

Let God Love You

A wrong understanding of the fear of God can result in our **not** believing that God does love us.

The fear of God stems from an understanding of His Majesty, Power and Sovereignty.

If this is our only viewpoint of God it will eventually lead us to despair and running away from God rather than seeking to have a balanced relationship with Him.

Christians mainly fall into two opposite camps in their relationship with their Creator

One group lays stress on God's majesty and sovereignty and see God only as transcendent far beyond human thought or relationship.

The other group lay stress on the sweetness and tenderness of God, the "*Abba Father*" side of God, and in so doing bring God down to their own level, treating Him as a "*benevolent buddy*".

Both of these approaches to our Creator are unbalanced and jeopardise our relationship with God.

Most of us wrestle in our minds with the problem that God really loves "*me*".

We may not find it too difficult to believe that God will take care of us or even cause all things, in the end, to work out for our good, but that God loves me, personally, is very hard to accept.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, 'Am I ready to let God love me?'

Sometimes we find ourselves afraid to let God love us in spite of all the evidence that He does.

This is especially true if we have never felt loved on a human level for we honestly do not know how to respond to love and accept it.

Some of the difficulties that may lay behind us letting God love us.

1. Some Christians have an over-scrupulous conscience and are constantly worried about matters that have nothing to do with sin. Things that are only the result of the differing cultures we find in this world.
2. Some Christians have a perfectionist mentality. They feel that they have to produce 100% in all they do to be accepted by God, yet this is beyond any human being.
3. Some Christians suffer from a psychological problem when it comes to call God "*Father*". Most times this is **not** a spiritual problem but a mental "*block*" due to past experiences. To such people Father brings up an image of one who is over-strict and abusive, or someone who was never there when needed as a young child.
4. Some Christians have been fed a faulty theological diet that stops them from easily accepting God's Love for them. To such Christians God is a being who is sovereign, and to be feared with emphasis being laid on His Justice and Wrath. Such may still be under the Old Covenant where we are saved by works, and lack any assurance of their own salvation through the Grace [Love] of God.
5. Some Christians feel that having "*let God down*" through personal failure and sin, that there is no way God could love them or should love them.

Why then is this study of God's Love important?

1. Our confidence in the future and our present well-being is at stake.
2. Our assurance of being saved is at stake.
If we have faith in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross bringing to us as a love gift of salvation, then we can have confidence in our salvation.
A gift is not something we have to strive or work for only something to be thankfully accepted.
Our salvation is a Love Gift from God.
3. The devil doesn't want us to believe that God loves us.
With a lack of belief in the personal love that God has for us, Satan will easily lead us into a state of despair and discouragement that destroys what faith we may have in God.
4. Christians who know they are personally loved by God can be used by God in a powerful way to spread the gospel message.
5. We please God most when we affirm His personal love for us.
Any normal human parent wants their children to feel secure in their love, and God is the perfect parent.

How do we begin to understand God's Love for us and so allow Him to love us ?

Begin with a general promise that God has made !

John 3:16 [NIV] *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

I'm glad that this scripture did **not** say *"God so loved John that if John believed he would not perish but have eternal life."*

Why?

Because knowing me as I do I would be afraid it referred to another John !

This promise refers not only to the world as a whole but to each of us individually.

How can I say this?

Romans 5:8 [NIV] *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

Paul is quite clear that the whole process of salvation, the first coming of Christ, His death on the cross all prove God's Love for us.

All this happened to show how much God loves us, for God loved us even when we were still unforgiven sinners.

1 John 4:19 [NIV] *"We love because he first loved us."*

We only have love, Christian love, the love towards the unworthy, because it first came from the one who loved us in our unworthy state of a sinner.

2 Peter 3:9 [NIV] *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

Note the word “you”.

This shows that the promises of salvation are personal.

This verse also shows a facet of God’s Love.

Time is of no consequence to God in His Love for us.

He is keeping open the door of repentance for as long as possible.

Scripture does not forbid us to believe that in some way and at some time that God who loves the whole world will bring the whole world to Himself through love.

These scriptures focus the broad Promise of God for all mankind right down to each of us individually.

Jesus Christ died for everyone

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 [NIV] *“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”*

Here through Paul God gives us a glimpse into the power behind his love when we accept it in our lives.

God’s Love for us becomes an irresistible force that limits us to the one great object in life to the exclusion of other considerations.

The Greek implies the forcibly compression of all our energies into one channel.

We “die” to any other goal in our lives other than to return God’s Love for us through lovingly serving others.

John 15:13 [NIV] *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

This is the love we find in God through Jesus Christ laying down His life for us.

1 John 2:1-2 [NIV] *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

“The whole world”. We cannot limit such a statement to part of the world.

We cannot deceive ourselves into thinking that Christ died for Peter, Paul, John, but not for me.

The only restriction to this promise is the rejection of the one condition that comes with it.

Romans 3:22 [NIV] *“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,…”*

The condition of belief and faith is the only way to accept and be covered by the Love of God.

The blessings that came to those “under the law” of God was restricted to those who were “under the law”, Israel, no Gentile was accepted, being “without God” in the Old Covenant.

The New Covenant does **not** have this restriction, **the only condition is faith** and this opens it up to all the world, not just Israel, God's chosen people.

1 Timothy 4:9-10 [NIV] *“This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (and for this we labour and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of those who believe.”*

What God intends for all mankind, He gives first to those who believe in Christ.

These who first believe are to become convincing living examples of God's Love for all mankind.

When we meet the condition of faith in the promises made by God we are assured of certain things

God's Everlasting Love

Jeremiah 31:3 [NIV] *“The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: I have loved you with **an everlasting love**; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”*

The loving and very patient relationship God has with His chosen people, Israel, is an example of God's everlasting love for us whom He has called to be His people at this time.

We are loved by Jesus Christ

John 13:34 [NIV] *“A new command I give you: Love one another. **As I have loved you**, so you must love one another.”*

We are loved by Jesus Christ Himself.

We are loved by the Father

John 17:23 [NIV] *“I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and **have loved them even as you have loved me.**”*

We are loved by The Father in the same way as He loves His Only Son Jesus Christ.

It is through our accepting the love that God has for us and the resulting relationship we have with the Father through Jesus Christ that the world will come to know God and His Love for them.

Why should we let God love us ?

1 John 4:8 [NIV] *“Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love.**”*

Love is the essence of God's divine nature.

All the other attributes of God are modifications of love.

Only God can love in the way He does.

There is no human frame of reference that can match the way God feels about us, His created children.

The only way we can learn to love as God does is to experience personally His Love for us.

1 John 4:7 [NIV] *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”*

True love is a two way relationship.

It is only by knowing God that we learn to love and it is only by loving God and others that we learn more about God and have a closer relationship with Him.

Love comes from God and love leads us to God.

How do we let God love us ?

In our human experience we are so used to rejection that we have a built-in defence mechanism that rejects God before He has the chance to show us how much He loves us.

We are afraid His Love isn't really true, or that it will not last and so we mistrust any overture of love He may make.

In what ways do we block God's Love for us ?

We block the flow of God's Love by trying to win His Love by performance

John 13:37 [NIV] *“Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”*

We always like to feel we are in control of our future; that it will be our “works” that will cause God to love us.

We, like Peter, do not realise that **Christ first has to die for us before we can die for Him by laying down our lives as a living sacrifice.**

Without first receiving from God the love gift of Jesus Christ we are neither fit or able to perform for God.

John 14:10 [NIV] *“Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”*

The works that Jesus Christ the son of man did on earth were **not** His own works but what the Father did through Him.

In the same way, **we cannot of ourselves perform works that will be acceptable to God**, it is only works that are done by the Holy Spirit in us and through us that are acceptable, blessed, by God.

We block the flow of God's Love by refusing to be accepted by Him as we are

Romans 8:1-3 [NIV] *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,...”*

Once we have repented and accepted the sin sacrifice of Jesus Christ in our place we stand before God clean, pure, sinless and not even Satan can justly bring any condemnations against us.

Other people or Satan through them may criticise and condemn us for our changed lifestyle but these fall on deaf ears as far as God is concerned.

But a word of warning lest we fall into the trap of self-righteousness.

1 Corinthians 2:2-5 [NIV] *“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. **My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.**”*

Paul shows the balanced approach that avoids self-righteousness.

Paul did not deny that he had been accepted by God and sent by God to do a job of work.

But he knew it was only what the Holy Spirit did through him that would be effective.

God wants us to “*feel good*” in His presence and when doing His Work but **not** to boast in any way about it, for this will only lead to self-righteousness which God hates.

We block the flow of God’s Love by not believing we are forgiven even after we have repented and confessed our sins

1 John 1:9 [NIV] *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

This was written to people who were already Christians, who believed in and accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Never doubt the power of God’s Love Gift, Jesus Christ, to forgive all our sins.

We block the flow of God’s Love by not walking in the light

Psalms 119:105 [NIV] *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”*

God’s Word, both scripture and The Word, Jesus Christ are a Light to guide our path in life.

1 John 1:5-7 [NIV] *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. **But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**”*

Our response to receiving the Love Gift, Jesus Christ from God is to have fellowship with God.

God is **not** found in the darkness of superstition and sin: that is where Satan dwells.

We can only have fellowship with God by being constantly illuminated by His Word, by the scriptures and by the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Un-confessed sins bring darkness to our path by blocking of the source of all light, God.

Hebrews 4:16 [NIV] *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

Here is the way to start each day so that we will walk in the light of God’s Word and accept His Love.

This is a matter of disciplining ourselves, being disciples of Christ.

We won’t do this perfectly but God is a god of compassion.

Psalm 103:10, 14 [NIV] “...*he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*” ... “...*for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*”

God is big-hearted and gracious.

He is **not** on the “war path” looking for every fault in us He can find to condemn us.

1 John 3:16-20 [NIV] “*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.*”

Life is a chance to learn how to love.

God will bring to us plenty of opportunities to show the love of Christ in a practical way every day.

It is the willingness to surrender what is of value in our life, our time or our hard earned money, to enrich the life of another in need.

Fine words will never take the place of fine deeds and not all the talk of Christian love in the world will take the place of a kindly action to a person in need made at the expense of some self-denial or self-sacrifice, for in such an action we really do carry our cross, the symbol of love, with Christ.

When do we need to affirm the love God has for us?

When we are sad or depressed

It doesn't take much faith to believe that God loves us when we are “on top of the world” and all things seem to be going well for us.

But when we are at “rock bottom” we need to affirm God's Love for us, and this is exactly what is pleasing to God.

Romans 8:28 [NIV] “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*”

All things include when we are depressed because of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, ill health, poor relationships not due to our actions, unemployment or loss of loved ones.

If we are able to affirm God's Love for us when in a depressed state we have attained a great victory, by showing that we do really believe God and His Love for us.

When we have sinned

1 John 1:9 [NIV] “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*”

When we have sinned – this is when we need God's Love most, and we need to affirm this before God by claiming this promise He has made.

When we are blessed and happy

Romans 12:15 [NIV] *“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”*

We often forget to be thankful when things are going well for us, when we are happy.

We may find it easier to weep with those who weep than to truly rejoice with those who are rejoicing because of being blessed by God.

It takes the affirmed love of God for us to rejoice with others who are blessed by God in a way we wish we were.

How do we accept God’s Love?

By passing it on to others

Romans 5:5 [NIV] *“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into [through] our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*

John 7:38-39 [NIV] *“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

When we read these two scriptures together we see that the word translated “into” would be better translated “through”, and this can be done without abuse of the Greek.

“The preposition used is “en” which is used to denote something that is dwelling within [the Holy Spirit] but also for something that emanates from within as a force denoting an instrument in union of fellowship with what was dwelling within.” [Appendix 104, Prepositions: The Companion Bible]

Love cannot be stored, it has to be shared.

God is love and God is sovereign.

God’s Love motivates His desire for the everlasting welfare of His created family and His sovereignty enables Him to secure it.

By accepting the friendship offered by God

God is sovereign and free but because of His love He has allowed His heart to be emotionally identified with mankind.

Although He is self-sufficient, God in His desire to share His Love has let His heart be bound to us forever.

No man with a trace of humility would first think of himself as a friend of God, but the idea did not originate with men, it first came from God Himself.

John 15:13-15 [NIV] *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”*

God’s Act of Love through Jesus Christ proves this friendship.

We do God more honour by believing what He has said about Himself and having the courage to come boldly to His Throne of Grace than hiding in self-conscious humility as Adam did among the trees in the Garden of Eden.

Love is also an emotional identification; it considers nothing its own but gives all freely to the object of its affection.

Accepting the friendship of people who will accept your friendship mirrors God's attitude of not isolating Himself from us, His creation.

By asking for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Luke 11:13 [NIV] *"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

The more indwelling we have of the Holy Spirit, the more He directs our desire, the more we will experience the Love of God.

Remember the Holy Spirit is God and God is Love.

By extending God's Mercy to us on to others

1 John 4:19-20 [NIV] *"We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God', yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."*

When we have true love we will totally forgive all those who have hurt us for this is the love we have experienced with God.

By becoming a disciple of Christ

Hebrews 12:5-6 [NIV] *"And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

Accept our loving God's discipline for it is the proof that God loves us.

God loves us just the way we are, sinners in rebellion to Him our Creator, but He loves us so much that He doesn't want us to remain the way we are and suffer the pain, frustration and eventual death that is the end of our way of life.

So God disciplines us to guide and lead us into a way that ends in joy, fulfilment and everlasting life, the way of love.

Conclusion

The Love of God and our accepting it is the greatest reality of the whole universe, the foundation on which the hope of the world may rest.

This Love of God is very personal, intimate relationship; He does not love populations, He loves people.

God loves us with a mighty love that had no beginning and will have no end.

The Christian experience is a loving relationship that separates it from all other religions by a vast abyss, and elevates it to heights far beyond human thought, for it has God Himself in the midst of it.

True Christian everlasting joy is found in our accepting the love God has for us.

So let God love you, beginning today !