

God Loves You

The Bible has wonderful news for man – that his Creator loves him. The Bible is the only book which tells you that God loves you. The Koran tells you that Allah loves you, if you love him, and hates you if you sin. Buddhism denies there is a personal god, and believes only that if you purify yourself you may be reincarnated into a better existence. Hinduism scatters its worship amongst over 300 000 gods and also focuses on being good to improve your next reincarnated experience. New Age insists you are god and ultimate fulfilment comes from loving yourself. Biblical Christianity alone teaches you – the Creator is a living person, and He loves you.

But even in Christian circles, the truth of God loving us has been perverted by two extremes. The one extreme is the lawless libertarians who make God out to be a heavenly Eli, turning a blind eye to sin, permissive of all acts of evil, one who does not like sin, but never really acts against it. They believe God is a cosmic grandfather who strokes all our sentimental notions of wanting to feel cute and adorable in the eyes of God. So these groups rejoice in the love of God, but it is a made-up love, it is worshipping a graven image.

At the other extreme are the harsh legalists, who have made God out to be a cold and exacting, stern God who expects much and excuses nothing. He is cranky, temperamental, and almost impossible to please. For them, it is unthinkable that God could be happy with His people.

Tozer said, ‘Unhappy souls, these, doomed to go heavily on their melancholy way, grimly determined to do right if the heavens fall and to be on the winning side in the day of judgment.’

It is critical that we understand a right conception of God. Our view of God will always affect the way we live our Christian lives.

If we think of God as cold and tough, we will find it impossible to love Him, and our lives will be ruled with a kind of fear, trying to do right to avoid being struck by God. If we think of God as a weak, permissive, sentimental kind of god, we are going to sin without restraint thinking it makes no difference. If we think of God as kind, joyful and understanding, we will serve Him with a grateful, joyful freedom.

What does it mean that God loves us?

To understand this, we have to know two important things:

Firstly - who God is, because who He is will define the way He loves.

Secondly - who we are, because who we are will define why and how He loves us.

God is not our equal. God does not love us as pals, buddies, or pets. Who you are, and who God is, determines how He loves you. If you have received Christ today you are three things. You are His creation, you are a fallen sinner, and you are a redeemed child of God. As such God loves you as a Creator, as a Saviour and as a Father.

I. As His Creation, He Enjoys You

In Genesis 1, we have this delightful comment on God’s view of the work of His own hands. Five times we read, ‘*And God saw that it was good.*’ Now you might ask, ‘Good to whom?’ Who else was there to regard it as good? No one was there, besides possibly the angels. But it is

God who regarded it as good – good in His own eyes. Put simply, He rejoiced in what He had made.

And then man is created – deliberately last. He is to be the climax of it all; he will be far more complex than any other creature, and then above all, God will put a part of Himself into the man – He breathes into man a soul. Verse 31 tells us that God looks at His completed creation and it was *very* good.

God rejoiced in His creation. He enjoyed man as a work of His own hands. He refers to us in those words sometimes – ‘*The work of my hands.*’

And **Psalm 139** tells us just what kind of care God takes with each human.

Psalm 139:13-16 *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.*

Consider your own experience. When you have made something, and it has turned out well, how do you feel about it? Whether it be a painting, a computer programme, a piece of music, a TV commercial, a workable solution for your business or your clients, an engine, a clever lesson for the children, a tasty meal, a beautiful garden – when you have in some way designed it and put it together, what are your feelings toward it? You enjoy it, you come back to it, and you like to look at it.

From where did we get that attitude of enjoying creativity? It is part of being made in the image of God. What we make, we enjoy.

And this is how God is. God enjoys His creation.

Proverbs 8:22-31 tells us of God's joy in mankind as His creation. Notice verse 31: ‘*rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.*’

God was delighting in man.

What about the fact that sin entered the picture? God still enjoys His creation. When God is replying to Job; it is thousands of years after the Fall of Adam, and yet God spends four chapters listing the beauty of His creation, from the planet itself, with its foundations and inner core, to its rotation, to the weather, to the oceans, to the animals – listing ten animals. God is praising His own creation to Job to teach Job about His wisdom and power as Creator and Sovereign in Job's life. The point is that God clearly still enjoys His creation. In **Romans 8** God tells us the creation is groaning to be released to its original state of perfection. There is a curse. But God is not miserable about the earth. It is still as Psalm 24, ‘*the LORD'S and the fullness thereof.*’

And the Bible tells us that all men are still in the image of God – **James 3:9**. When speaking to the unsaved Athenians, Paul says in **Acts 17:28** : ‘*For we are indeed his offspring.*’ Now, we are fallen; the image of God is marred in us, and we are not natural born sons of God, but we are still God's offspring in the sense we are the works of His hands. God knits every human in the womb. God does in fact love the world.

And God looks at you, one of the works of His hands, and He enjoys you. If God enjoys watching the mountain goat and the lion and the fish, be sure He enjoys watching the crown of His creation – humans.

Our Lord Himself said in **Luke 12:6-7** ‘*Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.⁷ Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.*’

2. As a Sinner, He Pities You

One of the hardest things for us to understand is how God can love a sinner? The definition of sin is ‘to do or think or say that which is contrary to God.’ Your sin is a violation of God. And if you and I are sinners, we are by definition, God offenders, God-crossers. How can God love a sinner?

The answer is in **Psalm 103**.

God’s love is that He pities the sinner. He sees we are just dust (**vs 14-16**); we are here today and gone tomorrow, and we spend most of our days falling short of the glory of God, missing the mark.

Psalm 90:10 *The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

And missing that mark hurts us, it harms us, it robs us. And God, with perfect knowledge, sees what we are, and also knows what we should have been.

And His love pities us.

How many times do we read God saying these words to His people:

Deut 5:29 *Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!*

Psalm 81:13-16 *"Oh, that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways! ¹⁴ I would soon subdue their enemies, And turn My hand against their adversaries. ¹⁵ The haters of the LORD would pretend submission to Him, But their fate would endure forever. ¹⁶ He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat; And with honey from the rock I would have satisfied you."*

Isa 48:18 *Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.*

Eight times in Deuteronomy God says that if Israel kept His commandments it would go well with them.

Put simply, God knows that obeying Him is our health and happiness, and disobeying Him is our destruction and misery. And because He knows that our sin blinds us as well – He pities us.

It is like a vet who sees a rabid dog. He knows the rabies is driving the dog mad. He knows the dog will probably try to bite him. But because of his love for animals he wants to help it

before it destroys itself. Even though it may bite him, his love will actually be slow to get angry. He will do as much as he can to help the dog, before giving up on it.

Look at the threefold nature of God's love – translated mercy in the King James version (hesed).

- [He is *slow to anger*, because He wants to help us before He destroys us. So He is patient with our rebellion.
- [He is *merciful*, holding back the punishment we deserve, not rewarding us with what we deserve (**Psalm 103:10**), and actually forgiving us of our sins if we repent and receive His offering (**Psalm 103:3**).
- [And then He is *gracious* – it gives us far more than we deserve (**Psalm 103:4-5**).

God does not give a swift retaliation for your sin, even as you are offending Him. He holds back what you deserve while He operates on you, trying to remove the cancer destroying you. And then He puts you on a lifelong recovery program called the Christian life.

In the end, it is only a stubborn rejection of the outstretched hand of God that seals our fate as objects of wrath and anger. If we will not let God have His way of mercy with us, He will let us have our own way which brings His unstoppable hand of justice.

3. As His Child, He Treasures You

Does God love a believer in a different way to how He loves an unbeliever? Yes, without a doubt. Because, once you are a believer, you are more than a creature and a sinner whom He pities; you are now in His own family. You are not strangers, but are in a sense, God's flesh and blood. He plants His own seed in you at salvation.

The relationship is as intimate as it can be. God loves you as if you were His firstborn Son.

He regards you as He regards His Son.

Now that might sound extreme. Is there any Scripture to say that God the Father loves us the way He loves God the Son?

John 17:23 *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

Yes, to be a child of God is to be one of the brothers and sisters of the firstborn.

That's exactly how **Romans 8:29** puts it: *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

How can that be? How can we be loved by God the way God loves His own Son? It is because of what He does at Calvary. God clothes you in the righteousness of His own Son.

2 Cor 5:21: *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

God did more than impute your sin to Christ on the cross. He imputes Christ's righteousness to you. So that when God looks at you, He sees His Son's perfect obedience. He sees His Son's perfect love for Him. He sees His Son's spotless, glorious righteousness. And as the

Father looks at the Son, both at His baptism and at His transfiguration, He says, ‘*This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*’.

As God’s child, God takes pleasure in you.

Psalm 149:4 *For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation.*

He delights in you, not because of your works, but because of what He has clothed you with. The Song of Songs captures what God sees when he regards you.

Son 4:7 *You are all fair, my love, And there is no spot [flaw] in you.*

What about my sin, though? His wrath has been poured out on Calvary. Your disobedience and mine displeases Him, the same way a human parent is displeased with disobedience. But He is forever delighting in the righteousness of His Son that clothes you. And Tozer put it this way again:

“He may sometimes chasten us, it is true, but even this He does with a smile, the proud, tender smile of a Father who is bursting with pleasure over an imperfect but promising son who is coming every day to look more and more like the One whose child he is.”

He gives you what He gives His Son.

What does this mean that you are an adopted child whom He treats as His own? It means all the blessings and gifts of father to a child apply.

In this life it means, He will provide for you, as a father feeds his children. He will defend and protect you as a father protects his own wife and children. He will help you, as a father helps his growing children with things they cannot yet do. He will teach you, the way a father teaches his children about the world. He will encourage you, the way a father encourages his children. Jesus explained it to us, when he said, “*Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*” (**Mat 7:9-11**)

But that is only in this life. Do you know what God plans to give us in the next? He plans to give us a share in the very glory of Jesus Christ.

Rom 8:17 *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

He plans to allow us to inherit what the Son inherits, and be glorified with Him. And if you think that is heretical, allow the words of the Lord Jesus Himself to make it plain.

Rev 3:21 *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

Rev 21:7 *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

Yes, that which belongs to the Son, belongs to His Bride. God treasures you as His child.

2 Thess 2:14 *Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

John 17:22 *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:*

He desires your fellowship as He desires His Son's fellowship.

From the Lord's high-priestly prayer in John 17, we get a taste of the deep love in the Triune God.

John 3:35 *The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.*

God delights in His Son, and the Son delights in the Father. They love one another's fellowship, and enjoy it forever. The Father earnestly desires the fellowship of His Son. And since you are clothed with His righteousness, and are His child, He earnestly desires your fellowship.

Doesn't that make you want to pray? Want to be in the Word? Want to just be with Him? He desires you!

Son 7:10 *I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*

I am not saying we become equal with Christ, or replace Him, or anything of that nature. It means that God loves us for Christ's sake; God treasures us as we wear His Son's likeness. In fact, when we understand it, we see how much glory it gives Him. He loves us for Christ's sake. He treasures us for Christ's sake. He blesses us for Christ's sake. And it is absolute sovereign grace that we should be in Christ and receive it.

Tozer put it this way:

"Fellowship with God is delightful beyond all telling...He is not sensitive nor selfish nor temperamental. What He is today we shall find Him tomorrow and the next day and the next year. He is not hard to please, though He may be hard to satisfy. He expects of us only what He has Himself first supplied. He is quick to mark every simple effort to please Him, and just as quick to overlook imperfections when He knows we meant to do His will. He loves us for ourselves and values our love more than galaxies of newly created worlds."

As His own creation – He enjoys you. As a sinner, He pities you and wants to free you from it. As a Father, He treasures you.