

THE LOVE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

1 John 4:8 says, "God is love." What does that mean? Does that mean that even when God judges people, that He is loving?

I. Definition of Love

God's love is an exercise of His goodness toward individual sinners, whereby, having identified Himself with their welfare, He has given His Son to be their Savior, and now brings them to know and enjoy Him in a covenant relationship.

A. God's love is an exercise of His goodness.

God's goodness causes God to deal kindly with His creatures. It is the affection the Creator feels towards His creatures. Psalm 145:9, 15, 16; Luke 6:35.

Have you guys ever worked hours and hours at something that you were really proud of? Tell us about it. How did you treat it? Did you take special care of it? That's how God treats us.

B. God's love is an exercise of His goodness toward "sinners".

We, as sinners, do not deserve God's goodness, as we have consciously broken God's laws. Yet God loves sinners, people who you would have thought would be unloveable. God loves us, not because we have something within us that prompts it....God loves us because He has chosen to and no reason for His love can be given except His own sovereign good pleasure (Deut. 7:7-8; Eph. 1:4-5).

Illustration of adopting twin boys:

Joe was a youth pastor in Minneapolis. He and his wife wanted children badly, but couldn't. One night, Joe was on the radio talking about parenting tips and expressed his desire to have children, but couldn't. A couple of weeks later, he got a call from an unwed pregnant teenager who had heard him on the radio, and wanted to give her unborn twins up for him to adopt. Joe was ecstatic. He and his wife couldn't wait until delivery day.

The big day finally arrived and he went to the hospital when he heard about the delivery. Two healthy baby boys. When he got to the hospital, he asked a nurse where he needed to go, and she looked at her records and said that the mother had already been discharged with the babies. Joe was confused. He didn't understand. Then he reasoned that she must have changed her mind and decided to keep the babies, as she had the option to do. Joe began to weep.

Then he stopped and asked himself, "Why does my heart hurt so badly when I haven't even met the babies? The reason he came to was because he had chosen to love those babies as his very own children a long time ago. Just then his wife found him and told him they were in room 202, waiting for him to meet his new sons. The nurse had been

wrong. Jose's tears of sorrow turned to tears of joy. And so God has chosen to love us. Those babies had nothing to give Joe. As a matter of fact, they would take quite a bit of attention and care from Joe and his wife. He didn't love them because they would give to Him. He loved them because he chose to love them.

- C. God's love is an exercise of His goodness toward "individual" sinners. God's love isn't a vague general good will toward everyone in general and no one specifically. Because God is omniscient, He knows each of us personally and expresses His love to us as individuals. (2 Thess. 2:13-14). God knows you and chose you (personally).
- D. God's love to sinners involves His identifying Himself with their welfare. This is true of all love. You would question the love of someone who doesn't care or isn't concerned when someone they supposedly "love" is in distress. Think about the example of Christ. The Creator became like us. He felt what we feel. He had compassion on the people. Why did He do that? Because He loves us and wanted to identify with us.

God's end in all things is His own glory, but by setting His love on human beings, God has voluntarily bound His own final happiness with ours. He didn't have to do that. He didn't have to get so personally involved. He did it by choice, because He loves us. That is why there is great joy in heaven when a sinner repents (Luke 15:10). God's love to sinners was expressed by the gift of His Son to be their Savior.

If the measure of love is how much it gives, God's love goes beyond measuring. God had nothing greater to give than His Son, (Eph. 3:18-19, Rom. 8:32, 1 John 4:9-10, Rom. 5:8, Gal. 2:20). This measure of God's love is expressed throughout the Scriptures.

- E. God's love to sinners reaches its objective as it brings them to know and enjoy Him in a covenant relationship.

A covenant relationship is one in which two parties permanently pledge to each other mutual service and dependence, as in marriage. God has promised to be our God as He did to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:1-7). As a result of God's promise toward us, we know that He will always act in a way toward us that is best. He will use all His attributes in relation to us for our good.

II. God's Love is Exercised in Combination with His Other Character Qualities

- A. God keeps all His character qualities in perfect harmony. For example: God is a God of love, but He is also Holy. Therefore, the ideas of a benevolent, soft, sentimental, indulgent God are quickly ruled out. God is a God of love, but because He is holy, He doesn't just overlook sin. He exercises a stern, holy love. God allowing us to pay for the consequences of sin is a loving act, intended to draw us back to Himself.

This is true of all God's character qualities. They are always exercised in combination with each other.

III. CONCLUSION

If what we have expressed about *God's love* is true, then:

- 1) Why do I grumble and show discontentment and even resentment at the circumstances in which *God* has placed me?
- 2) Why do I allow myself to grow half-hearted in serving the *God* who loves me in this way?
- 3) Why do I even allow my loyalties to be divided, so that *God* does not have all my heart?
- 4) 1 John 4:11 says we are to love others as *God* has loved us. If people looked at how I love my family, friends, teachers, etc., would they see *God's love*?