

1 John 4:7-21 – The 3 Tests of Saving Faith

1. **Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.** – Test #1 – Do I love as God loves? – The source of all true love is God; Love is the most prominent theme in 1 John: the words ‘love’, ‘loves’, and ‘loved’ appears 46 times in the 105 verses of this letter; This test is not so much yes/no as it is ‘to what degree’ - no one loves perfectly but God
2. **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.** – Perhaps the only word more prominent in 1 John than ‘love’ is ‘God’ – which appears 71 times – Test #2 – Do I believe Jesus is fully God?
3. **In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us** – John suggests that, in order to love others as we should, we must first understand how God loves us, because our actions (and thoughts) are a reflection of what we believe
4. **And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** – There are two ways to describe Jesus’ death on the cross:
 - a. **Expiation** – From Latin meaning “to make amends”, “to pay a debt” – often used in the Torah to describe the sacrifices of the law which ‘covered over’ sins but could not fully atone for them (Hebrews 9:9-14)
 - b. **Propitiation** – From Latin meaning “to appease” – this implies accepting the wrath of the other person in order to bring peace – many Christians balk at the idea that God would have wrath for anyone, especially Jesus
5. **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** – As John has said already, if we are truly ‘born again’ and are now God’s sons and daughters, we should begin acting like him rather than like our old father the devil (John 8:44)
6. **No one has ever seen God** – Despite many claims to the contrary, no human, alive or dead, can see God prior to Resurrection and the completion of God’s renewing work in us
7. **If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.** – By God’s Spirit God’s character develops in those ‘born of God’
8. **And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.** – We, like John, are God’s representatives, demonstrating by words and actions that God has sent Jesus His Son to bring salvation to all who believe
9. **Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. Thus 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.** – “Have I learned to die to self – to step aside and let God live His love through me?”
10. **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.** – Test #3 – Do I believe Jesus is fully human?
11. **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. We love because he first loved us.** – Because Jesus fully absorbed the wrath of God toward our sin when He hung on the cross, we no longer need to fear God’s wrath – it was all ‘spent’ on Christ; We still revere God but this type of ‘fear’ is not the fear that John is speaking of here
12. **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. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.** – It’s easy to love an ‘idea’ (like ‘god’); it’s harder to love someone outside ourselves, who often acts in ways we take offense at or do not understand – the Pharisees claimed to love God, but when God came in Jesus Christ, they found that He wasn’t what they wanted God to be
13. In this passage, loving others (especially fellow believers) is the visible test of genuine faith, and what we believe (especially regarding Jesus) is what informs and empowers that love – ‘Faith’ – what we truly believe – is the spirit’s ‘immune system’ – identifying the lies that distort love and that promote hatred; Loving others – and ourselves – as we should is not a matter of the will and intellect as much as it is a result of believing the Truth, knowing God, and allowing His love to change us from within