

THE LOVE OF GOD – Part 2 – March 13

We are talking about God's love, and we must do this because it's vital for our lives. No matter who you are, whether you are young or old, you need to know God's love, to be satisfied and strengthened by His love. I have been a Christian for 50 years now, and I still need to daily experience the love of God. 1 John 4:16

- Last week we said that God loves us in that He saves us, He forgives, He redeems us, He adopts us into His family, He provides for us, He protects us, He has compassion on us, we have fellowship with Him, He gives us purpose, and He gives us His Word. And today we want to continue to talk about how God personally loves us.

1. God has loving thoughts for you. His heart is full of love for His children. Therefore, the thoughts He has about you are loving, kind, patient, forgiving, and compassionate. If you really love someone, then you think about that person a lot, and your thoughts for that person are loving thoughts. How much more so is this true of God towards us? Eph. 1:4-5

Psalm 139:17-18. God's thoughts towards you are loving thoughts. They're also countless; they're infinite; they outnumber the grains of sand in this world. It's important to think of God's love for you in this way, that He's continually and constantly thinking loving thoughts about you. That God is always thinking loving thoughts about you is wonderful, incredible, and should cause you to be in awe of God, and to worship Him with all your heart.

2. God shepherds you. Ps. 23:1; John 10:11, 14; Matt. 9:36. The Lord is your shepherd, and He shepherds your life and your soul. He watches over you, He cares for you. Ps. 121:5-8. When you're going through tough times, when you are struggling, or are hurting, or are tempted to give up, God wants you to know that He is your Shepherd, and you are to trust Him to help you. Psalm 23:3 says, "*He restores my soul.*" 1 Peter 2:25

3. God leads you. God loves you by leading you in the plans He has for you. God would be uncaring if He just left you on your own, let you figure out your own way in life. Ps. 23:2-3. "*He leads me besides still waters... He guides me in paths of righteousness.*"

- Psalm 143:10. God is the perfect leader. He knows what you're like, and in His wisdom, and by His power, knows exactly how to lead you in the plans He has for you. By His Word, by His Spirit, through people, and by different circumstances, God leads you. Prov. 16:9. Again, this shows God's great love for you. But you have you to want God to lead you. You have to ask Him to show you the way He wants you to go. Psalm 25:4-5, 32:8

4. God's love for you is seen in the church. One of the reasons for the church is to help you know God's love for you. And one way to increase your personal understanding and comprehension of God's love is to be involved in the church. Eph. 3:14-21.

- The church is a spiritual family, a family that is to be loving and caring, a family that's to be devoted to one another in brotherly love. And as Christians, we need to experience God's love through our brothers and sisters. Rom. 12:10, 1 Pet. 1:22
- You show the love of God for others when you use your spiritual gift for them - it could be the gift of serving, mercy, encouragement, giving, or teaching.

And you show your love to others when you are patient with them, when you are kind or compassionate or forgiving. Another way we experience God's love in a church is when we take communion, for when we take communion, we are being remembering God's greatest act of love for us.

- The older Christians in a church are to love the younger Christians, and they do this by spending time with them, by discipling them, by helping them grow. Titus 2:3-5
- Indeed, showing and expressing God's love towards others is a clear, identifying mark of the church, whether it's this church or any church. John 13:35

5. God's love for you is seen in that you can talk to Him. God shows us His love by speaking to us through His Word, but He also shows us His love by enabling us to speak to Him. And we call this prayer.

- If someone says they love you, but they don't listen to you, or rarely listen to you, then they don't really love you. But God lovingly listens to you. And He listens to you all the time. Whenever you pray to Him, He hears you; and He hears exactly what you're saying to Him. Psalm 66:19-20
- God listens to you because He loves you. Most people on the street wouldn't believe it if you told them you could talk to God and that He actually listens to you, but He does.

God knows that communication is necessary for your relationship with Him and so He wants you to talk to Him, like a child to a Father, like a friend to a friend. He wants you to speak to Him, to be open with Him, to pour out your hearts to Him, to ask Him for help. Jn. 16:23-27. And so God loves you by listening to you, and by listening to everything you say. He listens with a loving heart, with compassion, concern, and understanding. Not only does God listen to you, but He answers you, He answers your prayers. Daniel 9:15-19

6. God loves you by being committed to you. Heb. 13:5. *"I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you."* God is totally, unreservedly, wholeheartedly committed to you. When God saved you, you were transferred from the devil's kingdom to God's kingdom, and you won't be transferred back. When God saved you, you become a child of God, and once you are a child of God, you are always a child of God.

There is no sin you can commit that can cause you to lose your salvation, can cause you to go back into the devil's kingdom, can cause you to go to hell. Some people say you can lose your salvation - that if you go astray, or backslide, or commit certain sins, then you're not God's child anymore, then you're not saved anymore. But what kind of love is that? Christ died for all your sins, every one of them, past, present and future. And once you repent of your sins and place your faith in Christ and in His death and resurrection, then you're forgiven forever, you're saved forever. As that old saying goes, once saved, always saved. John 10:27-29

- Indeed, if a person is truly saved, then he stays in God's family forever, for God is always faithful and loyal to His child. If God gives a person eternal life, then that person has eternal life, and eternal life, by definition and by decree, is eternal.

Rom. 8:28-31. These vss. are to assure you of your salvation, to convince you of God's eternal love for you. Because God is committed to you then He's going to work out all the details of your life on this earth with the goal of bringing you to heaven. God chose you, foreknew you, called you, justified you and He will glorify you - what God begins in you, He will finish in you. Phil. 1:6, 1 Cor. 1:8-9

7. God loves you by being patient with you. This means God puts up with your sin, your stubbornness, your waywardness. Because God is committed to you then He's patient with you during your entire life here on this earth. Isn't it true that God has been patient with you through the years, that He has put up with you, has been forbearing and forgiving? Isn't it true that you don't always do what God wants, that there are some sins you keep on committing, but yet God is patient with you?

- Parents know what it means to be patient with their children, to put up with their faults, inadequacies and disobedience. How much more so is God patient towards you? Neh. 9:16-21

8. God loves you in that He disciplines you. Heb. 12:5. This word discipline conveys the idea of training children. Now all good parents train their children as they're growing up, and what does this look like?

- The parents instruct their children - they tell their children what they need to do.

- They correct their children, tell them when they are doing something wrong.

- They warn their children, tell them the consequences if they keep doing what's wrong.

- They deal out consequences when they keep doing what is wrong. They may spank their children or use other means. Children need to feel pain when they do something wrong.

So too, our heavenly Father trains you – He instructs you, corrects you, warns you, and if you don't respond, there are consequences - a trial, a sickness, a difficult circumstance. Now when God disciplines you, He's not punishing you, but is doing it out of love, so you learn to do what is right, so you spiritually grow up and become mature, so you have a closer walk with Him, and so you're spiritually fruitful. 2 Tim. 3:16-17

9. God loves you by giving you hope. Hope speaks of God's promise, His guarantee to you of what He'll give you in the future, your future in heaven. And hope describes how God is going to show you His love in the future. And during your life on earth, God loves you by telling you about this hope, by telling you how He'll continue to love you in the future. God wants you to be looking forward to this future, to be excited about this future love He has for you.

Let me tell you about some of the things you should be hoping for, looking forward to:

1. You will be with Jesus. 1 Thess. 4:17, 5:10
2. You will be with other believers. 1 Thess. 4:13-15
3. You will be in heaven. Heb. 12:22-24
4. You will have a glorified body. 1 Cor. 15:42-44, Phil. 3:21
5. You will be rewarded for how you served God on earth. Col. 3:23-24; Matt. 6:4, 6, 20

Indeed, heaven will be a perfect and beautiful place. There will be perfect people and you will have perfect relationships; it will be a perfect environment with perfect food, and most importantly you'll be with Jesus, the One who loves you far more than anyone else. Heaven will be your home, your home with the Lord Jesus Christ, where you will know His love and kindness and goodness like never before, and where you will perfectly love Him, and worship Him, and serve Him. John 14:1-3, Rev. 21:1-7

We've talked about many of the ways God loves you. He has loving thoughts about you, He shepherds you, and He leads you. He loves you by giving you a church, by enabling you to pray to Him, to talk to Him. He loves you by being committed to you, by being patient with you, by disciplining you, and by giving you hope. Now remember these things, remember how God specifically loves you, for as a Christian, you need to be encouraged and sustained by His love for you. *"Keep yourselves in the love of God."* Jude 21

- And remember, God's love for you all goes back to what Christ did for you by dying for you on the cross, by paying for all your sins, by delivering you from sin, death, and hell, so you could have eternal life, an eternal relationship with God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Psalm 86:13. And this is why we are having communion today.