

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another,¹
for *love is from God*,
and whoever loves has been born of God
and knows God.

⁸ Anyone
who does not love
does not know God,
because God is love.²

⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us,
that God sent His only³ Son into the world,
so that we might live through Him.

¹⁰ In this is love,
not that we have loved God
but that He loved us⁴
and sent his Son⁵ to be the propitiation⁶ for our sins.

¹¹ Beloved,
if God so loved us,
we also ought to love one another.

¹² No one has ever seen God;⁷
if we love one another,
God **abides** in us⁸
and His love is **perfected** in us.⁹

¹ In 1 John 3:23, John said God left us a commandment to believe in Jesus as God's Son and to love one another. 1 John 4:1-6 talked about proper faith in Jesus is to reject all other false teachers. Now he turns to unfold the love aspect of this commandment. This, however, is not a new subject in this letter. We covered it in 1 John 2:7-11 and 1 John 3:11-18. So what is new this time around? Earlier the love theme was connected with light (1 John 2:8, 10) and then the evidence of eternal life (1 John 3:14-15). Here the connection is to the very nature of love and God's loving activity in Christ and in us.

² What else does Scripture say God is? Cf. John 4:24, 1 John 1:5, Heb. 12:29 (Deut. 4:24).

³ Reminiscent of the "sacrifice" of Isaac (Gen. 22). God tested Abraham by calling upon him to sacrifice his one and only son (Heb. 11:17). John uses this same word 4 times in the Gospel of John (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18).

⁴ Romans 5:8.

⁵ Cf. John 3:16ff. First John says that God is love (it's His nature), but here he describes the reality of God's love in history. Here's how we can know God really is love because He sent Jesus to die for us. One of the false teachings about God talked about Him as an impersonal force disconnected from this material world. This is from the Truth of Scripture. Our God is relational and His connection to the material world is solidified in a whole new way because Jesus takes on human flesh to be like us.

⁶ 1 John 2:2. God's love is known not merely in the fact that Jesus became a man, but that Jesus came in order that He would sacrifice himself for us.

⁷ John 1:18, Col. 1:15.

⁸ It is not our loving that causes God to come to dwell in us, but the opposite. God's dwelling in us brings forth love in us for others.

⁹ These two thoughts are going to be fleshed out in turn. In 13-16, John will say more about God abiding in us and in 17-21, about God's love being perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know
that we abide in Him
and He in us,
because He has given us of his Spirit.
¹⁴ And we have seen and testify
that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.
¹⁵ Whoever confesses
that Jesus is the Son of God,
God abides in him,
and he in God.
¹⁶ So we have come to know
and to believe the love that God has for us.
God is love,
and whoever
abides in love
abides in God,
and God abides in him.

¹⁷ By this is love **perfected**¹⁰ with us,
so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment¹¹,
because as he is
so also are we in this world.

¹⁸ There is no fear¹² in love,
but perfect love casts out fear.¹³
For fear has to do with punishment,
and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

¹⁹ We love
because he first loved us.
²⁰ If anyone says,
"I love God,"
and hates his brother,
he is a liar;
for he who does not love his brother
whom he has seen
cannot love God
whom he has not seen.¹⁴

¹⁰ 1 John 4:12.

¹¹ 1 John 2:28 the confidence at Jesus' appearing.

¹² While the Bible does talk about fearing God (e.g. Luke 23:40; Acts 13:16, 26; 1 Peter 2:17; Rev. 14:7) and sometimes Gentile believers are called "God-fearers" (Neh. 7:2; Acts 10:22), the fear toward God is often better thought of as respect, honor, or awe. It is a recognition of who God is and who we are before Him, but it is not a servile fear or phobia toward Him.

¹³ The flip side of confidence is fear. If we have confidence before God, we no longer need fear His wrath or punishment.

¹⁴ In one sense it's easier to love someone (God) you haven't seen, but John argues about the reality. We can only love those beside us whom we can serve. If we can't love those people, it's ludicrous to say we can love God.

²¹ And this commandment we have from him:
 whoever
 loves God
must also love his brother.¹⁵

This reminds me of Jesus' question, "Is it easier to forgive sins or to say to a paralyzed man, 'Get up and walk!'" (Mark 2:9ff.).

¹⁵ In Scripture love for God and love for our neighbor are two sides of the same coin (1 John 3:23, Deut. 6:4, Lev. 19:18, Matt. 22:37-40).