

1. Come to one of the most glorious and misunderstood attributes “Love of God”

- A. I feel like we must begin this with clearing up some of those misunderstandings

Is God Only Love?**1. The church today has a very lopsided view of who God is**

- A. I think that has mainly sprung out of this scripture

1 Jn 4:8 (ESV) Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

- 1). This has become a comprehensive statement on the character of God
“What is God like?” – “God is love”

- B. True. God is love – but John also wrote that God is “Light”

1 Jn 1:5 (ESV) ... God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

- 1). OTW He is utterly holy with no trace of moral darkness in Him at all

- C. Bible also says God is merciful...gracious...just... God is a consuming fire... etc.

- 1). All of these statements are as significant as the statement God is love

- 2). They are all as true as the others – leave any of them out you get an incorrect view of who God is

Point: To know God properly we must see Him as He has chosen to reveal Himself to us

- A. To isolate love and elevate it above everything else

- 1). Leaves us with a sloppy, sentimental God who tolerates everything

- a). And would never do anything severe because

“God is love and a God of love would never so anything like send a person to hell?”

- B. The damage a sloppy view of God can do – removes the proper fear and respect of God

When we do that it ushers sin and carnality into the church

Prov 16:6 (NIV) ... through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.

- 1). I was saved because of the fear of God – snatched out of the fire

When I discovered God would justly send me to hell because of my sin

- 2). The fear of God also keeps us walking in purity – I don’t want fatherly chastisement – it hurts

- a). But when we have this sloppy God who’d never harm anybody

We lost this healthy respect for Him and fail to avoid evil – we sin easily

Transition: This thought brings us to our first definition of the Love of God – brings in a necessary balance

I. THE LOVE OF GOD IS A HOLY GOD

God is love – but God is holy – therefore God’s love is a holy love

1. See the balance of love and holiness in John 3:16

Jn 3:16 (ESV) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- A. Awesome – God SO loves this world that is perishing

- 1). But why are the people perishing? Because God is holy

Point: Therefore while God loves the world – He is not overlooking any sin of the people in it

- A. His love sent a Savior to provide guilty man with a way to be forgiven

- B. And while Jesus was on the cross – God’s holiness judged Him in our place

- C. For those who refuse His offer of salvation – they will meet with a holy God at the Great White throne

2. This combination of love and holiness is all over the Scriptures

- A. He lovingly created the world and put man in paradise

But He also judged that same world with the flood because of sin

- B. He lovingly called Abraham out of idolatry and blessed him abundantly
But He also rained down judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah because of immorality

Summary: I think the church gets the fact God is love – see all the bumper stickers etc.

- A. I've never seen a bumper sticker that says "God is holy" – but He is
- B. If you don't see this side of God – you'll never have a proper fear and respect of God
 - 1). Therefore we will not turn from evil like we should – the church will stay weak & ineffective

II. GOD'S LOVE IS AN UNINFLUENCED LOVE

1. Uninfluenced love defined

- A. It is not a love that is influenced by anything outside of itself
- B. He didn't come to us in our unbelieving state because there was something that attracted Him

PINK: "There was nothing whatever in the objects of his love to call it into exercise, nothing in the creature to attract or prompt it. The love which one creature has for another is because of something in the object; but the love of God is free, spontaneous, uncaused. The only reason why God loves is found in his own sovereign will."

- A. His love is so unlike ours – our love is usually caused by something that attracts us in the other person
 - 1). Whether that be a physical feature, a temperament, or their personality
- B. Thankfully God's love is not like that – or none of us would ever experience His love

2. There was nothing good in the Christ rejecting rebel that God found attractive

Rom 3:10-18 (NIV) As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; (11) there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. (12) All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (13) "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." (14) "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." (15) "Their feet are swift to shed blood; (16) ruin and misery mark their ways, (17) and the way of peace they do not know." (18) "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

- A. Did you notice why they can live this way?
Romans 3:18 "There is **no fear of God** before their eyes."
 - 1). That is what Christ rejecting man - controlled by their sinful nature looks like to God

Point: This is the wonder of God's love – He still loves us even when we look like that!

- A. When there is nothing at all in us that would draw that love out

3. He didn't love us because of our affection for Him

1 Jn 4:10 (ESV) In this is love, **not that we have loved God** but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- A. His love wasn't a response to us – we didn't love Him first – it was just the opposite
"I always had a love for God. I guess that's why He loved me" – Wrong. You didn't
 - 1). Romans says we were enemies of God and hostile towards Him

Ro 5:10 (ESV) For if while we were **enemies** we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...

Ro 8:7 (ESV) For the mind that is set on the flesh is **hostile to God**, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

- 2). You may have had an affection to some imaginary God but not the true God
 - a). Not the God who demands repentance and surrender

Internal Summary: So what do we have so far

- A. He didn't love us because we were good we weren't - no one does good no not one
 - 1). There was nothing in us that drew out that love of God
- B. He didn't love us because we were loving to Him we weren't – we were hostile enemies
 - 1). We didn't want Him messing with our life – we loved our sin

4. He didn't love us because we naturally wanted to follow Him

“I always was the spiritual type. I always followed God” WRONG AGAIN

A. In Ephesians 2 we see why God must initiate the whole process

Why He must choose to love us when there is nothing lovely about us

Eph 2:1–3 (ESV) And *you were dead* in the trespasses and sins ⁽²⁾ in which you once walked, following the course of this world, *following the prince of the power of the air*, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ⁽³⁾ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

- 1). That’s a lovely picture – dead in sin – following Satan – carrying out desires of the flesh
 - a). Nothing there that would attract a holy God
 - b). Nothing that He would be pleased with – dead and following Satan
- 2). This also shows the foolishness of telling a believer – just meet God half-way! I’ve heard that
 - a). We’re dead in sin – how many corpses do you know that can meet anybody half way
 - b). Death – is an absence of response – no matter how strong the stimulus – paddles...

B. Therefore the only possible solution is that God comes to us first and does something miraculous
Our only hope is God’s love for us is not based on what we are like

Eph 2:4–5 (ESV) But God (what great words. God to the rescue), being rich in mercy, *because of the great love with which he loved us*, ⁽⁵⁾ even when we were dead in our trespasses (Even when we were hopeless and couldn’t do anything to help ourselves), *made us alive together with Christ*—by grace you have been saved— (read that again)

- 1). Verses 1-3 show us the ugliness of man in rebellion to God
 - a). He follows the ways of the world and the devil
 - b). He lives to gratify the craving of his sinful nature
 - c). He’s set against God to such a degree Romans calls him an enemy of God
 - 1a). OTW there is nothing to attract God – but everything to repel Him
- 2). Verses 4-5 shows us that even in that state God chooses to set His love upon us
 - a). Not because we changed first – and God is responding to that new us
 - 1a). We couldn’t change first – we were powerless to change
We were dead – NOT Princess Bride Dead but really dead
 - b). In my dead state when I couldn’t get to Him – He came to me
 - 1a). He stooped down in rescuing love – and He gave me life

Eph 2:5 (ESV) even when we were dead in our trespasses, *made us alive together with Christ*—by grace you have been saved—

- a). It had to be by grace – unmerited favor - dead men can’t merit much

Thought: When we see what God has done in our salvation – How He has set His love upon us

- A. Lifting us out of the state of rebellion we were in – not allowing us to go to hell
- B. As we see how great His love has been towards us to give us life so we can respond to Him
 - 1). Now we understand more clearly the truth behind 1 John 4:19
1 John 4:19 (NKJV) We love Him because He first loved us. (I guess!)
 - 2). That is the perfect picture of human love
 - a). Notice it responds to something in the other person
 - b). In this case God’s glorious love to us draws out a loving response in return

God’s love is holy - God’s love is uninfluenced – it is a sovereign choice

III. GOD’S LOVE IS ETERNAL

1. Paul shows us when God’s love was set upon us

Eph 1:4-5 (NIV) For he *chose us in him before the creation of the world* to be holy and blameless in his sight. *In love* (5) he *predestined us to be adopted* as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

- A. **Predestined** = God's sovereign determination before the world was ever formed to make you His child
 - 1). That is when He chose to adopt you
- B. He then worked that choice out by drawing you to Him

John 6:44 (NIV) "No one can come to me *unless the Father who sent me draws him...*

2. Jeremiah tells us God's love is like God – without beginning or without end

Jer 31:3 (NIV) The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an *everlasting love...*

- A. Everlasting = Before we drew our first breath of life God's love was already set upon us
- B. Everlasting = That love that was always there will always be there - will continue forever
 - 1). It is an eternal love

Thought: Proves God's love is a sovereign choice – not dependent upon the actions of its recipient

- A. Before you came to be – before you could ever merit anything – God's love was already upon you

CHS: "I'm glad he loved me before I was born, He certainly wouldn't have loved me after"

 - 1). That is true from a human standpoint – going to question it from a divine standpoint in a minute

3. This brings the child of God tremendous comfort

- A. Because God's love is like God = Eternal – without beginning or end
- B. Because God's love is like God = Immutable – it will never change – same everyday
 - 1). If you are a recipient of His love today – if you have been saved by that love
 - 2). Then you have been loved by God from eternity past – His love has always been upon you
 - a). Even when you didn't realize it – He knew you were His

Probably explains some protection you experienced etc.

 - 1a). I'm grateful to be alive because of those drunken drug crazed days

Now I see it – God's love was on me even then – protecting me
 - b). AND you will always be loved by God for the rest of eternity future

Question: Do you know how long you've been loved? How long you've been precious to God?
How long you've been the apple of His eyes?

- A. What security – if He has loved you so long – will He stop now?
- B. If He put His love on you knowing all you would do – He had full disclosure of every sin
 - 1). What could stop that love now?
- C. If God loved me when I was a hostile enemy – and He did! From before the creation of the world
 - 1). How much more now that I'm a precious child!
 - 2). This is so comforting – Remember I'm going to question Spurgeon's quote

CHS: "I'm glad he loved me before I was born, He certainly wouldn't have loved me after"

 - a). That's funny – I've used it many times – this time I saw a theological flaw in it
 - b). He did love me knowing everything I would do after

He loved me with full knowledge of every sin I would ever commit – full disclosure

 - 1a). He still said "I choose him to be mine. I adopt him!"

4. This becomes a great incentive to love God back

1 John 4:19 (NKJV) We love Him because He first loved us.

- A. This does not give us license to sin – "Well then it doesn't matter what I do"

This is one of the greatest incentives to do what is right – to live a holy life

 - 1). How do I show my love – through obedience – honoring Him with my choices

Jn 14:21 (ESV) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, *he it is who loves me...*

- a). My heart has been captured – I am awestruck by divine, fatherly, adopting love
And I respond by honoring Him with how I live

Transition: The next point has been hinted at already – but for our comfort let's strengthen it

God's love is holy - God's love is uninfluenced – God's love is eternal

IV. GOD'S LOVE IS INDESTRUCTIBLE

1. God's love is not frail or fragile – like man's love is

- A. Human love can be so fragile – married couple so in love end up hating each other
- B. Circumstances can strain man's love – stretching it until it is at the breaking point – will it snap?

Point: But nothing put's pressure on God's love for us

- A. Not only will God's love never end for His child – it will never decrease = immutable
 - 1). He will never say "I've grown weary of you. I just don't love you any longer."
 - 2). He will never say "I still love you, but it's just not the same, not as intense as it was before"

2. Need an example of this? Peter provides it

- A. The guy that denied Jesus 3 times in His greatest time of trial – cursing "I don't know Him"
 - 1). That would be a good test to see if God's love could be damaged
 - 2). If God's love wasn't indestructible he would be in trouble
- B. We see the love of God towards Peter before the trial took place

Lk 22:31–32 (ESV) "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ⁽³²⁾ but I have prayed for you..."

 - 1). Jesus knows Peter is going to deny Him – still no bitterness or anger in His voice
 - 2). You hear love – I'm standing with you Peter – you will deny me but I won't deny you!
- C. We see the love of God towards Peter after his denial
 - 1). After the crucifixion, the Women go looking for the body of Jesus at the tomb
 - a). They are met by an angel – messenger of God who tells them

Mk 16:6–7 (ESV) And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁽⁷⁾ But go, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

 - 1a). This messenger of God speaks to them **"Make sure you go tell Peter"**
 - 2a). Here is the love of God drawing Peter back
 - 2). Think of it – Peter has denied Christ – Christ has been crucified
 - a). I'm sure Peter thinks it's over – I blew it – I ruined everything
 - b). Here comes the women

"He's risen and Peter He made sure we told you. He singled you out!"

 - 1a). WHAT! He wants to see me still! He still loves me? There's hope!
- D. Then we see the love of God towards Peter when the NT church is up and running in Acts
 - 1). God grants Peter the privilege of preaching the first sermon of the new church
 - 2). AND He elevates Peter up to be the prominent leader in that church
 - 3). OTW God didn't say "Peter I'm going to let you into heaven, but you bother me. I can't believe what you did. I love you but its not the same. So stay out of the way while I use other men"
 - a). His love for Peter is still the same and Peter is not a second class citizen in the Kingdom
 - b). Peter was learning the lesson that God's love is not like man's – it is immutable

Thought: Can't you relate to this? We've all had our times of failure too!

- A. So great perhaps you wondered if you were a Christian at all – how can I be?

- B. Yet God has come to you – picked you up – forgiven you – lovingly got you going again and again
 - 1). Still using you because nothing destroys his great love for us

3. This is obviously not saying sin doesn't matter

- A. It is saying that when God's children do sin – it doesn't stop God's love for us
 - 1). It forces Him to love us in a way we don't like – chastisement

Heb 12:6 (NLT) For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children.
- Point:** That can be extremely painful – but it is always out of love
- A. And it is always for our good – it makes us think twice before we choose sin

Ps 119:67 (ESV) Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.

 - 1). We sin – God lovingly but painfully disciplines us – next time we think “No thanks”
 - 2). Taylor with lying – 3 days – next time a week – warning 2 weeks! Caught himself
 - a). That's the way it works! We start to sin....uh...maybe not!
 - b). It was the affliction that woke David up to the foolishness of choosing sin

V. GOD'S LOVE IS IMMENSE

1. It is a love without limits, bounds or measures

Eph 2:4 (ESV) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the *great love* with which he loved us,

- A. Not just love - that isn't strong enough - His love for us is a GREAT love

2. Jesus uses a little two letter word that speaks volumes about this immensity

Jn 3:16 (ESV) “For God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- A. Not just that He loved the world but that He SO loved the world...
- B. You can pour a million adjectives into that "So" and never plumb the depth of its majesty and glory
- C. That SO points to the greatest example of God's love for us - He gave His Son up to that cross

Thought: When the devil comes to you in those weak moments tempting you to doubt God's love for you

- A. You need to look no further than the cross to drive the doubts away
 - 1). Those nail prints tell us our God loves us with an immense love – He SO loves us

CONCLUSION

1. What a thought – Do you know that love personally?

Love these words: Ga 2:20 (ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, *who loved me and gave himself for me.*

- A. Yes - He loves the world – but do you glory in the love He has for you?
- B. Do you thrill that this eternal, indestructible, immense love is set upon you?

Thought: I know you're weak at times – you fail miserably at times – but don't go there right now!

- A. I know that you're not everything you desire to be for Him – but don't go there right now
 - 1). If you're his child – then you are a recipient of His eternal, indestructible love
 - 2). Learn to become possessive with these truths – like Paul – *He loves ME!*
- B. It is not a love that is given because I deserve – praise God – I don't so often
 - 1). It is an uninfluenced love – flowing simply out of the goodness of God's nature
 - a). It is a love that is eternal towards us – that will never end
 - b). It is a love that is indestructible – that will never fade

c). It is a love that is immense and unlimited

Point: That is the love that is set upon us right now! How glorious