

"The Tests of Faith, Life, and Love" (1 John 4:7-21)

A - ⁷*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God;* and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸The one who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**

B - ⁹By 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. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and **sent His Son to be** the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His **love is perfected** in us.

C - ¹³By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴We have seen and testify that the Father has **sent the Son to be** the Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. **God is love**, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

B' - ¹⁷By this, **love is perfected with us**, so that we may have confidence in the *day of judgment*; because as He is, so also are we in this world. ¹⁸There 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.**

A' - ¹⁹**We love, because He first loved us.** ²⁰If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Analysis of the Text: Verses 7 and 19 give essentially the same message: ⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; ¹⁹We love, because He first loved us. The outer paragraphs seem to complement each other and thus form bookends on the text. The paragraphs beginning with verses 9 and 17 respectively are also parallel. Both speak of Love perfected.

In verses 7-8 (A), God's love is manifested in our loving one another. In verses 9-12 (B), God's love is manifested in His sending His Son (Romans 5:8). We should follow suit and love one another. When we love one another, we make God visible. Thus God's love reaches its goal. In verses 13-16 (C), God manifests His love in us by His Spirit, who is love. We therefore believe and confess God's love in sending His Son into the world. In verses 17-18 (B'), the Spirit of love thereby achieves His purpose in us and we have confidence to stand before God in the judgment. In verses 19-21 (A'), we again see that God's love is manifested in our loving one another. The structure of the text points to the center where the objective testimony of Christ and the subjective experience of love merge.

Main Point of the Text:

1. What is the Text About? Answer: Knowing God as love, and God's love in sending us His Son and giving us His Spirit reaching their goals in us.
2. When does knowing God as love and God's love in sending His Son and in giving His Spirit reach their goals in us? Answer: When we confess Christ as our Savior and therefore do not fear judgment and when we love one another and thus make God visible.
3. Main Point of the Text: Combine the answers to 1 and 2.

When knowing God as love and God's love in sending His Son and in giving His Spirit reach their goals in us, we confess Christ as our Savior, we do not fear judgment, we love one another, and we thus make God visible.

Main Lesson of the Text:

IF God's love in sending His Son and in giving His Spirit and God Himself as love reach their goals in us, THEN we confess Christ as our Savior, we do not fear judgment, we love one another, and we thus make God visible.

Food for Thought: The main lesson indicates that there are many facets to assurance of salvation. Note the facets the text ties together. It is possible to confess Christ as your savior as an outward formality without being born again. It is also possible to act lovingly as an outward formality without a love for God in the heart. The test is that of love born of the Spirit. Love for Christ, born of the Spirit, sincerely confesses Him as Lord. Love for others, born of the Spirit, necessarily includes love for Christ born of the Spirit. The one cannot legitimately exist without the other.