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## WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US

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

### PART I

**INTRODUCTION: The very essence of true virtue and Godliness in the moral creature is love for the Creator and for His other moral creatures. And the very essence of sin is failure to love God and our fellow-man.**

The all-embracing requirements of the law of God is love to God and our fellow-man. Sin is essentially egoism or selfishness, putting self in God's place. That is what Satan did. *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! ..For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High,"* Isaiah 14:12-14. This selfism is manifested in four particulars: 1. Self-sufficiency, instead of faith; 2. Self-will, instead of submission; 3. Self-seeking, instead of benevolence; 4. Self-righteousness, instead of humility and reverence.

These characteristics are seen in the prodigal. *"A certain man had two sons,"* Luke 15:11.

1. He was self-sufficient; give me what belongs to me and I can take care of myself. I will not need my father's counsel or care. *"And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living,"* Luke 15:12.

2. He manifested self-will, instead of submission to his father's authority. He left home to have his own way. *"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his jour-*

*ney into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living,"* Luke 15:13.

3. He was self-seeking. He had no interest in his father or other members of the household. He would seek his own fortune in a far country. *"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him,"* Luke 15:14-16.

4. He was self-righteous and proud. *"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants,"* Luke 15:17-19.

Now all these characteristics belong to every person by nature and make him a child of wrath. *"We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others,"* Ephesians 2:3. Nobody loves God in his natural state. *"The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,"* Romans 8:7.

If any unregenerate man thinks he loves God it is because he has a deceitful heart. *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* Jeremiah 17:9. Sinners are not conscious of their hatred of God because they have a God of their own imagination. A sort of God they can tolerate. But when the God of the Bible, the Sovereign of the universe is presented to them their enmity will show itself. But no unregenerate man wants a God on a

throne, for sin is lawlessness and every man by nature is a sinner. He hates a Sovereign God. *"There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else,"* Isaiah 45:21-22.

In a sermon several years ago, a preacher told of a business man he had encountered. Their conversation turned to the subjection of divine sovereignty. When the preacher presented the Doctrine of Election, this strong-willed business man walked up and down the floor of his library, and then pausing before the preacher he said, "Look here, Sir, if the Bible left no alternative but to believe in the Doctrine of Election, I should be an infidel." And seeing there was no hope of agreement the preacher changed the subject. Then later in the evening the businessman told him of a time when his pastor called him and said, "Can you find employment for a poor man who is at my door?" "Yes," he said, "I will call the factory and tell the foreman to take him on." And then about 8 o'clock the next morning the foreman came into his office and said, "I have trouble in the shop, sir." "What is the matter?" "The men have taken off their aprons and put on their coats, they are going to walk out." Then the owner of the factory said I will go down and see what I can do about it. He went to the factory and said to the men, "Now what is wrong? Are you not getting wages enough? And they replied they had no complaint as to wages. And then he asked if the hours were too long. And they said there was no complaint on that score. And then he inquired about the working conditions and they had no complaint on that score. Then he said, "Well what is the matter? Why are you

walking out?" And they said, "You sent this man into the factory to work, and he does not belong to our union, and we simply will not work with him." "Oh!," he said is that the trouble? Listen! If you have any complaint to register about wages or hours or working conditions, I shall always be ready to talk with you, but I want you to understand that I own this factory; I built it with hard-earned money; it is mine; and I will run it as I like. If you are not satisfied with that, there is the door. This place will stand here and rot if need be, but I will be master in my own house." And the preacher says that was the same man who a few minutes before insisted that he would not allow God to be Sovereign. He himself would be master and do as he liked with his own, but he was not willing for God to be Master and do as he pleased with his enemies.

Love to God is not a natural or acquired human trait; it is a divine grace. "Love is of God." He is the source and cause of our love to Him. "We love him, because he first loved us," I John 4:19. It is a fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law," Galatians 5:22-23. Our love to God is the effect of the new birth. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God," I John 4:7.

### GOD'S LOVE FOR US

The reason anyone loves God is because God first loves him. God's love for us was the cause of our love to God. How did God's love to us cause us to love Him?

1. It was not the mere fact of his love that made us love Him. His love for us was a fact a long time before we began to love Him. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved," Ephesians 1:4-6.

2. It was not the mere telling us of His love that caused us to love Him. Many a man has heard the love of God preached who died without any love to God.

3. God's love for us was a working force in our souls that caused us to love him. God's love to us was a gracious force which operated in us in the miracle of the new birth. Grace is the name of God's love for sinner's and this grace is a working power in our souls. "But by the grace of God I am what I am," I Corinthians 15:10. It was God's love that made me love Him. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Romans 5:8. Love was a disposition in the heart of God and this disposition became a working force that changed my nature from that of enmity to God, to love for Him.

We have a faint ill of this in the way a man secures the love of the woman he loves. Where there was an ideal marriage it was some thing like this:

The fact that you loved your wife did not cause her to love you. You may have loved her sometime before you had the courage to tell her. And it was not the mere telling her of your love that caused her to love you. It was when your love went into action and you began to woo her with various courtesies and gifts that she fell in love with you.

So to secure our love to Him; God's love went into action. It began to express itself. It expressed itself in two ways and at two different times:

1. God's love to us was expressed at Calvary. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16. This was His redeeming love. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Galatians 3:13. It was His love that redeemed us from the curse of his law we had violated.

2. God's love was expressed in regenerating us. The same love that died for us on the cross worked in us in giving us a new nature; a nature that freely loved him, just as the old nature freely hated him. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as oth-

ers. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Ephesians 2:1-10.

## PART II

**INTRODUCTION:** In the first part of this message we closed with an ill of how God secures the love of sinners; how He gets those to love Him who by nature hate Him. We were showing how His love was a gracious love, and was a working force in our hearts that caused us to love Him. We drew the ill from the case of a man whose love went into action in an effort to get the woman he loves to love him in return. And in this particular point the ill does not do full duty; the man does not change the nature of the woman, but tries to make such changes in himself that will make an appeal to the one whose love he courts. He tries to make of himself what he thinks she will like. If he thinks she could not love a drinker, he promises not to drink. If he thinks she loves politeness, he tries his best to be polite. If he thinks she will admire a man of bravery then he will appear as a brave man; a veritable hero. He tries to make such changes in himself as will make him what she admires. There is no thought of changing her taste but of making such a change in himself as will suit her taste.

Now this is not the way God secures the love of a sinner. He does not accommodate himself to our depraved taste of what God should be in order to be loved. He works on the sinner's nature in the mystery and miracle of the new birth so as to make His nature and His person an object of love. It is not His nature that he changes; it is the sinner's nature He changes. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took

knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus," Acts 4:13. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John 1:12-13.

Everyone of us who now love God once hated Him. But He caused us to love Him. His love caused Him to work in us and so change our depraved taste that we love Him without any change in Him. He does not prepare a gospel that will suit the depraved sinner; he prepares the depraved sinner so that the gospel will suit him.

Some other characteristics of God's love:

### DISCRIMINATING

It is discriminating. It is not for every sinner individually, but for sinners of the human race or of the world. It is not for the devil. God's love is not for demons or fallen angels. If God had loved the devil or demons or fallen angels that love would have gone into action for them, and there would have been prepared a salvation for them and their natures would have been changed so that they would love Him.

Universal love means universal salvation or else it means nothing. If God loved the devil it has had no meaning to the devil, has it? He has not been benefited by it, has he? If God loved the devil what has He done to show it? He gave no Son to redeem him from the curse of his rebellion. He sent no Holy Spirit to change the devil's nature. So what good is a love that does not do anything for its object!

If God loved Judas as much as He did Paul, what good did it do Judas? If God loved Hitler as much as he did Spurgeon what good did it do Hitler? God showed His love to Paul and to Spurgeon and myriads and other poor sinners by doing two things for them; He gave Christ to redeem them and the Holy Spirit to regenerate them. God causes those whom he loves to love Him. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee," Jeremiah 31:3. "We love him, because he first loved us," I John 4:19.

### EVERLASTING

God had no beginning. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from ever-lasting to ever-lasting, thou art God," Psalm 90:2.

God's love is an everlasting love. Perhaps the one Scripture more often used to prove the preservation of the saints; the everlasting salvation of the saved is Romans 8:38-39. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life," John 6:47. Here the love of God is made the basis of our security and safety and if it is universal, then everybody will be safe in heaven because nothing can separate them from the love of God.

God's love for every object of his love is everlasting. His love went into action back in eternity when it laid the plan of salvation and according to this plan Christ was to redeem sinners by giving his own precious blood. Then He would draw them to Himself by the power of the Holy Spirit. He would regenerate their natures and give them a heart to trust and love Him.

God's love is still in action causing those whom He loves to love Him. He woos with the gospel and works on their nature so that they respond to the gospel and lovingly trust Him. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth," Revelation 5:9-10.

### DISCIPLINARY

God's love is a disciplinary love. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," Hebrews 5:5-6. The heavenly Father's love is not the silly kind that most parents have for their children. His love is not the kind that spares the rod and spoils the child. It is not the kind that ignores all the bad conduct of

his children. Those who think God loves them and yet never chastises them are mistaken in the judgment. Those claiming to be his children who are not disciplined are making false claims. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons," Hebrews 12:5-8.

Here is one of the sweetest truths about God's dealings with us. He is a Father who knows when and how to discipline us so that it will be effective and make us partaker of his holiness. "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee," Deuteronomy 8:5. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law," Psalm 94:12. "The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death," Psalm 118:18. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," Revelation 3:19. He disciplines us for the good of our character and not for our comfort or good feeling. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word," Psalm 119:67.