

- Read **1 John 4:7-8**
- One of the greatest statements in the New Testament. Reiterated in 1 John 4:”<sup>16</sup> *So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*”
- Reconfirmed by Paul in Romans – read **Romans 5:5**
- Packer makes 3 points about this:
  - “Poured” or “shed abroad” – poured freely, or dumped. Packer uses the word “inundation”
  - “has been” – means it’s already done, the Love is already there!
  - It’s one of the perks for believers; it is part of the ministry of the Spirit for believers
- Packer takes on the diversion/division that comes with a focus on gifts (healing & tongues & snake handling, etc.). “The more gifts, the holier you are.” The Corinthians apparently were caught up in this, so Paul rebuked them. Read **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**.
- “God is love” is not a complete description of God. (Remember our previous discussion about our limited ability to describe God).
  - Jesus talking w/Samaritan woman at the well:  
<sup>23</sup> *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him.* <sup>24</sup> *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*” John 4: 23-24
  - God is not A spirit; God is not THE spirit.
  - By being spirit, He has no **body** so is not limited to the physical world.
  - No **parts** – all personality, powers, and qualities are perfectly integrated.
  - No **separate passions** that are involuntary; for Him they are voluntary choices, and so not like humans.
  - John also calls God “**light**,” and said believers/followers walk in light, while non-believers walk in darkness.
- Packer p.122: To say “God is light” is to imply that God’s holiness finds expression in everything that He says and does. Similarly, the statement “God is love” means that His love finds expression in everything that He says and does.
  - John 3:16 - For God so loved the world....
  - Song - Jesus loves me, this I know....
- But, Packer says “God is Love” is the complete truth about God, so far as the Christian is concerned. – Every single thing that happens to us expresses God’s love to us, and comes to us for the furthering of God’s purpose for us.
- Packer then defines God’s Love

1. God's love is an exercise of his goodness.  
Goodness in God is "that perfection in God which prompts him to deal bountifully and kindly with all His creatures. It is the affection which the Creator feels towards His sentient creatures as such."<sup>1</sup>
2. God's love is an exercise of his goodness toward sinners.  
Considering God's requirement for perfection, it is amazing that His love extends to sinners. Dr. Richard Gibbons in Greenville frequently paraphrases Charles Wesley: "He loves us because He loves us, because He loves us!"
3. ... towards individual sinners  
Ephesians 1: <sup>4</sup> *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.* <sup>5</sup> *He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,*

And to the Thessalonian church:

**2:13** - *But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you (selection) from the beginning (before creation) to be saved (the appointed / planned end), through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (the appointed means).*

4. God's love to sinners involves his identifying himself with their welfare.  
Human relationships of love require empathy. Packer believes that God voluntarily chooses to be empathetic with His sinful creatures; that His ultimate happiness is bound up with ours. (I have trouble with this concept.)
5. God's love to sinners was expressed by the gift of his Son to be our Savior.  
Read **Romans 8:32**

... and why did God send His Son? John 3:16...

6. God's love to sinners reaches its objective as it brings them to know and enjoy him in a covenant relation
  - Westminster Catechism – chief end of Man is to know God and enjoy Him forever.

## Summary

- Does this conflict w/your view of Yahweh in the Old Testament?

Heaven goes by favor. If it went by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in. - Mark Twain

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 4<sup>th</sup> revised ed., Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996, p. 70.