

The Love of God

Anytime the subject of God's love comes up there's a go-to passage that it seems everyone can quote. John 3:16. If there was any passage that ultimately defined the theme of the Bible it would be this one. But what of the attributes that few, if any, understand concerning the **nature** of His love? This lesson is in regards to how deeply He loves us, but also the responsibility we have in allowing Him to love us **as His children**. Either way He loves us. You see, we have the power of choice that God will not change. He gave it to us and refuses to take it back because He wants us, out of our own sincere choice, to love Him back. His love is eternal but we decide whether or not we wish to receive it. His love...

Gave and Gives

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world,... (the **manner** in which He loved...)

"This does not mean that God approved the conduct of men, but that He had benevolent feelings toward them, or was "earnestly desirous" of their happiness. God hates wickedness, but He still desires the Happiness of those who are sinful. "He hates the sin, but loves the sinner." A parent may love his child and desire his welfare, and yet be strongly opposed to the conduct of that child." Albert Barnes

...that **He gave**...

"It was a free and unmerited gift."

"It was the mere movement of love; the expression of eternal compassion, and of a desire, that sinners should not perish forever." Albert Barnes

- Because God is "not willing that any should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9). God knew, even before He created the physical makeup of the universe, that He would, in time, send what was most precious to Him as the sacrifice that would end all sacrifices to save His rebellious creation from perishing forever. He sent...

...His only begotten Son,... (the best He had to offer...)

2Co 5:21 For He hath made (Gk.4160- to make or do: -ordain) Him (Jesus) to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God **in** Him. (Emp. Added)

- Man cannot be righteous in and of himself.

"...the Son of God has become incarnate for our sins, and has suffered and died in our stead." Albert Barnes

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels **for** the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; **that** He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (Emp. Added)

- Grace is God's Redemption At Christ's Expense. Jesus came to experience death and that through dying "He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (*Heb 2:14*). God's love provided such grace. It is now up to us to willingly receive it.

Gal 1:3 Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who **gave** Himself **for** our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to **the will of God** and our Father: 5 To Whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen. (*Emp. Added*)

- God prepared a body by impregnating a virgin via His Holy Spirit (*Lk 1:35*) in order to bring forth a sinless body for His Son to inhabit so that He would become the ultimate propitiation for man's sin.

Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel (*Heb.6005- with us [is] God*).

- It was at that point the redemptive process on earth began, when God appeared in the form of human flesh to be "tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (*Heb 4:15*). Thus giving us the definitive description of love.

1Jn 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to *be* the propitiation (*Gk.2434- atonement*) for our sins.

- Christ came to Earth for the purpose of redeeming man back to God. "Adam, which was the son of God" (*Lk 3:38*) gave up that relationship through his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit. In order for God to redeem man back to Himself He couldn't just send an angel to be the ultimate sacrifice for sins nor could He accept the blood of beasts as the ultimate life flow to save man. He had to give of the same thing He required man to give as a restitution for sin, something unblemished, something perfect, something that what was most precious to Him. But something that was living with blood flowing through its being. So how could God, Who is Spirit, give of Himself to die when something spirit has no blood and cannot die?

Ecc 3:21 Who knoweth the spirit (*Heb.7307- life*) of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

Ecc 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it.

- Man has a soul and was directed to offer up animal sacrifices that weren't created "in the image of God" (*Gen 1:26*) meaning animals aren't spirit beings.

"As we derive our animal and dying nature from the one [Adam], so we derive our immortal and undying bodies from the other [Christ]". Albert Barnes

- Thus, "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (*Heb 10:4*). God had to give of Himself in order for human beings to be purchased back once man sold himself to Satan through his disobedience which began in the garden. To do that God paid the price of our redemption "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot" (*1 Pet 1:19*).

Heb 2:16 For verily He took not on *Him the nature of* angels; but He took on *Him* the seed of Abraham. 17 Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

“He undertook the work of human redemption, and consequently it was necessary for Him to be man.”
Albert Barnes

- In His ultimate plan for mankind to understand the true nature of sacrifice, God set up the sacrificial system found in the law of Moses through the Levitical priesthood. In having to give “of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof” (*Gen 4:4*) man discovered how painful it was to have to sacrifice what was most prized in order to atone for his iniquity. And it had to be in the form of something living, it had to be a blood sacrifice.

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar **to make an atonement** for your souls: for it *is* the **blood that maketh an atonement** for the soul. (*Emp. Added*)

- So, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (*Gal 4:4*). And that sacrificial system, along with the Old Law was then nailed to our Savior’s cross (*Col 2:14*) once Christ completed His part in the plan to redeem man from “the prince of the power of the air” (*Eph 2:2*). In His earthly walk Christ lived under the Old Covenant system of laws. Being “born of a woman” and not of the seed of a man shows that He was both Deity and human in nature. Through this combination of God and man, Christ was then in a ready state to become our Redeemer. His was the final, perfect blood sacrifice to wash away sins through “the suffering of death”.

...that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

- “Belief” in this verse serves as a synecdoche for obedience to the God breathed Gospel plan of salvation. It means that “whosoever” “entrusts their spiritual wellbeing to Christ” (*Gk.4100*) will have placed their eternal souls in His hands by obedience to His word in order to be saved by Him. He did His part in going the distance to reveal God’s love for us. It then becomes our part to show how much we love Him in return by our actions in obedience to His commands. To again become a part of the family of God, Christ’s resurrection serves as our entrance “by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (*Heb 10:20*).

Rom 8:29 For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- Christ became the first to resurrect from the dead never to die again, “death hath no more dominion over Him” (*Rom 6:9*). In that, He became the eldest in God’s spiritual family, the church, making Him “the head over all things to the church” (*Eph 1:22*).

Joh 3:17 For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name (*Gk.3686-authority*) of the only begotten Son of God.

1Pe 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: 7 Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.

- Because God loves everyone in His creation, His love...

Is Not Biased

- And just because God is focused on His creation over all, He still has a special place in His heart for those who love and obey Him over those who don't. Obviously, He wants all to repent (*2 Pet 3:9*) but sadly God cannot have His way in this. It would go against His will as the just God that He is. He loves us so much He gave us the choice to love Him in return or not. An Old Testament example of this can be found in 2 Kings.

2Ki 17:27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. 28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. 29 **Howbeit** every nation made gods of their own, and put *them* in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. (*Emp. Added*)

- Peter later confirmed this when he was faced with a bias against the gentile Roman Centurion named Cornelius who feared he wasn't worshipping God according to truth.

Act 10:34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation **he that feareth Him**, and **worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him**. (*Emp. Added*)

- God's love then...

Demands Our Focus

Jer 17:7 Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. 8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful (*Heb.1672- be anxious: -be afraid*) in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. 9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 10 I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

- When we are focused on our hope in God and trust in His love we then relinquish any and all human thought to His complete wisdom. He wants what's best for us as a parent wants what's best for their children. Parents have "been there, done that" and when children think they are wiser than them they risk making mistakes that could have been prevented. As God has made it so plain...

Isa 55:8 For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways My ways, saith the LORD.

- So with that, God's love...

Demands Our Worship

- Since the very beginning, God gave man a choice when it comes to worshipping Him. Through His people Israel, He established the Mosaic law with ten basic commandments. The first of which concerned their worship and the object of it.

Exo 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, Whose name (*Heb.8034- an appellation [designation], as a mark or memorial of individuality; character*) is Jealous, is a jealous God:

- The very first of the ten commandments given to Israel was that they were to worship only Him.

Exo 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

- Even under the Old Covenant there were multiple times when mankind trusted in and worshipped things other than the One Who made them.

Jer 17:5 Thus saith the LORD; Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

- How often, and how sad it is, when man thinks he knows better than God.

1Co 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

- It is because of man's foolishness in thinking he knows better than God that God has no choice but to allow His own creation, in having its way, to be relieved of the love He wants to give them.

Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen.

- Because...

Joh 4:24 God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship *Him* in spirit and in truth.

- The Spirit Being that created us desires to be worshiped in like manner. Therefore, God's love...

Demands Our Obedience

Joh 14:21 He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.

- God's commandments exist for our own good. As a father loves and disciplines his son to grow into the image and character of his predecessor, so the Heavenly Father cares for His children. He wants only what's best for us and not, as some would like to say with such sacrilege, to be some imaginary, unbenevolent dictator in the sky. But before we

can become members of such a righteous family, there is a process we need to go through to become eligible.

Psa 32:1 **A Psalm of David, Maschil.** Blessed is *he whose* transgression is forgiven, *whose sin is covered.* 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile.

- To be eligible for such an honor God's love requires us to share His holiness.

1Pe 1:15 But as He Who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;
16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

- Without such no man can stand in His presence.

Psa 68:2 As smoke is driven away, so drive *them* away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. 3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

- In order to be able to rejoice in His presence we first must go through the adoption process to become His children. God has made it possible, through His love to...

Bring About Our Adoption

- When Adam gave up his sonship with God, that relationship was severed from then on until something had to happen in order to regain that connection. Just as disobedience on the part of man separated him from God then, so it is today. When Enos was born to Seth and "men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (*Gen 4:26*), even though not face to face as in the beginning with Adam, that personal, covenant relationship with the Father was returning. The final page was yet to be written before mortal man would ever be able to, according to God, "see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live" (*Ex 33:20*). That day will come when man will be able, through the redemptive process, gaze into the face of the Almighty.

Rev 22:4 And they shall see His face; and His name *shall be* in their foreheads.

- Thus, when Christ came on the scene, the process of adoption through Him as our mediator began.

Eph 1:4 According as He (*the Father*) hath chosen us **in** Him (*the Son*) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children **by** Jesus Christ **to** Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us **accepted in** the Beloved (*Christ*). (*Emp. Added*)

- The point of this passage is to be "in Him" in order to "receive the adoption of sons" (*Gal 4:5*). Christ then serves as our intermediary in the adoption process to renew our lost relationship with the Father, that we lost through our own disobedience. Every one of us is responsible for our own sins.

Eze 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Rom 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just (*Gk.1342- innocent, holy*) shall live by faith (*relying on Christ to save us*). (*Emp. Added*)

- Concerning God's righteous nature...

McGuiggan said, *"Law is thus not simply a demand that God makes on His people: it is the way in which He administers His universe. He can be relied on to act according to law. This becomes especially interesting when we consider the matter of how God will acquit the guilty. This acquittal cannot be done at the expense of God's Holiness or Law. If God justifies men, it must be a 'righteous justifying'; it must honor the law of God. We are never to think of the transaction at Calvary as a ruse of God to get around the holy demands of the law!"*

- What does the expression "faith to faith" mean then?

"This epistle sets forth a clear contrast between faith and works, and this verse makes a point about the contrast. If we desire to be righteous (just) before God, we must do it by faith. This means faith is the starting point to becoming righteous and faith is the ending point. Works can never justify us."

Brad Price

- But both are necessary to be justified in His sight.

Jas 2:14 What *doth* it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; **notwithstanding ye give them not** those things which are needful to the body; what *doth* it profit? (*Emp. Added*)

"The sense is, 'being by itself:' that is, destitute of any accompanying fruits or results, it shows that it is dead. That which is alive bodies itself forth, produces effects, makes itself visible;..."

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

"...that which is dead produces no effect, and is as if it were not." Albert Barnes

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

- Likewise, when we say we love Christ but do not the things which He commands us to do in order to be part of His family, what does that say of our sincerity?

Luk 6:46 And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47 Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is

like: 48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

- Part of the responsibility of the great commission was, and is, for Christ's followers to teach, immerse for the forgiveness of sins and continue teaching (*Mat 28:18-20*). If we love Jesus we will set aside preconceived thoughts on the matter of salvation and "do the things which He says", i.e., obey Him if we wish to be saved.

Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again (*Gk.509- from above*), he cannot see the kingdom of God.

- Jesus further explains this in verse 5.

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born **of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (*Emp. Added*)

- Baptism is not a benevolent physical work of man as is feeding and clothing the hungry and naked. Those are works that should be second nature to the faithful child of God. Baptism is a work of faith.

Tit 3:4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 **Not** by works of righteousness **which we have done**, but according to His mercy He saved us, **by** the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (*Emp. Added*)

- Our salvation cannot be attributed to anything we **think** we have done to earn it.

2Th 1:11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *His* goodness, and **the work of faith with power**: 12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Emp. Added*)

- God fulfills "the work of faith with power" through the gospel.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is **the power of God unto (purpose) salvation** to everyone that believeth (*Gk.4100- those who entrust their spiritual well-being to Christ*); to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (*Emp. Added*)

- God has willed it that no redemption can be obtained outside the Gospel plan salvation. Only those who have heard that plan, believe it, repent of their past sins, confessing their lost state and that Christ, as the Son of God alone can save them and obey His command by being immersed for the forgiveness of those sins, only those will experience the love of God and fall under the umbrella to be designated as His children.

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