

THEOLOGY PROPER (68)

Certain Biblical observations concerning love may be made:

1) Acts 17:25.

The love of God is not based on a need of God. Infinite love would demand an object to love, but this could infinitely be demonstrated and fulfilled in the Godhead. A more accurate perspective is that **the love of God is not based on a need of God, but on a choice of God.** This is a very critical issue because an ultimate level of love cannot depend on a need of anything, but must be based on a choice to bestow and impair free from any restrictions or demands. Love is at its greatest level when it doesn't have to do something, but chooses to do something. If God had a need to love humans, He would be forced to love them to the need. However, since God does not need anything, He is free to choose to love.

2) John 3:16.

The love of God is displayed in the sacrifice and the sending of His Son. We must recognize that God loved His Son infinitely. The sacrifice of sending His beloved Son to this world to be executed is the ultimate sacrifice. We may observe in this that the love of God is that which, according to humans, is willing to go against what one feels like doing. A human emotional system would not feel like sending one's only son to a world to die.

When a son is called to military service and is required to go overseas into a dangerous situation, there is great emotional trauma experienced by the parents. If the choice were left to the emotions of the parents, no son would ever go into such a situation. The trauma for the parent is due to the fact that the son could be harmed. Parents realize that war injures and kills and there is always a chance that one's own son may be wounded or killed.

Think of the decision God makes in sending His Son to this world. He knew how His son would be treated and He knew how His son would die. God graphically predicted and described this in Isaiah 53:1-12. The choice to love the world was a very costly decision for God and it goes against what any parent would feel like doing.

When we display the love of God, we will often make choices to do exactly the opposite of what we feel like doing. As we have observed, God's love is less emotional and more volitional.

3) Romans 5:8.

This verse is important because it clearly states that God's agape love is that which loves an object in spite of its worth. Prior to faith in Jesus Christ, every human was classified by God as "helpless" (5:6a), as "ungodly" (5:6b), as and as one deserving of God's "wrath" (5:9). There was nothing in anyone that would merit or earn or deserve God's love. There was nothing in the object worth loving. Certainly we see in agape love is a reasoned out choice rather

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an emotionally based choice. In most human relationships, love is based on emotions and if the object of love does demonstrate some merit or worth for the love, the emotions suggest that the love be withdrawn. God's love is exactly the opposite of this. It is not determined by any value or worth of the object. This is the highest level of love that is possible.

4) Romans 13:8-10.

God's love is that which will not do wrong to another. It will not be jealous or envious of another and will not do anything harmful, concerning another's person or property. God's love maintains proper actions and attitudes toward others.

5) Rev.1:5.

God's love is that which will release the believer from his sins, but it is not that which will prevent the unbeliever from experiencing His wrath (i.e. John 3:16,36). Again, this critical point establishes that God's love is more volitional than emotional.

6) Ps.11:7.

In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the O.T.), the word used for God's love is the same as in the N.T.- agape. It is clear from this statement that God loves righteousness and righteous people. Although God's love is not completely devoid of emotion, it may be again observed that it is a calculated choice or decision. God's love is not some glazed-eye feeling that and overlooks and tolerates anything and everyone. It, like His hatred, is very specific- "He loves righteousness."

7) Is.61:8.

God loves justice. He loves those who make true judgments and show no partiality in making those judgments. God's love does not eliminate the need to make judgments. This was true for O.T. Israel and this is true for the N.T. church (i.e. I Cor.5:11-13). We can clearly observe that God's love is judicial and volitional. It contains emotion, but it is not based on emotion. When a person or church makes just decisions, God loves it. He loves justice.

Practical Applications:

1. It should cause us to praise God that He chose to love us when we were in sin.
2. It should cause us to praise God that He is not irrationally emotional in anything He does or is.
3. It should cause us to marvel at a love that would provide salvation for a helpless, hopeless, ungodly and sinful world.
4. It should cause us to develop in our lives so that our love is more of a mental choice than some emotional reaction. Every situation demands prayerful, volitional calculation if we are to demonstrate the love of God.
5. It should cause us to love things God loves and hate things God hates.
6. It should cause us to love as God does, based on no merit or value to us.

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Communicable Attribute #8- Hate.

Although this particular attribute is often neglected, it is clearly part of God's character and it is clearly a communicable attribute. As with love, **God's hatred is not irrationally emotional, it is rationally volitional.** Just as God high and carefully calculates His love, so the same is true with His hate.

We may define God's hatred as being that expression of His character that chooses to have an intense hostile aversion or hatred for something or against someone. It is this quality that causes God, as Floyd Barackman says, to have "an extreme dislike for, and opposition toward sinners and their sins." (Barackman, p.63).

Oft times a verse such as John 3:16 will be used to promote the love of God at the expense of the hatred of God. It needs to be remembered that God's love for the world is demonstrated by the sending of His own Son to die on Calvary and to shed His blood for sins. Those who reject His Son are not loved by are in fact enemies of God who are heading to face the wrath of God.

There is an old saying- "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner." In a qualified manner this is a true statement. God loved sinners enough to put His Son on the cross. However, we must not for one moment think that God loves one who rejects His Son. The truth is, it is impossible to separate the sin from the sinner. If God hates the sin, He also hates the one who is sinning. Failure to understand this distorts both the love of God and the hatred of God.

The difference between God's hatred and human hatred is that God's hatred will always be perfect, holy, just and right. Human hatred is many times emotional, irrational and lacking in justice and righteousness.

There are many passages of Scripture that give insight into the hatred of God attribute:

1) Leviticus 18 - This chapter is filled with a list of things God absolutely hates. Most things in this list have to do with sexual immorality. He classifies things here as "defiled abominations" that will bring His wrath (vrs.24-30). God hates sexual immorality and the one involved in it. (Lev. 20:23)

2) Ps.5:5 - Notice carefully that the object of God's hatred is not the iniquity, but "all" who do it.

3) Ps.11:5 - God hates the one who loves violence.

4) Prov.6:16-19 - Here is a list of seven types of things God hates with the final one being "one who spreads strife among brothers"(v.19). Clearly the sin is connected to the sinner.