

The New Commandment: Love One Another  
1 John 4:7-21

[7] Beloved, let us love one another, 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. [9] In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only 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 us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [12] No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is 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 with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. 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. [21] And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:7-21 ESV)

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I. God First Loved Us: 7-10

Standing at the foot of the cross, gazing on the length to which God's love has gone for us, it's impossible (unless we are particularly hard-hearted; unless, as he says, we simply haven't known God at all) not to sense the power and possibilities within that love. This is the force that has changed the world, and could still change the world if only the followers of Jesus would really come on board with it.

II. Abiding in Love: 11-16

At the heart of this passage we find, repeated, a little word which means a whole world to John, as in his gospel it means so much to Jesus himself: **abide**. 'Those who *abide* in love *abide* in God, and God *abides* in them'

III. Abiding Leads to Obedience: 17-18

'Nobody has ever seen God. The only-begotten God, who is intimately close to the father – he has brought him to light.' The meaning of that statement is striking: we don't really know who 'God' is – until we look at Jesus. Now we see the meaning of our present statement in 1 John 4:12: people don't really know who 'God' is until they see it revealed in the life of Christians. Until, that is, 'his love is completed in us'.

IV. The Practically of Love: 19-21

Our love is not a perfect love. Our hearts may condemn us in our attempts to love others. It's never going to be a perfect love, but that love is being perfected in us, because it is God's love which is being perfected in our hearts and lives.

V. Closing Thoughts and Challenge

Love comes from God. It proves God. But Love isn't automatic. There is no authenticity in the claim of loving a God we have not seen, if within that actualized love, we do not respect through words, actions and deeds to one another.