

The Personal and Practical Meaning of God's Love

Introduction

It was the Lord Jesus Who said: **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."** Matt 22:37-39

I. Important Clarifying Propositions Regarding Biblical Love.

A. Many believers cannot experience the "feeling" or "awareness" of God's love.

One reason may be the home in which they were raised, never having experienced true love on any level, or the person may be wounded and so afraid of entering into any relationship in which love, or even emotions, may be a part. Many people live behind a wall of some type.

B. It must be kept in mind that we are a "spirit" kind of person. We are not primarily mind (analytical function), emotions, will, body or a social creature. If we try to understand and experience love on an analytical basis we will be disappointed. Love is a special kind of relationship between persons and cannot be experienced or even understood by analysis.

C. Love is one, and perhaps the primary, characteristic of spiritual bonding. The relationship between God and Adam, before the Fall, was a spiritual bonding, as was his relationship with Eve. And, of course, these two relationships were the most important aspects of Adam's life and daily experience.

C. Sin severed the spiritual bonding between God and Adam and probably did serious damage to the relationship of Adam and Eve. As we are born into the world we have no spiritual bonding with God and therefore no genuine awareness of His love. In salvation the spiritual bonding is again restored. However, if one is not taught, does not receive healing prayer, does not enter into true worship and surrender -- that person, while doing everything right on the outside -- may live with deep spiritual loneliness, weakness, disappointment and despair on the inside. And our enemy may use such a condition to harass and accuse.

D. Loving God is the first commandment for a reason. And loving one another is the second command for a reason. The reason is simple: we are not going to grow, be fruitful, be joyful, be strong, and be healed -- without knowing, in a non-analytical way, the

love of God and love with one another. We were designed by God to give and receive love through spiritual bonding. When these vital qualities are absent from our life, even though we may be honest, dedicated, working hard at being a Christian, and doing everything externally right -- on the inside it is anything but joyful.

II. A Provisional Definition of the Love of God. (I Cor 13)

- A. In His love for us -- **God recognizes us as a person.**
- B. In His love for us -- **God gives us rightful place in His life and will.**
- C. In His love for us -- **God always does what is right by us -- seeking to become sacrificially involved in our life for our good.**
- D. This provisional definition helps us to know how we are to love God and one another

III. In His Love Our Lord Makes an Important Distinction. (John 13:1)

- A. God distinguishes between **who we are and what we do.**
- B. God loves us **unconditionally as a person** while He may not be pleased with what we do.
- C. **We cannot earn the love of God** by any form of behavior.
- D. **It is important to be honest about our behavior.** Dishonesty and disobedience are evidences that we do not love God. Such attitudes and actions are grieving to our Lord.

IV. God Not Only Loves Us He Likes Us and Enjoys Us. (Is 54:5; 62:5; John 14:3)

- A. The love of God is highly **personal and experiential.**
- B. The believer is more than a pardoned criminal. **We are adopted sons of God.**
- C. It is helpful to affirm daily: **God loves me and He likes me!**

V. God In His Love Has Given us Great Promises.

- A. He has promised: **"I will never leave you nor forsake you."** (Heb 13:5,6)
- B. He has promised: **" I will supply all your needs."** (2 Cor 9:8; Phil 4:19)
- C. He has promised: **"I'll take everything in your life and work it for your good -- if you let Me."** (Rom 8:28,29)

Conclusion: God has given each of us the greatest love gift possible -- Himself. The only true response we may make is to love Him with all our heart and give Him the only thing He does not have -- ourselves.

Victor Matthews