

Lovers! of What and Whom

by H.J. Vine

God's love is the foundation of the family of God and the source of love in our hearts.

Scripture: 1 John 4:10

Topics: "Gods Love", "Christian Living"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the profound love of God that has begotten a family of believers who love Him deeply. This love is demonstrated through God's great love for us even when we were in sin, desiring us to be His children. Believers are called to love God, love the brethren, and have a deep love for the truth, being marked by their sincerity in loving the Lord Jesus Christ. As believers grow in light and love, they reflect the virtues of God and are instructed to show hospitality and love to all, especially to good and lowly men.

Transcript

God's own love has begotten a family which loves Him, so that we read in the Word of "them that love God" (Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 2). His love is declared to be "His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins;" and we are called upon to behold the manner of His love, in that nothing less would satisfy Him but we should be His children.

The lovers of God are lovers of the brethren; for it is said, "Everyone that loves Him that begat, loves him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1); or, as the apostle to the Gentiles so often writes, they are marked by "love to all the saints." Moreover they are distinctly shown to have that of which unbelievers are void, "the love of the truth," The truth of God is valued by them increasingly, they are lovers of the truth. Jesus said, "They that are of the truth hear My voice." Above all, grace has wrought so wonderfully and divinely with them that at a time when the One who is "the Truth" personally is being denied His true glory, they have the precious privilege of being true and loyal to Him, who is the delight of the heart of God, our Father, for they "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" (Eph. 6:24). they are lovers of the Lord.

As they prosper in light and love, the excellencies and virtues of that which is divinely beautiful will manifest themselves through these lovers of God. He has received them into His house of plenty, as we learn from the story of the prodigal. And as they rejoice in His love and all that it has done and is doing and will yet do for them, they become like Him and are instructed to be "lovers of hospitality" (Titus 1:8). And while doing good unto all, lowly men and good men are to find a specially welcome place with them, for they are to be "lovers of good men" (Titus 1:8). Like God Himself, their Father through infinite love, His

children are "Lovers of that which is good." Each one is a "lover of goodness."

Guidance also is given in Romans 13, as to how those that love God should act towards earthly authorities ordained of God. Though they are the children of God with heavenly glory as their destiny, they are to be rendering to all what is due. They are to "Owe no one anything, unless to love one another: for he that loves another has fulfilled the law." And further, "Love works no ill to its neighbour: love therefore is the whole law." In every circle love triumphs. It is written, "Love never fails." "Everyone that loves has been begotten of God, and knows God." The manifestation of divine love is found where the love of God is believed and known. With the redeemed, of course, both the measure and the manifestation are varied and limited, but in God's Son it is perfect in every way, and there is such a thing as being made "perfect in love" (1 John 4:18)

The law is not contrary to this. Love is the fullness of the law. It is true that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," they may become religionised or Christianized ostensibly, but apart from the new birth and the sealing of the Holy Spirit, they cannot answer to God's demand; for we are told also that the law itself could not produce in the unregenerate man what is pleasing to God. We read, "It was weak through the flesh" (Rom. 8:3); nevertheless, sin having been condemned in the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, and the Spirit having been given to those who believe, the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (v. 4), for He it is who sheds abroad God's love in our hearts, and who also produces "delight in the law of God after the inward man" (7:22), and that in spite of the opposition of the law of sin in our members. Love to God and love to our neighbour is what the law required! The Lord Jesus said the second was like to the first (Matt. 22:39); but mark, it is the second and not the first! Response to God's love comes before love rightly flows out to others. Attempted reversal of this order has produced dire iniquity. Pre-eminently the law demanded love to God; it could not produce it, but God's own love has brought this about in those who are now His children. He revealed His love when Christ died and our hearts have been won by it.

The very fact that the law's demand was love shows that it was God's own nature which desired this; and that nature is love;--"God is love." Nor does the law simply demand love from the whole heart as is sometimes said, but rather from the whole being! for we read, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31). How encouragingly blessed and glorious then it is to know that what God's own nature desired, He shall have in righteousness and holiness through the redeeming work of His Son, and in His eternal home He shall rejoice to have those who wholly love God! How glad are our hearts that He desires nothing less! How we bless His holy name that His perfectly proven love has produced love. What the law could not do, His love has done. "We have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love;" and, "We love because He first loved us." Love was desired and demanded, but being fully proved in the Son of God upon the cross, love has been procured responsively.

The Spirit of God having been given by our Lord Jesus Christ--He had secured eternal redemption for us upon the cross; after He had risen from among the dead; after He had ascended to the throne on high--delights to bring home to our hearts God's own sovereign love. Therefore we do not find in the distinctive teaching to those who are God's children any command or exhortation given to love God for as we have seen, God's own love in Christ has secured this after the law had failed to do so.

We can only shortly indicate this; from whence comes the "way of more surpassing excellence",--this which is the greatest--GREATEST? (1 Cor. 13). It comes from God, for it is what God is in Himself. Twice we are told so in the inspired writings--twice in one chapter--"GOD IS LOVE" (1 John 4:8, 16). "Love is of God"! He is love, therefore He loves. And, oh! if He sought it from all the heart, all the soul, all the mind and all the strength of man how greatly must He Himself (Who desired this) love the redeemed. And then His love is eternal (as well as everlasting in regard to our being brought into it), for although its manifestation and commendation are seen in the death of His beloved Son, nevertheless in itself, it has neither beginning nor ending. Like Himself it is from everlasting to everlasting. God is the supreme eternal Lover! And He shall be supremely and fully loved for ever by His redeemed ones who shall love one another amidst the rejoicings of eternity! Glory, glory, glory to His holy name!

You, all with deepest joy at length shall sing His love divine,

And praise His holy blessedness, sweeter than choicest wine

Yet even now, its favour flows the same as shall be ours

When heart and mind with soul and strength love God with all their powers.

He loved the world and gave His Son in view of the believer having eternal life (John 3:16). He manifested His love toward us by sending His only-begotten Son that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9), "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins" (v. 10). He commends His love in Christ's death for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). How exceedingly wonderful all this is! It makes the heart uprise in worship. It has often caused also the glad repetition of the apostle's words regarding all the saved, "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."

Yes, divine love is there. Faith beholds it and knows it there, "In Christ Jesus our Lord!" and His redeemed are in Him free from all condemnation; "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Love is there and also a new creation; but no condemnation. He bore all our condemnation on the cross; now He is risen and accepted in divine favour on high and we are taken into favour in Him.

When about to go to the cross in obedience to the Father's commandment He said, "I love the Father." And before He went forth from the presence of His loved ones (who were with Him in the large upper room furnished), He said to them, "The Father Himself loves you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." Again He said, concerning them, to the Father, "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." I must close! The subject is infinite! Brought so nigh, its glorious immensity stretches out far beyond us! Thankfully we rejoice with exceeding joy that our eternal Lover has secured "lovers of God" already, and they shall be to His glory for ever and ever.

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