

1 JOHN – CHAPTER 4:7-8

Love: An Overview

INTRODUCTION

The Epistle of First John is a fatherly appeal—gentle in tone yet deliberate in guiding the reader’s thinking. Its purpose is to draw the audience into alignment with apostolic truth concerning the identity and message of Jesus Christ. Through thoughtful repetitive layering, variation in phrasing, and utilizing contrast and tension, the author leads the reader not merely to hear, but to think about the truth—wrestling with the question, understanding the answer, and the outcome is to return (or maintain) to belief in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ and love one another.

In the Previous section the author poignantly contrasts the children of God with the children of the devil, demonstrating that as believers, the children are now identified with Christ and with the Father. The antichrists are identified with their father, who is a liar and a murderer, they do the things that he wishes and in the end, they demonstrate that they do not love the brethren.

In this section of the letter, the author skillfully shifts focus away from contrasting the children and the antichrists, centering instead on the importance of love as both the believers’ ideal state and the first and foremost command we have as believers. Through deliberate repetition and nuanced variations—such as “love is from God,” “God is love,” and “God loved us”—the letter emphasizes that it is God’s love demonstrated through Jesus Christ that is the source and model for believers’ relationships. The extended discourse serves not merely to restate a simple command but to build a rich context, underscore the gravity of the message, and invite the reader into deeper emotional and intellectual engagement. This approach strengthens the credibility of the instruction and encourages critical reflection, resulting in a powerful exhortation: because God first loved us, we too should love one another.

1 JOHN 4:7-8 LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Beloved. By using this term of endearment John refocuses the readers to make a strong point. The Author regains his audience’s attention with this word six times, three times in chapter 4 (4:1,7,11). It is not necessarily a change in topic but here in verses 7-12 it functions as bookends for a very significant point to the life of the believer.

The paragraph (7-14) supports the main thought of verse 7 and the ought of “let us love.” After this imploration, there are 20 indicative verbs from verses 7-14. This command from God through the author is supported by no less than 20 points. In this paragraph we see that all these points are used to show why we should strive to love one another. Some of the points are similar and may look alike. Before we get into the specifics let us itemize points.

1. Love is sourced in God
2. The Loving One is Born of God
3. The Loving One Knows God
4. The One Not Loving Has Not Known God

1 JOHN – CHAPTER 4:7-8

Love: An Overview

5. God is Love
6. God Demonstrated Love to Us
 - a. Sent His Son
 - b. So That We Would Live
7. Love Is What God Has Done
 - a. Not That We Loved God
 - b. He Loved US
 - c. Sent His Son
 - d. Be Propitiation for Our Sins
8. God's Love for Us is the Main Reason to Love One Another
9. Loving Means a Completion of God's Love in Us
 - a. No One Has Seen God
 - b. If We Love One Another
 - c. God Abides in Us
 - d. His Love is Completed in Us
10. Loving is a Representation of God in This World
 - a. We Have Seen
 - b. We Testify
 - c. The Father Has Sent the Son, the Savior of the World

Verse 7 begins with Beloved and the instruction “ἀγαπητός *agapētos* ἀγαπάω *agapaō* ἀλλήλων *allēlōn*” the word for beloved is the adjective of “ἀγαπάω *agapaō*” meaning one who is loved. Beloved, in the Epistles, is only used of believers by believers.

Let Us Love is the verb “ἀγαπάω *agapaō*” and is in the First Person Plural Present Active Subjunctive. This is then translated “We should love.” There are many great “you should, must love” passages in the New Testament (John 13:34; Romans 13:8-10). In 1 John 4:7-5:3, the verb love is used 19 times; the noun 13 times (1 Corinthians 13 the verb is not used).

“ἀγαπάω *agapaō*” is the verb “ἀγάπη *agapē*” is the noun. The definition is, “a sacrificial, unconditional activity or desire for what is in the best concern for the one of interest, this is done without any regard for reciprocation.”

Love is primarily for fellow believers. The call to action here, is that we love one another. “ἀλλήλων *allēlōn*” is a pronoun that means exactly as it is translated; this is a unique term that combines the subject and the object of the action. This is a word that means to reciprocate the action among yourselves. But this does not mean that we exclusively love one another.

The imploring of this letter, Beloved, we should love one another,” is based on the nature of God. “The love is of God.” The article is used here with the noun love (7, 9, 10, 12, 16², 17,

1 JOHN – CHAPTER 4:7-8

Love: An Overview

18³, 5:3). Articles discriminate, they limit the focus to a particular one, “the love” is love specifically characterized being sourced from God. The love of God is not something that the world understands. In the Hebrew Scriptures we see YHWH showing His “**chesed olam**” (Jeremiah 31:3; Psalm 136:1). In Luke 6:27,32-35, Jesus presents love as properly given to those who don’t deserve it, completely antithetical to the Talmud teaching of that time (Matthew 5:43). In Romans 5:6-8, we see this come full circle in God’s demonstration of love and contrasted with human limitation. The love that is being taught about here is represented in the love that is demonstrated by God and it is not easily duplicated.

Without understanding the love of God, we have no frame of reference. If we do not have love defined by God, humanity would be stuck only loving those who love them; which is not really love but a false representation of it.

Next in verse 7 is “everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” This seems to be that being born of God and knowing God is evidenced by love. But that is not how this is understood. First of all, this is literally, “all the loving one, of God has been born and knows God.” Everyone who loves is “pas” with an Articular Participle. This is the exact same grammatical format as the previous 9 in Chapter 2 and 3 so this identifies a who, not an activity: “each lover.” Identity is only provided to a believer by God because we are in Christ. A believer cannot obtain identity through activity, God identifies who we are, then instructs us to function based on our identity.

“Having been born” is in the Perfect Indicative. “**γεννάω gennaō**” is found in 5:1. Born of God is one of the clearest markers of the believers’ identity in Scripture and is exclusively in John and 1 John (John 1:13; 3:8; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 5:1)

Knows God is “**γινώσκω ginōskō**” is in the Present Active Indicative.

John 1:10; 17:3; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Galatians 4:8-9; Philippians 3:8-10; Hebrews 8:11

1 John 2:3,4,13,14; 3:1,6; 5:20

There are some passages that have an idea of increasing knowledge of God, but in 1 John and especially here, I don’t think a case can be made for a level of knowledge but rather to know God in opposition to not knowing God.

What this is saying is that the being identified as the loving one (Articular Participle) is equated to those who are born and have come to know God. This is a positional statement. Beloved we should love one another; all the loving one is born of God and knows God

The Antithesis is brought about in the next verse, “The one who does not love does not know God; God is love.”

1 JOHN – CHAPTER 4:7-8

Love: An Overview

“The one not loving” has not acquired this designation they do not know God. In fact, it changes the verb tense to Aorist Active Indicative. With the negative particle this indicates “has never known God.” Examples of negative particle with “**γινώσκω** *ginōskō*” (John 1:10a; 8:51-59; 14:16-17; 16:2-3a; 17:25a). The one thing that I cannot find, is an example of a believer who does not know God.

All of this substantiates the idea that verses 7 and 8 give us the final contrast between the audience of the Beloved, the Children, and the antichrists who are unbelievers and children of the devil.

1 JOHN 4:7-8 CONCLUSION

The meaning of verses 7-8 then means that as a believer we are designated as the loving ones, we are born of God and have known God. Therefore, since love is sourced in God and God is characterized by Love, we ought to love one another. Beloved we should love one another because we are the Ones who love.

Remember, we do not use this in reverse; the articular participles are identity, not behavior. It is true in their circumstance that the antichrists were evidently not loving their brother. But what is also evident is that their behavior has influenced some of the Children in the audience. They are not acting in alignment with their identity, they are acting like unloving antichrist even though they are identified as the loving ones, born of God.