



# Grace Notes

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## 1 John 4:1-11

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup>By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup>and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. <sup>4</sup>Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup>They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup>We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

*Heavenly Father, You demonstrated Your love for us in sending Your Son into the world to pay for our sins. Fill us with love for each other, that we might express Your love in the world. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## Love Always Wins

The above phrase has become very popular on t-shirts, coffee mugs and wall plaques. It is a nice sentiment that everyone wants to believe. After all, who wants to live in a world where hate has an upper hand over love? Who does not want to be loved? What other alternative do we have, if we hope to survive and remain positive, in an otherwise hostile and cynical world?

I do not at all disagree with this phrase, nor am I suggesting it is just a pious cliché. It does, however, take some careful, biblical thought. You can find two contemporary songs by this title. One is by Detroit Rhythm and Blues singer, Kem. His version is a soulful, smooth love song to one's romantic interest. The other is by Christian singer-songwriter Michael W. Smith. He seems to be singing about a person's love for those who are his enemies or opposed to him.

Both artists do a nice job of expressing the sentiment and value of romantic love and brotherly love, in Greek eros and philia. I would argue that the only love that always wins is the love mentioned in our text—agape. This is a love whose origin is not in man, but in God. John tells us that we cannot really know, or experience love apart from God. He writes, *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.* If we know God then we know love because God is love. If we are loved by God, we will love one another.

This text makes it clear that the most important love is the love from God to us, no us to God or us to one another. John says, *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.* Since God sent His Son into the world, He sent love into the world. This is a love that reached out to us to forgive our sins. Propitiation means that the wrath of God has been appeased. Because we do not love God in return as we should, and because we do not love our neighbor as ourselves, we are sinners. As sinners we are under the judgment of God. Yet, in love for us, Christ came in the flesh and went to the cross, to make satisfaction for our sin. Our sin is paid for, God's wrath propitiated, and we are the beloved children of God.

All this being true, John says, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* This we can do, because God has loved us, and God is in us. Let us allow Him to love others through us.

### Please pray for:

- The love of God to work in us so that we might love one another.
- Small businesses in our community that are still struggling and recovering from the pandemic.
- People who are unemployed or underemployed, that they find relief and help in time of need.
- The elimination of the coronavirus.