

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

The Holy Spirit

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

True Love

Reading:
John Chapter 3 or
1 Corinthians Chapter 13

Introduction

Love is the world's most popular subject. Go into any library and you will be amazed at the number of books on **love**. Love stories, love songs, love poems, love letters etc. fill the shelves. Switch on the radio or TV and you will be met with an ever increasing menu of dramas featuring love. Young people dream about **'falling in love.'** Yes, **love** and **lovers** are always in the news. No one will doubt, but that love is a popular subject. But, strange as it may seem, **'love'** is also the most misunderstood word in the world. **What is love?** Does anybody know what love is? We're sure millions do. But can you define the word **love?** It's easier to say what **'love is not'** or what **'love does not do'** than to say **'what love is.'** Yes, what is love? The Oxford Dictionary defines the word **'love'** as:

1. A **warm liking** or **affection** for a person, **affectionate devotion**.
2. **Sexual affection** or **passion**.
3. **God's benevolence towards mankind**.
4. **Strong liking** for a thing. i.e. the love of music.
5. No score. (in games)

Notice the words: **liking, affection, devotion, passion** and **benevolence**.

1. Types of Love

This Sabbath we will first consider **'love'** in the normally accepted sense of the term: **liking, affection, devotion, passion** and end by concentrating on the definition, **'God's benevolence towards mankind.'** Then we will see if we can duplicate part of God's love in our lives towards Him and others.

Mother Love

This is one of the best forms of human love. It begins at birth and lasts as long as mother lives. Your **mother** is the first person to love you and, as long as she is alive, the last person on earth to forsake you. Mother love is probably the purest and most unselfish type of human love there is. Mothers love for what they can give, not for what they can get from their children. Mother love is pure affection and devotion. It's impossible to describe. Individuals learn to love others by receiving love from their mothers. When mother love is absent, and this does happen occasionally, a child may grow up feeling rejected and become itself emotionally stunted. Such a child may well

become incapable of loving others, simply because it has never received love from its own mother or father.

Family Love

This comes next, father, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents. We love all of these in a different way. No matter how we may quarrel with the family, we can never alter the fact that genetically we are related, and because nothing can change that fact, families generally cling together.

Friends/Neighbours

Our love for them is different from our love for our families. This love depends upon shared interests, conditions, experiences, dangers or religious beliefs. These things bring people together in friendship.

Spouse

The love of a man for his wife, or a wife for her husband is something totally different. No happily married couple can properly explain marital love. It is indefinable. It manifests itself in a thousand different ways. That is why we have tens of thousands of **love stories** coming on to the market every year; each in its own way telling the wonders of love between a man and a woman.

2. The Love of God

Finally we come to **God's love for mankind**. No likes and dislikes, sexual affection or passion here; but '**divine benevolence**.' The dictionary defines the word '**benevolence**' as: *wishing to do good to others, kindly, helpful and charitable*. Most modern translations of the Bible have replaced the word **charity** with the word **love**. Both words come from the same root; but because the word **love** is so misunderstood these days, the phrase '**God is love**' has lost its meaning.

Were you to tell a young unbelieving audience that **God is love**, many would think that you mean **God is Sex** or that **Sex is God!** How tragic is the result of such misunderstanding. Far better had we retained the word '**charity**' meaning benevolence; and in God's case meaning '**divine benevolence**.'

God Loves You

We must be taught about God's love. Taught what it is and what it is not. We must be taught that God loves the world; and, more importantly, that He loves each of us. He loves **you** and He loves **me**. No doubt you've heard that truth before, that '**God loves you**.' Its been voiced so often that many people treat it as a meaningless **cliché**. But it is a fact, a great truth. '**GOD LOVES YOU**.' Understanding of that fact could well be the most important discovery of your life, that **God loves you!** Not **likes** you, but **loves** you with **benevolent affection**.

Romans 5: 8: *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

Ephesians 2: 4: *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"*

Many years ago I heard the words of a song about God's love. Here is part of it:

1. *Could we with ink the oceans fill
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade.*

2. *To write the love of God above
Would drain the oceans dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Were it to stretch from sky to sky!*

Can God Hate?

We often hear Christians say that God **loves** the sinner; but **hates** the sin. It's a beautiful thought; but alas! it's not what the Bible teaches. Believe it or not in certain circumstances, **God hates the blatant sinner!**

Malachi 1: 1: *“The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.*
2: **I have loved you**, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, *Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,*
3: **And I hated Esau**, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.”

Romans 9: 13: *“As it is written, **Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.***
14: *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.”*

Why did God hate Esau?

The answer is because Esau was a **‘profane person.’** Esau treated sacred things with **blasphemous irreverence** and **contempt**. He despised the religion of his grandfather Abraham, his father Isaac and his brother Jacob. So God began to hate Esau. We are warned not to imitate Esau in his sins of unbelief and profanity.

Hebrews 12: 16: *“Lest there be any **fornicator, or profane person, as Esau**, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.*
17: *For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”*

3. What is Love?

But back to our question **What is love?** We now know that love is **benevolent affection**. But let me attempt a further description; one we have arrived at from the study of Scripture.

‘Love is the sacred, motivating PRINCIPLE which governs the Almighty God’s behaviour.’ It is not a matter of likes or dislikes towards friends or enemies. Love is the leading component in Yahweh's character. Everything He does is guided by this principle. Though His love may manifest itself emotionally (i.e. in anger or joy) love is far more than the emotions it generates. **Love is the holy motivating force at the heart of God!**

To be sure, generosity, mercy, patience, kindness, tender-heartedness etc. are all outcomes of God's benevolence - His love. But God's love is the **motivating force** behind all these beautiful outcomes. That's why the Bible says that **God is love!** We catch a glimpse of God's love, His character, His inner mind in the following passage.

Exodus 34: 5: *“And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him (Moses) there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.*
6: *And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, **The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,***
7: ***Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;** visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”*

Here we have a description of the **LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Love!**

- **He is Merciful ...** This is a divine outcome of love.
- **He is Gracious ...** This is a divine outcome of love.
- **He is Abundant in Goodness and Truth ...** This is a divine outcome of love.
- **He keeps mercy for thousands and forgives iniquity and transgression and sin ...** These are all divine outcomes and expressions of God's love.
- **But God will by no means clear the guilty!** Here is another divine outcome of love; it is justice! This is perhaps the most difficult of all to understand.

Notice that these **‘divine outcomes and expressions of love’** are very different from the **likes, dislikes, emotions and passions** we humans mistakenly call **‘love.’**

4. Examples of True Love

There are many examples of true love in the Bible.

Mother love: Tell the story of the 2 harlots in (1 Kings Chapter 3)

Father love: Tell the story of the prodigal son. (Luke Chapter 15)

Love of Friends: Tell of David and Jonathan (1 Samuel Chapter 19)

Love for One's Spouse

Genesis 29: 18: ***“And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.***

19: And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.

20: And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.”

5. Love One Another

John 15: 12: ***“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”***

Satan has attacked the word '**love**' because it is a Biblical term that describes God's character.

So great is Satan's hatred for God that anything associated with the Almighty: His Word, His commandments, His Sabbaths, His people and even the language that describes Him is attacked, vilified and twisted. As believers we need to know what the Bible means when it says: '**God is love,**' or '**love one another.**' Failure to understand what the Bible is telling us will result in hang-ups of self-pity. We need to understand what Jesus means when He says:

'Love one another as I have loved you.'

Remember that love must not be confused with **feelings, likes, dislikes** or **emotional demonstrations**. Love is a divine, motivating principle which emanates from the mind of God! **Love is holy benevolence**. Though love may manifest itself in mercy, kindness, honesty, generosity and patience etc. **Love is not sappy sentimentality!** Love is how God behaves. Love recognizes sin for what it really is. Love abhors unbelief, profanity and blatant sin; and, like God, love is the opponent of the blatant sinner! Failure to understand these things will lead to all kinds of emotional problems.

If you want love to take root and grow in your life, then keep Yahweh's commandments; begin to do what He says.

John 14: 15: ***“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”***

1 John 2: 4: ***“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”***

Leviticus 19: 18: ***“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.”***

Obedience to these commands is only possible if we recognize love for what it really is: the **holy benevolence of God** motivating us to be like Him.

6. Love your Enemies

Matthew 5: 44: ***“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”***

What does this mean? How is it possible? How does one love one's enemies? What are we supposed to do or not do? Does it mean we are to '**like**' our enemies; be emotionally attached to them; be friendly with them? No it doesn't mean this at all. Now that we know that '**love**' is not a matter of **likes** or **dislikes**, but rather a divine principle generating *mercy, loving-kindness, goodness and truth*, we can better understand the Saviour's words when He said:

'Love your enemies.'

Do you have any enemies? Perhaps not; but most of the leading characters in Scripture had enemies. The prophets, apostles, the Saviour and even God Himself; they all had enemies. They didn't like their enemies. In fact they hated them. But they did **love their enemies**. They prayed for them, pleaded with them, admonished them, warned them of sin etc. But they didn't **'like'** them! They weren't emotionally attached to them as with friends or family. In a similar way God loves the world; but He hates the blatant **'workers of iniquity.'**

Psalm 5: 3: *“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

4: *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.*

5: *The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: **thou hatest ALL workers of iniquity.***

6: *Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: **the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.**”*

7. Love for God

The last day church we all know is >**'a commandment-keeping church.'** This church will also be recognized by the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love for Truth and love for God being the most evident.

Revelation 12: 17: *“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, **which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.**”*

If you wish to measure your spiritual progress in the **Garden of your Soul**, then look there for the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, mercy, kindness etc. If they are missing, then you know very little - if anything - about true love. Always remember that **true love is a product of Yahweh's Holy Spirit**. One cannot learn about true love from books. One cannot fall into true love; or make true love. It is not an earthly product. **True love is made in heaven!** Happy marriages are made in heaven. True love is extinguished by **unbelief, suspicion, profanity, selfishness, greed, pride, slander, violence, infidelity and INIQUITY** etc. All these will stifle and kill true love. If you want true love to flourish in your life, in your marriage and your family then beware of these **smothering weeds**. They will choke true love to death if left to grow unchecked. The Master warns that in the last days just prior to His return.

“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

(Matthew 24:14)

That time has arrived. It is here. Millions are giving up their faith in God. True love, for God, His Holy Word, His law and His Church is also vanishing from the earth. How is it with you? Have you lost your first love for God? Beware that it isn't frozen out by sin!

AMEN!

In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.

Elder: Max W. Mader

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