

The Immeasurable Love of God

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It is clear from Scripture that God loves His elect people unconditionally. The Lord does not discover loveliness in us and find Himself attracted to us because of that, but rather by His sanctifying grace He deposits loveliness in us.

The immeasurable, unchangeable, and unconditional love of God is something that is wonderful and precious beyond our abilities to assess. We who are the objects of that divine love are infinitely more treasured by our heavenly Father than we can know. Yet, because the unconditional love of the Lord is not the same thing as an absolute indulgence, we at times feel as though our God's love for us is weak, wavering, or that it has expired to be replaced by divine wrath. Here we must have a clear understanding of the difference between the nature of the love of God and the administration of that love.

It is clear from Scripture that God loves His elect people unconditionally. The Lord does not discover loveliness in us and find Himself attracted to us because of that, but rather by His sanctifying grace He deposits loveliness in us. Therefore, we read of our being predestined in love (Eph. 1:4,5), and of God's demonstration of His love for us in that while we were at our sinful worst, He gave His Son to die for us (Rom. 5:8). We have done nothing, nor can we do anything, to deserve or compel the Lord's love for us. It is for us a wonderful, liberating, and soul-securing truth that the ground for God's love for us is in Himself not in us. Thus, the foundation for that love is unchangeable, as God Himself is unchangeable.

However, in the administration of God's love, we sometimes find it difficult to perceive that love. This is so because God does not always show us His love in every detail and circumstance of our lives. This is not to say that anything other than His love is the source of all details and circumstances of our lives. It is rather to acknowledge that the changing details of our lives form part of a pattern designed by our heavenly Father according to His wise, holy, and loving determination. We perceive now in part, and that incomplete perception accounts for our occasionally losing sight of the love of the Lord.

We especially fail to see the love God has for us in the trials, afflictions, and deprivations of our lives. But our reckoning that circumstances contrary to our desires betray something less than our God perfectly loving us manifests our confusing divine love with divine indulgence. Our faith should cling to the clear teaching of God's Word, and not seek to read the level of our Father's love for us from the mystery of His providential dealings with us. The Word of God clearly

tells us that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases (Lam. 3:22), that God has supremely and undeniably demonstrated His love for us in Christ's death for us (Rom. 5:8), that our God lovingly causes all things to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28), and that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Rom. 8:38,39).

Although the love of God is constant, its administration toward us varies according to our need and according to the wise and loving purposes of our Father. Because our God loves us with an immeasurable, unchangeable, wise, and holy love, His love will be like none we have ever experienced. Precisely because He loves us, He treats us at times as though He does not. There is wise and loving design in His treatments which seem to contradict His professions of love for us.

By our Lord's judicious withdrawals of the manifestations of His love, for example, we are trained to hunger and thirst for His love, viewing it as more vital to us than we perhaps presumptuously had been doing. In short, the pure, unceasing manifestation of God's love for us in our current less than perfectly sanctified state would prove not a delightful refreshment to our souls, but a debilitating intoxication overwhelming us. As God's glory fully manifested to us as we are now would consume us, so His love poured upon us without judicious administration would not edify, but would ruin us.

Thus, we should realise that we are in a school wherein we are being trained to contain greater measures of the pure and potent love of the Lord. Our God does not deal with us according to what we deserve, but that does not mean that He indulges and spoils us. Rather, He deals with us according to His design, which is wise, holy, and ever loving.

One day we shall see the face of our Lord, and behold with perfect clarity His most tenderly intimate disposition toward us. Then we shall see that His love has prompted all of His actions toward and provisions for us. Until that day, we perceive His love as through a veil. But the veil covers only sense and sight. Faith penetrates it and enables us through the safety and certainty of its conduit to see and sense what a great love the Father has for us. Faith enables us to trace the most painful and perplexing aspects of God's providence to the source not of a heedless, hapless, or hating divinity, but to our infinitely wise, perfectly holy, and unchangeably loving heavenly Father. So, let us by faith not only work out our love for God and for others, but, even more fundamentally, work out a right apprehension of the love our God has for us.

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