

I Believe in God who is Loving

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Why I am purposely dealing with this attribute of God last? It is not because I believe this is an insignificant attribute. God is a God of love. But I am dealing with this last because I didn't want to ignore the other less known attributes. Those attributes needed attention as well. Now let us consider our loving God. We will use again the instruction about God's love from the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Our headings are:

The Doctrine of God's Love Explained

The Doctrine of God's Love Illustrated

The Doctrine of God's Love Applied

Our goals are: **That knowing God is love, and having experience his love, you will then worship God and make the introduction between God and those who need his love!**

WCF 2:1 There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; **most loving**, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

The Doctrine of God's Love Explained

1. God is love; his very nature is loving.

1John 4:8 He who does not love does not know God, **for God is love.**

There is never a time when God is not loving. He can't stop loving.

God always loves the right things. (Which man can say this? There are many right things man doesn't love.)

2. God's love is a self-sacrificing love.

God's does not need anything – he surely doesn't need you or your love! God didn't say: "I will give you my Son, but I need something back." He was perfectly happy before he created you or ADAM! But he exercises goodness to you! (This must humble you as it proves you are not that important!)

Further, you see his willingness to sacrifice his Son so that you might be reconciled to him!

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

God's self-sacrificing love targets sinners.

3. God's love is seen particularly in his grace and mercy.

What is the difference between grace and mercy?

Mercy is the fact that God does not punish you as you deserved to be punished. Psalm 51:1-2. Luke 1:54, 72, 76. Romans 15:9, 9:16

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, **because of His great love with which He loved us**, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Grace is God giving us something we desperately needed but could not get by ourselves. (Ephesians 2:5-9)

Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, **according to the riches of His grace**

So God showed mercy and grace to sinners, the ultimate example of love. God loved us first, even when you were not lovely! This is true grace.

1 John 4:19 We love Him because **He first loved us**.

4. God's love (seen in his mercy and grace) is spread abroad in the hearts of men.

Romans 5:5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been **poured out in our hearts** by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

This means you know God's love in an experiential. Notice the perfect tense. This is a completed action – an established state!

And notice the language: God's love has been "poured" out, not "trickled out." This speaks of abundance. (Isn't this the language regarding the Holy Spirit? He was poured out on believers! See also Acts 2:17ff, Titus 3:6.

And the more you experience God's love, the more you are able to spread God's love.

5. God's love must never be seen in isolation, as if God were not just, and jealous, and angry!

He is loving, but he is also just, jealous, and angry at the appropriate times. (You have seen some of these other attributes of God already.) **To view God as only loving is to have a perverse view of God.** That is making God in your own image. If you simply describe God as "loving" as is common today, you will not have the healthy fear of him as you should have! **You have to grasp what you fully deserved in God's judgment so you can appreciate his love.**

6. God's love includes discipline.

Hebrews 12:6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

But even the straying one, the one who betrayed his trust, God welcomes back when he repents.

The modern concept of love as "blind support" is a corruption of true love. "Love, no matter what" is not good love.

The Doctrine of God's Love Illustrated

1. God's love was illustrated when he did not execute Adam and Eve when they sinned by eating the forbidden fruit.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

God had every right to destroy them totally.

2. God's love was illustrated when he provided an ark to save Noah and his family while the world drowned.

You can read this account in Genesis 6-8. So God's love does not mean that God was not just. He surely showed his justice here.

3. God's love was illustrated when he rescued Israel from Egyptian slavery.

Exodus 14:13 And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. 14 "The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

The Egyptian horses and the riders God threw into the sea – killed them – so he could protect his people. God even killed all of Egypt's firstborn so the people he loved could go to the Promise Land.

4. God's love was illustrated when he rescued the Hebrew boys from Nebuchadnezzar's fire.

Daniel 3:24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

This love was not from a distance, but was a close up encounter of love, as the Lord Jesus himself joined the 3 Hebrew boys in the extremely hot fire.

5. God's love was illustrated when spoke through Solomon, showing that God's love was like

a might river that could not be stopped.

Songs of Solomon 8:7 Many waters cannot quench love, Nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love All the wealth of his house, It would be utterly despised.

There is no limit to God's love.

6. God's love was illustrated by the Apostle Paul when he said that God's love was so great that no one could separate us from it.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

This was a rhetorical question, of course, where the answer is obvious! Nothing could separate the Christian from the love of Jesus – regardless how strong the enemies were.

The Doctrine of God's Love Applied

1. God's love is just one of the many attributes of God.

It should not be pushed as the main one. You have to consider God's greatness...the wonder...his majesty...his justice...his jealousy, etc.! So when you see the big signs at a game "God is love," you should take one that says "God is just." You need both!

2. You need God's love (his mercy and grace) because you are sinful.

Ecclesiastes says there is not a righteous man who does good and does not sin. (Ecc 7:20)

Paul said that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

John said that if we say we have no sins we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

(1John 1:8)

And the payment for sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

And the payment for sins in hell. (Revelation 20:12-15)

So you desperately need God's love...shown in the mercy – so that you don't die and go to hell...and in grace...so that you might have salvation credited to your account.

3. When you know (experience) God's love, fear will begin to disappear from your life.

No worries about the future will overwhelm you.

1John 1:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us.

You will then be able to speak for Christ. You will be able to confront sin in others. You will not be afraid to leave a job if it requires you to break God's law. You will not be afraid to break off a sinful relationship you might have. And you must confront sin. Do it in love, but do it.

4. You have to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

This means your love must not fluctuate with how you feel.

Conclusion:

God is love. Take the time to learn of God's love. Learn how God's love is a self-sacrificing love. Love how God's love is translated into mercy and grace that came to us through Jesus Christ – how he lived and died for us. Learn how God spreads his love to all kinds of people. Learn how God loves enough to discipline. But also learn that God's love is never isolated. That while God is loving, he is also just. (His love does not negate his justice.) Love does not mean that God will not send the unrepentant to hell. His justice requires that he does so. His love does not negate his justice.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

a. J.I. Packer wrote: "To know God's love is heaven on earth." He was right. But you have to work to know God's love. It is not miraculously given. **You have to dig into and meditate on God's love letter. When you learn of God's love you will see how much you need it.** You will see that you needed someone to live a life of perfect obedience and die on the painful and shameful cross for you.

b. God will then help you to experience his love.

c. When you experience God's love personally, you will be embolden in how you live for him. You will have no fear of the world. Perfect love casts out fear.

d. When you experience God's love personally, you will then work to share God's love to the world. You will point the world to the one who shares his love through his mercy and grace.

Finally: You are the saddest person in the world if you don't know God's love. But I am here to tell you that God loves the world and offers the world what it needs most: Salvation. If you want God's salvation, then ask God to show you his love in the person of Jesus Christ who came and died in the place of sinners so they could go free.