

FOCUS “On the Love of God”

INTRODUCTION:

The New Testament has many references to the love of God and the believer’s responsibility to demonstrate this same kind of love, the Old Testament references are less frequent. This is not to suggest that the Old Testament avoids the subject of God’s love, but rather that the love of God is fully revealed with the coming of Christ. Another reason for the relative rarity of love in the Old Testament is a failure on the part of Bible translators. The Hebrew word, *hesed*, is often employed in the Old Testament, rendered “**lovingkindness**” 176 times, and “**unchanging love**” but twice. Nevertheless, *hesed* is the key word in describing the love of God toward man. Thus, “love” is much more frequently the subject in the Old Testament, even though it may not be the English word “love” that is more widely used.

Love is prominent in the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, being mentioned in each chapter.

Chapter 1 - Love is first mentioned as the motivation of God as He chose us for salvation in eternity past. (1:4)

Chapter 2 - Paul reminds his readers they were once dead in their trespasses and sins, and that God provided salvation for us because of His mercy and His great love with which He loved us (2:4).

Chapter 3 - Paul prays that his readers might be “**rooted and grounded in love**” (3:17), and “**know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge**” (3:19).

Chapter 4 - Christian unity is encouraged, as believers show “**forbearance to one another in love**” (verse 2). In the same chapter, Paul says that the church, the body of Christ, builds up itself in love as Christians speak the truth in love (verses 15-16).

Chapter 5 - Paul urges believers to “**walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma**” (verse 2). Husbands are instructed to “**love their wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for her**” (verse 25). In his concluding words to the Ephesians, Paul writes,

Characteristics of Divine Love

God’s Love is Infinite, Limitless, Unfathomable - How quickly human “love” can turn to hate when relationships fail. God’s love is not like this. His love is unchanging. As God is immutable, so is His love Psalm 103:11; Isaiah 63:7; Ephesians 3:18-19

- **God's Love is Holy** - God's love is always an expression of God's holiness. It is also directed toward producing holiness in us. God's love seeks to make us holy. The love of God is not a guarantee that we will not suffer; it is the assurance that whatever suffering we endure is directed toward making us holy by a God who loves us. If it was necessary for Christ to suffer in order to demonstrate His love toward us, why would we think our suffering is incompatible with God's love toward us? Ephesians 1:4 Ephesians 5:25-26.
- **God's Love is Sacrificial** - God's love is not self-serving but sacrificial. Love comes at a high cost, and the one who loves is the one who willingly pays the price. Love always has a price tag, and the "lover" is gladly willing to pay the price. From eternity past, God set His love on us and purposed to save us through the sacrificial death of His Son John 3:16; John 15:13; Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:25; I John 4:9-10
- **God's Love Forgives Sins** - God's love is shown in the forgiveness of sins, but not incompatible with punishing sinners. Some wrongly think of love as antithetical to punishment. They believe they love their children by not punishing them. They expect God to bless them and make them happy, and then they become angry and frustrated when God allows suffering or pain. This evidences an inadequate definition of love. Exodus 34:6-7; Isaiah 53:4-6; Romans 3:21-26

CONCLUSION

In our witness to a sinful, lost, and dying world, we dare not distort the love of God. God is the One who defines love, not men. We must accept God's love as God has defined and expressed it. We dare not rely on God conforming to the distorted perceptions of love to which fallen men ignorantly cling. We must be careful not to compartmentalize God's love and separate it from His other attributes, or try to evangelize men by appealing only to the love of God. Our Lord did not indicate that we should depend upon the "attraction" of His love, as much as He has indicated that lost men should be compelled by a sense of His righteousness, our sin, and the judgment which awaits sinners (John 16:7-11). *The sinner ought not to be comforted by assurances of the love of God (apart from Christ), but should be reminded that God hates sins and yet extends His love to sinners.*