

"The Love of God"

Romans 8:37-39; 1 John 3:16-17

The phrase "the love of God" appears 12 times in the New Testament, with 4 occurrences in 1 John alone, emphasizing its importance to the church. This love speaks of sacrificial love, originating with God, and displayed fully in the work of Christ for our redemption.

A psychiatrist once asked a mother of three which child she loved the most. At first, she insisted, "I love them all the same." But when pressed, she broke down and said, "When one is sick, I love that child more. When one is hurt, lost, or struggling, I love that child more. And when one is really bad — not just naughty — I love that child more."

That's a picture of God's love. He loves each of us fully, but when we are hurting, broken, or far from Him — He meets us with an even deeper compassion. As one writer put it, *"God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love"* (paraphrased from *St. Augustine of Hippo*).

I. GOD SAVES US THROUGH HIS LOVE – JOHN 5:42; ROM. 5:5; 1 JOHN 3:16-17; 4:9

A. It is absent from the unbeliever – John 5:39-47 (esp. vs. 42)

John 5:42

⁴² But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

- This doesn't mean that God doesn't love them, but it means that they have not accepted the payment for sin that the love of God brought and so they don't possess the love – it's not in

them spiritually.

B. Salvation occurs when God's love is "shed abroad" in hearts by the Holy Spirit – Rom. 5:5

Romans 5:5

⁵ And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

1. "Shed abroad" (ἐκχέω) = poured out abundantly
2. Like water being poured out (a literal understanding of the word), God's love is abundantly imparted through the Holy Spirit's influence.
3. The true believer experiences abundant love toward God that sustains them.

C. Salvation demonstrates God's love through Christ's sacrifice – 1 John 3:16-17; 4:7-10 (esp. vs. 9)

1 John 3:16-17

¹⁶ Hereby perceive we the love of *God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

1 John 4:9

⁹ In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

1. The sacrifice of Christ reveals that God the Son gave Himself for us.

2. In the Father's sending and the Son's dying, we see the depths of divine love.

II. GOD SANCTIFIES US BY HIS LOVE – LUKE 11:42; 2 THESS. 3:5; 1 JOHN 2:5; 5:3

- Definition: Sanctification means being set apart for divine use. God's love makes us holy, pure, and Christ-like.

A. Sanctification begins with simple obedience – Luke 11:42

- Start with easy things we know are right.

Luke 11:42

⁴² But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

B. Sanctification requires God's love to direct us – 2 Thess. 3:5

2 Thessalonians 3:5

⁵ And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

1. It's impossible to succeed in Christian life without God's love.
2. Along with God's Word, His will, and His holiness, we need His love.

C. Sanctification is revealed through obedience to God's Word – 1 John 2:5; 5:3

1 John 2:5

⁵ But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

1 John 5:3

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

III. GOD SECURES US IN HIS LOVE – ROM. 8:39; JUDE 21

A. Nothing can separate us from God's love – Rom. 8:39

Romans 8:39

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

B. We are safe in His love, both in life and in death.

IV. GOD SHARES HIS LOVE THROUGH US – JUDE 1:21; 1 JOHN 4:11; JOHN 13:35

A. As we reach out to others – Jude 1:20-23

Jude 20-23

²⁰ But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, ²¹ Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ²² And of some have compassion, making a difference: ²³ And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

B. As we love others, showing the reality of the gospel – 1 John 4:11; John 13:35

1 John 4:11

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

John 13:35

³⁵ By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if

| ye have love one to another.

C. Even when the message is rejected, love can leave a lasting impression.

A good example of this was reported by Ralph Neighbour, pastor of Houston's West Memorial Baptist Church (in *Death and the Caring Community*, by Larry Richards and Paul Johnson):

Jack had been president of a large corporation, and when he got cancer, they ruthlessly dumped him. He went through his insurance, used his life savings, and had practically nothing left. I visited him with one of my deacons, who said, "Jack, you speak so openly about the brief life you have left. I wonder if you've prepared for your life after death?"

Jack stood up, livid with rage. "You -- --- Christians. All you ever think about is what's going to happen to me after I die. If your God is so great, why doesn't he do something about the real problems of life?" He went on to tell us he was leaving his wife penniless and his daughter without money for college. Then he ordered us out.

Later my deacon insisted we go back. We did. "Jack, I know I offended you," he said. "I humbly apologize. But I want you to know I've been working since then. Your first problem is where your family will live after you die. A realtor in our church has agreed to sell your house and give your wife his commission. I guarantee you that, if you'll permit us, some other men

and I will make the house payments until it's sold. Then, I've contacted the owner of an apartment house down the street. He's offered your wife a three bedroom apartment plus free utilities and an \$850-a-month salary in return for her collecting rents and supervising plumbing and electrical repairs. The income from your house should pay for your daughter's college. I just wanted you to know your family will be cared for."

Jack cried like a baby. He died shortly thereafter, so wrapped in pain he never accepted Christ. But he experienced God's love even while rejecting him. And his widow, touched by the caring Christians, responded to the gospel message.

— Van Campbell, Homer, Louisiana. *Leadership*, Vol. 5, no. 1.

Conclusion: What does the love of God mean to you?

- If you're lost, it means He loved you enough to die for you.
- If you're saved, it means He loves you enough to keep you – and to work in you and through you.

But it doesn't stop there: *because* He loves us, we are called to love others – even when they don't love us back. That's what makes God's love visible in this world.