

There is a sense in which God loves everyone, but it is also a fact that God does not love everyone the same or equally. This is because there are two principle forms of love in the nature of God.

## TWO KINDS OF LOVE

1) Benevolence as an affection of the mind by an act of the will. Benevolence should be exercised towards all people, irrespective of their moral character. It is with this type of love we are to love all people, love our enemies, and love the poor and the rich. It includes kindness, gentleness and a desire for their good.

2) Benevolence as an affection of esteem and approval of the character of its object. This kind of love is only due to those who are good, righteous and holy.

When God's Word says things like, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Romans 9:13), God still had the first kind of love for Esau and his descendants but since Esau was an ungodly man God did not have the second kind of love for him. God hated his character. Jacob also had many character faults but he believed God and went through a process of purification. Therefore God loved him.

There is a sense in which we should dislike evil people, even while we maintain the first kind of love for them. It can at times be difficult for us to have a right balance in this but God has a perfect balance, for His love is perfect.

When we understand the difference between these two forms of love we can see why we should never love sin, nor compromise when people are doing evil things. We must love the sinner with the first kind of love even while we hate their sin. It is right for us to hate the devil.

## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD'S LOVE

The attributes of the first kind of love are best demonstrated by the crucifixion of Christ for the sins of the world. It is through this love that salvation has been made possible for the worst sinners, if only they will receive it. But in this message I want to focus on a couple of the attributes of the second form of love: the esteem and approval of godly character.

1) Opposition to sin – This is an attribute of God's love. It is love in relation to evil. Love desires the good of others and there is nothing more destructive to this than sin. God is love; therefore He must be the ultimate opponent of all sin in every form and degree. God cannot contemplate sin without hating it.

Many have wrongly inferred that because God is love He cannot hate sin or sinners. Such people have a concept of love that would ultimately destroy the whole universe. This has also foolishly led people to say that if God is merciful He cannot punish sinners in Hell.

It is true that mercy is an attribute of love. God is merciful and He is willing to forgive all who humble themselves before Him and repent. Turning away from sin is and must be a condition of receiving mercy. True love is opposed to sin. Those who do not repent will therefore suffer in Hell because of God's perfect love in opposing sin.

2) Justice – This is also an attribute of God's love. Justice is the opposite of mercy in relation to crime. It will treat every person according to what they deserve by their actual merit. It is right and proper that a moral being should be dealt with according to his or her own deeds. Justice punishes crime according to the law.

Justice produces a feeling that the guilty deserve to be punished. It is modified in its exercise by the attribute of mercy. Since God is perfect in both mercy and justice, God seeks to save sinners until His mercy has been ignored and then He displays justice. This is happening frequently in the dealings of God with people.

When the punishment of the wicked can be held back, God will hold it back; but when justice is needed it is merely another manifestation of His righteousness and love. God's justice in punishing the wicked and His anger at sin are only exercises of His perfect love in regard to the general happiness and stability of His kingdom.

Justice is among the sterner attributes of love, but it is indispensable to the entire moral perfections of God's nature. Love without justice would be anything but morally perfect. Without justice it would be corrupt and therefore it could never be love.

In the Psalms there are many prayers for the punishment of the wicked. Sometimes Christians still find this hard to understand due to their lack of knowledge. They have supposed that this could not come from a right heart and that it is so unlike the sweetness of Christ. Yet these prayers, such as the prayers of King David, were by the Spirit of God.

There is a time for mercy and there is also a time for justice. It can be for the greater good and salvation of many that God no longer holds back His punishments and instead judges the nations. When sin reaches a certain point, love calls for mercy to cross over into justice.

A sickly, inefficient sentimentalism often masquerades as love, but it lacks virtue and leads to destruction. Justice produces honesty and honesty is another attribute of love. It says "no" to violence and disorder. A society without justice will slowly or quickly disintegrate. The

happiness of God and of those who dwell with Him in Heaven cannot be spoiled by the punishment of the wicked in Hell. Justice has to prevail so that God's love can dominate His kingdom.

### THE DEMONSTRATION OF GOD'S LOVE

It is a mistake to think that love is tolerance and softness towards all things. We have a saying that speaks of "tough love." People know that this is love even though it can be corrective and hard. In order to save people from being lost forever there are times when God has to use tough love.

Without God's love no one would be saved. No one would go to Heaven and every person in the human race would have sunk down into Hell. There is no salvation without God's love; without receiving it into your heart so that your life is transformed.

*'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8).*

*'This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins' (1 John 4:10).*

God has loved you. Receive it because God wants to pour His love into your heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Love can be rejected and many people have rejected it and have shut themselves out of God's kingdom. In His mercy God disciplines people in this world with the hope that they will repent.

### ALLOW GOD TO DISCIPLINE YOU

*'Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our*

*good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it' (Hebrews 12:10-11).*

If you are not willing to allow God to bring correction into your life then you are not one of His children. You have cut yourself off from being a part of His family and therefore you will be separated from the love of God for eternity. But if you are willing to listen to God's voice, He will lead and guide you along the path of righteousness.

Everyone needs God's love in their lives. The fullness of God's love is found in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus stands before this world with His arms opened wide to save whoever is willing to come to Him. His love is true. His love is perfect. Jesus has many people in this world because they have received God's love.

Jesus said: *"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:19-20).*

*"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love" (John 15:9).*

### OPEN YOUR HEART AND RECEIVE GOD'S LOVE

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DO YOU  
KNOW

GOD'S

LOVE?

*'And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God' (Ephesians 3:17b-19).*