

I. The Glory of God

- A. For the past six weeks, we have been considering the glory of God. In that time, we have looked at God's glory as shown through His holiness, His Son – Jesus Christ, His desire for relationship with us, His immeasurable worth, His goodness, and His supremacy. Today we are going to look at the glory of God as shown through His love.
- B. Romans 8:31-39 . . . If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Christ freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; therefore who is able to trump God and condemn us? Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. Therefore, I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- C. The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell; It goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell; The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win; His erring child He reconciled, and pardoned from his sin.

When years of time shall pass away, and earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men, who here refuse to pray, on rocks and hills and mountains call,
God's love so sure, shall still endure, all measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam's race – the saints' and angels' 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, though stretched from sky to sky.

O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall
forevermore endure the saints' and angels' song.

- D. Prayer

II. The glory of God is revealed through His love

A. Love is one of God's qualities that makes Him glorious. And love is one of God's qualities that we cherish, frequently talk about, expect a lot from, and probably understand the least. So to begin our examination of God's love, I want to make it clear that His love is what it is because He is an integrated whole – with love being only one of His many qualities and parts. For example:

1. God's holiness keeps His love pure, that is, unmixed with anything that is less than love or the opposite of love or an enemy of love.
2. God's impartiality and justice keep His love fair – in two ways. It is fair to those receiving some manifestation of God's love, and it is fair to anyone who is in any way affected by God's show of love to a particular individual or group.
 - a. The point here is that God's love does not benefit one at the expense of another – with the exception of God himself, for He has loved and continues to love us at His own expense.
 - b. For example, Christ died for us, that is, in place of us, so that we can live with God for eternity. As the scripture says: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).
3. Because God is omnipresent, infinite, and eternal, His love is not only available to everyone at the same time and all the time, it is also available to everyone in unlimited measure.
4. Because God is all-powerful, His love cannot be constrained or thwarted by anything outside of God.
5. And God's goodness, grace, and mercy mean His love includes compassion, sympathy, and a readiness to look for ways to continue showing the tender side of love even to rebellious sinners.
6. The point I trust you can see from this is that God's love does not stand alone or apart from the rest of who He is. Instead, God's love is one of the many parts that make up the whole of God. Therefore, His love is influenced and effected by many of those parts.

B. In 1 John 4:8, we read that God is love. This too needs some explanation, because when we say God is love, we do not mean that love and God are synonymous – as if God is love and love is God. Nor do we mean that love is in some way greater than God, as if God must serve love, or as if God must abide by the rules of love.

1. Nothing rules over God or confines God in any way – including love. God is first and supreme in and over all things so that everything other than God serves God and His purposes.
 2. We see this truth in the scriptures, which say: “By Him all things were created . . . and He is before all things” (Colossians 1:16-17), and “love is from God” (1 John 4:7).
- C. Also, when we say God is love, we mean it in the same way we mean God is holy, that is, love permeates all that God is and does.
- D. Now, even though we are to love like God loves, far too often and for too many, our human love is very different from God’s love. Therefore, I want to examine some of the characteristics of God’s love for the purpose of bringing us to a right view of His love, and to discourage wrong conclusions about His love.

III. Characteristics of God’s love

- A. Love – at its core and in its essence – is a virtue or principle that is unchangeable regardless of the circumstances, the object of its focus, and its various manifestations. In other words, the virtue of love, like any godly principle, is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This is why Paul says “love never fails” – as if to say that love never fails to act like love (1 Corinthians 13:8).
1. Unlike God, we humans face two common temptations when it comes to loving others.
 - a. First, we face the temptation to base the quality of the love we give on the quality of love we receive. This includes the temptation to withhold love when love has been withheld from us.
 - b. Second, we face the temptation to base the quality of love we give on what we want from the one we are showing love to.
 2. In either case, we are not loving according to the unchangeable virtue of love. Rather, we are deciding what quality and measure of love to give according to the misguided belief that wanting love is proof we believe in and hold to the virtue of love. However, the only proof of what principle we hold to – be it love or selfishness – is the quality of love we give, regardless of the person or circumstances.
 3. God, who knows our weaknesses, addresses this foolishness way of thinking and living – and four scriptures quickly come to mind:
 - a. Mark 12:31 . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
 - b. Luke 6:31 . . . Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

- c. Romans 12:9 . . . Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.
 - d. Ephesians 5:25 . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.
 - 4. Thankfully, God has no weaknesses, no selfish inclinations, and no evil intentions. Therefore, in all His ways, in every situation, and toward everyone, God's love, at its core, is unchangeable.
- B. However, though God's love, as a principle, is unchangeable, the manifestations or practical applications of His love do change according to such factors as the person or group being loved, the immediate verses the long-term needs, the greater good of the individual as weighed against the greater good of the community, the behavior of those being loved, and whatever amount of grace, mercy, or compassion God chooses to bestow on a particular person or group in a particular situation.
 - 1. For example, God's love toward His children is manifested differently from His love toward those who reject Him or do not believe in Him.
 - a. On the human level, we see this same difference between a godly husband's love for his wife and the love he shows toward his neighbor's wife. Even though the love for both comes from the same unchangeable principle, it is manifested in very different ways.
 - b. We also know that a mother's love for her children is different than her love for her neighbor's children, even though she is driven by the unchangeable virtue of love to seek the good of both groups of children.
 - 2. Returning to the various manifestations of God's love, we know that His discipline for educational progress is different from His discipline for sinful behavior.
 - a. The first is for further growth toward maturity, while the second is intended to correct, bring repentance, and restore the sinner to godly behavior.
 - b. The first moves us forward in the educational process. The second restores us to the place where we went astray.
 - c. On a human level, we know that a father's educational efforts are demonstrated one way when his children are behaving and another way when he disciplines them due to misbehavior. Yet in both cases, he is acting out of the same unchangeable principle of love.

- d. A scripture example of discipline for education comes from James 1:2-4 . . . Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. [4] And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
 - e. And a scripture example of discipline for sinful behavior comes from Psalm 89:30-34 . . . If his (*David's*) sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, [31] if they violate My statutes and do not keep My commandments, [32] then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes. [33] But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. [34] My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.
3. Once again, we know there is a difference between the grace, mercy, patience, and compassion of God, and the wrath of God. Yet both are manifestations of God's love, for both are committed to the health, security, and preservation of creation, all who dwell on the earth, and God's eternal kingdom.
- a. For example, God's grace, mercy, patience, and compassion are expressions of love over the mess we have gotten ourselves into because of our rebellion and unbelief toward God.
 - (1) For example, Jesus said: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17).
 - (2) And Peter added: "The Lord . . . is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).
 - (3) Are God's grace, mercy, patience, and compassion extended to every living being who has ever lived? Yes, for that is what love does.
 - (4) Does everyone who has ever lived receive the benefits of these expressions of love? No, only those who repent and submit to God by living righteously – for that is the faith that receives the free gift of salvation (Romans 2:4).
 - b. On the other hand, God's wrath is a manifestation of love's intolerance for whatever threatens the health, security, and preservation of His creation and His heavenly home.

- (1) Therefore, Paul exhorts us to “be imitators of God, as beloved children; [2] and [to] walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. [3] But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; [4] and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. [5] For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. [6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 5:1-6).
- (2) The point here is that love’s intolerance of evil, as manifested through God’s wrath, is what prevents life on earth today from being as bad as life is in hell – where there is no intolerance of love and therefore no restraints to hold back evil.
- (3) Regarding heaven and God’s eternal kingdom, it is love’s same intolerance of evil that keeps evil out of them. And given the example of Adam and Eve, we know that sin, even if brought into heaven by just one unrepentant person, is like a leaking dyke which in time will disintegrate and allow the ocean to flood the city.
- (4) Therefore, whether it is God’s grace, mercy, patience, and compassion or God’s wrath, they both come from the same unchangeable principle of love and are focused on the preservation of what is good – both now and forever.

IV. Conclusion

- A. It is my hope that by now you are able to see that this love which makes up part of God’s glory is an unchangeable love with varied manifestations.
- B. Finally, I want to read several scripture portions about God’s glorious love which affirm what we have already said about His love.
 1. Deuteronomy 7:7-11 . . . The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, [8] but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. [9] Know therefore

that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; [10] but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. [11] Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them.

2. John 14:21-23 . . . He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.
3. Hebrews 12:5-6 . . . My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; [6] for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.
4. 1 John 4:7-8 . . . Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [8] The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.