

# 1 JOHN—WEEK 5

## LOVE PERFECTED



F. Michael Slay  
*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*The Cover Picture is by Jan van Eyck (1390–1441)*

*On display in Ghent at the St. Bavo Cathedral, it looks like a statue, but it's a painting.*

Everyone born of God has overcome the world. We love the Father and thus love His children. This makes obeying His command to love one another not burdensome, increasingly so as our love is perfected.

The water, the blood, and the spirit all testify to the truth of who Jesus is.

---

We're pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

Thank you.

All the individual weekly study guides are available for download here:

<https://www.ailbe.org/resources/itemlist/category/91-deep-studies>

1 John, Week 5 — Love Perfected  
Copyright 2022 F. Michael Slay  
The Fellowship of Ailbe  
[www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org)

*Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.*

1 1 John 4:7–11

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

Love, love, love. All you need is love. This passage uses the word love eleven times. All eleven of them are variations on the Greek noun *agapé* (ἀγάπη) or its verbal form *agapao* (ἀγαπάω).

While *agapé* and *agapao* can refer to affection, they are more about love in action—like the definition given by Olaf in the movie *Frozen* — “*Love is putting someone else’s needs before yours.*”

Unfortunately, that doesn’t work with the best known use of *agapao* in scripture.

“*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” — Matthew 22:39b

You can’t *agapao* yourself if *agapao* is always about someone else. Olaf’s definition also isn’t a good fit for this line in today’s passage— “*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.*” God’s love for us is awesome, but His glory is still the purpose of everything. So, a general definition of *agapé* that isn’t comparative is best—like, “seeking someone’s well-being.”

All this is to set up the purpose clause in this passage— “*that we might live through Him.*” All this love is for the purpose that we might live through Christ. But what does it mean to live *through* Christ?

In a night of anguished prayer, Major W. Ian Thomas, heard the answer from His Lord.

“*You see, for seven years, with utmost sincerity, you have been trying to live for Me, on my behalf, the life that I have been waiting for seven years to live through you.*”

In his landmark work, *The Saving Life of Christ*, Ian refers to this incident as his discovering the secret of the adventurous life. “*I got up the next morning to an entirely different Christian life. But I want to emphasize this; I had not received one iota more than I had already had for seven years. Thus, step by step the most high led his trusting and obedient servant in the paths that he neither foresaw nor chose, but they were pathways of service eminently satisfying and always adventurous.*”

That’s what the love is for—that we would live in Him and through Him. How glorious is that?

---

Are we ready to live that way? To let Him have total control?

Few people are. We’re happy to serve Christ, even to take a lot of direction from Him, but remove all the limits?

I’m not ready for that much adventure.

2 1 John 4:12–17 (ESV)

*No one has ever seen God; 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. 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.*

The point is in the purpose construction at the end of this passage. *By this is love perfected with us*, for the purpose *that we may have confidence for the day of judgment*.

Okay, but why is it so important that we have this confidence?

*Because as he is so also are we in this world.*

As it was with yesterday's passage, this one is all about love, love, love. But this time the message gets refined. It's all about love being *perfected in us*.

This is the result of God abiding in us. *God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

This sets up the three-step process of the final sentence. Love is *perfected with us*, for the purpose *that we may have confidence*, and this is *because as he is so also are we in this world*.

This is about making us better ambassadors. We are Christ's representatives *in this world*. He wants us to be confident about our position in His kingdom.

Otherwise, we won't be good ambassadors.

---

Be careful with this confidence. It's only confidence *for the day of judgment*. It is not confidence about our understanding, our doctrines, or our methods. Overconfidence is worse than under-confidence. Our witness is ruined by anything that interferes with our being dependent of Christ.

The beautiful thing about our confidence is that it isn't confidence in ourselves; it's confidence in Him. We're confident only in our relationship with Him and in what He can do through us.

Though we don't know what it is He's going to do through us.

No confidence there.

3 1 John 4:18–21

*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.*

*If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

Today’s passage speaks of another aspect of perfected love. Yesterday, we learned that perfected love gives us *confidence for the day of judgment*.

But perfect love also *casts out fear*. Ambassadors need that too.

But what fear is John talking about? He obviously doesn’t mean fear related to salvation; that was already taken care of. What fear might Christians have?

John gives us a hint when he says, “*fear involves torment*.” What is the source of torment for Christians at the time John wrote this?

Persecutors—Roman, religious, etc. Christians can fear their persecutors, *but perfect love casts out fear*.

This all traces back to the commandment to love our enemies. Love the ones you would fear, and the *love casts out fear*.

And what great ambassadors that makes us.

*But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. — Acts 16:25*

Their fearlessness set the stage for the conversion of their jailers.

---

This is advanced stuff. Being fearless in the midst of persecution is a great blessing. Unfortunately, we don’t often see, much less experience, that—because our love is still in the process of being perfected.

So, if you see that you’re not all that great at loving your enemies, take heart. That’s normal. You’re still growing.

But don’t slack off either. The goal is exciting.

Imagine what life would be like having cast out fear.

4 1 John 5:1–5

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

This ties a bow around John’s point about love and concludes that it’s all *not burdensome*. It’s a straightforward, three-step logical progression.

Belief *that Jesus is the Christ* => *born of God*.

*Born of God* => *loves Him who begot* (*We love Him because He first loved us.* — 1 John 4:19)

*Loves Him who begot* (i.e., the Father) => *loves him who is begotten of Him* (“him,” lower case, means one who is “*born of God*,” i.e., a Christian).

Therefore, *by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments*. And don’t forget what 1 John 3:23 said about *His commandments*.

*And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment*, which is automatic according to the logical progression above.

Therefore, it’s *not burdensome*.

But John goes on to note, “*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world.*” In other words, our overcoming the world is the root of it all being *not burdensome*. And what has overcome the world?

*Our faith.*

---

Yesterday’s lesson was about how perfected love casts out fear. However, perfected love is an advanced skill. Newborn Christians are not expected to have matured to that point yet.

But this connects to today’s point about overcoming the world. We have all overcome the world, even newborn Christians.

Perfected love is within everyone’s reach.

5 1 John 5:6–8 (ESV)

*This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.*

What is the meaning of *the water and the blood*? Are they just symbols? Here are the clues.

- 1) The water and blood are ways Jesus *came by*.
- 2) They both testify to something.
- 3) What they testify to is important (presumably to the issues addressed in 1 John).
- 4) Jesus *is he who came by water and blood*, not just *by water only*, which would be normal.

*Came by water and blood* meaning His birth and His death and resurrection fit all four criteria.

- 1) His birth and resurrection are both arrivals heralded by angels.
- 2) Being born naturally testifies *that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh*, while His crucifixion and resurrection testifies to His Lordship.
- 3) Both are important, especially in the context of 1 John’s case against Docetism.
- 4) Being born naturally is the norm while Jesus coming back after being crucified is special.

And the Spirit ties this together perfectly.

*By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, — 1 John 4:2 (ESV)*

---

One of the questions I like to ask my students is, “What is the most important aspect of Christianity?”

I get a wide range of answers. Some are about Jesus and His atoning sacrifice. Others are about our glorious destiny. A few speak to the work of the church and how Christian fellowship works in practice.

But rarely do I hear my favorite— “It’s true.”

We don’t talk enough about Christianity being true. We like to talk about all the things that make Christianity attractive. But believing Christianity is, fundamentally, believing it’s true—that Jesus is risen from the dead and thus is Lord of all creation.

Today’s passage is about things that “testify” to that fact. In the first century, Christians used the word “testify” a lot. They didn’t just preach; they testified.

I like to say that the church needs to get back to the purity and glory of its early years. I normally mean that we need to get back to the purity and charity of Christian behavior that turned the world upside down.

But maybe that’s not at the heart of what was different back then. Maybe it was the focus on Christianity being true and testifying to that.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

Note: some of these questions may seem to have obvious answers. That's by design. Those answers should be a good springboard for discussion.

1. What does it mean to live *through* Christ?
2. Where did God lead you that you didn't expect?
3. Has your growth in Christ led to some fearlessness?
4. Over time, how has it become easier to love other Christians?
5. How shall we testify to the truth of the gospel?

*Items for prayer:*