

ST 19 - The Love of God

(including the goodness and benevolence of God)

God's love is most evident in the His eternally giving of Himself to others. His love is sacrificial.

1John 4:8 -- The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

John 17:24 – “Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.

Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

We love Him back by giving him the “sacrifice of praise” (Heb. 13:15). Our worship is an offering we give Him in love.

1John 5:3 -- For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Obedience is a loving response.

Just as we imitate His grace, kindness, patience, etc. we love others because God first loved us.

1John 4:11 - Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

John 13:35 - By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Mark 12:28-34 -- One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

From James Boyce. Abstract of Systematic Theology

LOVE.

Of this there are five kinds, which vary according to the object upon which love is exercised. The attribute in God is the same; but it is in its exit, or in its termination, that it assumes these different forms.

1. There is the love of complacency or approbation. This is exercised towards a worthy object in which excellencies are perceived. It is of the nature of love of the beautiful, or the good, or the useful in us. It complacently or approvingly regards, because there is in the object something worthy of such regard. This is exercised by God, in its highest degree, in the love of himself, of his own nature and character, because the infinitely excellent must be to God the highest object of complacent love. Were God but one person, in this way only could such love be exercised. But in the Trinity of the Godhead, there is found, in the love of the separate persons towards each other, another mode in which this love of complacency may in this highest sense be exercised. Such love is also felt by God for his purposes.

As he perceives them to be just, wise and gracious, he approves and regards them with complacent love.

But this love extends itself also to the creations, which result from this purpose. This is true of inanimate creation. It is perfect, as far as conformed to his will, and fitted to accomplish his end, and as such God can regard it and pronounce it good. Thus we find that he did in the creation, Genesis, Chap. 1:10, 12. The same record is made, in verse 25, as to the animal creation, before that of man; and after the creation, and investiture of man with the dominion over the earth, with its plants and animals, we are told, verse 31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." The complacent love of God, therefore, extends not only to himself and his will, but to all his innocent creation and even to inanimate nature.

This love of complacency, however, as it is exercised in its highest degree towards himself, so also is it exhibited, in the nearest approach to that, towards those beings who are most like himself, having been made in his nature and likeness. An innocent angel, or an innocent man is therefore by nature a joy to God, as is the child to the father who sees in it a peculiar likeness to himself. But the guilty cannot thus be loved. Sinful man cannot receive such love, so long as sinful. Even the penitent believer in Jesus, until the time of his perfect sanctification in the life to come, and doubtless even then, has access to God only through Christ, and, of himself, can in no respect secure the approbation of God.

2. The second kind of love, is the love of benevolence, which corresponds to the idea of God's goodness towards his creatures.

This is the product of his wishes for their happiness. It is not dependent on their character, as is the love of complacency, but is exercised towards both innocent and guilty. It is general in its nature, not special, and exists towards all, even towards devils, and wicked men, because God's nature is benevolent, and, therefore, he must wish for the happiness of his creatures. That that happiness is not attained, nor attainable, is due, not to him, but to their own sin. When the benevolence of God is exercised actively in the bestowment of good things upon his creatures, it is called his beneficence. By the former, he wishes them happiness, by the latter, he confers blessings

to make them so. This is done to the wicked also, as well as to the righteous. It is to this that Christ refers, Matt. 5:45, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

3. The third form of love is the love of compassion. This corresponds to our idea of pity. It is benevolent disposition to those who are suffering or in distress.

4. A fourth form of the love of God corresponds to what we call mercy. This can be exercised only toward sinners. Its very nature contemplates guilt in its objects. It consists, not only in the desire not to inflict the punishment due to sin, and the neglect and refusal to do so, but in the actual pardon of the offender. It cannot be exercised towards a righteous being, because in him is no sin or guilt to be pardoned. It is, however, no new attribute in God, which has arisen because of the existence of sin, and which is, therefore, an addition to his attributes. It is a virtue inherent in his nature, and is especially only one form in which his love exhibits itself, the same love as that benevolence which innocent creatures call forth, and the same love which in another form of complacency has been eternally exercised in the Godhead.

5. The fifth form of love is that of affection. This differs from that of complacency inasmuch as it does not always demand a worthy object. This is exhibited in the parable of the "Prodigal Son." It differs from that of benevolence, inasmuch as its object is not viewed in general with all others, but is one of special interest. It differs from that of compassion and that of mercy, because the object may neither be in distress, nor sinful. It arises from:

(1.) Mutual relationship; as of the Father to the Son, and of all the persons in the Trinity toward each other; of God to Israel, of Christ to his apostles, his disciples and his church, and of the adopted sons to God the Father.

(2.) From dependence; as of creatures on the creator, and of the redeemed upon the redeemer.

(3.) From ownership; as of God over man, of God over Israel, and of Christ over the redeemed. This is illustrated in the lost coin in Luke 15:8, 9. This kind of love originates in each of these ways in man,

and, as the Scriptures show, is also found in God. It is from this aspect of God's love that proceeds grace, which is to be distinguished from love, and pity, and mercy.

Love, as we have seen, is the general characteristic, exhibiting itself in these five different forms. Mercy is one of these, but is given to the guilty only. Pity is given to guilty or innocent, who may be in distress, pain or suffering. Grace is also given to guilty, or innocent, and does not necessarily suppose distress in the object, but involves an affectionate interest in it, arising either from peculiar relation to it, or ownership of it, or compassion for its dependence. Grace is undeserved favour to innocent or guilty arising from affection. Mercy is undeserved compassion to the guilty only.

John 3:16. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

I John 4:8. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

Goodness

God is the final standard of goodness and all that He is and does is worthy of approval.

Ps. 86:5. "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness unto all them that call upon Thee."

Ps. 118:29 "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His lovingkindness endureth forever."

Ps. 100:5 - For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, And His faithfulness to all generations.

Ps. 106:1 -- Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Ps. 34:8 – Oh taste and see that the Lord is good.

Ps. 119:68 – Thou art good and doest good; Teach me Thy statutes.

God's will is good, so it is appropriate to follow after His instruction --

Romans 12:2 - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing (*dokimazo*) you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (ESV)

Dokimazo – testing to discover and confirm what is approvable, allowable, or good.

James 1:17 - Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

We should test our own standards or concepts of goodness against what God says is right or acceptable, since He is the source of goodness and truth. God is the highest good.

Even when God brings about trouble, He is doing it for the ultimate good. Calamity is usually the result of judgment and God's judgment is right, good, and proper.

Romans 8:28 – All things work together for good.

According to Grudem: God's goodness calls for worship and joy from our hearts. God's goodness is the only real foundation for joy in the universe. Some things are so worthy of approval that it makes us happy or joyous to see something that is truly good.

As God created all things, He saw that it was good. God's creation is good because He is good. So, we are able to enjoy the creation and we see aspects of God's creative goodness when we see humans create and share good things – a reflection of the good God.

So, we delight in Him, which is a form of joy, because He is good.

1Peter 1:8 - and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

And we should imitate Him.

Galatians 6:9-10 - And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

In other words – be good because God is good.

The knowledge of God's goodness helps us deal with the difficult stuff.

Longsuffering or forbearance.

Num. 14:18. "Jehovah is slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression."

Rom. 2:4. "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

Grace and Mercy (Patience is in that heading)

Grace is God giving you what you cannot deserve, whereas mercy is God not giving you what you do deserve.

Grace and mercy are specific aspects of God's goodness.

Exodus 34:6 - (speaking to Moses) "Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;"

Psalm 103

Neh. 9:17b. "But Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness."

God's grace is seen primarily in God's forgiveness for sins and justification by grace.

Romans 3:23-24 – for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

God's grace stands in direct contradistinction to human effort:

Romans 11: 5-6 -- In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Grace is entirely God's choice to dispense. People think that God has to naturally love everyone. But grace, by definition, cannot be deserved.

Mercy

God's goodness toward those in misery or distress, according to Matthew 9:27 – "Have mercy on us, Son of David."

1 Chronicles 21:13 -- And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man.

Ex. 33:19 (also in Romans 9) - And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

Rom. 9:18. "So then He hath mercy on whom He will and whom He will He hardeneth."

Eph. 2:4, 5. "But God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."

Grace and faith are inter-related. Faith is trusting God, not ourselves.

Romans 4:16 - For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Ephesians 2:8-9 – By grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

By definition, our whole life is a matter of grace.

Patience

Withholding punishment when it's due and enjoying His working out of all things over time. (like making the world in six days, or waiting millennia for the "fullness of time" to send His son after promising it to Eve. And, Christ's return is waiting. So, God takes His time. He is patient.)

Numb 14:18

"slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love"

2Peter 3:14-15 -- Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things (new heaven and new earth), be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

Read Colossians 1:9-12 – "steadfastness and patience" is "longsuffering and patience."

Romans 2:4 - Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

God's patience is not avoidance. He will finally and fully judge rightly and fully.

2Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

[King James Bible](#)

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Romans 9:22

We are told to reflect that characteristic and also endure hardship and be patient with one another, demonstrating longsuffering.

1Tim. 1:16, 2Tim. 3:10, 2Tim 4:2, Col. 1:11, Col. 3:12, 2Cor. 6:6, Eph. 4:2, 1Thes. 5:14