

# 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.

### 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.

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