

1 John 4:15-21 | Sunday March 29, 2026

Throughout this section in 1 John we have been encouraged, reminded and commanded to love. Each time the anchoring thought has been God's great love for us that is shown through Jesus. The entire emphasizes is not how much we can love God, but how much He has loved us. God is love, and was willing to send Himself, Jesus, to be the propitiation of our sins. Jesus is the perfect blood payment for sin that satisfied God's righteous holiness and appeased His wrath against sin. Since we have been loved with such an extravagant, self-sacrificial love, we are to show this kind of love to others. We are to reflect the amazing love that Jesus has shown to us.

1 John 4:14-21 ESV

(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.

With the lies of the false teachers John keeps bringing us back to the core truth of who Jesus is. Earlier in the chapter, in verse 2, John affirmed that **the Spirit of God confesses "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh."** God's anointed, the Messiah took on full humanity. Now John is affirming the full deity of Jesus, He is the Son of God. This is the same truth that John the Baptist confessed.

John 1:31-34 ESV

(31) I myself did not know Him, but for this purpose **I came baptizing with water, that He might be revealed** to Israel."

(32) And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on Him.

(33) I myself did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

(34) **And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."**

John the Baptist came baptizing so that the true messiah could be revealed. God gave John a sign to be watching for, the person that the Holy Spirit descended and remained on was the Messiah. As John baptized Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended and remained on Him. **This convinced John that Jesus was the Son of God.** Jesus was not an ordinary man but was **fully God and fully man and came as the Christ.** It is on this profession that Jesus promised to build His church.

Matthew 16:15-18 ESV

(15) He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

(16) Simon Peter replied, “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”

(17) And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, **but My Father who is in heaven.**

(18) And I tell you, you are Peter, and **on this rock I will build my church**, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

This was a truth that God had revealed to Peter. Peter understood that Jesus was the promised Christ. Who was physically there in the flesh and at the same time was the Son of the living God. That confession is the rock that that church is built on. **The church is not built on the man Peter but on the confession about Jesus. It is a confession that declares who Jesus is and what He has done.** When someone confesses this, they are saved. 1 John 4:15 even emphasizes this by the word “**confesses**” being in the **aorist tense**. This emphasizes a **single, decisive, confession, the time of which is unspecified, that is completed**. It is not a future confession that we need to make to enter the pearly gates. It is not that we must keep on confessing it and if we ever stop, we lose our salvation. That is what is so amazing about salvation, **it is not about us but about Jesus**. In Him we see God’s love for us.

1 John 4:16-17 ESV

(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.

The more we come to know Jesus the more we will come to know and believe the love that God’s has for us. **Jesus shows us God’s love**. We know His love the moment we are saved but are to continue to know and trust in His love as we grow and mature. Our walk as believers will never be stronger than the extent that we show God’s love to one another. **We are not just to store up His love but let it flow out of us**. Our fellowship with Him is to be shown in the love He produces in us. **The more we know Jesus the more loving we will be**.

This outflow of love is to give us a confidence that God has been maturing us. It is to give us **a boldness, and free speech for the day of judgment**. This is a theme John introduced back in chapter 2.

1 John 2:28 ESV

(28) And now, little children, **abide in Him**, so that when He appears **we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming**.

As we abide in Jesus we will also be abiding in His love and letting it be brought to completion by showing God’s love to others. **Abiding in Him and in His love gives us a boldness to see Jesus on the day of judgment**. The judgment mentioned is not a fear of punishment or wrath. As believers we will not experience this.

John 5:24 ESV

(24) Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and **believes Him who sent Me** has eternal life. **He does not come into judgment**, but has passed from death to life.

We do not experience judgment of our sins because Jesus fully paid for them on the cross. If we believe in Jesus we pass from death into life. We do not come into judgment for our sins. **The day of judgment John is referencing, that we can have a boldness for is the Bema Seat.** It is when the earthly will be separated from the eternal in our lives.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 ESV

(10) According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.

(11) For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, **which is Jesus Christ.**

(12) Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—

(13) **each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.**

(14) If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

(15) If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, **though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.**

All believers have an opportunity to build on top of the foundation of Jesus. Some things will look good here but burn up and not be eternal. Others things will seem small here but will be shown as eternal. **John wants us to have confidence for this day by abiding in Jesus and showing His love to others.** Showing God's love is eternal and can only be produced by walking with Him.

1 John 4:16-17 ESV

(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.**

Having this confidence is possible because just as Jesus is so also are we right now. This points us to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and is resurrected. **Because Jesus is a Son and resurrected so are believers today.** As a believer we are a son or daughter of God and can walk in the new resurrected life that Jesus secured. **We can abide right now in this world because we are like Him.** The Bema seat is meant to motivate us to live for Him right now, to live for eternal things. **It is not meant to be something to be dreaded.**

1 John 4:18 ESV

(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.

Fear and love are incompatible with each other. John is careful to define what kind of fear he is talking about. The fear that is not involved in love has to do with punishment. The word punishment is very unique and only found one other place in scripture. In Matthew 25 Jesus describes the separation of sheep and goats and the punishment that non-believers will experience.

Matthew 25:46 ESV

(46) And these will go away into eternal **punishment,** but the righteous into eternal life."

The fear of hell and being punished in it is cast out of our lives as we experience the love of God. Meaning we do not need to keep looking over our shoulders as believers and be

worried that we will be punished in hell. We have the love of God in Jesus. When we believe in Jesus we no longer have to fear this punishment but get to abide in His love! **This kind of fear is actually its own punishment.** We see this start immediately after Adam and Eve sinned.

Genesis 3:8-10 ESV

(8) And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife **hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God** among the trees of the garden.

(9) But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

(10) And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and **I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.**"

Once Adam and Eve sinned they began to experience the fear that involves punishment. Hearing God coming close was no longer a joy but something to be scared of. God pursues and in our fear we hide.

As believers we are able to abide in Jesus and enjoy fellowship with Him again. We do not need to be afraid of punishment because of all He accomplished on the cross. **Fear of punishment is very different than the fear of God we are called to have.**

2 Corinthians 5:9-11 ESV

(9) So whether we are at home or away, **we make it our aim to please Him.**

(10) **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,** so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

(11) **Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord,** we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

We make it our aim to please God out of a response to all he has done for us. **Understanding how important the bema seat is and living for the eternal is called knowing the fear of God.** This is not a fear of punishment, but a reverential awe of who God is. We stand amazed at the love He has shown to us and in awe are to live for Him.

1 Peter 1:17-19 ESV

(17) And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, **conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,**

(18) **knowing that you were ransomed** from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,

(19) **but with the precious blood of Christ,** like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

We are to have a reverential awe during our time on this earth because we know what God did to ransom us. He sent Jesus to save us by offering His perfect blood. **This is not a fear of punishment, but living in a reverence and awe based on who He is and how much He has loved us.** Fear of punishment is worrying we are going to make a mistake and God will smite us. Having a fear of God is seeing God as holy and being amazed that Jesus shed His blood for you. In response to this love, what would you ever hold back or not trust Him with. We can learn how to abide with Him in this awe as we truly come to know His love for us.

1 John 4:18-19 ESV

(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.**

We need to understand that our ability to love God and others **comes from Him**. He loved us first. Why would we fear punishment when we see what He has done for us? **Our love of God and others will grow the more we see God's love for us.**

This is not a love based on us, or based on something in our own character. We are able to love because He first loved us. In our sin, in our wickedness, He loved us. Yet, He didn't stop there. **He wants to bring that love to completion.** John has mentioned it multiple times. We are to let our awe of God's love for us overflow by showing His love for others.

1 John 4:20-21 ESV

(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.**

God knew that we would try to claim to know Him and love Him without loving others. If we are hating our brother in Christ, and showing prejudice to them, then we are not loving God. **Racism and hate have no place in an abiding believer.** How do we talk about people that are different than us, or disagree with us? How do we talk about the people we see as the problem? We cannot let ourselves fall into the hypocrisy of religion. To love God is to love our brother in Christ.

This is the third time John has warned us not to hate our brother (1 John 2:9; and 3:15). These commands are not addressed to the world, or nonbelievers but to us as believers. This has been repeated so many times because it is so important and we struggle with it. **Hate is what is natural to us. Godly love is from Him.** This entire section John has tried to show the incredible love that God have for us and how it should be at work in us. **God's love causes us to love Him and then love others.** This was Jesus' answer to what is the greatest commandment.

Matthew 22:37-40 ESV

(37) And He said to him, **"You shall love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

(38) This is the great and **first commandment.**

(39) And a **second** is like it: **You shall love your neighbor** as yourself.

(40) **On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."**

First, we are called to love God, with our heart, soul and mind. This means we are to love Him with all that we are. This is only possible because He first loved us. We respond to His great love. Then the second is to love our neighbor. **We cannot separate out the two commands, and we cannot change the order.** The entire Law and Prophets are summarized by this working of God's love in our lives. **He loved us, so we can love Him with all we are and then we can love others.** God loves us so much and wants to bring that love to its full completion in our lives.