

God is Love

INTRODUCTION

- A. A gentleman who was a professed Christian was taken seriously ill.
1. He became troubled about the little love he felt in his heart for God, and he spoke of his worry to a friend.
 2. This is how his friend answered him:
 - a. “When I go home from here, I expect to take my baby on my knee, look into her sweet eyes, listen to her charming prattle, and tired as I am, her presence will rest me; for I love that child with unutterable tenderness.
 - b. “But she loves me little.
 - 1) “If my heart were breaking it would not disturb her sleep. If my body were racked with pain, would not interrupt her play. If I were dead, she would forget me in a few days.
 - 2) “Besides this, she had never brought me a penny, but was a constant expense to me. I am not rich, but there is not money enough in the world to buy my baby.
 - c. “How is it? Does she love me, or do I love her? Do I withhold my love until I know she loves me? Am I waiting for her to do something worthy of my love before extending it?”
 3. The dying man had tears in his eyes and exclaimed, “Oh, I see. It’s not my love to God, but God’s love for me, that I should be thinking of, and I do love him now as I never loved him before.”
- B. Is that not a perfect way of looking at God’s love?
1. It’s not the amount of love that we have for God, but it is the love he has for us.
 2. This morning, we will explore God’s love in order that we might love him more.

GOD IS LOVE

- A. Throughout the Scriptures, we are told repeatedly that God is love.
1. “It is because the LORD loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt” (Deut. 7:8).
 2. “The LORD loves the righteous” (Ps. 146:8).
 3. The Lord appeared to Jeremiah and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you” (Jer. 31:3).
 4. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16).
 5. “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).
 6. “God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Eph. 2:4-5).
 7. “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God: and so we are” (1 Jn. 3:1).
 8. “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him” (1 Jn. 4:9).
 9. “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” (1 Jn. 4:16).
- B. God’s love is quite famous.
1. You stop and ask anyone to name a divine attribute, and he will likely mention right off the bat that God is a loving God.
 2. Because this attribute is so well-known, it’s difficult to describe accurately God’s love. This is because so many people have different ideas about God’s love. We will explore God’s love based on Scripture, not opinion.

SOME FALSE VIEWS OF GOD’S LOVE

- A. Because there are various views of God’s love, there are some falsehoods taught about his love.
- B. In the second century AD, a very dangerous heresy taught by a man named Marcion came on the scene.
1. According to Marcion, there was a god whom the Jews worshiped — one who required bloody sacrifices, one who has people killed for disobedience, and one who sent the Israelites into battle.
 2. Juxtaposed to this god was the God of the New Testament, a God who is love and a God who sent his Son to die for mankind.
 3. Marcion established his own church and carried many believers astray in the first few years after the apostles finished their work.

4. Marcion's basic problem was that he could not conceive of a God who was multi-faceted.
 - a. Thus, he came up with the idea of their being two gods, one of the Old Testament and one of the New Testament.
 - b. The God we serve is love, but he's not only love — he is also just and vengeful and fearful.
- C. The second false view results from the same basic problem that Marcion had, but it's a little different. There are some who truly believe that God is so loving that he would never condemn anyone.
 1. The universalists believe this — God loves so richly and so deeply that no one will be lost.
 - a. I think the absurdity of this thinking becomes evident when you carry it to its fullest expression: if every soul is ultimately going to be saved, what about Satan? Will he be saved, too?
 - b. Obviously Satan isn't going to be saved, and neither will everyone else.
 2. The Bible teaches that there are some who are going to be lost, who are going to go to hell.
 - a. To those on his left, the Son of Man will say, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41).
 - b. "God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:6-8).
 - c. God isn't going to send people to hell because he doesn't love; he's going to send to hell because he is also just.

WHAT GOD'S LOVE SAYS ABOUT GOD

- A. God's character is love.
 1. Notice again the wording of 1 Jn. 1:16: "God is love." The text says that God is love; love is who God is; love is God's essence, his character.
 2. God, in his innermost being, is love. Because God in his innermost being is love, his love is going to be constant.
 - a. His love isn't going to be like a teenager falling in love for the first time where love is on again, off again, on again, and off again.
 - b. Whatever I do, wherever I am, God is going to love me. "His steadfast love endures for ever" (Ps. 136:1).
- B. God's love made him do something.
 1. Notice again John 3:16: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes him should not perish but have eternal life."
 2. So many in today's society have a false view of love — they view love as an emotion, something you feel.
 - a. Many wedding vows now read "so long as we both shall love" rather than "so long as we both shall live."
 - b. However, you do not stop loving someone until you choose to stop loving someone.
 - 1) Loving someone means acting in that person's best interest, helping that person be the best he or she can be, sacrificing your own interests for someone else's interests. It's not getting weak in the knees when someone walks through the door!
 - 2) God did something — rather than feel something — when he decided to love man.
- C. God's love also means that God hates.
 1. It is absolutely impossible for God to be a loving Being unless he can also be a hateful being.
 - a. There are concepts in this universe that simply cannot exist without the other. E. g., how can I describe peace unless I also describe war? How can I describe cold unless I also describe hot? How can I describe goodness unless I also describe evil?
 - b. These dichotomous concepts occur in much of this world, and one dichotomous concept is that there is love there must also be hate. How can you describe love without hate, or how can you describe hate without love?
 2. The truth of Scripture is that God hates as well as loves.
 - a. God absolutely hates sin.
 - 1) "And you shall not set up a pillar [an idol], which the LORD your God hates" (Deut. 16:22)
 - 2) "There are six things which the LORD hates, seven which are an abomination to him; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers" (Prov. 6:16-19).
 - b. I was afraid that perhaps the Hebrew word for "hate" didn't really convey the same nuance it does in English. So, I consulted a well-respected Hebrew text by some very renowned Hebrew scholars. Here's how they defined the term: "It expresses an emotional attitude toward persons or things which are opposed, detested, despised, and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship."
 - c. When we sin, God hates it.

- 1) When we tell our friends one thing when the truth is something else, God hates that. When we become so angry we say and do things we soon regret, God hates that. When we refuse take a stand for what is right but just go along with the crowd, God hates that.
- 2) God has great compassion on those who sin. Remember how Jesus treated the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, and Peter after his betrayal of Jesus. However, just because God is compassionate toward sinners does not keep him from hating sin.
- 3) Let us put away sin from our lives that we might give God no reason to hate!

WHAT GOD'S LOVE SAYS ABOUT ME

- A. God's love says that I am worth something.
 1. Any self-help section of a bookstore will be inundated with self-esteem books.
 - a. I'm reading a graduate level psychology textbook at the moment, and that book speaks a good deal about self-esteem.
 - b. Self-esteem is an important concept because so many struggle with their self-esteem. They believe that life is hopeless and that their existence has no meaning.
 2. The truth, however, is probably best portrayed in the cliché-ish license plate: "Smile God loves you."
 - a. In fact, that phrase has become such a cliché I feel a little awkward mentioning it; but, it's true.
 - b. God loved me even when I was unlovable.
 - 1) "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).
 - 2) God didn't wait for me to return his love before he gave it. He didn't wait for me to be worthy of his love before he gave it. He loved me because of who I am; a creature made in his likeness.
 3. A father heard his two children upstairs, and they were in quite a fistfight.
 - a. As he went up the stairs to end World War III, he heard one boy say to another, "If you're not good, Daddy's not going to love you anymore."
 - b. You can imagine how brokenhearted that father must have been to have heard those words coming from his child. God loves us even when we're not good.
- B. Yet, God's love ought to compel me to love God.
 1. There is probably nothing sadder than unreturned love. RJ has a few girls he's after in kindergarten, and he's probably going to come home before long and tell me that those girls don't love him.
 2. That's funny and cute when it happens in kindergarten; it's neither funny nor cute when it concerns us and our God.
 - a. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Mt. 22:37-38).
 - b. We are to love God with everything we have. Can you name me one thing that is more important than returning the love of the God who gave his Son that we might live?
 - c. Adolphe Monod, a famous French preacher of the mid-1800's, said before his death: "He has loved us — that is the whole of doctrine; let us love him — that is the sum total of the ethics of the Gospel."
 - d. Let us love our God!
- C. God's love also requires me to love my fellow man.
 1. You know that we are instructed to love one another.
 - a. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 Jn. 4:7).
 - b. "If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn. 4:20).
 2. Do we honestly love our brothers and sisters? Are willing to go out of our way to help our fellow man? Are we willing to put the needs/interests of our brothers and sisters in front of our own needs/interests?
 3. Loving one another is the benchmark of Christianity.
 - a. You remember the words of Jesus: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:35).
 - b. If we bicker and fight amongst ourselves, those in this community will never know that we are the church of the Lord. If we do not love each other deeply and serve one another, those in this community will never know that we are the church of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

- A. God loves you immensely more than we could ever express in words. Do you love him?
- B. Do you need to come this morning and begin expressing that love?