

Doctrinal Summary of
Love: An Oppositional Entity and Force to Fear

In 1 John 4:18 John identifies unconditional love as an opposite counterpart to fear.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”

The word “fear” is translated from the Koine Greek word φόβος (“pho-bos”) which more literally means, “careful consideration of one’s actions as a result of recognizing the potential consequences of something because of its characteristics and nature, based on initiation.” It refers to a mental attitude that an individual can have when faced with the potential consequences or ramifications of dealing with another being or an impending circumstance. As the individual recognizes the characteristics and nature of the being or circumstance in view, he comes to understand the potential consequences that may be encountered depending on what the being might do or how the circumstance might play out. Since both potentialities are beyond his immediate ability to control, he must choose carefully how he responds to the being or circumstance. This can result in stoic decision making that carefully and respectfully responds to what he is facing or it can result in deciding to flee from what he is facing in order to avoid any undesirable consequences. As a mental attitude it is under the control of man’s volition and can be chosen or rejected, thus it is based on man’s initiation. Perfect love casts out fear according to John

The word “perfect” is translated from the Koine Greek word τελεία (“te-lei-ah”) which more literally means, “that which is complete as a result of having every necessary component to be whole, based on response.” It refers to something that is not missing any part of what it is designed to possess, whether in characteristic or in function. As such it is complete rather than incomplete. Whether something is complete or not is based on its ultimate design and whether each of the attributes, requirements, or components are present or lacking. Thus, what is complete is based on response to all its components being present. Unconditional love is complete when it has all its components present and abides in an individual. When this occurs it performs the action to cast out fear.

The words “casts out” are translated from the Koine Greek word βάλλει (“bal-lei”) which more literally means, “it really performs the continuous type of action to throw something away from a location using a purposeful motion of varied force.” It refers to purposefully and forcefully causing something to be moved from where it is to another location. The level or intensity of the force used to make this location change varies depending on the context and motivation for the action. Thus, it can refer to something that is thrown out, cast out, expelled, or driven out depending on the context in which it is used. When unconditional love is complete it performs the action to remove fear of another or circumstances by its presence and function. This relieves the concern for the potential consequences that accompany fearing another being or impending circumstance.

Love and fear are opposites much in the same way that light and darkness are opposites. Light overtakes darkness by shining into it. Love casts out fear by being shown to and abiding in an individual. As unconditional love abides in an individual it provides for all his needs. By providing for all his needs, unconditional love removes the need to carefully consider what the individual does in light of what he is facing. This results in stability and confidence in the one that love abides in and removes the instability and uncertainty that accompanies fear. In this way love is an oppositional entity and force to fear.