

God Is Love (1)

Ryan Goodwin

“When understood in its true Biblical sense, love as a divine attribute is unique to the Christian concept of God” (God the Redeemer, Cottrell, p. 323). Love, after all, is the Christian specialty. Love is the greatest expression of our innate spark of divinity – “But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of them is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Love is our commandment. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). It is interesting to see the relationship between our love and God’s love. By loving each other, we prove how Christian we are. It is the truest form of living in the path of God.

“For God is love”

1 John 4:8,16 is *“the most daring statement that has ever been made in the human language. The fact that God is love is the quintessence, the central word of the whole Bible” (The Christian Doctrine of God, Brunner, p. 183). And there are some marvelous practical applications to this verse:*

- First, the fact that God is love must not be interpreted to mean that God is only love. The Bible also claims that God is light (1 John 1:5). In the same way, a large red box can be described as a box, but also has the attributes of size and color. God is love, but He is also vengeful (Romans 12:19), jealous (James 4:5), and a righteous judge (Colossians 3:23-25). He is a spirit (John 4:24) and a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).
- So anybody who wants to assert that there is no actual God, but only that love is God, fails to realize that there is more to the Lord than just one side. The terms “God is love” and “love is God” are not interchangeable.
- The fact that God is love tells us that everything He does – all of His dealings with us – proceed from Love. God always has our best interests in mind.
- His commandments, therefore, are always good for us (Deuteronomy 6:24), and it is simply best for us to obey them (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).
- Since all of God’s dealings with mankind originate from His love, we have to realize that He will treat us all with unwavering fairness (Matthew 5:45).
- This concept also refutes the idea of Deism – which teaches that God simply created the universe and does not interact with it any longer. He is a force that is immaterial to our lives, and indifferent to our condition. But if God is love, then that true love springs forth in an abundance of concern, care, and interaction. He will not only protect and save the righteous, but also protect them from sinners who refuse to repent. God’s love steps in every time a righteous judgment is made, a sinner is cleansed through belief and baptism, a prayer is offered in humility, etc.
- There are also some qualifiers that must be considered with God’s love. It is great (Ephesians 2:4), infinite (Ephesians 3:18-19), eternal (Jeremiah 31:3, Ephesians 1:4-5), and dependable (Romans 8:35).

“By this the love of God is manifested...”

“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9). God’s love is self-giving, unselfish, and concerned with the well-being of His creation. People often love themselves, or perhaps love others to the brink of self-sacrifice, but nobody has loved us as freely, openly, and fully as God. By virtue of our creation God loves us – after spending the time and energy to design us and put us in this universe, He is now doubly concerned over our spiritual well-being. “He would not have made us only to ignore us or treat us with indifference... He is concerned not only to give us positive blessings of His good creation, but to remove the negative consequences of sin. Thus in terms of concern, God does not love us less now that we are sinners; He loves us even more” (Cottrell, p. 337). It should impress us that God loves us so much in spite of our sin. It goes to show that even if I have nothing in worldly terms (because of hardships) and even less in spiritual terms (because of my sins), God still loves me. He loves us even when we are stripped of everything. Even though we are nothing more than sinners in our world, the love with which God loves us is incomparable (Romans 5:8).