

Moments *for* You

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Theme: God Is Love



GOD IS LOVE

Yes indeed, God is love. But this part of God's character was not always revealed to man. After the flood, when God had shown Himself as an *unrelenting judge*, He revealed Himself to Abraham as the *Almighty God*, the possessor of heaven and earth. More than four hundred years later He made Himself known to Moses as the great I AM, *the eternal God*. Having through Moses delivered His people Israel from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, He led them into the wilderness, unto Mount Sinai. When the people had promised to obey the Lord in all things, He gave them His law. By this they were taught the *absolute holiness of God*, and that He could not tolerate the smallest sin.

Ten commandments comprised this law, the first and greatest part being summarized as: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). What a strange command this was! A people ordered to love a Being whom they could not see, and only knew as a terrible God, fearful in holiness, all-powerful, and ready to punish the smallest sin. And they were commanded to love Him with all the powers of their being!

Yet God never orders the impossible, for behind this command lies a deep secret not yet revealed to man—which would not be fully revealed for centuries—the marvelous loveableness of God. True, glimpses of God's love were given, as we find in Deuteronomy 7:7,8, where we are told that He had chosen this people because He loved them. In the Psalms

we find many verses expressing God's *kindness and goodness*, and especially His *mercy*, but nothing more.

At last, when the fullness of time was come, the long-promised Deliverer appeared, and proved to be none other than God's own beloved Son, who revealed the long-hidden secret that *God is love*. How different from the terrible denunciations against sin in the Old Testament is that wonderful verse, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Page after page of the Gospels speak to us of that blessed Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who in His earthly pathway down here exhibited love and grace and truth to the full.

As we read on through the New Testament, what beautiful descriptions we find about this *God of love!* The *Father of mercies*, the *God of all comfort*, the *God of all grace*, the *God of peace*, the *God of hope*, the *God of patience and consolation*. Yet more, the Apostle John writes, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). And in the following chapter, twice over are found these wonderful words, "*God is love.*"

What is your response to the love of God, and the gift that love has provided? Jesus laid down His life as a sacrifice for your sin, and rose again to provide eternal life. Have you seen your need of being reconciled to Holy God and turned to Him in repentance? Accept the gift of God's love: put your trust in Jesus Christ today.

—G. F. Barlee, adapted.

GOD'S LOVE

One of our greatest needs as human beings is to be loved. We all need love. We need to know that we are important to somebody, that somebody truly cares about us, wants us, and accepts us unconditionally. The good news from God's Word is that somebody does love us—God! Love is His nature. It is the essence of His being.

GOD'S LOVE IS SELF-GIVING

God wanted so much to manifest His love that He first created the angelic hosts and later the human race so that He might communicate Himself to them, give of Himself for them, and bestow His very best on them for their benefit and blessing. Our love is often selfish and demanding, but God's love is pure. Because He is love, He loves to give. Jesus said He gives good things to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11). James went so far as to say that every good gift finds its source in Him (James 1:17). Since God is love, we can expect Him to give of Himself.

GOD'S LOVE IS SACRIFICIAL

Not only does God's love motivate Him to give, but it motivates Him to give when it costs Him dearly. God's love cost Him the very best that He had—His only Son. That is the message of the greatest love text in the Bible: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God's giving His Son involved more than merely allowing Him to leave Heaven's glory and enter earth's history. It meant allowing Him to die in our place and pay the awful debt of our sins. God proved His love conclusively and irrefutably by sending His Son to the

cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9,10). That is sacrificial love.

It was no less of a sacrifice for God the Son; His willingness to offer Himself was the summit of sacrificial love. Paul called Him "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Jesus Christ made the supreme sacrifice for us when He died in our place. He was falsely accused, beaten, spit on, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross, and left to die the most excruciating death known to man. The infinite curse of sin's penalty, the Father's just punishment for the whole world's guilt, was laid on Him as He hung on that cross. He possessed the power to walk away from it unscathed, yet He voluntarily stayed there and bore that suffering for us. There simply is no greater love (John 15:13).

Whenever we are tempted to think that nobody loves us, we need to think of the cross. Jesus bore that shame and suffering because He loves us. He values us so highly that He was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to secure for us eternal joy.

GOD'S LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL

One of the most amazing things about God's love is that it is extended to us when we do not deserve it and continues steadfast and strong even when we do not respond to it. When the Bible says, "For God so loved the world," it refers to each individual sinful person. The Bible categorizes all unbelievers as God's enemies, people who have willfully set themselves against Him (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21). God even loves His enemies—all of them.

There is not one good thing in any of us that merits God's love. He does not love us because we are so lovable or because we can somehow make

ourselves worthy of His love. We are totally unworthy, yet He prizes us highly and showers His very best on us. It is His love for us that gives us our worth. God finds great delight and receives great glory when we respond to His love, enter His fellowship, and do His will. In fact, He made us for that purpose. But whether or not we ever return His love, He keeps on extending it to us. There is nothing we can do to make Him love us any more, and nothing we ever do will cause Him to love us any less. He loves us perfectly and completely regardless of how we perform. His love is unconditional.

GOD'S LOVE IS ETERNAL

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). That everlasting love reaches into eternity past. He knew us and loved us before He made us, when we were but a thought in His mind. And He will love us for eternity to come, for, as Paul assured us, nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:39).

How can we ever exhaust the love of God! Paul called it a love that "passeth knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19), far greater than our finite minds can grasp. He also called it a "great love" (Ephesians 2:4). He referred to its breadth, its length, its depth, and its height (Ephesians 3:18), but it is obvious that he was speaking of dimensions that defy measurement: breadth and length which encompass the whole world, a depth which reaches to the lowest sinner, a height which exalts us to the loftiest Heaven. God's love has no limit. It is described in F. M. Lehman's gospel song:

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;*

*To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Tho' stretched from sky to sky.*

We can no more exhaust God's love than we can empty the ocean with a bucket. And we are invited to keep drawing from His inexhaustible supply.

GOD'S LOVE IS HOLY

Since God is holy, then His love must be a holy love that encourages holiness in those loved. God will use every loving means at His disposal to encourage our obedience. He does that because He loves us. The writer to the Hebrews encouraged us not to regard God's discipline lightly. It is the evidence of His love for us (Hebrews 12:5,6). He knows that obedience to His Word will be for our greatest happiness, so He takes steps to help us want to obey Him. If He did not love us, He would not care about our happiness.

GOD'S LOVE IS COMFORTING

When we grasp the reality of God's love we will rest in the Lord, free from all fear, secure in the assurance that He is going to provide all that we need and protect us from everything that will not be for our good.

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18). God never punishes His children. He laid all the punishment for our sins on His Son. He disciplines us in love for our benefit, but even that is nothing to be afraid of. Understanding God's love eliminates all fear—fear of God's discipline, fear of what tomorrow holds, fear of losing a loved one, fear of losing a job, fear of natural catastrophes, fear of global war, fear of suffering, fear of death, fear of being alone, fear of rejection. God loves us!

There is nothing to fear.

GOD'S LOVE IS LIFE-CHANGING

It is to our advantage to know and believe the love that He has for us. We may never be able to grasp it fully with our human understanding alone, but God is ready to make it real to us if our hearts are open and receptive to His Word. Most of us long to be loving people, but we find it so difficult. God's love can change that. We can find all the acceptance and affection we crave in Him. Then, secure in His love, we shall be able to reach out in love to others, unselfishly, sacrificially, unconditionally, and inexhaustibly. It will profoundly influence our relationships with those around us.

A world-renowned theologian was asked by a student what he considered to be the most significant theological truth he ever learned. His answer was, "Jesus loves me. This I know; for the Bible tells me so." Believe it. God loves you!

—Condensed from *The Joy of Knowing God* by Richard Strauss.

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Love saw the guilt of sin, and sought a basis of pardon. Love saw the alienation of sin, and sought a ground of reconciliation. Love saw the defilement of sin, and sought a way of cleansing. Love saw the depravity of sin, and sought a means of restoration. Love saw the enslavement of sin, and sought the instrument of emancipation. Love saw the malady of sin, and sought a balm of healing. Love saw the condemnation of sin, and sought a method of justification. Love saw the death of sin, and sought a way of life. Love sought, and love found.

—J. C. M.

THE CHANNEL OF LOVE

"To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

We must not think that the Father loves us because our Savior made Him love us when He interposed between His wrath and us. To think this is heresy indeed. We cannot separate between the Father and the Son, for God is one. As is the Father, so is the Son. It was the one purpose of Jesus to make man see that His own life and love were a true reflection of the depths of His Father's heart.

The death of Jesus did not cause the love of God, but was caused by it. God did not love us because Jesus died; Jesus died because God loved us so much as to give Him up for us all. God loved us from eternity, but it was needful for Him to satisfy the claims of a broken law, to vindicate His righteousness, to be just. Therefore He gave Himself to us in Jesus, who manifested God in the flesh, put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and entered into the Holiest of all to become a merciful and faithful High Priest.

Though God's love was not *caused* by the Beloved, it *comes* to us through Him. The ocean fullness pours itself through the channel of the Man Christ Jesus. Because of this, God's love is brought to us with all the abundance and wealth of the Divine Source, and all the adaptation and tenderness of the human channel. The only-begotten and beloved Son is like the reservoir in which the great love of God is stored. In exact proportion therefore as we abide in Him, we shall realize and enjoy its blessed fullness.

—Condensed from *Devotional Commentary of Ephesians* by F. B. Meyer.

CYCLE OF LOVE

“Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life” (John 10:17).

It gives us true delight and joy to hear the blessed Son of God say, “Therefore doth My Father love Me.” The Son is in the deep consciousness of the love which the Father has for Him, and He gives the reason for it. His going into death was a voluntary act, for He can say, “I have power to lay it down” (John 10:18). None but the blessed Son of God could use these words. But He could also take His life again; for He would manifest Himself in resurrection as the Son of God with power.

Having shown His power and authority over life and death, He can add, “This commandment have I received from My Father.” He always acted in subjection to the will of His Father. He could not, and would not, act independently of the Father, ever delighting in the accomplishing of His will—even if it meant His going into death. Notice how the voluntary surrender of Himself in love to the Father drew out another expression of the Father’s affection towards Him.

Then in John 16:27 the Lord Jesus makes known to His disciples, “The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me.” How precious it is, fellow-believer, to know that there has been placed in our hearts an affection for this blessed One who has come to make the Father known to us. What else could we do but love the Son who shared with us the secrets of the Father’s heart? Now notice how this very response from our poor hearts to our Savior, Jesus Christ, draws out a fresh announcement of affection from the Father for us. What a boundless cycle of love we have been brought into! —R. Duncanson, adapted.

DIVINE LOVE AND ITS PRACTICAL EFFECT

Knowing God’s love compels us to love God and others. The apostle John, who delighted to speak of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, said, “We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Here we see love’s practical effect in John, and the same should be true of all who know the love of God. God’s desire is that the divine nature will be produced and nourished in every believer. But are we not all conscious of the relatively small measure to which this is achieved in us?

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

If there was one thing pressing upon the heart of the blessed Lord before He left this world, it seemed to be the desire that His followers should love one another. He had loved His own; this is what had characterized Him. Now He desires that it should characterize them: “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Why is there so little love seen in us? It must be because we have failed in our apprehension of divine love. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; and when we believe in Christ, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us (Romans 5:5). When this is known and enjoyed in the soul, it must have a practical effect. We will love God, and we will love one another. This must be the result if we are able to say “we have known and believed the love that God hath to us” (1 John 4:16). And if we love one

another, the love of God is perfected in us (1 John 4:12).

If we turn to Galatians 5:22, we find that the first fruit of the Spirit is love. All the other fruits grow out of that one. If love is lacking, the rest are only like artificial fruit tied on a tree—it never grew there. The next on the list is joy. Our joy will always be in proportion to our love. This is an unailing principle. And so it is with the next, peace. If, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are actuated by love in all we do and say and think, we shall enjoy a peace which nothing can disturb.

LOVE AS CHRIST

In Ephesians 1:4 we read that, “We should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” This requires us to be conformed to the image of His Son: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1,2). Rather than leaving us exposed to what we justly deserved, Christ sacrificed Himself for us, covering us with His own acceptability. This is precisely how we are to act. Instead of simply exposing the delinquencies of others, we are to seek to remove them. Our Christlikeness is measured, not in condemnation, but in recovery and restoration. “[Love] shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

GODLY EXAMPLES

Let us look at a couple of illustrations from the Bible regarding the practical effect of love. Moses is an example for us. He was on the mountain enjoying communion with the Lord, and he received from His hand the two tables of stone. But when he came down he found the people dancing around the golden calf. We read

that “Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.” He destroyed the golden calf, poured its remains into the water and made the children of Israel to drink of it (Exodus 32:19,20). But notice what he does next: he says to them, “I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin” (v. 30). Then he prayed, offering himself for the sake of these very people: “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written” (vv. 31,32).

Paul had the same spirit. He could say, “I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:2,3). And again, to the Corinthian saints who had not shown him much appreciation he writes, “Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you.... And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (2 Corinthians 12:14,15).

How could these two devoted servants of God manifest a spirit so sublime? Because the love of God had touched their hearts. And this same love will produce similar results in us in proportion to our appreciation of it. May the Lord give us to see that “the end of the commandment is [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Timothy 1:5). And again, “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” (1 John 3:23).

—R. E., adapted.

GOD'S LOVE: OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The New Testament is filled with verses that tell us what the love of God should mean in practical experience. Here are ten of the most powerful statements on the subject:

1. It is the visible mark of genuine Christian faith

“By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.” *John 13:35*

2. It is the means by which forgiven sinners can live in harmony

“And above all things have fervent [love] among yourselves: for [love] shall cover the multitude of sins.” *1 Peter 4:8*

3. It is the standard by which Christian husbands will be judged

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” *Ephesians 5:25*

4. It is the great principle of Christian conduct

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” *Galatians 5:13*

5. It is God's counterbalance against harsh words

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” *Ephesians 4:15*

6. It is the supreme motive for sharing Christ with others

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead.” *2 Corinthians 5:14*

7. It is proof positive that we know God

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” *1 John 4:16*

8. It is the path to confident, victorious living

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” *1 John 4:18*

9. It is the sum total of what God demands from us

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” *Romans 13:10*

10. It is the supreme virtue and will last for all eternity

“And now abideth faith, hope, [love], these three; but the greatest of these is [love].” *1 Corinthians 13:13*

Love is truly the language of Heaven. It comes from the heart of God and is poured out into the heart of every believer. Love fulfills the law because when we live in love, we are truly living in the essence of God Himself. —Adapted from “Sense and Nonsense About God's Love” by Ray Pritchard.