

Myths Surrounding God's Love

Grace Bible Chapel

Special Study – John 3:16, & Selected Texts

October 22nd, 2017

- VBV Conf. “Fighting the Good Fight, explaining the truth, exposing the lies.”
- If not for the glorious love of God none would be saved. God's love is wonderful, infinite, incomprehensible, immeasurably valuable – unconditional in that He did not love us because of us, & He gave His Son (exposing its manifest nature).

Point: Address myths – not in any manner reducing its glory – but man's ideas of it!

- 2 Tim. 4:2 Paul stated of the last days “for a time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.”
 - Mix this attitude with 2 Tim. 3:2 & 4 “lovers of self” – “lovers...rather than God.”
 - Spotlight shift from God's glory to man's self importance – humanism.
 - It is far easier to speak of God's love for man, then of man's sin, his lost condition, God's wrath, or hell. Subjects unattractive to the unsaved & difficult.

Point: Therefore God's love is the #1 target for careless misuse.

What role does love have in the Gospel presentation?

- From websites addressing salvation – “*To God you are special, God's smile is upon you – you light up His face as much as anyone has ever lit up a lovers face.*” – can you imagine John the Baptist saying this – Noah, Jonah/Ninevah, JB/Israel, or Christ's message to the 7 churches (Rev. 2-3) – repent, believe.
- Just had a major religious event – big name – not to be critical – ad “going to tell people God loves them” – no – I believe real love instead would tell America to repent! This is a new standard of the gospel not the Gospel.
- The book of Acts is filled with Gospel presentations yet the word “love” is never used!

Point: God's saving love is unconditional to its recipients, but it is not indiscriminate.

- Rom. 9:13 “Jacob loved...Esau hated.” Before born–sovereign right– contrast.
- The theme used repeatedly & popularized for evangelism to the sinful world –the last 50 years is: “*God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.*”

Point: This is attractively man centered “*God loves you!*” (which for the unsaved is not savingly true) & declaring “*has a wonderful plan for your life*” is saying God's purpose is to make mankind's circumstances appealing & happy in this fallen world.

- Remember as child hearing – things God cannot do! (lie, evil, deceive) another - God cannot savingly love those who will not be saved!
- Sign as boy–“Jesus Saves” Implied: Christ focused, people are lost, need saving.
- North central San Antonio had a large sign, placed for years to the lost masses: “God loves you, no conditions apply.” Do you see the problems with that?
 - The problem is the “you” is applied broadly, indiscriminately to every person – implied savingly, And if “No conditions apply” is true for every person:
 - Why did Christ go to the cross “if no conditions apply?”
 - Why does sin matter at all “if no conditions apply?”
 - Why does the Bible tell of hell when God savingly loves everyone & no conditions apply?”
 - There are countless other ways to pick this to pieces – you get the idea!

Point: It is one thing to be told you can be a recipient of God's saving eternal love & another to be told **you already are!** “Those who come to Me...I will not cast out” – is both a notice of God's right in relation to salvation and an invitation. Or, no one is beyond the reach of God's love!

- This wily fraud neglects altogether man's condition in sin and cheapens the need of salvation.

- We have a very large ministry east of SA that has sought to define & declare only positive ideas from Scripture – neglecting anything perceived as negative.
 - Neutering God’s Word or adding half truths to make it appealing is troubling!

Point: I contend this mushy concept of God’s indiscriminate love (instead of warning of their peril – as Noah, Jonah, JB) provides sinners no sense of their offense to a holy God, a false sense of God’s approval, & is 180 degrees out of phase to God’s revealed message – of warning the lost they are lost!

- By contrast – Jonathon Edwards (called the greatest theologian America ever produced) – read a written message in 1741.
- “Sinners in the hands of an angry God”
 - In the **introduction** - "There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell but the mere pleasure of God." By the "mere" pleasure of God, I mean His ‘sovereign’ pleasure, His arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation on His part, not hindered by any difficulty. God's will not hindered in the least degree in respect to the preservation of wicked men.” God is not constrained by man’s concepts of God’s love.
 - In the **body** – “The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This you have heard is the case of every one of you that are without Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning fire, is stretched out wide under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell’s wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.” Issue: The teaching of God’s wrath is to wake sinners up!
 - In the **conclusion** – “You young people especially have now an extraordinary opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful gorge in blindness and hardness...The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let everyone fly out of Sodom: "Hurry and escape with your lives, don't look behind you. Escape to the mountain, unless you be consumed." God’s justice and judgment is a reality!
- Interesting to note – This message is credited as initiating “the Great Awakening” & God’s love is not mentioned in this message – are we less sinners today?
 - God’s message does not change – “He changes not” – what changes? The interpretations, ideas, doctrines, & methods of those professing Christ.
 - The danger of another message replacing or skewing God’s message, is repudiated in the strongest language by Paul in Galatians 1!

Point: Do we need to be careful, precise, & clear as God’s ambassadors to present His saving message? or can we justify a little more PC, or sugar?

What do we need to understand about God’s love?

- God’s love is a wonderful attribute which blends harmoniously with His other attributes, but His love does not counter or contradict His other attributes.
- Nor will God’s attribute of love over-rule His other attributes – how do we know? If it could Christ would not have been required to die under God’s wrath in the place of sinners – but because of God’s holy justice, sin could not be overlooked.

Point: You may say God is stated to love even His enemies.

- Many take God’s love as only being of one form – but it is in two distinctions: General & Particular, or we can sum up in attitudinal or relational.
 - Mat 5:43-48; 7:12; 1 Pet. 2:17 “honor” Attitudinal love - Patient, concerned, kind, orderly, but not intimate, & not permanent. This is common grace seen in a general sense (Tit. 3:4).
 - It has nothing to do with our personal worth – we are intrinsically evil, we have no personal value – His common love for us is not because we are lovely.

- It is seen as a love of warning because of His great loving concern— over & over the Bible is full of warnings concerning judgment – a type of pity, concern, & thereby love – a love that warns repeatedly, & says come to Christ (John 6:37)!
- John 13:1;17:6,9,22-23.Relational love-particular, attached, unlimited, permanent. This discrimination is true with us—other children or your children.
 - Relational love is seen throughout the epistles – always for saved (context).
 - Rm. 5:8 “God demonstrates His own love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The “us” (context) refers exclusively to saved.
 - Rm. 8:35 “Nothing can separate us from the love of God” – the saved!

Point: We need to be discerning in our reading, study of the Word, who we listen!

How does God’s love fit into His saving plan (3:1-36)?

- The proof verse for all universal indiscriminating “love” concepts is John 3:16.
 - Nicodemus (a prominent Jewish religious teacher / leader) did not understand his own condition & believed that salvation came by keeping laws.
 - Christ explains true salvation to Nicodemus – how to be right with God.
- John 3:16 - For – has a causal relation to the previous text – it does not stand alone. A quick overview of the context:
 - In vs. 3-13 – the new birth is stated as essential, supernatural, sovereign.
 - Vs. 3 – “unless one is born again” – repeated in Vs. 5 & Vs. 7.
 - Vs. 8 – the wind blows – is referring to the promise of God by the HS – (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 31; Ezek 36:26); of the new covenant to Israel, & extended to us - gentiles (Rom. 11:19) as grafted-in.
 - Vs 14-15 – is an OT picture of how salvation would be accomplished at the cross—Israel had an incurable problem of snake bites leading to death – God brought a remedy – this is analogous to the one true remedy – Christ!
- Vs. 16-Beginning in vs 16 Christ declares Himself as the lifted up sacrifice.
 - As a Pharisee, Nicodemus had several personal beliefs to overcome:
 - He did not understand that man cannot earn salvation by keeping laws.
 - He believed God was only for Israel—other nations/people were excluded.
 - & he had no concept of a loving God – God was a condemning law giver.

What is John 3:16’s focus? Not on people (God loves you Nicodemus), but two aspects of God:

- **The Power of God’s love** – “so loved He gave” – it is explaining the infinite glorious depth of God’s love, God’s gift to the world, & His determination to save.
- **The Purpose of God’s love**—to rescue (grant “eternal life” in contrast to “perish”).
 - The “whosoever” is God’s terms for who is rescued & granted the eternal life.

What is “world” in John 3:16? – significantly misinterpreted – never challenged.

- The general manner this term (world) is taught is that God loves every person in the world who ever lived or will ever live – in the form of saving love!.
- World – kosmos – is used in a variety of ways in Scripture & its use must be determined by the immediate context.
 - The “God loves everyone” evangelism in my introduction is derived here.
 - However, “kosmos” used 186 times is never used in the NT for every person & not every person in Scripture is to be assumed to have the same love relation with God.
- John 3:17 – context brings us additional clarity – “send His Son into the world” – world here meaning the incarnation coming as a man.
 - “judge” – kreeno – try, condemn, punish – in Nicodemus mind the Messiah was to come against the rest of the world to establish a Jewish kingdom.
 - “the world might be saved” – if “world” in Vs.16 means every person, then every person would be saved according to John 3:17 – same context.
 - “Might or may” has been added by the translators to bring clarity to what they think this passage is saying, but it does not exist in the Greek “world be saved.”

Point: Christ is addressing an orthodox Pharisee's that believed Yahwey cared only for Jews – Christ stating He came to save people throughout the world (Rev. 5:9).

- Christ came as promised (Gen. 3:15) not to the Savior of every single person who ever lived, but to bring salvation into the whole world.

• God's plan emphasis is applicable exclusively to "whoever believes."

Point: It is not "God loves you, no conditions apply." But, see the price of God's amazing love to bring salvation to those who would come to Him! - intended! "God is merciful, He has by His love paid the price, repent & flee to Him!"

- I know of the controversy surrounding the scope of Christ's atonement (extent or effect), but all will agree, His atonement will ultimately only apply to "the whosoever."
- God cannot savingly love those who will not be saved!
- God's love tracts the same path as the application of Christ's atonement. God will save all He intends to save (John 6:37-39).

• **Charles H. Spurgeon** said in answer to a question on giving the Gospel. *"May I go out and tell them - Jesus Christ died for every one of you? May I say - there is life for every one of you? No; you may not. You may say - there is life for every man that comes. But if you say there is life for one of those that do not believe, you utter a dangerous lie. If you tell them Jesus Christ was punished for their sins, and yet they will be lost, you tell a willful falsehood. To think that God could punish Christ and then punish them - I wonder at your daring to have the impudence to say so!"*

Point: if you are in Christ by saving faith, relish in God's glorious eternal love, but if not – take no false comfort in God's relational love for you!

Are the unsaved under the same love as the saved?

- Vs. 16 – Perish in the same verse is contrasted with eternal life. Perish is the status of everyone apart from the Son – not recipients of God's saving love.
- Vs. 18 –further clarifies– man's condition is not one of being under saving love, but "has been judged already" – kreeno – not saving love but condemnation.
- Vs. 36 –(skip to–a verse often overlooked) "the wrath of God abides on him."

Point: Even a cursory look at these passages should leave no one apart from Jesus Christ with any sense that God is looking on them favorably. What is the position of the unsaved – not under love, but under judgment, under wrath!

What is the stated condition for His saving love? – believe in Him (Christ).

- In our context belief follows the "new birth" ie: work of God – the "everyone."
- Within saving belief is a transformed life – repentance – & a following of Him!

Point: Christ declares to Nicodemus why He came – that those smitten (Vs. 14) look to Christ alone, as Israel looked to the wilderness serpent, He is God's remedy.

Application:

- The first Gospel presentations are Mat. 3:2 (John B), then 4:17 Christ – "repent." Not God loves you. Repentance (change of mind) is part of saving faith – not a recognition God loves you, it is a new birth, a change in the person.
- It is a work that dethrones us, and enthrones God!
- Let me be foolish, no one in hell will be proclaiming– my how much God loves us!

Point: To loosely portray God's glorious saving love present on rejecting hearts is to cheapen the warning of Scripture & skew the need of coming to Christ on His terms, & to leave the impression God's wrath is no longer active.

- Only when people have Christ will they have an eternal love relation with Him!
- We are admonished to study to show ourselves approved rightly dividing the Word of truth – it is a right understanding of the Word that leads by the Spirit to the true Bible message, new birth, saving faith & a love relationship with God.