

Understanding God's Love

Scripture Reading 5:1-11

Text: Romans 5:8

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Intro - Whenever one considers the subject of Unbounded Love, one must certainly consider THE LOVE OF GOD. The apostle Paul, in great delight, spoke of God's love in this manner, "God commends his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

What a magnificent exercise of love that is, love shown toward man yet abiding in his sin. To sin is to disobey God, to go contrary to His teaching, or, to miss the mark set for us by God. Sin is disobedience to God, to his way, and to his will. The word sin describes the condition of all men everywhere. Yet, to such a sinful man, God demonstrates the proof of His love in providing a Sin Bearer.

From the beginning of time man has sinned believing he has a good reason to do so. Adam was desirous to make the most of life, not wishing to miss one thing. He wanted to get a taste of all of life, even of the tree of which God had instructed him not to eat.

According to the book of Genesis, chapter 3 verse 6, "There was a tree that was good for good, and it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise." Yet God forbade Adam and Eve to eat of it, 2:17. Why? Why could they not eat of this fruit? There was not anything wrong in the fruit or in the tree. It would give them something they desired. Eating it would not hurt anyone else, and it seemed that its fruit would help them.

The only reason they were not to eat of it was the Word of God. God had said no and that was all that had to be said. This same principle applies to us. When we try to determine whether something is sin or not, our first thought must be, 'What does God say?' If God says no, that is final! Any transgression of His law is sin.

Man has never learned this, yet, obedience is the unquestioning submission to God. When God says, "Thou shalt not steal," man must obey; not because any inherent wrong in the product stolen, but because God has spoken.

We are not given the option to debate the issue; whether it is good or bad. We must learn to obey God for what he says. This is one of life's most difficult lessons to learn.

I. The Present Condition of Man Shows That This Has Not Been Learned.

For the word of God says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." -Romans 3:23

"There is no man that sins not." -1 Kings 8:46

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." I John 1:8

A man estranged from God, walking in his deceitfulness, is boasting of his sin. He enters a place of business the morning after a night of corruption and sensual pleasures and proudly tells of his wickedness. He makes light of his wrong, laughs it off as being smart, thinking he has gotten away with something. But the Bible says, "Be sure your sin will find you out." – Numbers 32:23

Little does he realize that God Almighty is looking upon him with a heart that is grieved because of his sin. Little does he care that God is love. The more he sins, the less he thinks that God loves him. Then he says, "Even if God did love me before, he certainly doesn't love me now, not after all I've done. Nobody loves a sinner like me."

II. But Does He? What is God's love like?

Does He really love the sinner? The answer is a positive yes! "For God commends his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." – Romans 5:8. Can we not understand that God's love is so unique? It is true! God still loves us even though we may dwell in disobedience and unrighteousness. God is love and God loves the world and everyone in it. Nothing will change Him from that Love, no not even the sin of mankind. But let us not think that God's love excuses sin. The nature of God cannot condone sin. And sin will result in punishment. As God is unchanging in His love to man, He is also unchanging in His justice toward sin.

"The soul that sins it shall die." - Ezekiel 18:4

"The wages of sin is death." - Romans 6:23

Let me illustrate. In the Old Testament we meet Jonah who is a prophet of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Jonah was commissioned by God to preach to the people of Nineveh. The people were wicked and God was displeased. Jonah, too, was displeased with their sin, and he had plans of his own that were not God's plans. He knew of the inevitable judgment of God if they did not repent of their sin; and it was his God-given task to warn them of this judgment, and bring them to repentance.

Jonah knew God, and he knew that God was love. He knew God was a gracious God and merciful, a God that was slow to anger and of great kindness. (Jonah 4:2).

Jonah knew that God would forgive them if they repented, but Jonah wouldn't have done that himself. He felt that their sin was deserving of punishment. Thus, he disobeyed God, and rather than go to Nineveh and warn them, he went to a ship and sailed toward Tarshish - away from God's appointed destination. We all know what followed and what happened to Jonah. The justice of God was dealing with him, for disobedience.

Jonah said, "Thou O Lord, hath cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods compassed me about, all thy billows and thy waves passed over me, then I said, 'I am cast out of thy sight.'" Jonah 2:3

Here, Jonah was realizing the full impact of punishment, the punishment that came from God because of sin. God punishes sin, whether that sin is in the children of Nineveh, or in the prophet of the Lord.

"The waters compassed me about, even to the soul. The depth closed me round about, the weeds wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottom of the mountains, The earth with her bars was about me forever." – Jonah 2:5,6

But that wasn't the end. When Jonah repented, he cried for help. (vs. 7) The Lord, in His love and forgiveness, helped him. He helped him as he has always helped those who have repented for sin and cried out unto him.

(Vs.2:9) Salvation is of the Lord and God met the need for a sinbearer!

Listen to Jonah giving his testimony; "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple. Thou hast brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." (vs. 6)

Here is the love of God, reaching down to man - a man yet in his sin. That is the love of God.

All of this causes us to see that

III. God's Love is Unlike Man's Love

God loves the unlovely. To Jonah, God showed this dissimilarity, this contrast. The Love of God cannot possibly be understood by comparing it to the Love of Man. It so far transcends the love of man, that it must be understood only as it is seen in Christ. That was also the feeling of the Apostle Paul who wrote our text. He, in the 5th Chapter of Romans, contrasted God's love to the love of man.

"If man sees a righteous man, one that is innocent and unjustly condemned, he will pity this man, he will express his great sorrow over his unjust condemnation, but few would do more than verbally express their displeasure over such an act. Few would

actually rise to their feet in action to free this one.” –And now Paul says: “scarcely for such a righteous man will one die.” - 5:7

Who would want to hazard his life for another? Not many. There is a story in a past issue of a national magazine about an innocent man who was put in prison for a crime he did not commit. Was anyone willing to help him? The story is one of sixteen years of his efforts in trying to prove his innocence, which he finally succeeded in doing. But who would help him?

It may be that if a man is not only innocent and righteous but also a national figure or a popular person, then maybe someone may dare to die for him. Even that is rare.

We remember how in 1963 President Kennedy was assassinated, and the picture is still vivid of the way Vice-President Lyndon Johnson was shielded by the body of a secret service agent. Christ goes far beyond this. For in the Love of God, commended unto us, He did not stop to consider our worthiness, He did not think of our merits, He knew that we were sinners and while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He answered the need for a sin bearer. He bore our sins.

That is the unsurpassed love of God, for “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for His friends.” (John 15:13)

Christ did not die for the righteous, neither for the good. We have in His own words, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” (Matthew 9:12)

“The son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10) He has come to give forgiveness to sinners and to lift us out of the pit of Hell. That is the love of God.

God’s love is a self-sacrificing love. He has shown us its greatness by showing us the length to which he will go in love. He loves the unlovely. He does not shrink from sacrifice in order to demonstrate it.

IV. The Sin bearer. The Love of God also desires the best for those He loves.

We see this is in human relationships with fathers, mothers, parent-child, boyfriend-girlfriend. But human failures and errors creep in from a human standpoint. It is not always possible to determine the best for our loved ones.

But the mind of God is free from error, there is no wrong in His choices. He knows the supreme virtues of life. We also rest in the assurance “All things work

together for good to them that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

The motive behind God’s love is always our good. That was the motive of the cross. Through the death of His Son, He gave us life, eternal life, a kind of life that causes us to be victorious over Sin.

It is this love, the love of God that lies behind the things we find the most difficult to understand. There are lessons we must learn through the discipline of God. The Bible says, “Whom the Lord loveth, He chaseth.” (Hebrews 12:6)

Christ, the sin bearer, continues His relationship with us in all of life. “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness” – (1 Peter 2:24)

For this reason, says the writer of Hebrews, “despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him.” (Hebrews 12:5) King David learned that. David, like you and me, loved the Lord and when just a lad, he was selected by the Lord to become the King of Judah. The protecting hand of the Lord kept him from wicked King Saul. When he became King, David had his struggles, but he was also successful and was finally accepted as King over all the tribes, King over all Israel. He was the one who set up the ark in Jerusalem.

But in spite of his victories **DAVID SINNED**; he took Bathsheba to be his wife. He made certain her husband Uriah was slain in battle. David was found in sin, guilty of adultery, of treason, and of murder, yet God did not stop loving him. He was the anointed of the Lord, the King - and God found it necessary to exercise his love in a chastening manner toward His servant.

He said unto David, (II Samuel 12:7-11)

“I, the Lord anointed thee King over Israel and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; I gave thee thy masters house, and thy masters wives.

into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and Judah, and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. (More)

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandments of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword and hast taken his wife to be thy wife and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised me, behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house.”

That which followed was the death of his son, which was born of Bethsheba. Two more sons were born and they were named Solomon, and Absalom. His son Absalom raised an insurrection against his father David, to take the throne. Absalom was slain, then another insurrection occurred, the kingdom was threatened and a famine came upon the land. In all this, David sensed the hand of the Lord in judgment for his sin. Nevertheless, he believed that the judgment of God was in love. "The Lord hath chastened me sore, not unto death, give thanks unto the Lord. He is good."

God's mercy was extended to David throughout this experience with correction, rebuke and discipline. For the work of Christ, the sin bearer, is perpetual in our lives.

V. The Love of God, of which we read in our text, is the kind of love that desires to possess the object that is loved.

When Christ died for us, we were His enemies. But now, he has made us His friends. No longer working at cross purposes, we are now doing the will of God obediently. By Christ's death, and now reconciled to the Father, the wandering child has come home; not entirely by our own volition, for Christ the Good Shepherd went to find the lost sheep.

In Luke 19 Jesus went to Zacchaeus, and told him "Today I must abide at thy house." They became friends and Jesus said, "Salvation is come to this house."

In John 4, Jesus went to the Samaritan woman at the well and having shown His concern for her, He gave her the Water of Life.

With this same desire to possess, He went to Peter, James and John and said to the fishermen of the Galilean Shore. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." He didn't ask for their money, He didn't want their fish, nor their influence, these were sinners. He did not want what they had, He wanted them, Peter James and John. He wanted to possess them, to fill them with the fruits of righteousness, to make them pure and clean, and Holy.

Christ, the sin bearer, wants us too, you and me, not because who we are, not because of what we are. He wants us because of what we can become, in and through Him; to show us that He really loves and cares; to show us that His love is incomparable and all inclusive.

God gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And all that the Sin Bearer.

wants now is to hear us say, "Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God I come. I come."

AMEN.