

## GOD IS LOVE

### Introduction:

1) Quick review from God is holy.

NB. This is spiritual truth and can only be perceived and understood through the work of the Spirit in our inner spirits, not through our rational minds alone.

2) How can we link the theme of the two days together? ANSWER: God's love is a holy love, different, unique, pure, above all other "loves", untainted by any sin.

3) When we think of "love", naturally our thoughts are strongly influenced by both our own experiences of loving or having been loved -- a mixture of good and bad. For some, predominantly very good, while for others predominantly bad. In other words, our sinfulness to some degree taints our perceptions and understanding of LOVE.

It is then easy if we're not careful to project our own feelings & experiences (positive & negative) on to our understanding of the nature of God's love.

Therefore, step one in this process of hearing God speak to us on this subject is to ask the Spirit of God to deliver us from these hindrances -- ungodly thoughts and feelings so that we can "see" and "hear" what God is saying to us about HIS love for us.

4) Let us not focus our primary attention upon our response to our duty to love God and how we are to do that. Rather focus our entire attention upon God's love. (Our responses will be discussed this afternoon.)

For some of us, it is very hard to talk about God's love for "me". Perhaps generally we just shrink back for whatever reason when someone says to us: "I really love you. You are truly beautiful. You are special and I love you with all my heart."

Our responses are varied:

- No, I'm not beautiful. I know it, and they are just saying that to make me feel good. I don't really believe them!
- I'm not worthy of this love. I've hurt them too often and do not deserve to be loved like that.

It is so important today to let us ourselves go in God's presence. Let us come to this study in a very personal way. God the Father & Jesus, God's Son, desire to speak to us individually & personally today. We need to hear His word to us: " \_\_\_\_\_ , I truly love you. You are My child. I gave Myself for you. You are the apple of My eye."

However, this message can only get through if we will allow the message "in". Unbelief is probably the biggest barrier and reason for rejecting it. We must welcome God's message into our complete beings: our minds, our feelings, and our hearts -- by the use of our wills. I choose to believe what is being said to me, even if it seems unbelievable. It is too good to be true. So let us not block God's truth today but let it fall into good ground like in the parable of the sower. Then it will produce an abundant harvest -- in our lives, and then through us to others.

Today imagine that Jesus, our LOVER, is sitting alongside of us. He isn't here to condemn us for not being good enough, or for failing to do enough work for Him. He is here to speak these very powerful words to us: "I love you, yes, YOU!" Look back in His face and with all your uncertain

feelings, respond: "Yes, my Lord, I welcome Your love into my heart. I almost cannot believe it -- it's too good to be true."

5) When the Bible speaks about God's LOVE, it does not speak about it philosophically, or even theologically (in some academic sense). It is never treated as a some mere concept to be debated and tossed around in conversations or even sermonised. So even today's study is potentially dangerous.

Therefore, we need to be on guard against just talking or thinking about this subject as if it is "outside of ourselves". As if we can come in some cold, intellectual way to examine the love of God with our rational minds and think that we have understood the Love of God.

God's love is LOVE in ACTION. We can only understand it by experiencing it, not by thinking about it. His love is never an idea or even an ideal that sits hidden away on a book shelf. While on the one hand, we can read about God's love in the Bible and hence study it, on the other hand, His love cannot be reduced to words to be read and studied on the pages of a book.

It is to be experienced. And the more we allow His love to touch our lives, the more we understand what it means. Otherwise it will remain as an abstract fact without any reality.

6) When we think of God's love for His people, we can see it perfectly demonstrated in the Person of Jesus in His relationship with His beloved disciples. He spoke to them about how He loved them. See the expressions of Jesus' love for His disciples and friends: John 11:5,36; 13:1,23; 15:9-10; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20.

In what practical ways do you see this love clearly revealed through the stories in the Gospels? Write down your thoughts.

Discuss & share together.

What then does the Bible say about God's love? How has God revealed His love to man?

1) When God speaks directly about WHO HE IS, He declares Himself to be "abounding in love". See Ex.34:6-7; Psalm 103:8; 145:8.

2) Love is always experienced IN RELATIONSHIP. It is a relational word *though* we can talk about loving yourself. God loves a people, a people with whom we comes into a special covenantal relationship. He chooses to set His love on them. He chooses them for Himself. These are the people who experience the full extent or measure of His love. See Ex.20:6; Deut.7:7-9; Eph.1:4; Col.3:12. cf. John 3:16.

3) God's love is A HOLY LOVE because He always love perfectly, absolutely, unconditionally. When the Bible speaks about God loving His people, it uses very powerful words. Let us notice what they are. See Lam.3:22; Ex.15:13/Ps.32:10; Ps.100:5; Jonah 4:2; Ps.36:5,7/103:11.

4) God's love is inseparably linked with HIS FAITHFULNESS (cf. faith). Love and loyalty go together. We can understand this because we recognise that true love is expressed within the boundaries of "covenant" in absolute faithfulness. See Ps.85:10; 89:14; Prov.3:3.

5) God addresses His people with WORDS OF LOVE. Sometimes He may need to speak sharply to them, to rebuke them, but even then His words are still deeply rooted in His love for them for they have a perfectly loving intention. And we need to allow these divine words ring in the ears of our hearts. See Deut.7:8; Zeph.3:17; I Thess.1:4; Col.3:12.

6) Whenever we think of "love" in a human way, we tend to think of experiences or things that relate love to our emotions and nice feelings. But God's love is always love in action MOTIVATED BY OUR HIGHEST GOOD. And if we are prone to stumble and go off track, then love in action means acting in order to bring us back on track, to restore us to the right path. This is tough love and sometimes is associated with pain. But it is true love. See Prov.3:11-12; Heb.4:4-13; Jer.2:1-3; 31:3. cf. 1 John 4:18.

7) God's love pre-eminently FOCUSES UPON A PERSON -- how He demonstrated His love for us through His own beloved Son. See how God speaks of His love for Jesus-- Mark 1:11; 9:7. cf. John 15:9 (14:21). God loves not with words only but loves totally -- through total self-giving, paying the ultimate price through sacrifice. See John 15:13; Rom.5:8; I John 4:9-10.

N.B. This is a truth that we should never allow to become mere doctrine. Rather to impact our spirits dynamically.

8) God loving His people can be likened to the love advances of a true lover. LOVE IN ACTION DEMANDS A RESPONSE OF LOVE. Those on the receiving end can never just stand still and do nothing. In fact, an indifferent, "no response" reaction to a love advance or a loving message is frightening. Deadening. Painful for the one making the advance. How must God feel when we give His love advances the cold water or cold shoulder treatment? The Bible tells us how we are to respond. See Psalm 18:1; 108:1-5; Ps.59:16; 31:7; 25:6-7/94:18.

On hearing these truths, we cannot remain idle or indifferent. Our personal response is demanded.

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