

Is God's Love Unconditional?

“But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him”. (Psa. 103:17)

It is often said that God's love for believers is unconditional, meaning that He will love us and take us to heaven no matter what we do. Is this true? It is true that God showed unconditional love to the world in general, when He sent Jesus to die on the cross (John 3:16), but God's love to us individually is conditional upon our obedience to Him. This is made obvious in the following statements by Jesus -

- *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him”* (John 14:21).
- *“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love”* (John 15:10).
- *“If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned”* (John 15:6).

The 'ifs' in these verses make it quite clear that Jesus' love is conditional upon our obedience to His commands. Psa. 103:17-18 say, *“But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children - with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts”*. So, once again, we see that God's love is conditional upon our obedience to His commands.

Rom. 8:35-39 is often quoted as proof that nothing can separate us from God's love. These verses list many hardships such as persecution, famine, sword etc. and say that nothing *“in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God”*. Note that these hardships are all external influences and God's promise is that He will keep us in His love through them and anything else Creation can offer. However, no mention is made of sin which is the result of the internal influence of our sinful nature. Sin comes from within and always separates us from God just as Isa. 59:2 tells us, *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

The fact that sin always separates us from God was made clear from the beginning of Creation. In the Garden, Adam was sinless and literally walked with God. However, once he sinned, he was removed from the Garden and separated from God's presence. It is the same today, sin will separate us from God.

Some say that once we become a son of God we will always be a son of God. In our physical world, it is true that a father/son relationship cannot be changed, however, something that is true physically is not necessarily true spiritually. In John 8:44, Jesus told some Jews that the Devil was their father, that is, they were sons of the Devil. If “once a son, always a son” was also true in the spiritual realm then these Jews could never be saved because they were already sons of the Devil - “once a son of the Devil, always a son of the Devil”. However, because salvation is available to everyone, these Jews could have been saved at a later time and spiritually changed from being sons of the Devil to being sons of God. So, because “once a son, always a son” is not true spiritually, a son of the Devil can choose to repent and become a son of God and, in the same way, a son of God can choose to go into sin and return to being a son of the Devil. Speaking to believers, 1 John 3:10 tells us, *“Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God”*.

So, it can be seen that God's love towards us as individuals is not unconditional but depends upon our personal walk with Jesus. In Luke 13:3, Jesus said, *“unless you repent, you too will all perish”*. The word *“repent”* is Present Tense meaning that we must repent of our sins and continue in repentance otherwise we will not remain in God's love but will instead perish. Amen

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Mick Alexander
leeandmick@gmail.com
<http://www.ChristianIssues.biz>