

The Love of God

“So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

1 John 4:16 (ESV)

“...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...”

Ephesians 1:4-5 (ESV)

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

Ephesians 2:4-5 (ESV)

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:37-39 (ESV)

for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.

Proverbs 3:12 (ESV)

The First Epistle of John states twice that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8, 16). In *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer says that this is “one of the most tremendous utterances in the Bible—and also one of the most misunderstood.” When the Bible says that God is love, it does not – and, in fact, it *cannot* – mean God is not also just, wrathful, and holy. Though some have abandoned these attributes of God in the name of “love,” Packer reminds us that “it is precisely of the God who does these very things [condemns and punishes the disobedient] that John is speaking.” God’s love, as it is found in Scripture, is something far different and far better than the love of which we often think.

Discuss some of these ways in which God’s love is different and better than ours:

God’s love is *eternal*. God is love and has always displayed perfect love within the Trinity. His love also chooses his people for salvation before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4-5).

God’s love is *covenantal*. In John Frame’s *Systematic Theology*, Frame reminds us that it is “God’s love that initiates his covenant with Israel and, indeed, all his covenants with men.”

God’s love is *sovereign*. God’s love is not influenced by anything in us; rather, it is freely, undeservedly poured out solely by his good pleasure and according to his will (Deut 7:7-8; Eph 1:5; 1 Jn 4:19).

God’s love is *holy*. God’s love is not at odds with his holiness (and the justice and wrath his holiness demands). God does not sweep sin under the rug. He does better; he deals with sin in the most loving way.

God’s love is *gracious*. God’s love and grace are inseparable. It was the Father’s love that moved him to graciously give the Son for sinners. Likewise, it was the Son’s love that moved him to willingly go to the cross. Finally, it is the Spirit’s love that moves him to regenerate the hearts of his people and to seal their salvation.

Reflection Questions:

1. Is God’s love what you expected it to be? What are some other ways God’s love is different and better than ours?
2. How is Calvary the ultimate demonstration of God’s love for his people? Consider how the different aspects of God’s love meet at the cross.

3. Does being loved by God mean no trials or afflictions will come upon his people? Did it mean this for Jesus?
4. What are some other scriptures that speak of the love of God? Spend some time reflecting on God's love as it is revealed in Scripture.
5. How should we respond to the great love with which God has loved us?

Close your time of family worship in a time of prayer using the following prayer from *The Valley of Vision*:

Love Lusters at Calvary

My Father, enlarge my heart, warm my affections, open my lips, supply words that proclaim, 'Love lusters at Calvary.' There grace removes my burdens and heaps them on thy Son, made a transgressor, a curse, and sin for me; There the sword of thy justice smote the man, thy fellow; There thy infinite attributes were magnified, and infinite atonement was made; There infinite punishment was due, and infinite punishment was endured. Christ was all anguish that I might be all joy, cast off that I might be brought in, trodden down as an enemy that I might be welcomed as a friend, surrendered to hell's worst that I might attain heaven's best, stripped that I might be clothed, wounded that I might be healed, athirst that I might drink, tormented that I might be comforted, made a shame that I might inherit glory, entered darkness that I might have eternal light. My Savior wept that all tears might be wiped from my eyes, groaned that I might have endless song, endured all pain that I might have unfading health, bore a thorny crown that I might have a glory-diadem, bowed his head that I might uplift mine, experienced reproach that I might receive welcome, closed his eyes in death that I might gaze on unclouded brightness, expired that I might forever live. O Father, who spared not thine only Son that thou might spare me, All this transfer thy love designed and accomplished; Help me to adore thee by lips and life. O that my every breath might be ecstatic praise, my every step buoyant with delight, as I see my enemies crushed, Satan baffled, defeated, destroyed, sin buried in the ocean of reconciling blood, hell's gates closed, heaven's portal open. Go forth, O conquering God, and show me the cross, mighty to subdue, comfort and save.