

Abiding in Love

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Love is the greatest! Of course, there are reasons why this is true. Our Creator is characterized as love. We bear His image; therefore, there is nothing more fulfilling in the human experience than receiving and reciprocating love.

The apostle John is remembered as being the “apostle of love.” In his gospel, writes about the physical manifestation of God’s love: Jesus. In his epistles, John explains the meaning of God’s love. Notice the following excerpt:

“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 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. 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. 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” (1 John 4:14-19).

Love is relational. John writes about abiding in love. We can have a relationship with God through His Son and our Savior, Jesus. To abide in God means to abide in love. Abiding corresponds to a state of existence. Abiding in love is comfortable, nurturing, and consoling. Consider why this is true according to John.

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1). The role of faith. Abiding in the love of God is initiated by faith in Jesus. We must confess faith in the One whom God sent to the world to save us. This is non-negotiable. We will never fully experience the love of God in life unless we believe in Jesus.

Believing in Jesus is more than acknowledging a historic figure. John emphasizes the need for us to believe that Jesus died for our sins. John wrote, “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. 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” (1 John 4:9-10).

Sin breaks our relationship with God. We cannot abide in the love of God if we are separated from Him. Thankfully, we can be reconciled to God through faith in the death of Jesus. Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins and absorb the wrath of God. The price of our sins is satisfied by the cross of Jesus. Therefore, we must have faith in what Jesus accomplished for us. We cannot abide in the love of God without faith in the death of Jesus.

2). Love gives confidence. Confidence is a byproduct of love. For example, children make progress in their development knowing they have parents who love and support them. They

know their parents will pick them up when they fall and encourage them when they struggle. Eventually, children develop skills and become responsible adults. As such, they can bravely face life.

As Christians, we may struggle to grow. We may struggle to sacrifice sin. We are afraid of what life would be like without vice. With faith in the love of God, we can begin to give up sin. Little by little, day by day, we can grow stronger and stronger. Over time, we will become transformed in the best possible sense of the term. Then, we will want to help others grow into a new creation in Christ.

3). Love takes away fear. Fear permeates human society. Governments use fear to control nations. Corporations use fear to coerce consumers to buy products. Much of our lives are lived in fear. We fear what others think. We fear what might happen. We fear the unknown. We fear death. We fear judgment. Yet, John boldly asserts that love casts out fear.

Jesus came to absorb the most feared part of the human experience: death. Through self-giving love, Jesus died that we might live. If we believe in His self-giving love, fear will be cast out of our hearts and minds. If we believe in Jesus, we will be free. This is the power of love.

Jesus was once approached by a man whose daughter had died. The people thought all hope was lost for the little girl. Jesus told the people, “Do not fear, only believe” (Mark 5:36). When Jesus got to the home of the girl, He spoke words of new life and raised her from the dead. Jesus proved His power over death. The lesson for the people present and us is that we must not fear, only believe.

We face fearsome adversaries in life. Yet, with faith in the love of God, we do not have to be afraid. Paul wrote, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39). The love of God shown in Jesus is greater than our greatest fears and strongest enemies.

Conclusion

Everyone agrees that the world needs love. The Gnostics of John’s time thought love was within humans. If we could somehow tap into this divine spark, we would save ourselves. Today, people may not describe themselves as Gnostics; however, most look within themselves to find love and salvation.

John sought to redirect our search for love away from ourselves and toward God. John makes a compelling case for abiding in the love of God. The love of God in Jesus saves and transforms. Only good will come through faith in the love of God. The knowledge of our salvation will empower us to share the love of God with the world.