

# God is Love

## I. Definition

- A. Grudem: "God eternally gives of himself to others...self-giving for the benefit of others." <sup>1</sup>
- B. MacArthur: "God's perfect love is his determination to give of himself to himself and to others, and is his affection for himself and his people." <sup>2</sup>
- C. Packer: "God's Love is an exercise of his goodness toward individual sinners whereby, having identified himself with their welfare, he has given his Son to be their savior, and now brings them to know and enjoy him in a covenant relationship." <sup>3</sup>

## II. God's Love - The Source

- A. God's Essence is Love - "God is Love" - 1 John 4:8,16
- B. Eternal Trinitarian Love
  - 1. The Father Loves and Delights in the Son (John 17:23b-24, Matt 3:17,17:5, Ps 42:1)
  - 2. The Son Loves and Delights in the Father (John 14:31, 8:29, 15:10)
  - 3. Eternal Love that existed before anything was created
    - a) *"If there were no world and no universe, the persons of the Trinity would still have an infinite, blessed, unchangeable, eternal, powerful love between them—an inward love. This love satisfies them because it is a perfect love; it cannot be increased or decreased in any way."* <sup>4</sup>
- C. Relationship to Other Attributes
  - 1. Holy: Pure
  - 2. Eternal: Everlasting, No Beginning or End
  - 3. Infinite: Inexhaustible, Abundant, Limitless, Boundless
  - 4. Sovereign: Spontaneous and Uninfluenced

## III. God's Love - The Expression

- A. God's Love is Knowable and Revealed (Rom 5:8, Eph 3:17, 1 John 4:16)
- B. God's Love is Distinguishable (different toward different people)
  - 1. Love toward Creation (Ps 145:9)
  - 2. Love toward the world (John 3:16, Matt 5:44-45)
  - 3. Love toward sinners - Grace and Mercy (Rom 5:8)
  - 4. Special love for the Elect (1 John 3:1, Eph 1:4-5, 1 Pet 2:9, Rom 8:38-39)

## IV. God's Love - The Purpose

- A. God's love is transformative and active (2 Cor 5:14)
  - 1. God's Love for us motivates us to love Him (1 John 4:19)
  - 2. God's Love for us motivates us to love Others (1 John 4:11,21)
- B. God's Love Perfected (achieving its purpose or full effect)
  - 1. 1 John 2:5 - "But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected."

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 199

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds, *Biblical Doctrine: a Systematic Summary of Truth*, 181-182

<sup>3</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 123

<sup>4</sup> Mark Jones, *God Is*, 127

## V. Questions (Avoiding Misconceptions)

- A. Is God's love a duty or delight?
  - 1. God delights in his children (Ps 18:19, 44:3)
  - 2. *"His love is not a passion, as if something causes God to love. His love to others is caused by himself. If someone is pleasing to God, it is because God has made that person pleasing to himself according to his love and grace."*<sup>5</sup>
- B. If God is love, how can he hate? How can a loving God send people to hell?
  - 1. God's love is holy, righteous and good.
  - 2. God doesn't wish for any to perish (2 Pet 3:9, 1 Tim 2:4)
  - 3. If he loves righteousness, then he must hate (and punish) unrighteousness.
- C. Is God unloving when we are experiencing hardship and difficulty?
  - 1. Heb 12:5-6 - "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

## VI. Application

- A. When we are tempted to self-righteous pride – Remember that we love because He first loved us.
- B. When we sin – We must flee to the merciful one.
- C. When our hearts are cold – We can warm our hearts by the fire of His love.
- D. For Reflection (adapted from J.I. Packer)
  - 1. If God truly is Love then...
    - a) Why do I ever grumble and show discontentment and resentment at the circumstances God has placed me in?
    - b) Why am I ever distrustful, fearful, and depressed?
    - c) Why do I ever allow myself to grow cool, formal and halfhearted in the service of the God who loves me so?
    - d) Why do I ever allow my loyalties to be divided, so that God has not all my heart?
  - 2. Could an observer learn from the quality and degree of love that I show to others (wife, husband, family, neighbors, church members, co-workers) anything at all about the greatness of God's love to me?

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Jones, *God Is*, 127