



Perfect Love

KNOWING GOD THROUGH LOVE

1 John 4

Teaching Notes

INTRO

As the expected end drew near, John emphasized that believers had to be on guard. Christians needed to walk the line, walk in love, and not compromise. They were also supposed to watch out for the Antichrist.

There is a theme of love in 1 John, especially in chapters 2, 3, and 4. According to John, the ultimate picture of love is the crown of thorns.

The phrase for Christ in the book of 1 John is *Perfect Love*. What Christ has done is drive out all fear because of His death, burial, and resurrection. Fear implies punishment, but in Christ, all fear is gone.

TEACHING

1 John 4:1-21: John's greeting implies a love for the congregations that he addressed in his writing. MacArthur states, "The mention of the Holy Spirit in 3:24 prompts John to inform his readers that other spirits exist (i.e., demonic spirits) who produce false prophets and false teachers to propagate false doctrine."¹ Demonic spirits existed and produced false teachers who communicated false truths. John's text implies there are other spirits out there that are not of God.

John states there is a need to test every spirit to determine if what they are communicating is of God. There is a need to be skeptical of a teacher's doctrine. The testing would clarify whether or not a teacher is of the Lord.

The Bereans in Acts 17 were eager to receive the message from teachers, but they examined the Scriptures daily to determine if the teachings were accurate and correct. There needs to always be a testing of teachings against the Scriptures.

Trustworthy teachings confess that Jesus came in the flesh. Those teachings came from God. The Bible serves as the measuring rod for truth.

John warned that false teachers were creeping into the believers' world. Prior to the coming of the Antichrist, the false teachers will reflect the spirit of the Antichrist. They have mannerisms, commands, and laws that are not of the Lord God. Part of the role of 1 John is to warn believers of the spirit of the Antichrist. Any additions to the message that Jesus is Lord, that Jesus is God, and that Christ died, was buried, and came back to life constitutes false teaching. John is attempting to expose the truth and pull people away from false teaching.

MacArthur explains there are numerous terms for the Antichrist: "Other names for Antichrist (1 John 2:18; 4:3), 1. little horn—Daniel 7:8, 2. king—Daniel 8:23, 3. the prince who is to come—Daniel 9:26, 4. the man of sin—2 Thessalonians 2:3, 5. the son of perdition—2 Thessalonians 2:3, and 6. the beast—Revelation 13:4."²

The Antichrist is different than Satan. The Antichrist is a human tool of Satan. First John 2:18 explains there are references to persons—false teachers—that have the spirit of the Antichrist. The marker of truth is identifying Jesus as God and Savior. The books of Jude and 1 John were written to defend against false teachers and teachings.

In verse 4 John states that the One who is in believers is greater than the one that is in the world. John then points out that the apostles and their teaching were from the Lord (v. 6). Believers who knew God listened to them. They contrasted the spirit of truth to the spirit of deception.

John encouraged believers to love one another because God was the essence of love. MacArthur explains, "John introduces the reader to the first of five reasons why Christian's love: because God is the essence of love."³

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), pp. 1962.

² MacArthur, p. 1963.

³ MacArthur, p. 1964.



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Believers are expected to love all people. They are to love their enemies but should not accept their enemies' message. Love is a way for believers to reflect who they are in God. Even though Christ died for the world and the world has been saved, it does not mean all the world believes in Him.

The requirement for salvation is that a person confesses Christ as Lord. Love is the Christians' confidence in the coming judgment. The message to nonbelievers is a message of hope and not of fear if they will believe in Christ.

The love of God requires that believers love their brothers and their neighbors. If they embrace God the Son as their Savior, then they also must love one another. Believers are to love as they are loved by God.

CLOSING

We can only love because Christ first loved us. Because God sent Christ to die on the cross for us, we can know love. God expects believers to love their brothers. The question is then, who is my brother or neighbor? Love could be shown to them by sharing the real truth.