

OUR LOVE FOR GOD

"We love him, because he first loved us." I John 4:19.

More than any other writer in the New Testament John, the beloved disciple, dwelt upon the love of God. If any man knew the measure of God's love, it was John. He had grasped the hand, looked into the eyes, listened to the voice, and felt the throbbing of the heart of Christ as he pillowed his head upon the bosom of the Saviour, but all he could say was, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God!" "What manner of love!" Who can describe it? It is unparalleled, unmerited, unsolicited, unchangeable, and unending. It surpasses all finite understanding. God's love is universal. It is changeless and undying. Human hate cannot kill it. One cannot be bad enough to cause God to quit loving him. Christ never hated Judas Iscariot or Pontius Pilate. A soul can never drift so far as to be outside the zone of the love of God, nor fall so deep as to be beyond its reach.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." When man sinned against the God Who loved him, he deserved to pay the price of his disobedience. He deserved the worst, but God provided the best for him.

"We love him, because he first loved us." What simple words, and yet how very full of meaning!

I. We Love God.

The love of God toward us precedes our love for Him. The initiative is always with Him. God's love for us was a reality before we ever loved Him. We did not have any interest in Him. Notwithstanding this fact, God loved us. His love for us preceded our repentance. He loved us compassionately when sin was pleasant to us, when neither the thunders of His law nor the pleadings of His gospel could persuade us to turn to Him in repentance and faith.

1. We love God because of His character.

God is holy, just, loving, and merciful. He should be loved.

2. We love God because of His blessings.

Life itself is a gift from God. He is the source of all life. Salvation is the greatest blessing of all. Think of God's bountiful gifts to us -- His Son to redeem us, His Spirit to teach us, and His Word to comfort us. In James 1:17 we read, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." The loving heart of God must be grieved when His gifts are ignored or spurned.

3. We love God because of His faithfulness.

Even when His professing children are unfaithful He abideth faithful. There is never the slightest variation or shadow of inconsistency in God. With Him there is no change. He is the same in His love, grace, power, holiness, wisdom, and readiness to bless. His nature and purpose are always the same.

4. We love God because of His love for us.

God's love for us was a reality before we ever loved Him. We never asked Christ to come from heaven, but He came. Many things cause us to love Christ.

(1) The beauty of His person.

When Christ came to earth, due to the blind and perverted vision of men, they did not see in Him any beauty which would cause them to desire Him. Even though He lived beautifully, wrought beautifully, and displayed all the beauties of holiness, the multitudes did not fall in love with Him.

Christ is the One Who is altogether lovely. As somebody wrote, "Christ is a garden full of sweets, a hive full of honey, a sun without a spot, a star ever bright, a fountain ever full, a brook which ever flows, a rose which ever blooms, a foundation which never yields, a guide which never errs, and a friend who never forsakes.

(2) The wonder of His love.

The more that we contemplate the love of Christ for us, the more we shall love Him in return. He loved us and gave Himself for us. His love for us was and is unmerited. There was nothing in us to call it forth. We were neither loving nor lovable, but He loved us and gave Himself for us. His love is unchanging. It is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The measure of our love for Him does not determine the measure of His love for us. If it did, at times it would be very small. Unlike human love, the love of Christ for His followers does not turn hot and cold with the changing circumstances and conditions of life. In this changing world, it is good to know that the love of Christ is unchangeable.

(3) The bountifulness of His gifts.

When we think of Christ's boundless liberality in giving us all things that we need, our hearts burn in love for Him. We have pardon, peace, joy, hope, and life everlasting.

(4) The tenderness of His care.

He delivers by His grace and then keeps by His power. He is caring for us with a care that never wearies.

II. We Should Express Our Love For God.

1. By thinking about Him regularly.

If a person told you that he loved you and yet seldom had you in his thoughts, you would not believe him. God is well pleased when His children think about His Word, His will, His way, His church, and His kingdom. Having Christ in our thoughts will help to mold us into His likeness. When He controls our thinking, we shall become more like Him in His separation from sin, in His devotion to His Father's will, in His wonderful prayer life, and in His desire for the salvation of others.

2. By speaking about Him frequently.

Christ should be the subject of our conversation as well as the object of our trust. We can talk fluently about the fleeting things of this world, and remain tongue-tied when it comes to talking about Christ. If we truly love Christ, there will be a naturalness about our references to Him which will be captivating.

3. By obeying Him faithfully.

Christ said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." Wholehearted obedience to His commands is the best evidence of sincere love for Christ. Profession of love for Christ is without value unless there is obedience to Him.

4. By living for Him consistently.

A Christ-centered and Spirit-filled life is the supreme expression of love for Christ. The world is looking for a demonstration of what Christ can do for and through those who trust and love Him.