

Knowing God Series #13

“Our Infinitely Loving God”



Review

- I. The nature of God**
- II. The Attributes of God**
 - A. God is infinitely GREAT in His ability / capacity**
 - B. God is infinitely and perfectly PURE in His morality and judgments**
 - C. God is infinitely GOOD in His relationships**

A study of the greatness and purity of God looks at the mind, mouth, mighty arm, moral character and eternity of God. A study of God's goodness peers into His very heart. Just as God expects and enables His children to not only reflect His righteousness and holiness he also commands and enables us to reflect His goodness. The channeling of God's love to one another and the world around us is the indisputable and credible credentials of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

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

THE CONCEPT OF GOD'S LOVE

Goodness describes a propensity or inclination to act beneficially toward others apart from merit on their part or without ulterior motives on our part. God is good and continually does good. Out of God's goodness flows a multicolored display of relational actions all of which we are specifically called to receive from God and reciprocate to others.

Love, grace, mercy, faithfulness, kindness, gentleness, longsuffering, forgiveness We use the term goodness as a general term for benevolent feelings and actions toward others and love seems to focus on the passionate pursuit of intimate relationship. It doesn't take much to discover the huge place love occupies in the scriptures. Put simply, God is love. It is who He is and dictates how He interacts with others. It is the basis of His eternal interaction within the trinity.

"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. John 17:24

It is the basis of His interaction with His creatures. He cannot love more or less.

His love does not lapse. It is not the sum total of who He is. He is also spirit, light, holy, righteous, great. His love manifests in complete balance and harmony with all of His other attributes.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:7-8

All His other attributes regulate and complement His love.

It is self-existent as God Himself. It is all powerful. It is all knowing. It permeates the universe. It is unchanging. It is absolutely pure. It operates according to truth, holiness and righteousness. It never fails.

What is it?

The concept of love lends itself more to description and illustration than definition. It appears all through the Scriptures and usually some sort of benevolent action accompanies its mention. Of course, the greatest description of the characteristics of genuine love appears in 1 Cor 13. It is there that I think the unique nature of this love stands out.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. 1 Cor 13:1-3

Notice the actions described.

Powerful encouragement, Enlightening communication, Supernatural faith, Sacrificial giving of my possessions, Sacrificial giving of my life

Generally we would think that such admirable actions would be evidence of genuine love. Yet, the passage makes it clear that one can do all these actions for others without loving others. The missing element is a passionate pursuit of meaningful relationship apart from merit. I can give away my things without any desire to pursue intimate connection. The description that follows seems to focus on pursuit of relationship in spite of difficulty.

Love is longsuffering

Love is kind no matter what.

Love has no jealous for what someone else has.

Love is not self-focuses

Love doesn't respond in hurtful ways (unbecoming).

Love is not concerned about self-promotion.

Love doesn't react negatively.

Love doesn't keep track of offenses.

It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

Love pursues and practices meaningful relationship in spite of rejection and difficulty. It is easy to be friends with the friendly. It is easy to love the lovely. It is easy to relate to the relatable. Such a lofty concept of love barely existed at the time of the New Testament. A rarely used word had to be recruited to differentiate from three other words translated love. The other three words translated "love" all involved the idea of some kind of mutual benefit.

Eros – Feeling love focused on mutual pleasure.

Storge – Family love focused on mutual family connection. (parent child, siblings)

Philos – Friendship love focused on mutual companionship, brotherhood, interests, and warm fondness

Mythology described gods who were fickle in their love for humans. They had nothing to do with the unlovely or underserving. All other religions present a god who only favors the faithful or worthy. God pursues relationship and practices benevolence with His flawed and helpless creatures apart from their merit or loveliness. His passion comes by reason of His own choice to pursue and practice meaningful connection. In a dismal world of rejection and conflict, this kind of love stands out like a beacon of light. Paul reminds us that it is possible for someone to give their life on behalf of someone who has a reputation as a good and worthy person and some have even done so.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:8

The Holy Spirit dusted off an unused Greek term to refer to this kind of unconditional love. **Agape** – Foundational love based on the will and character of the one loving. It is a love offered without conditions. It is not based on any mutuality in a relationship but on an act of the will to pursue relationship. It is based on the character of the one loving apart from the conduct of the one being loved.

*Agape love begins with a **DESIRE** to meaningfully connect with people that stimulates a **DECSION** to pursue connection and results in **DEEDS** that demonstrate care, promote and maintain connection.*

God has a passion to meaningfully connect with His creatures. God pursues such a connection with His creatures. God demonstrates that passion and pursuit with unconditional acts of love. The New Testament overflows with such unmistakable demonstrations of His love for us. I have tried to capture the essence of this aspect of love as demonstrated by God. I want to briefly track love's journey from the heart of God to and from the heart of man.

THE APPLICATION OF GOD'S LOVE

• God's love for us

John wrote about coming to know and believing God's love for us.

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 1 John 4:16

I (Jesus) in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. John 17:23

Interesting that living in unity is one of the graphic proofs of genuine love. It is a well-known fact that the foundational felt need of every human is to love and be loved. Most unacceptable behavior and psychological issues usual stem from a lack of genuine love. At the core of that need is the need for acceptance apart from merit; to be loved for who we are, not for what we can do. Christian and non-Christian alike long for such acceptance. We all grew up in a merit based system. We learned early on that we were more acceptable if we behaved in a certain way. Unconditional love can only be found in God and come from God. Yet, for some reason, even Christians struggle with feeling or perceiving God's acceptance. If we don't perceive love, we live in fear of rejection and are unable to show love. Satan works overtime trying to block our perception of being loved. He may allow us to intellectually acknowledge it but not emotionally feel it. If possible, he tries to prevent both; not recognize it or feel it.

How do we know that God really loves us?

The Scriptures declare it over and over.

God so loved the world. God is love. It is interesting that God's love actually encompasses all the categories of love.

The feeling aspect (eros) – Song of Solomon

You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever. Psalm 16:11

For You make him most blessed forever; You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence. Psalm 21:6

How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light. Psalm 36:7-9

The family aspect (storge)

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is (intimate relationship). 1 John 3:1-2

The friendship aspect (philos)

Don't differentiate agape and philos as God's love and man's love.

and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. James 2:23

*This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My **friends** if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you **friends**, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another. John 15:12-17*

The foundational aspect (agape)

"God so loved the world... John 3:16

God's actions demonstrate it.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:8 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 gave Himself up for me. Gal 2:20

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:4-6

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 1 John 3:16-18

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another John 4:7-21

The Holy Spirit confirms it.

The Holy Spirit saturates the heart with God's love.

The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:5

The Holy Spirit empowers us to maintain a relationship with Jesus and come to a deeper understanding of Christ love leading to complete saturation with God's fullness part of which is love.

I (Paul) pray that God would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:16-19

The Holy Spirit testifies as to our connection to the family of God.

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. Romans 8:16-17

- **God's love in us**

I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." John 17:26

The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:5

This passage could be interpreted two ways.

1. An understanding of God's love is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
2. God's love is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

I think the Holy Spirit does both. Note the what, where and who in this verse.

God pours His love

God pours His love in our hearts

God pours His love in our heart by the Holy Spirit.

The verb employed along with its particular tense stands out. The word translated "poured out" indicates a flooding or permeation; to spill over. Paul used a perfect tense verb indicating a specific action bringing about ongoing results. If I wanted to indicate a temporary flood happened I would use a point time verb tense. "Our culvert flooded in the heavy rains. In our passage it would indicate that God at one time flooded our heart with His love. If I wanted to indicate a more monumental flooding I would employ the perfect tense. The Shasta valley flooded when the constructed the dam. It flooded when they put in the dam and it is still flooded. In our passage Paul meant us to understand that at our conversion God flooded our hearts with His love by a work of the Holy Spirit and it is still flooded to overflowing.

Don't say you aren't loved. Don't say you can't love others. If the Holy Spirit lives there, there is an overflow of love there.

May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. 2 Thess 3:5

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but (God has given a capacity for power and love and discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. Jude 1:20-21

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

God's love is in us in quantity sufficient to heal our hearts and flow to others.

• **God's love through us**

God intended to complete the cycle of love by allowing His love to flow through us to others.

Love for God and others is the summary of the entire Bible.

And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:37-40

It is God's love for us and in us that enables us to demonstrate God's love through us.

The only way we can love God or others is because God loved us first and imbedded His love in our hearts. God teaches us by precept and example to love.

Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 1 Thessalonians 4:9

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk(live) in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. Ephesians 5:1-2

Love is the first evidence of one directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Gal 5:22

We are told to speak truth in the context of loving relationships Eph 4:15

Not so much confronting sin with "tough love", but speaking upbuilding truth to one another.

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Ephesians 4:15-16

Paul instructed husbands to love their wives like Christ loves the church.

It doesn't get wives off the hook because the Bible tells us to love everyone.

And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. 1 John 4:21 Whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. 1 John 3:16-18

Today I don't want you to just know God's love. I want you to believe it and feel it. His love casts out all fear. His love heals the hurts from past rejection. This love never changes. His love does not depend on my merit. God chooses to continually love us. He knows everything about us and still chooses to love us. He is all powerful so nothing can prevent Him from loving us. He is everywhere present so His love is always available. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:37-39

Agape love begins with a DESIRE to meaningfully connect with people that stimulates a DECISION to pursue connection and results in DEEDS that promote and maintain connection.

God has a passion to meaningfully connect with His creatures. God pursues such a connection with His creatures. God demonstrates that passion and pursuit with unconditional acts of love.

The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. Zephaniah 3:17

Don't let the enemy convince you otherwise. Know it and believe it. We sang earlier "Think about His love." Right now I want you to feel His love. We have declared the Scriptures. We have pondered the demonstrations. Now listen to the Spirit's confirmation.

Respond to and celebrate the Father's love. "Jesus loves me this I know (and believe) for the Bible tells me so"

Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted,
be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace
will be with you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:11-14