John 4:8](#)
- [1 John 4:9](#)
- [1 John 4:10](#)
- [1 John 4:11](#)
- [1 John 4:12](#)
- [1 John 4:13](#)
- [1 John 4:14](#)
- [1 John 4:15](#)
- [1 John 4:16](#)
- [1 John 4:17](#)
- [1 John 4:18](#)
- [1 John 4:19](#)
- [1 John 4:20](#)
- [1 John 4:21](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll!

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

1 John 4:9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him:

Greek - en touto ephanerothe (3SAPI) e agape tou theou en hemin, hoti ton huion autou ton monogene apestalken (3SRAI) o theos eis ton kosmon hina zesomen (1PAAS) di autou

Amplified - In this the love of God was made manifest (displayed) where we are concerned: in that God sent His Son, the only begotten or unique [Son], into the world so that we might live through Him.

Wuest - In this was clearly shown the love of God in our case, because His Son, the only begotten One, God sent off into the world in order that we may live through Him.

NLT - God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.

Smalley - This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent his only Son into the world so that through him we could live. (Word Biblical Commentary)

- **Was:** 1Jn 3:16 John 3:16 Ro 5:8-10 8:32
- **God has sent:** 1Jn 4:10 Lu 4:18 John 5:23 6:29 8:29,42
- **only:** Ps 2:7 Mk 12:6 John 1:14-18 3:18 Heb 1:5
- **we:** 1Jn 5:11 John 6:51,57 10:10,28-30 11:25,26 14:6 Col 3:3,4
- [1 John 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S LOVE IN THE INCARNATION

By this (similar phrase 5x in this section - 1Jn 4:9, 10, 13, 17, 5:2) - **By what?** In context this seems to most clearly refer to what follows "and is interpreted by the following **"that"** (hoti) clause." (Hiebert) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." ("**By this** the love of God is revealed in us: **that** God has sent ... ")

God is love and so He must communicate, not just in words but in deeds and here we see the greatest expression of His love, the sending of His Son. As Paul wrote (Ro 5:8) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

As **A E Brooke** says "The true nature of God's love has now been shown, in a way which men can understand and appreciate, in the fact and the purpose of the **Incarnation**. God gave His best, that men might be enabled to live the life of God." ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

Love of God - Not our love for Him, but clearly His love for us (subjective genitive), "because it describes God's action in sending his Son into the world." (NET Note)

Spurgeon - There is love in our creation; there is love in providence; but most of all there is love in the gift of Christ for our redemption. The apostle here seems to say, "Now that I have found the great secret of God's love to us; here is the clearest evidence of divine love that ever was or ever can be manifested toward the sons of men."

Indeed, God's supreme example of sacrificial love should serve to motivate us to love in the same way.

In us - "This description does not specify where the love of God is revealed with regard to believers: *'in our midst'* (i.e., among us) or *'within us'* (i.e., internally within believers). The latter is probable, because in the context the concept of God's indwelling of the believer is mentioned in 1Jn 4:12: "God resides (menei) in us." (NET Note)

Hiebert - Fallen humanity would never have known such redeeming love apart from the fact that God took the initiative in revealing His love to mankind. Therefore, "all our definitions of what love is and how it behaves must be drawn from Him if they are to accord with reality." (Jackman) The true nature of God's love was manifested in the **incarnation** (1Jn 4:9) and in the **atonement** (1Jn 4:10). ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

Steven Cole on the love of God was manifested in us - John's point here seems to be that we, as God's born again children, are Exhibit A of His great love that sent His only begotten Son to this wicked world... Why did He come? To display or manifest His great love in us, to His glory (Eph. 1:3-12-note)! ([1 John 4:7-11 Why We Must Love](#))

Was manifest (appeared) ([5319](#))(**phaneroo** from **phanerós** = manifest, visible, conspicuous in turn from **phaino** = give light; become visible in turn from **phos** = light) literally means "was brought to light" and so conveys the sense that God's love (by itself not clearly visible) was made clearly visible. God clearly revealed His love making it abundantly clear in the Incarnation. The coming of Messiah into the world as a Man was unmistakable evidence of divine love.

Wiersbe notes that "The word **manifested** means "to come out in the open, to be made public." It is the opposite of "to hide, to make secret." Under the Old Covenant, God was hidden behind the shadows of ritual and ceremony (Heb. 10:1); but in Jesus Christ "the life was manifested" (1John 1:2-note). "He that hath seen Me," said Jesus, "hath seen the Father" (John 14:9)." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

John uses the **aoirist tense** which points to a definite historical event which took place at a given time in the past, specifically referring to Christ's incarnation, when the invisible God became visible and God's love became visible in and through Jesus and His words and deeds, especially His loving us enough to die on the Cross in our place (Eph 5:25-note). And so the **aoirist tense** in a sense summarizes the entirety of Jesus' first coming, His birth, His ministry years, His death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead. The implication of the **aoirist tense** is that God's love had never before been displayed in such a personal manner. God is love and He has always loved the world, but the sending of His Son was the "exclamation point!"

Notice below in John's other uses of **phaneroo** that he has already explained **WHY** the Son was **manifested** or **appeared** -- in 1Jn 3:5-note "He **appeared** in order to take away sins" and in 1Jn 3:8 He **appeared** for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil." When and where were these goals accomplished? Isaac Watts answers in rhyme...

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!
Alas! and Did My Saviour Bleed=-

Phaneroo is a favorite verb of John (18x in 49v) - John 1:31; 2:11; 3:21; 7:4; 9:3; 17:6; 21:1, 14; 1John 1:2; 2:19, 28; 3:2, 5, 8; 4:9.

1John 1:2-note and the life was **manifested**, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was **manifested** to us-- (Jesus attested the same thing in His great prayer - "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world."

1John 2:19-note They went out from us, but they were not [really] of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but [they went out,] in order that it **might be shown** that they all are not of us.

1John 2:28-note And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He **appears**, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

1John 3:2-note Beloved, now we are children of God, and **it has** not **appeared** as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He **appears**, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

1John 3:5-note And you know that He **appeared** in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

1John 3:8-note the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God **appeared** for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

1John 4:9-note By this the love of God was **manifested** in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

Paul uses **phaneroo** in 1Timothy 3:16 writing "And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was **revealed** in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory."

Ironside wrote that this "is the first manifestation of divine love. Creation proclaimed God's omnipotent power and wisdom, but creation could not proclaim His love. When God looked down on a world groaning under the sentence of death because of sin, a world of people who were alive to the things of this life, but dead to the things of God, God found it in His heart to go down after those people and find a means of bringing "whosoever will" into newness of life. He said in effect, "I am going to give them the greatest gift that one could possibly give, My only begotten Son. I am going to send Him into the world that they may have life through Him." ([1 John 4 Commentary - Ironside's Notes on Selected Books](#))

Love (26)(**agape**) is a love that impels one to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of the object loved... (it) speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in the object loved, an apprehension of its preciousness.

Three times in this section on love John writes that the Father **sent** His Son - that we might live through Him (1Jn 4:9), as the propitiation for our sins (1Jn 4:10-note), and as the Savior of the world (1Jn 4:14-note). In horse racing a trifecta is when the bettor wins by selecting the first three finishers of the race in the correct order. That Jesus would achieve all three of the goals for which He was sent was never in doubt, as His cry underscored -- "**It is finished.**" (Jn 19:30) (See discussion of [Tetelestai - It is Finished! Paid in Full!](#))

**Babies are born into the world,
but only Jesus was sent into the world!**

Sent (649)(**apostello** from **apo** = off, away from, speaks of separation + **stello** = appoint to a position this sense in the derivative word **apostolos** = emissary) literally means to send forth. "To dispatch someone for the achievement of some objective, send away/out." (BDAG) **Apostello** is in the **perfect tense** signifying the permanent effect of the sending of the Son. The sending of the Son has lasting effect! Indeed, the results of the Father's sending the Son will abide throughout eternity in those who have received the Son as their propitiation and Savior. For example in context the result "that we might live through Him" will be everlasting! Hallelujah!

Vine on **apostello** - lit., "to send forth" (apo, "from"), akin to **apostolos**, "an apostle," denotes (a) "to send on service, or with a commission." (1) of persons; Christ, sent by the Father, Matthew 10:40; 15:24; 21:37; Mark 9:37; 12:6; Luke 4:18,43; 9:48; 10:16; John 3:17; 5:36,38; 6:29,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18 (1st part), Jn 17:21,23,25; 20:21; Acts 3:20 (future); 3:26; 1 John 4:9,10,14; the Holy Spirit, Luke 24:49 (in some texts; see No. 3); 1 Peter 1:12; Revelation 5:6; Moses, Acts 7:35; John the Baptist, John 1:6; 3:28; disciples and apostles, e.g., Matthew 10:16; Mark 11:1; Luke 22:8; John 4:38; 17:18 (2nd part); Acts 26:17; servants, e.g., Matthew 21:34; Luke 20:10; officers and officials, Mark 6:27; John 7:32; Acts 16:35; messengers, e.g., Acts 10:8,17,20; 15:27; evangelists, Romans 10:15; angels, e.g., Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27; Luke 1:19,26; Hebrews 1:14; Revelation 1:1; 22:6; demons, Mark 5:10; (2) of things, e.g., Matthew 21:3; Mark 4:29, RV, marg., "sendeth forth," text, "putteth forth" (AV, "... in"); Acts 10:36; 11:30; 28:28; (b) "to send away, dismiss," e.g., Mark 8:26; 12:3; Luke 4:18, "to set (at liberty)." ([Send - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words](#))

Into the world - Whereas **apostello** indicates a sending of the Son from the Father with a mission and objective (salvation of mankind), **into the world** gives the Son's destination. As John writes in his Gospel "God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him." (John 3:17)

JESUS IS ONE OF A KIND!

His only begotten Son - Only begotten marks His uniqueness. Son marks His deity. See also [What does it mean that Jesus is God's only begotten son?](#)

Hiebert adds that "'His Son' calls attention to the intimate Father-Son relationship between the sender and the one sent; in eternity past the Son was in an intimate face-to-face relationship with God (John 1:1)... The term (**monogenes**) implies the sacrificial nature of the Father's love in voluntarily sending His only Son." ([The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary](#)) (See also related [journal article - 1 John 4:7-21 - Excellent](#))

Only begotten (One of a Kind, One and Only) ([3439](#))(**monogenes** from **monos** = alone + **genos** = birth, race, kind <> from **ginomai** = to come into being, to become) means that which is the only one of its kind of class or specific relationship and thus is **unique** or "**one and only**." Most modern scholars agree that **monogenes** does not refer to the "begetting" aspect of Jesus' sonship, but rather to His uniqueness. **BDAG** says **monogenes** "pertains to being the only one of its kind or class, unique (in kind) of something that is the only example of its category. He alone is the eternal Son of God, who existed in the beginning with God (John 1:1).

Monogenes (9x) - Luke 7:12, 8:42, 9:38, Jn 1:14, 18, 3:16,18, Heb 11:17 1Jn 4:9

NET Note on **monogenes** - Although the word translated one and only (**monogenēs**) is often rendered "**only begotten**," such a translation is misleading, since in English it appears to express a metaphysical relationship. The word in Greek was used of an only child (a son [Luke 7:12, 9:38] or a daughter [Luke 8:42]). It was also used of something unique (only one of its kind) such as the mythological bird called the Phoenix (1 Clement 25:2). From here it passes easily to a description of Isaac (Heb 11:17 and Josephus, Ant. 1.13.1 [1.222]) who was not Abraham's only son, but was one-of-a-kind because he was the child of the promise. Thus the word means "one-of-a-kind" and is reserved for Jesus alone in the Johannine literature of the NT. While all Christians are *children of God* (*tekna theou*), Jesus is God's Son in a *unique, one-of-a-kind* sense. The word is used in this way in all its uses in the Gospel of John (Jn1:14, 18; 3:16, 18).

MacArthur adds that "John always uses (**monogenes**) of Christ to picture his unique relationship to the Father, His pre-existence, and His distinctness from creation. The term emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ, as the only One of His kind. It was He Whom the Father sent into the world as the greatest Gift ever given (John 17:3; 2Cor. 8:9) so that we might have life eternal (cf. John 3:14-15; 12:24). (MacArthur Study Bible)

Only begotten Son - this phrase occurs 4x - John 3:16, 18; Heb 11:17 (of Isaac as the "unique" son of promise); 1John 4:9

Ironside - Only Begotten Son. That relationship remains unique for all eternity. Think of it! God the Father loved a world dead in trespasses and sins in such a way that He gave His unique Son, the darling of His bosom, that we might live through Him. ([Ibid](#))

Storms notes that God "gave his Son to die; not primarily to live or to teach or to exhort or to be an example but to die He gave his Son to die for sinners (Ro 5:6-8); not for righteous people or loving people or kind people or pretty people, but sinners. ([First John 4:7-21](#))

Into the world - John mentions **world** three times in this section on love (1Jn 4:7-21) - "God has sent His only begotten Son into the **world** that we might live through Him" (1Jn 4:9-note), "the Father as sent the Son to be the Savior of the **world**." (1Jn 4:14-note), "As He is, so also are we in this **world**." (1Jn 4:17-note) God clearly demonstrates His love for the world in these passages, sending His Son as Savior, giving us His Son's life and leaving us on earth so that others might see Him in us (1Jn 4:17)!

So that (hina) (term of purpose or result) should always prompt at least one question - What is the purpose? The purpose of God's Son coming is for us to have eternal life now and forever. True life. Life as God intended it to be lived.

William Barclay - God's love is demonstrated in Jesus Christ (1John 4:9). When we look at Jesus we see two things about the love of God. (a) It is a love which holds nothing back. God was prepared to give His only Son and make a sacrifice beyond which no sacrifice can possibly go in His love for men. (b) It is a totally undeserved love. It would be no wonder if we loved God, when we remember all the gifts He has given to us, even apart from Jesus Christ; the wonder is that He loves poor and disobedient creatures like us. ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

Cole on we might live through Him - Christianity is not primarily a matter of a person deciding to stop certain sinful practices and to start doing morally acceptable practices. It is not a matter of changing from being a non-religious person who spends Sundays for himself, to becoming a regular churchgoer. Rather, at its heart, Christianity is a matter of God imparting new life to those who are dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1-5). That new life manifests itself in loving behavior. As born again people who have experienced God's love, we should display His love to this wicked world that crucified the Son of God. ([1 John 4:7-11 Why We Must Love](#))

Wiersbe - Jesus Christ died that **we might live "through Him"** (1Jn 4:9), "**for Him**" (2Cor 5:15-note), and "**with Him**" (1Th 5:9-10-note). A sinner's desperate need is for life, because he is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1-note). It is something of a paradox that Christ had to die so that we may live! We can never probe the mystery of His death, but this we know: He died for us (Gal 2:20-note). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

And if we **live** through Him, we will be enabled (by His Spirit) to **love** like Him.

In chapter 5 John writes "He who has the Son has the **life**; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the **life**." (1Jn 5:12-note)

John's purpose for his Gospel was "these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah prophesied about over 300x in the OT), the Son of God; and that believing you **may have life** in His name." (Jn 20:31) So the purpose was that we might believe and live in Him.

Paul writes God "gives **life** to the **dead** and calls into being that which does not exist." (Ro 4:17-note)

In his great letter to the Ephesians Paul reminded the saints of their great salvation writing "you were **dead** in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived (**Ed**: This is hardly LIFE as God intended us to experience!) in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of **His great love with which He loved us**, even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive** (**Ed**: This is LIFE God intended for us to live) together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). (Eph 2:1-5-note)

Ironside - "we were dead we needed life, and there is no life apart from Him."

A E Brooke - God sent His Son that men might live. The manifestation of His love is made in those who have entered upon the life which He sent His Son to give. ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

REAL LIFE, LIFE INDEED LIFE IN THE SON

Barclay on live through Him - Jesus is the Bringer of life. God sent Him that through Him we might have life (1John 4:9). There is a world of difference between **existence** and **life**. All men have **existence** but all do not have **life**. The very eagerness with which men seek pleasure shows that there is **something missing** in their lives. A famous doctor once said that men would find a cure for cancer more quickly than they would find a cure for boredom. Jesus gives a man an object for which to live; He gives him strength by which to live; and He gives him peace in which to live. Living with Christ turns mere **existence** into **fullness of life**. (1 John 4 Commentary - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible)

Life is found alone in Jesus,
Only there 'tis offered thee-
Offered without price or money,
'Tis the gift of God sent free.
Take salvation-
Take it now, and happy be.

Might live ([2198](#))(**zao**) refers literally to natural physical life (opposite of death, Acts 22:22, 25:24, 28:4, Ro 7:1-3, 1Cor 7:39, of Adam = 1Cor 15:45; 2Cor 4:11 = refers to natural lives of believers; Php 1:22 - "to live on in the [physical] flesh"; 1Th 4:15,17 = believers physically alive at time of Rapture; Heb 2:15; Heb 9:17; James 4:15 = "we shall live" physically if God so wills it!). **Zao** means to come to physical life after death (Mt 9:18) or to recover life after sickness (Jn 4:50).

In the present context **zao** refers to supernatural, spiritual life, life available only in Christ, Who is "the Resurrection and the Life." (Jn 11:25-26). **Zao** describes life wrought by the new birth wrought by belief in the Gospel (Ro 1:17-note "the righteous shall live by faith")

John links **life** and **Jesus** in other passages...

And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this **life** is **in His Son**. (1John 5:11-note)

Jesus said " "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also **shall live because of Me**. (Jn 6:57)

As Paul said now it is "Christ Who is our life!" (Col 3:4-note) (Literally the Greek reads "Christ, our life!")

Hiebert comments on the verb **might live** in the aorist tense - The aorist tense declares the purpose of Christ's mission as the actual bestowal of life with the resultant ongoing possession of eternal life. The added phrase "through him" declares that the Son Himself is the mediating agent of this bestowal of eternal life, imparted to them while they are here on this earth. This God-given life is not merely future; through Christ it is received here in this life and will continue into the eternal future. "It includes the removal of the sentence of death, the return of spiritual life of the soul, and the final enjoyment of eternal life in heaven." ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#)) (See also related journal article - [1 John 4:7-21 - Excellent](#))

Because Jesus "bore our sins in His body on the cross," it is now our privilege and power to "die to sin and **live** to righteousness." (1Pe 2:24-note)

Paul links **life** with **Jesus Christ** in a number of passages...

Romans 6:11-note Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but **alive** to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:13-note and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin [as] instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those **alive** from the dead, and your members [as] instruments of righteousness to God.

Galatians 2:20-note "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who **live**, but **Christ lives in me**; and the [life] which I now **live** in the flesh I **live** by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

1Thessalonians 5:10-note "(Christ) Who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may **live** together with Him."

Love, INC (Read: Colossians 3:12-17-note) - When I heard about the service agency called Love, INC, I assumed that meant Love, Incorporated. But it actually means Love—In the Name of Christ. The organization's goal is to mobilize churches to reach out to a hurting and needy world in the name of Christ.

Throughout history, people have said they're acting in Jesus' name, when in reality it was for their own advantage. During World War II, the horrors of the Holocaust were sometimes rationalized by those who labeled the Jews "Christ-killers." Today racist groups dare to use "Christian" in their name or literature while using violence and hatred to intimidate people.

The Word of God is so saturated with the word love that it's hard to imagine how anyone could justify doing hateful acts in the name of Christ. Love is at the core of the gospel: Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was motivated by God's love. "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1John 4:9).

As grateful followers of Jesus, we are told to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17-**note**). When we represent Him to other people in word and deed, they should see love, in the name of Christ. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Teach me to love—this is my plea;
May all the Spirit’s graces shine through me;
Tear from my heart all hate, foolish pride;
Help me to live like Christ the crucified.
—Peterson © 1968 John W. Peterson Music Company.