

God's Love

"God is love." (1 John 4:16)

As we look at the evil in this sin-sick world it is easy to see why non-believers say that God cannot be a God of love. It's hard to find words to describe how low mankind has sunk and, despite all the empty talk, things are only going to get worse until Jesus returns. God is allowing the world to continue on its sinful free-fall into greater filth, violence and apostasy. However, there is a limit as *"He has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed [that is, Jesus]"* (Acts 17:31). But why is Jesus so slow in returning? Speaking about Jesus' return, 2 Pet. 3:9 gives the answer where it says, *"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."* It is because of His great love for mankind that God is patiently waiting for sinners to repent and then He will return to judge the world with justice and great wrath. If He was not patient and loving then He would have returned to destroy all sinners long ago. So, let's look at the love of God.

The cross

God's love is not a dizzy-headed, fuzzy feeling that fades away after a honeymoon period. His love is an unchanging, solid and selfless commitment. For over three years Jesus walked towards the cross knowing the awful agony that He would soon endure. On the night before He was crucified, He was in such anguish that, while praying, *"his sweat was like drops of blood"* (Luke 22:44). This occurs with extreme trauma but despite the trauma Isa 50:7 tells that *"He set His face like flint"* in His determination to suffer on the cross to save you and I from hell. Now, THAT is love!

On the way to the cross, after being whipped and beaten, Jesus was more concerned about the women weeping for Him than for Himself (Luke 23:27-31).

On the cross, in awful agony, He selflessly continued to think of others.

In mortal agony -

He forgave a thief being crucified beside Him (Luke 23:39-43);

He asked God to forgive His executioners (Luke 23:33-34) and

He asked a disciple to care of His mother (John 19:26-27).

Through all of this, God watched Jesus' agony and Isa. 53:10 tells us that it pleased God to allow His Son to suffer for us. We sinned against God and Jesus paid the penalty of death for us. Now, THAT is love far beyond measure and understanding. In John 15:13, Jesus said,

*"Greater love has no one that this,
that he lay down his life for his friends."*

God's love since the cross

God's love did not end with the cross. He continues to lovingly draw the unsaved to Himself and sends the Holy Spirit to live within all who repent of their sins and put their trust in Jesus. The Holy Spirit lovingly and patiently disciplines and guides believers to be conformed to God's will. It is because of His love that He disciplines us, even severely if necessary. Heb. 12:5-6 tell us, *"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."* To discipline us, God manipulates our emotions and circumstances in order to get us to repent of our wicked ways so that we walk with Him in peace and inherit eternal life.

The Prodigal Son is a perfect example of God's patient love and discipline. This young man arrogantly asked for his inheritance while his father was alive and then went off to waste the money in wild living. When his money was gone, he ended up feeding pigs that were eating better than he was. These conditions caused him come to his senses and repent so he went back home hoping to work for his father as a slave. To his surprise, his father saw him in the distance and ran to welcome him home as his son, not as a slave. This parable is given to tell us how our heavenly Father controls our circumstances and emotions to bring us to repentance whenever we go off the path of holiness. God is extremely patient and loving toward us. Psa. 100:5 says,

*"For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations."*

Finally

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us." (1 John 3:16). We should not have the slightest doubt about the love God has for each one of us because His love and faithfulness are ever present in our lives. Nor should we doubt the love He has for the unsaved as He continues to patiently draw them to Himself in the hope that they will repent. If anyone says that God is not loving and asks why He does not put an end to evil then we can safely tell them that He plans to do that soon enough but in the meantime He is waiting for them to come to repentance. As sure as night follows day, the present time of Love and Grace will end and God's fierce wrath will be poured out on the earth. Amen.

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