

13 SEPTEMBER 2020 – THE LOVE OF GOD

Love, they say, makes the world go round. More songs and poems have been written about love than just about any other subject.

And yes – love is absolutely essential in our lives.

From the moment we're born until when we die, we do need love. So, why is it that so many people don't experience real love in their lives? **Real love – the sort that God talks about a lot.**

I want us to open up God's Word to discover what God has to say about love – not what we imagine, not what we hope for with love, not even what others tell us is the truth about love.

What does God say about His Love towards us? That amazingly, overwhelming Love that He wants to pour into our lives.

What God has to say about real love – His Love - may well surprise you. And it will definitely change you ... for ever.

God's love justifies our lives and fills **us** with hope for the future. **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."** John 3:16.

The Good News is that even death has no dominion over those who **love God** and are **loved** by the **Lord**.

Let me begin by acknowledging that there is a lot of interest in this topic and many Christians wonder if God's love is **unconditional** or **conditional**.

You and I have to be careful and wise when we use those terms because it is easy to convey the wrong impression about God and the seriousness and importance of salvation.

The extremes of either view is that:

[1] God's love is **unconditional** therefore God loves us no matter what we do. So, we are therefore free to do as we please and we will still get to heaven because God loves us and has to forgive us. That view leads to sloppy grace and total liberty from consequences of our sin - which is deception . . .

OR

[2] God's love is strictly **conditional** so I have to perform and follow all the legal rules which leads us to legalism and exclusivity regarding heaven and it puts us back into the bondage of the Law of the O.T..

They are the extremes!

So I want to start with an anecdote:

A certain catholic priest announced he would be preaching next Sunday evening on **"The Love of God."** As the shadows fell and the light ceased to come in through the cathedral windows, the congregation gathered. In the darkness of the altar, the priest lit a candle and carried it to the crucifix.

First of all, he illuminated the crown of thorns, then slowly he moved down to the two wounded hands, then the mark of the spear wound in his side from which blood and water had poured out. Then, finally, reverently, down over the whip scarred body to the nail torn feet.

In the hush that fell, he finally blew out the candle and quietly left the chancel.

There was nothing else to say.

When we come to the topic of Love we are reminded in the Scriptures that **God is Love** 1 John 4:8 and 1 John 4:16 KJV.

There is only one source of pure, divine love, and wherever that love is present, you know that the possessor of that love has found its source in God.

God's love is absolutely selfless. He loves the unloving to make them love, putting away their sin and perfecting their union with Himself.

And, unfortunately, people stop there.

But God is immensely more than the one facet called Love.

God is Holy, He is Just, He is Righteous, He is Jealous of us, He is also a **God of wrath, of Judgment.** God is a lot of things.

We need to understand what people actually mean when they talk of the **Unconditional Love** of God.

Does God love unconditionally? That's the question. In fact, that's really the BIG QUESTION.

I believe there is such a thing as unconditional love in God, but it's not what most people generally mean by that phrase.

When I think of God and Love I have to think clearly about what the "word" of God is saying and not be driven by what my emotions or even those mental beliefs which brink on humanistic Philosophy, in all of us, might cause my belief system to adopt.

Now, I say this carefully, so please listen carefully and catch my spirit on this:

God's love is eternal, it is everlasting, it is wonderful . . . but,

- **God's Love is not a saving love** that he has for everybody though it is available to all.
- Otherwise everybody would already be saved irrespective of their sin, iniquities, wickedness etc., since they would not have to meet any conditions. Not even the condition of faith. We know that we need to have faith in Christ to be saved but Jesus said everybody is not saved Matthew 24:46-51
- **God's love is not the critical aspect that justifies sinners** since the Bible says we are justified by **faith**, and faith is a condition. Romans 5:1
- **God's love is not the love of working all things together for every person's good** because Paul says that happens **"to those who love God and are called according to His purposes"** Romans 8:28. Another condition.
- **It's not the love of the most intimate fellowship with the Father** because Jesus said, **"He who loves me [condition] will be loved by my Father"** John 14:21. Condition.
- And James said, **"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you"** James 4:8. Conditions.
- **It's not the love that will admit us into heaven** when we die because John says, **"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life"** Revelation 2:10. Faithfulness is a condition.

Thousands of people speak of the unconditional love of God but we need to pray that they would discover the true biblical meaning of what they say when they use the **"unconditional"** word. If that happened many would find their feet on more solid ground.

Yes! God loves you but that doesn't mean you are saved and going to heaven. Entry to Heaven has conditions attached to the ticket.

The Bible tells us that God **hates** the wicked ([Psalm 11:5](#)). Doesn't say that God hates their wickedness thus separating the perpetrator from the consequences. God says they are wicked and I hate them.

That's powerful and that is definite. We say, "Love the sinner, hate the sin". Which is a correct attitude to have in trying to reach that lost soul for Christ. However, sinner has to repent of his sin and seek forgiveness from the Lord. Conditional.

So immediately we can see that whilst God is Love, there are things that even **Love** hates. Wesley says of this verse: **"He chastens even righteous persons, yet still he loves them, and therefore will in due time deliver them. But as for the wicked, God hates them, and will severely punish them."**

When the Lord Jesus comes back, He will inflict **"vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction"** [2 Thess 1:8,9](#).

1Th 5:9 (KJV) **For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,** demonstrates clearly whether there be conditional love or

unconditional love there is "**wrath**" for those who have not obtained salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we do not know God and do not obey God, we should not allow ourselves to be put at ease by any thought of God's love saving us despite our refusal to accept Him, but we should be terrified by the thought of God's judgment on the unsaved.

I recall someone once trying to persuade me that: in the end, everyone will go to heaven because God, in His love, could not and would not allow any of His creation, go to hell. Then the person said, "That if God allowed anyone to go to hell then that person could not worship such a God, in all good conscience.

My reply was that I could not worship a God who allowed His only begotten son to suffer and die so atrociously for my sins, lead people to believe of their need to join Christ in His sufferings for two thousand years, for many to become martyrs, and then in the end say, Well all that really doesn't matter, my sons death means nothing, come in anyway.

Whilst God always remains Love, yet God does not unconditionally love everybody in the sense that everybody will go to heaven. That's as false a belief as, I'll go to heaven because I say I am good.

God is love. And because He is love, He cares about who we are and what we do.

God Is Love: If you fully understand that statements then you realise that it affirms that True Love is not an emotion – Love - real love - is GOD!

Because He is love, He hates evil. God's love of what is good must lead to His judgment on what is evil, otherwise His love is empty and He is not **just**.

Yet there are ways in which God's love is unconditional.

Several ways:

*It could be argued that He loves us with electing love unconditionally. "**He chose us in him before the foundation of the world . . . for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.**" Ephesians 1:4-5.*

Now, the questions is how did He choose us, but that's another sermon.

Acts 13:48 says, "**As many as were appointed to eternal life believed.**"

[2] He loves us with **regenerating love** before we meet any condition. The new birth is not God's response to our meeting the condition of faith. On the contrary, the new birth enables us to believe.

A] "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been [already!] born of God," 1 John 5:1

B] "[We] were born, not . . . of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" John 1:13.

In addition we discover in the Scriptures that:

[3] God "**is kind to the ungrateful and the evil**" ([Luke 6:35](#)).

[4] He "**desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**" ([1 Timothy 2:4](#)).

[5] 2 Peter 3:9 kjv "**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**"

We know that it is His desire that none should perish, and we know also that some will because they refuse to meet those conditions. No matter how much God loves - the word of God tells us that, "**no flesh should glory in His presence.**" 1 Cor. 1:28 The unsaved will not enter heaven and those who don't enter have no excuse. The Bible clearly states that they are without excuse. Rom. 1:20

When we become believers, we know that God has loved us with a special kind of unconditional love. His love for us is not based on anything that we did, but flows from who God is, because "**while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**" ([Romans 5:9](#)).

It is an incredible love that takes the risk of such an agonising death in the hope of a spiritual response from that person so loved.

It is however, Conditional That We Abide in His love.

But, even when we are Christians, we can easily go wrong by talking casually about God's **unconditional** love.

Jesus tells us "**abide in my love**" ([John 15:9](#)). We can so easily move away from God and from experiencing God.

God's love for us and our love for God is linked to our obedience.

Jesus says there are two conditions for us if we want to be loved by God: loving Jesus and keeping His commandments – and these really are one and the same.

John 14:21 KJV "**He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.**"

John 14:15 "**If ye love me, keep my commandments.**"

John 15:10 "**If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.**

I am suggesting to us all that we should not go through life thinking, "**God loves us, no strings attached – everything will be okay, it doesn't matter what I do, God has to forgive me.**"

That is a wrong and dangerous understanding of the love of God.

What we really need to comprehend is that this whole concept of God's Love begins with God and not with us.

It starts with God! It doesn't start with how you or I feel God should be like; it doesn't start with our humanistic philosophy about what LOVE is; it doesn't start with how we prefer it to be: It starts with God!

It all starts with the love of God. "**The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.**" ([Jeremiah 31:3](#)).

Our security is not in what we do or think, but in **His promises**. "**For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord**" ([Romans 8:38-39](#)).

Remember, this is speaking to the **saved** believers, this passage is an encouragement and affirmation of God's love to Christians, sons of God, members of the Body of Christ.

Our response to God's love is so important – it really matters!

God's love is wonderful, eternal, overwhelming, deeper than we can imagine and it is for us if – note the conditions! –

if we trust Jesus as our Saviour,

if we love Him,

if we obey His commands,

if we devote ourselves "to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" ([Acts 2:42](#)).

Both conditional love or unconditional love are humanistic psychological terms and not actually found in the **Bible**.

God's love, as revealed in the Bible, is:

[1] *eternal* ([Psalm 136](#)),

[2] *perfect* ([1 John 4:16-18](#)),

[3] *unfailing* ([Psalm 33:5](#), [143:8](#), [Exodus 15:13](#)), and

[4] *infinite* ([Ephesians 3:16-19](#)).

However, I think that amongst people, Christians included, that God's love is often described as *unconditional* because we humans, deep in our hearts, long to be loved and accepted without any conditions or reservations.

Such love and acceptance can only be given by a self-sufficient being like our God, because we know it is beyond our capacity.

There are [four Greek words for love](#):

eros (intimate love),

storge (family love),

philia (friendship, brotherly love), and

agape (unconditional love). The word *agape* is used to represent divine love; it is the greatest gift from God to all mankind ([1 Corinthians 13](#) and [John 3:16](#)).

Checking even further in the Scriptures to examine whether God's love is truly unconditional, especially when looking to some of those statements said by Jesus Himself, as well as others:

- *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him..."* ([John 14:23](#)).
- *He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God* ([John 3:18](#)).
- *"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine"* ([Exodus 19:5](#)).
- *Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known* ([Deuteronomy 11:26-28](#)).
- *The Lord hates these seven things: eyes that show pride, tongues that tell lies, hands that kill innocent people, hearts that plan evil things to do, feet that run to do evil, witnesses in court who tell lies, and anyone who causes family members to fight* ([Proverbs 6:16-19](#)).

Many more examples can be found throughout the Bible (e.g., [John 3:36](#), [Matthew 6:14-15](#), [Romans 1:18](#), [Psalm 5:5](#)) showing that God's love can also be conditional.

All of this means that even though God loves His Creation, God does not tolerate sins, wickedness, disobedience, and hostility toward Himself.

And it is rightly so in light of His holiness and sovereignty.

A clear human distinction is commonly understood:

Conditional love is "earned" on the basis of certain conditions that should be met [some find their parents love very conditional], **while unconditional love is given freely and completely without expecting anything in return** [which is rare in human experience].

Loving conditionally means to love if the object deserves the love, whereas loving unconditionally means to love despite the object being unworthy of love.

We have examined closely the conditionality of God's love. So, let us now look further to the other soul-reviving aspect of God's love.

GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

God's love is unconditional, in a sense, that love is His nature ([1 John 4:8](#), [Deuteronomy 7:9](#)) hence there is never a moment when God does not love.

Everything God does is done out of love; even God's anger is a holy expression of His love ([Psalm 30:5](#), [Micah 7:18](#)).

God is good and generous to everyone, regardless of their disposition toward Him ([Matthew 5:45](#)). The rejection and rebellion of humanity against God can never change the truth that God is love. In other words, God is always a God of love despite our actions and attitudes toward Him. God's love, as described by Dr. John T. Yates, is **“unconditional and unselfish concern of God, in emotion, volition, and action for man's highest good.”**

God has given humanity the best gift fully manifested in the person of Jesus [Christ](#), so that we may know His love and have a personal relationship with Him ([Romans 8:31-32](#)).

God's plan since the beginning has been to prosper us, to protect us, and to give us purpose in this life ([Jeremiah 29:11](#)). And even more, God, in His extraordinary love, grants those who receive and believe Jesus, the permanent status as the [beloved] children of God ([John 1:12](#)).

What a great blessing and privilege to be compassionately loved by the Heavenly Father with the likeness of a father-child relationship ([Psalm 103:13](#)), which lasts forever.

GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE EXAMPLES IN THE BIBLE

There are many examples of God's unfaithful love in the Bible. In the Old Testament, God, in His sovereignty, has chosen [Israel as His treasured people from \[and to bless\] all the nations on earth](#). Instead of responding to God's love by living in trust and obedience, unfortunately, the Israelites rebelled against Him so many times by worshipping other gods and deliberately disobeying Him.

But God's promise never fails: He repeatedly forgives, restores, and glorifies Israel because of His unfaithful love ([Jeremiah 31:3](#)).

Israel's journey [and struggles] with God could actually represent our spiritual walk by faith in Him who has loved us with an everlasting love.

King David, despite his sins, acknowledged the immeasurable love of God toward those who fear Him ([Psalm 103:10-12](#)).

God's love has also been demonstrated in the life of Paul the Apostle, who formerly hated and persecuted Christians, but was unexpectedly visited by Jesus Himself through a divine encounter that radically transformed his life forever. He ended up becoming the author of nearly half of the New Testament books, upon which most doctrines of the Christian faith are laid. Paul believes that the love of God has been revealed through the work of Christ [what Christ has done] for us ([Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Ephesians 2:4-5](#)).

The Bible is very clear on this point: no one or nothing can ever separate us [the saved] from God's love in Jesus Christ ([Romans 8:38-39](#)).

WHY DOES THIS MATTER FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY?

God's love is unconditional according to His grace and mercy, but also conditional in His holiness and sovereignty.

Unconditional love involves total acceptance, while conditional love involves discipline; both are motivated by a sincere desire to bring the greatest good to [and the best out of] the object of love. The Heavenly Father proves his love to us by a divine discipline so that we might share in His holiness ([Hebrews 12:6-10](#)).

In contrast to God's unconditional love, human love (apart from God) is conditional: without the love of God in our hearts, we are not able to love unconditionally.

The real meaning of love is clearly described in the Bible ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)), however, because of fallen human nature, we struggle to grasp what love is all about because the essence of love contradicts our self-centred nature. In fact, we can love [and know what love means] because God first loved us ([1 John 4:19](#)).

Learning how to love like God has loved us is a lifetime process because God's love is incomprehensible.

Thanks be to God, He has revealed His love to humanity by sending His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him in the journey of loving God and loving one another ([1 John 3:16, 4:7-9](#)).

Loving unconditionally starts with living unselfishly; it is a life fully dedicated to Christ ([Galatians 2:20](#)) who enables us to truly love God and each other ([1 Peter 4:8](#)).

At the end of this sermon are a lot more Bible References for you to check out but I don't want to leave anyone of us in doubt about God's great love for every one of us. Part of understanding the profoundness of God's love for us is discovered by the answers to two questions:

How does God demonstrate His love for us?

Why does God love us?

These profound questions finds there answer in the very nature of God Himself. [First John 4:8](#) teaches that, "**God is love.**" Not only does God love; love is part of His essential nature. Love is who God is, therefore He cannot but love.

Do we deserve His love?

No! Romans 5:8 clearly teaches, "**God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**" We had not even been born yet, and God was already at work to provide a way for us to spend eternity with Him ([John 3:16](#)). Jesus even noted that He is preparing a place for those who love Him ([John 14:3](#)) where we will dwell in His presence forever.

There are limitless expressions of God's perfect, love for us. One of these is the fact that He created us. [Colossians 1:16](#) says, "**All things were created through him and for him.**"

This includes every person who has ever lived. [John 1:3](#) adds, "**all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.**"

God also shows His love for humanity by sustaining our lives.

[Colossians 1:17](#) teaches, "**And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**" [1 Peter 1:5](#) notes believers are those, "**who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**" [2 Timothy 1:12](#) adds, "**I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.**"

God has revealed His love through sending His only Son Jesus Christ to provide salvation for those who believe.

[John 3:16](#) observes, "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**" His salvation provides inexpressible joy, "**Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls**" ([1 Peter 1:8-9](#)).

God reveals His love through salvation.

[Ephesians 2:8-9](#) instructs, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**" Salvation is God's free gift to those who will receive it, an expression of love that includes eternal life.

God reveals His love through the calling and gifts He has given us.

[Ephesians 2:10](#) shares, "**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**" [1 Corinthians 12:7](#) adds, "**To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.**"

God reveals His love by making believers part of God's family.

[1 John 3:1](#) declares, "**See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.**"

God reveals His love for believers particularly by preparing an eternal home with Him.

[John 14:2-3](#) promises, "**In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.**"

Many additional examples could be provided to show how God loves us, but the only adequate reason to explain why God loves us is found in His very nature. He is love, and His love for us as His created beings ultimately brings glory to His name.

God loves us not because we are loveable but because He is love. And because He is love, He can only will what is best for us, which is to be transformed into a being of holy love like Himself.

He will settle for nothing less.

As we meditate on God's love for us, especially in the cross of Christ, our love for God and our neighbour will increase, and our hearts will become more and more like God's — filled with love. May I close by sharing one of my favourite Biblical Verses regarding "Love?" It comes from Song of Solomon 8:7 kjv

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: AMEN!

The Biblical description of God's love:

- [Psalm 136](#)
- [1 John 4:16-18](#)
- [Psalm 33:5](#)
- [Psalm 143:8](#)
- [Exodus 15:13](#)
- [Ephesians 3:16-19](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)
- [John 3:16](#)

The conditionality of God's love:

- [John 14:23](#)
- [John 3:18](#)
- [John 3:36](#)
- [Matthew 6:14-15](#)
- [Romans 1:18](#)
- [Exodus 19:5](#)
- [Deuteronomy 11:26-28](#)
- [Psalm 5:5](#)
- [Proverbs 6:16-19](#)

God's unconditional love:

- [1 John 4:8](#)
- [Deuteronomy 7:9](#)

- [Psalm 30:5](#)
- [Micah 7:18](#)
- [Matthew 5:45](#)
- [Romans 8:31-32](#)
- [Jeremiah 29:11](#)
- [John 1:12](#)
- [Psalm 103:13](#)

God's unfailing love examples in the Bible:

- [Jeremiah 31:3](#)
- [Psalm 103:10-12](#)
- [Romans 5:8](#)
- [2 Corinthians 8:9](#)
- [Ephesians 2:4-5](#)
- [Romans 8:38-39](#)

Christians Response to God's Love:

- [Hebrews 12:6-10](#)
- [1 John 4:19](#)
- [1 John 3:16](#)
- [1 John 4:7-9](#)
- [Galatians 2:20](#)
- [1 Peter 4:8](#)

