

GOD

Our Love for God

Throughout time, it has always been **God's great desire** to have a family who would **love Him**. **God**, who is **love (I John 4:16)**, has always done great and wonderful things for those that kept His commandments, who endeavored to live their lives according to His Word so that He could bless them. He did all this **because** of His great **love**, and it would be the logical **response** for those He has blessed to **love Him** in return.

Look at **Deuteronomy Chapter 6, verses 4 and 5**, spoken to the **Israelites**, God's chosen people in Old Testament times:

Deuteronomy

6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:

6:5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

This was one of many **commandments** that God gave to His people in Old Testament times, but it was by far the **greatest**: people had to **love the one true God** and no other gods in order for Him to be able to bless them.

Jesus Christ knew this very well. He **condensed** all of the hundreds of Old Testament laws into **two**, which we can see in **Mark Chapter 12**:

Mark

12:29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord thy God is One Lord:

12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

12:31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Notice in **verse 30**, which is a quote of Deuteronomy 6:4 and 5 that we looked at, the multiple usages of the word "**and**". This is the figure of speech *polysyndeton*, used to call attention to **each** of the four things mentioned: **heart, soul, mind, and strength**. Taken **together**, you could read this "**Love God with everything you've got.**" Even so, these four things – heart, soul, mind, and strength – all fall within the realm of the **five senses**. At the time of Jesus Christ's ministry, man was still only **body and soul**, and **could only love God via the five senses**.

Today, in the **Grace Administration**, those of us who are born again of God's spirit are **no longer** just body and soul but **also** have the gift of **holy spirit** within, so **we** can love God **spiritually** also. This *agapē* kind of love is available **only** to us born-again believers.

We'll take a look at **why** we should love God, considering **what God has done for us** that makes Him deserving of our love. Then we'll see **how** we love God today as we look at some of the great truths in the epistle of **I John**. Finally, we'll briefly consider a couple of the **benefits** of loving God in our day and time.

First, let's read **verse 16** in the Gospel of **John, chapter 3**:

John

3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

In this verse we have an important figure of speech, *metonymy*, where a noun representing a **place** ("the **world**") is used for the **inhabitants** of that place (**people**). God's **love** for mankind was so **great** that He **gave** His only-begotten Son (Jesus Christ) so that **we** could have **everlasting life**.

In **I John, Chapter 4** we see more about how **God**, because of His great **love** for us, made it available for us to be **saved** through **the accomplishments of Jesus Christ**:

I John

4:9 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.

4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation (*payment in full*) for our sins.

Paul's epistle to the **Ephesians** shows us many of the great things that God, because of His **love** and **grace**, has **done for us** living in this Grace Administration. Let's look at a few of these, beginning in **Chapter 1, verse 3**:

Ephesians

1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ.

We have been **blessed with all spiritual blessings**.

1:4 According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;

1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption (*sonship*) of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Verse 4 tells us that **God chose us**. He **knew** in His foreknowledge that we would **believe** what it says in **Romans, Chapter 10 verse 9**, so He was able to **choose** us, making us **holy** (setting us apart) and **blameless**.

According to the **texts**, a **comma** could be inserted after “before him”, and the words “**in love**” would then be **followed** by the next verse: “**In love** (God by His love) **having predestinated us...**” God knew we would believe, so **because** of His great **love** He could “predestinate” us to become His children. And this **isn’t** something we have to **wait** for: **I John 3:2** begins “Beloved, **now** are we the sons (**beloved children** in the text) of God...” When we got born again, we became God’s **children**.

When God made us His children, He made us **alive spiritually**. We see this truth in **Ephesians, Chapter 2, verses 4 and 5**, where we **also** see His **motivation** for doing so:

Ephesians

2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (*made us alive*) together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved);

But there’s **more**. God didn’t **just** make us alive spiritually. Let’s back up to **Chapter 1, verse 18**:

1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
1:19a And *what is* the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe...

God, **because** of His **love** and **grace**, gave us great **power** in this life; **and** we have the **hope of the Return** of Christ with **eternal life** to look forward to.

We’ve seen some of the greatness of **what God did for us** because of His **love for us**. Our logical **response** is to **love God**, and the **more** we **know**, the **more** we can **love Him**. We see this in **Philippians chapter 1, verse 9**:

Philippians

1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment.

The **greater** the **full, experiential knowledge** of our heavenly Father that we have, the **more** our **love for Him** will abound.

Next, let’s look at **I John** to learn more about **how** we love God in this Grace Administration. This epistle deals with the **walk** of the born-again believer, **especially** our walking in **fellowship** with our heavenly Father.

We’ll begin **I John chapter 5, verse 1**:

I John

- 5:1** Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.
- 5:2** By this we know (*experientially know*) that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.
- 5:3** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

Once we are **born again**, we can **love God** with that *agapē* spiritual love. Verse 1 tells us that **if we love God**, we **also** are to **love** those who are **His children**, including Jesus Christ and the other born-again believers, our brothers and sisters in the household.

Verse 3 tells us that “**the love of God**”, meaning our love **for** God, is **manifested** when we “**keep his commandments**”.

So, **what** are God’s **commandments** that we need to keep in order to **manifest** our love **for Him**? Let’s back up to **chapter 3, verse 23**:

- 3:23** **And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.**

This commandment to **love one another** with the love of God is the same one that **Jesus Christ** gave to his disciples as recorded in **John 13:34**: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love one another, as I have loved you**, that ye also **love one another**.”

We find **more** about **loving God by loving our brothers and sisters** in **I John, Chapter 4**. We’ll begin in **verse 12**:

- 4:12** **No man hath seen God at any time: If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected (*matured*) in us.**
- 4:16** **And we have known (*experientially known*) and believed the love that God hath to us: God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.**
- 4:17** **Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment (*today, when man does the judging*): because as he is, so are we in this world.**
- 4:18a** **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear...**

As we **keep God’s commandment** and **love one another**, our love is **perfected**, or made fully **mature**, and we have **fellowship with Him**. Then, we can have great **boldness** in our day and time, and when we **love God** we can live our lives **without fear**.

- 4:19** **We love him, because he first loved us.**

The word “**him**” in this verse is **not** found in five of the seven critical Greek manuscripts, so we can read this verse “**We love, because he first loved us**.” Because God **first loved us** and made it available for us to get born again of His spirit, **we now have the ability to love with the love of God**. Now comes **verse 20**:

- 4:20** If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?
- 4:21** And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

We see that **to love God** we must **love our brothers and sisters** in the household. **How** we do this, the subject of much of the epistles to the Church of Grace, is succinctly **summed up** in **Ephesians, Chapter 4 verse 15**, which says: “But **speaking the truth in love**, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ.” We know that “**speaking the truth**” in this verse can more literally be rendered “**truthing it**”, meaning that we are to lovingly deal truly with others as we live our lives according to the Word of God.

Finally, what are some of the **benefits** that we can enjoy as we love God? There are, of course, **numerous** benefits to loving God, but we’ll just briefly look at **two**. First, let’s go back to **I John Chapter 5**, where we’ll begin with **verse 3** that we read earlier:

- 5:3** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

God’s **commandments** to us, which among other things include **loving others** in the household, are **not grievous or burdensome**. Why not? Look at the **next verse**:

- 5:4** For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (believing).
- 5:5** Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Romans, Chapter 8 verse 37 tells us that because nothing can separate us from the love of God, we are “more than conquerors (“**super-conquerors**”) through him (**God**) that **loved** us.”

We’ll conclude with **Romans, Chapter 8 verse 28**, which neatly sums up many of the **benefits** of **loving God in this Grace Administration**:

Romans

- 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

As we **love God** by keeping His commandments, we can **know** that all things will “**work together for good**”. The word “**good**”, from the Greek word *agathos*, can be understood as “a harmonious perfection, that which is spiritually advantageous and admirable”. As we **love God**, we can believe for the **best** Godly solutions for **any** situation we may face, according to what is available in that situation. Knowing this, we can live our lives victoriously and without fear as we keep God’s commandments by doing His Word, manifesting **our love for God**.

- Dr. Rick Batt