

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE LOVE OF GOD

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INTRODUCTION: Is there a God; a supreme being to whom every other being is accountable? If there is a God, where did He come from? And where is He? And what is He doing? Did He create Himself? How did He come to be?

Where did this universe come from? This vast universe that beggars description in size and mystery? Did it create itself? Or did it come into existence by some fixed law? If so, where did this law come from?

These are not idle questions. These are questions with which the greatest minds have grappled through the ages. There are some who claim the universe came by evolution. But what is evolution? Some define evolution as development and there can be no objection to the theory of evolution if this is what is meant. But development does not answer the question of origination. There can be and has been development of that which is in existence, but we are now dealing with the question of existence; of how things came into existence. You have to have something before you can have development.

Unless there is a revelation from God who created the universe as to how it came into existence, there is no possible answer to the question as to how it came into existence. Science can only deal with development of what already exists; it can tell us nothing definite about how it came to exist. Man, by his own unaided reason can find no answer to the question about God and the universe.

The Greeks had the greatest minds of all history, but Paul said in I Corinthians 1:21, "...the world by wisdom knew not God..."

We are fortunate to have a revelation from God who created all things, climaxing creation with the creation of man. This revelation answers all our questions we started this message with. It tells us there is a God, the kind of God He is, and what He has done and is doing and will yet do. This revelation is the Bible, the very word of God. This revelation begins by Genesis 1:1, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" The very word for create means to make out of nothing. This universe did not come from nothing, it came from God. Leave God out of the picture and it for ever remains, that out of nothing, nothing can come. But from God anything can come that He pleases to create. This revelation says, Genesis 1:3, "*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*" God said, 'Let there be so and so, and it was.' Hebrews 11:3, "*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*"

The obvious thought is that what we see did not come from something else, but from God. This verse is dealing with the origin of things and tells us they did not come from some previously existing

matter. And the only way we can know this is by faith. We learn this from the Bible, not in a laboratory; not from some scientist or philosopher.

Now back to our question about God. Here we are dependent upon the Bible for a knowledge of the true God. Man cannot discover Him; He must reveal Himself. He must tell us who He is and how He came to exist and what He is doing in His creation. In the Bible we learn that God is a Spirit; He has eyes and hands and feet, but He is not matter. In the Bible we learn that He had no beginning, but is self-existent and

eternally existent; He is from everlasting to everlasting. In the Bible we learn about His personal perfection or character. He is

Almighty in power; nothing is too hard for Him. He is infinite in wisdom; He knows and foreknows all things. He is the Holy One and is described as glorious in holiness. He is righteous, which means that He must enforce His law. And this makes sin dangerous in the extreme. He is a God of love, and this is the source of all His grace and mercy towards sinners. Ephesians 2:4, "*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.*"

Without love every other divine attribute would be against us as sinners. Without love His justice would condemn us and cut us off. Without love His

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holiness would put us out of His sight. Without love His power would destroy us. Love is the one and only hope of sinners, and our greatest concern should be to discover God's love to us. If God loves me, His power will protect me, His wisdom will find a way to save me, His holiness will not push me out of his sight. If God loves me, His providence will make everything work together for my eternal good.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S LOVE

It is **eternal**. Jeremiah 31:3, "*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.*" Psalm 65:4, "*Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.*" The love that bought us at the cross also brought us to the cross where we found mercy with God in Christ; the mercy seat. There never was a time when God did not love His people. He loved us as much before we were saved as He does since we are saved. "*For God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"

God's love is **immutable**. God changeth not and there can be no change in his love. John 13:1, "*...when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*" Paul's grand argument for the security of the believer is based upon the fact that nothing can separate us from the love of God; nothing in the grave of the past, nothing in the perils of the present, and nothing in the womb of the future. Romans 8:35-39, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 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."

MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD'S LOVE

In the **gift** of His Son. John 3:16, "*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.*" Ephesians 5:25, "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*" John 10:11, "*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*" As a typical Jew, Nicodemus thought God loved nobody but Jews. Until they were taught better Christ's own disciples thought all the sheep were among the Jews. But the Saviour corrected them in John 10:15-16, "*As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*"

God's love is manifested in the **new birth**. By nature we are children of wrath; by a supernatural birth we become the children of God. Romans 9:8, "*...They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*" I John 3:1, "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*" Jesus explains the new birth to Nicodemus in John 3:1-21, "*There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born*

again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

God's love is manifested in **discipline**. Hebrews 12:6, "*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*" Here is proof that not one of God's children is perfect, they all need the Father's chastening rod. The word for chasten means child training, and the word for scourge means to whip or flog. Children need training and whipping, and the love of God will give us what we need. Chastisement is from the loving hand of a wise father; condemnation is from the truthful lips of a just Judge. When the saints are dealt with for their sins, they are chastened of the Lord, that they might not be condemned with the world. Chastisement is not pleasant but profitable; it increases the fruit of

righteousness and makes us partakers of his holiness.

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF GOD'S LOVE

Several theologians speak of several kinds of divine love, such as the love of pity, or compassion, and the love of complacency. But I like to think of love as one divine principle with varying emotions and exercises, according to the object upon which the love is bestowed.

If the object loved is lovely, then the emotion is that of complacency. If the object loved is in need of kindness and help, then the emotion is that of benevolence. If the object is in distress, the emotion is that of compassion or pity. Just as the active principle of fire is the same regardless of the material upon which it lays hold, so the principle of love is the same.

When God's love terminates upon Himself or upon innocent creatures it is the love of complacency. This is the aspect of love for His Son.

When the love is towards sinners as objects of misery, it is the love of pity.

The love of God is subject to no vicissitude,

*"His love no end nor measure knows,
No change can turn its course,
Eternally the same it flows
From one eternal source."*

God's love is **sovereign**. This ought to be self evident. God Himself is a sovereign, consulting His own imperial pleasure, and working all things after the counsel of His own will. We see sovereignty in human love. The young man selects his bride as the object upon which he bestows his love.

No sinner can lay claim to God's love as his right. Who dare to say that God ought to love him? What was there in this poor sinner to attract the heart of God? Absolutely nothing! On the other hand there was everything to merit His hatred.

"What was there in me that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father, I ever must sing,
Because it seemed good in Thy sight."

God's love is a gracious love and grace is sovereignly bestowed.

The love of God is **effectual**. This also is obvious, for it is the love of the Almighty. Would you expect to go

hungry if you knew a certain millionaire loved you? What love does is the measure of the ability of the lover. The wife who is loved by her husband will find home and its comforts according to the wealth and ability of the man who loves her.

We are often loved by those who are not able to do much for us. They lack the power to do what is in their heart to do for us. Their love does not mean much measured by material benefits, for they lack ability to make their love effectual. Darius loved Daniel but was powerless to save him from the decree he himself had signed. But we, the believers in Jesus Christ, are loved by One who is Almighty. He can save us from the curse of His own law, for He had a Son who was willing to bear the curse of the law for us. Darius could not save Daniel from the lion's den, because the law of the Medes and Persians had no place for substitute, but God had a Son who was willing to be our substitute and who died in our place.

He who can make sure that God loves him may also be assured of eternal salvation. Here is a most important question: How may I know that God loves me? By making sure that I love Him. We love Him because He first loved us. His love for us created our love for Him. I John 4:7-10, *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

Another question: How may I know that I love God? I John 5:3 *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."* In those born again there is the desire to do God's will; in all such there is the spirit of obedience.