

What Effect Does God's Love Have on You?

Scripture Reading: I John 3:1-3

We want to take some time to *"Behold / See"* the love of God. I John 3:16 tells us that we can perceive or know God's love *"because He [Christ] laid down His life for us."* What good is love if it is not communicated? How important it is that love be understood! We can read in John's Gospel, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."* (John 3:16). Back in the book of first John, we are also told that, because of God's love, *"we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* (I John 3:16). So, love is a powerful force that affects the world and changes things...changes us. Let's consider a few statements from Scripture.

As we consider that God is holy (i.e. separate from / different than any other thing / person. Things like His knowledge, wisdom, power, purity. He is eternal and unchangeable.), we must consider that His holiness includes His love. It is His essence. God's love initiated our relationship with Him and is the only way that we can truly love God, or anyone else. See I John 4:7-19.

The world, dominated by Satan and the natural man, cannot manufacture this love. Natural man may try to imitate it, but their reproductions will fall short of the glory of God's love. See I John 2:15-17 cp. Romans 3:9-20,23; I John 5:19.

The love of God is characterized by selfless giving. It is sacrificial (John 3:16; 15:13; Romans 5:8; I John 3:16-18). Jesus took an old commandment (Matthew 22:36-40 – Note verse 39) and turned it into a new commandment by His personal sacrifice and example (John 13:33-35; I John 2:7-11)

God's love (God's Spirit ministering truth to us) is a primary force in what sanctifies us (i.e. what makes us different than the world and become more like God). See Romans 5:1-11 (especially verses 5, 8); Ephesians 3:14-19; II Corinthians 5:14-15 (cp. II Corinthians 5:16-21); Jeremiah 31:3; 9:23-24 (cp. I Corinthians 1:26-31). See the relationship of love and truth John 17:14-23; I Corinthians 13:4-8a (especially verse 6). The environment of God's love preserves us. See Jude 1:20-21; Ephesians 3:14-19; John 15:1-14 (especially verses 5,7,9).

Love is our primary debt to God. One way that we fulfil our love to God is by loving other people – especially the family of God (Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 5:44-48; Galatians 6:9-10; I Peter 1:22; 2:17). God's love requires us to give the gospel to others. See Romans 1:14-16; II Corinthians 5:14-15, 18-20. We must be careful to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15a, 25, 29 cp. James 3:13-18).

Our Scripture reading (I John 3:1-3) provides us three effects of God's love.

God's Love Separates Us from the World. (I John 3:1)

God's love changes us so much, that the world will label us. From the world it is not a term of endearment, when they call us "*sons / children of God.*" The label "*Christian*" came from unbelievers in Antioch around A.D. 43 (Acts 11:26). The word means, "Belonging to the party of Christ." A search of Acts 11:19-26 will give us clues as to how God's love, working in us and through us, causes us to earn the title "Christian."

- Preaching the Word (Acts 11:19)
- Preaching the Lord Jesus (Acts 11:20)
- Believing in Christ and turning from sin to the Lord (Acts 11:21)
- Clinging to the Lord (Acts 11:22-23)
- Good works, spirituality, faith (Acts 11:24)
- Time invested in teaching and learning. As "disciples" they were committed to obedience to that teaching, (Acts 11:25-26 cp. Acts 2:40-42; Matthew 28:18-20)

God's love called us out of the world (Ephesians 2:1-6; Matthew 16:24-26; Galatians 1:4). The world seconds that motion by pushing us away (I John 3:1,13; Matthew 10:24-25; John 15:17-21; 16:1-3, 33; I Peter 4:12-19). God's love exposes us to His grace and, at the same time, the world's wrath. God's love will preserve us through all the persecutions of this world (Romans 8:35-39).

God's Love Blesses Us Now and Forever. (I John 3:2)

Through faith in Christ, we can know that we belong to Him now (John 1:12-13; Ephesians 1:13; Romans 8:14-16). We also have the joy and assurance that we will belong to Him forever (Ephesians 2:4-7; John 10:27-30; 14:1-6; 17:20-26 cp. I John 1:1-4). We look forward to a glorious future filled with God's love (Philippians 3:20-21; I Corinthians 15:51-58; Jeremiah 29:11; 31:3).

God's Love Gives Us a Purifying Hope. (I John 3:3)

This hope of a glorious future – of being with Christ and of being like Christ, not only encourages us, but it sanctifies us. If our future is holiness, should we not, then, start now and strive to be like Him – here in this life? Let us encourage each other to look forward to a glorious future and to work towards the goal of glorifying Christ now – in our lives, in our worship, in our church! See Ephesians 1:12; 2:10; 3:21; Matthew 5:13-16; I Peter 2:9-12; I Thessalonians 5:1-11; II Peter 3:10-14.

If God's love is so wonderful, why doesn't everybody love God? If God's love is so powerful, why do Christians have to struggle with loving Him supremely? Why doesn't God's love dominate the dealings that Christians have with each other... with all people in the world?