

Doctrinal Summary of Love: The Result of Knowing God

In 1 John 4:8, John identifies that the ability to unconditionally love another is the result of knowing God.

“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

The phrase “the one who does not love” is translated from the Koine Greek phrase ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν (“ha mae ah-gah-pohn”) which more literally means, “the one not performing the continuous type of action as a matter of principle to self-sacrificially and unconditionally love regardless of the response received because of one’s character and decision to pursue what is best for another based on his own initiation.” It describes an individual as being one who is not unconditionally loving another or others. His failure to unconditionally love is based on his own decision making. He has not initiated the necessary actions to perform unconditional love. Thus, by his failure to choose what is necessary in order to perform the action of unconditionally loving others, his failure is the result of a principle in operation within his life. His failure to unconditionally love is occurring simultaneously to not knowing God by means of a personal relationship that develops a personal knowledge of God.

The phrase “does not know” are translated from the Koine Greek phrase οὐκ ἔγνω (“ouk eg-noh”) which more literally means, “he really has not performed the action in a point in time to know something through experience resulting in personal understanding of how academic fact(s) relate to experience.” It identifies the one who is not loving unconditionally as not having come to a personal understanding of who God is. This is not something he has performed the action to accomplish. Academic facts can be memorized and logically cognized into comprehensible thought. However, understanding the relationship of those facts to reality requires personal interaction in time and circumstances with those facts. The believer who has not spent time interacting with God does not come to personally understand who God.

To personally understand God requires having a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ (cf. John 14:6) and maintaining that relationship with God through confession of sin (cf. 1 John 1:9). As the believer spends time in fellowship with God he comes to personally understand who God is and how God operates. The believer who does not unconditionally love has not come to personal understanding of who God is. If he had then he would unconditionally love because God is love.

The word “for” is translated from the Koine Greek word ὅτι (“ho-ti”) which more literally means, “on account of the fact that.” It identifies the basis or reason behind something being true. Here it identifies the reason why those who do not love are those who have not personally understood who God is. It is because of the fact that God is love.

Unconditional love is one of the seven attributes of God. It, along with the other six attributes, is used in every decision God makes regarding how He carries out His will toward and in response to man and Satan & Company. It is a part of who He is. Those who come to know who He is understand unconditional love from its source. Consequently, they can choose to unconditionally love others as well. However, failure to know God personally establishes the principle that they will not be able to unconditionally love others. This is because unconditionally loving others is the result of personally understanding the God of the universe by means of personal experience with Him in time and circumstances. Thus, unconditional love is the result of personally understanding and knowing God.