

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Love of God, Part 1

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-77

Well, it's Christmas season and we are very conscious of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and the significance of that. As I was thinking about what I might do in terms of my preaching to you through this month of December, I decided to set aside our study of 2 Corinthians because we finished the fourth chapter and before we embark upon a new chapter address ourselves to an issue that is much on my heart, and certainly suited to the Christmas time.

I am preparing at this particular point a book on the subject of the love of God. And in preparing that book there are some things that I hadn't yet studied and hadn't yet preached and hadn't really yet thought through. And so wanting to do that on the theme of the love of God and wanting also to address myself to the issues that surround this wonderful time of the year, I decided to do a series on the love of God. And certainly the greatest truth about Christmas is that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Christmas is really the effect of which God's love is the cause.

It's appropriate then that we understand something about the love of God. At first, we may affirm that we fairly well understand it already but I think on second notice we're going to find out this morning that there are some immense issues that need to be grasped to whatever degree we humans can capably grasp them that relate to the love of God.

I suppose if there's been any one thing that Christians through the centuries have extolled it has been the love of God. We bask in it as believers. We speak of it when we witness and evangelize. We are always eager to tell people that God loves you and therefore sent His Son to die on the cross. We have proclaimed to the world that God is love. We have regularly announced to sinners that God loves them, everyone of them without exception.

Scripture does give us reason to proclaim that God is a God of love, in fact in 2 Corinthians 13:11 He is called the God of love. And in 1 John 4:8 the Bible says God is love. There's no question but that this is truly an attribute of God. This is part of the fabric of His spiritual essence, His being. And it is a much celebrated attribute because along with it comes goodness and kindness and mercy. Those are the evidences and those are the elements of expression that find their origin in love. Song writers and hymn composers and poets through all the history of the church have extolled the virtues of God who is a God of love. They have written hymns and songs and psalms and poems on the love of God. And Christians consequently have recited those poems and sung those songs and hymns and therefore celebrated the love of God for centuries.

I remember when I was spending some time with Bill Gaither who has written so many contemporary songs. I said to him over dinner one night, "As one who is concerned about lyrics, you and your wife write some of the most beloved lyrics of Christian songs in our time, what is the greatest lyric ever written?" To which without a blink in his eye he immediately responded, "The greatest lyric ever written is this, 'Could we with ache the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made, were every stock on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade, to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.'" An immense communication of the love of God. The chorus of that song says, "O love of God how rich and pure, how measureless and strong, it shall forevermore endure the saints' and angels' song."

There are many such songs about the love of God that we have heard and sung that express that great sense that we have that indeed God is a God of love. We are eager to say to people, "God loves you...God loves you so much He sent His Son in the world to die on the cross to provide an atonement for sin." We are eager to be able to say to the most abject, the most hostile, the most ungodly person, "God loves you, and if you'll come to Christ God will save you."

I don't know how it struck you but it struck me as an amazing thing on one hand and yet not so amazing on the other that before Jeffrey Dahmer's, the mask-murdering homosexual who killed 17 and cannibalized a number of them died at the hands of some fellow prisoners, he had made a confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and been baptized. In fact, I had occasion to read his will in which repeatedly he expressed his genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in confidence that Christ had forgiven all his sin. And I heard an interview with the chaplain who said that there was no question in his mind but that the faith of Jeffrey Dahmer's was indeed placed in Jesus Christ and that he was now in His presence.

In some ways that would make the world very angry. To think that a man who did that could be accepted into heaven would go against the grain of everything they perceive about who is really good and who is not and who deserves heaven if there is one. But as far as evidencing the amazing love of God, it's a classic illustration. We want to be able to say to the Jeffrey Dahmers of the world or anybody else for that matter that God loves the world so much that He has sent His Son to die for the sins of the world and whoever believes in Him can be saved, and that "whoever" is unlimited. We want to be able to say to them that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, He'll forgive your sin just like He forgave the sin of Paul who said he was the chief of sinners. He too was a blasphemer and a persecutor and a murderer. And so we proclaim the love of God far and wide and we always have.

You say, "Well, it's pretty simple and pretty straightforward." But not so because no matter what we say about the love of God, no matter how we extol God's love and God's kindness and God's mercy, people still have serious unanswered and very disturbing questions in their minds. Like these...if God is love why is the world such a theater of tragedy and why are so many people suffering?...If God is

love and God is also sovereign and in charge, then why in the world would a loving God ever do this? Have you heard that question?

And not only is that a question that you face, but here's one that's even more penetrating...If God is love why would He send people to hell to suffer forever? That doesn't...that doesn't represent any definition of love that I know...most people would say. What kind of love is it that can control the world and allows the world to suffer the way it suffers? What kind of love is it that is sovereign and in charge and sends poor suffering people to an eternal flame? How am I to understand that kind of love? You tell me God so loved the world? Then I would say to you if God really loved the world He would never allow all the suffering and all the torture and all the pain and all the sorrow and all the grief and all the death. And I tell you, if a God of love was really running the universe, then He would express that love and He would do what I think love would do and that is He would remove all pain, He would remove all evil, He would remove all sorrow and He would fill time and eternity only with happiness. Why doesn't God do that if He really loves everyone?

And furthermore, you're telling me that God wants everyone to be saved? Then why would He devise a plan that has most people going to hell forever? And if God is a God of love and He loves everybody, then why doesn't He just save everybody? Is He incapable? And if God is the loving Father of humanity, why doesn't He act like a...like a human father who loved his children, who would never allow his children to make choices that would result in their destruction if he could prevent it or overrule it. If God is a loving God why did He allow sin in the first place and death?

Those questions are reasonable and they need answers. There are a number of suggested answers. One is the answer of universalism. Universalism is a doctrine believed by many that teaches that in the end everybody will be saved, that ultimately the saving plan is universal and God's going to save anybody and in the end everybody is going to heaven and hell will not exist. That's how some people answer the problem of if God loves the whole world then how could He possibly send everybody to hell, except that few that believe. They answer it by saying that well in the end He won't do it. In the end His love will prevail and He will save everybody. That's universalism.

Other people answer the question with a theory called annihilationism. Their solution is well in the end God takes the believing people to heaven and the rest He puts out of existence so they completely go out of existence, experience no consciousness at all, they are non-existent so they can't have any conscience...a conscious suffering. There is therefore no hell of punishment, just annihilation. And there are not only individuals who believe that but there are groups of people who believe that. There are churches and cults that believe that. So some people solve the problem by just having everybody saved in the end and other people solve the problem by having all the unsaved people just go out of existence so that they have no conscious suffering at all because they don't exist anymore.

The problem with those two views is that you can't defend them in the Bible. I suppose to some degree it would salve our human emotion a little bit if we could buy in to either of those. It would certainly eliminate some problems for us. First of all, we could feel comfortable about everybody and we could sort of kick back as far as evangelism goes cause either they're going to be saved forever or they're going to go out of existence forever and what's the difference? So let's no worry about anybody, there's no ultimate hell so why be involved in evangelism? It would make life comfortable emotionally and it would certainly make life comfortable in terms of any responsibility. The problem is the Bible doesn't teach either of those.

Some others have come up with a solution that's a little bit different. They say, "Well, the way to understand it is this...God doesn't love people who aren't His own, He hates them. So you don't have to worry about the love of God being frustrated, you don't have to worry about God loving people and then damning them because the fact is anybody He damns He hates. He doesn't love them at all." And they would say that the love of God is selective and it's given only to those who believe in Him and the rest He hates. And they would remind you of the Old Testament where it says God is angry with the wicked every day. They would remind you of passages in the Old Testament where God says I hate every false way, every evil way and other places where God expresses animosity toward sin and even sinners on occasion. And they would basically say the simple way to understand it is God hates everybody who doesn't believe in Him and therefore the love of God is limited and it is limited to the elect.

The problem with that is the Bible doesn't teach that either. The Bible says, "God so loved...what?...the world."

Now there's another option. Some would come along and say, "Well, I'm not in to universalism, I'm not in to annihilationism and I don't want to necessarily narrow the love of God just to the elect. So my answer is to the person who asks that question, shut your mouth. You haven't got a right to ask the question." And people who have that view would take Romans 9 and they would take the words of Paul who said, "Who are you, old man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder why did you make me like this, will it? Did you ever hear a pot ask the potter why the pot was made the way it was? Does not the potter have a right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? And what Paul is saying is you who are running around questioning what God does, stop your mouths, God is God. God will do whatever He wants to do because He's God. He's the potter, He decides how the pot is going to be. God is God, God created, God created as He pleased to create. That's it, stop asking the question."

Now there's truth in that, obviously. God is God. And ultimately we're going to run out of answers. And ultimately we're going to end up in Romans 9, at the end and ultimately we're going to have to settle for the fact that God will do what God will do. We can understand the issue without being able

to comprehend it fully. We can at least understand what the mystery is if we can't solve it.

But before we ever get to that point there are many things that we need to understand. When somebody says, "Well I don't know how God can love the world and be a God of love and things be the way they are." You don't have to say to that person shut up, you don't have a right to ask that question, you're just a pot and you have no right to question the potter. You don't have to respond that way because the Bible will fill out for you a wonderful, marvelous, rich comprehensible understanding of the love of God. Ultimately you're going to get to the place where you have to just trust God's judgment as the potter, but not at the very beginning. And what I want to show you is how to understand the love of God.

Now in order for you to grasp it, I want you to think around three key propositions and I want you to remember now, we're going to go through this for a few weeks here, so until it's all done you're not going to have it all together. We're going to go down the right road, folks, but we're not going to get to the destination till the end. So don't leap to preliminary conclusions, just enjoy the trip. And when you enjoy the trip you will love the destination when we reach it.

Let me give you three key propositions and I'm going to build our thinking around these three propositions. This is a very, very important study because it is going to answer some very penetrating and compelling issues both from a theological side and from a very pragmatic side as you deal with people, particularly at this season of year who are going to ask the questions about God loving the world enough to send His Son and if He's a God of love why are the things the way they are.

Let me give you the three propositions. Proposition number one, God's love is unlimited in extent. God's love is unlimited in extent. Proposition number two, God's love is limited in degree. God's love is limited in degree. Three, God's love is ultimately directed at His glory. God's love is ultimately directed at His glory.

We're going to take these one at a time starting this morning with the first one. God's love is unlimited in extent. As we examine each of these, you will have an unfolding grasp on the glory of God's love, I think, like you've never had before. So let's take that first one.

God's love is unlimited in extent. There is that love of God which Scripture clearly shows us is general, universal, indiscriminate, unconditional, unlimited, whatever term you want to use, and that it extends to all people in all times. It is what Titus 3:4 refers to as God's love for mankind. It is that general love for all mankind. And Scripture attests to this love in several places. Let's look at them, Matthew chapter 5...Matthew chapter 5. And I want you to stay focused because this is going to yield for you wonderful fruit. In Matthew chapter 5 and verse 43 Jesus said, and this, by the way, is a verse that establishes the background to John 3:16, as I'll point out later, "You have heard it said,"

that is in your Jewish theology, "You have heard it said, the rabbis have taught, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." Now that is what was the existing theology of the time. Love your neighbor and hate your enemy...which being interpreted meant...love Jews and hate Gentiles. Basically they despised the Gentile world and they loved their own. That's what you've been taught. And so when they loved their own and hated the despised Gentile or the Samaritan half-breed, they felt justified because that's what their theologians had told them pleased God.

But verse 44 Jesus says, "But I say to you, love your enemies." In other words, you don't just love your own, you don't just love those in your own family, you love your enemies and you show that love by praying for those who persecute you, like Jesus, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," Stephen, "Lay not this sin to their charge," while they were being killed by murderous people. He says love your enemies and pray for even the ones who persecute you. And verse 45 tells you why. "In order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven."

What do You mean "sons of your Father in heaven?" In order that you might manifest that you're of the same family, that you are children of God. Ephesians 5:1, "Be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love." Imitate God and walk in love. What's the point? The point is this, you love your enemies because you're the children of God and God loves His enemies. See it? That's what it means. God doesn't just love His family, God loves His enemies. Jesus on the cross doesn't just demonstrate love toward the apostles and those who believe, His love extends to those who don't believe. Love your enemies so you can be like your Father who loves His enemies.

Look at Mark chapter 10 and let's build a little more on this same idea. This is a wonderful story of the rich young ruler and I could take a lot of time with it but I want to resist doing that. The bottom line in the story of the rich young ruler is he comes to Jesus, he says, "What do I do to have eternal life?" Which is a great question. How do I get into heaven? is what he's asking. And Jesus says to him, "Do you know the law?" Verse 19. "Do not murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, defraud and then honor your father and your mother." So He gives him the Law. The idea is to confront his sin and his violation of God's Law but instead of that the response is quite the contrary, he says, "Teacher...in verse 20...I've kept all these things from my youth up. I never have broken the Law." I mean, it's unbelievable, right? This man believes he's completely and he won't admit his sin. So Jesus says, "You want eternal life? The first thing you have to recognize is you're a sinner. If you don't know that you're a sinner, then you're not going to be able to receive eternal life, it's for repentant people. And so he confronts his sin. The guy denies that he has any.

There's a second component in salvation and that is a willingness to obey Christ. First you admit you're a sinner, secondly, you submit to Christ. So he gives him a test. And He says, "Look, go sell everything you have, take your money, give it to the poor and then follow Me." No way. Two things the young man wouldn't do. One, he wouldn't acknowledge his sin and two, he wouldn't follow Christ. Now it's very hard to become a believer without doing those. It's very hard to receive eternal life. It's

impossible. And that's what Jesus says...how hard will it be for the those who are wealthy to enter the Kingdom of God?" verse 23.

But the thing I want to call you to is in verse 21. The sad deal is the guy went away, verse 22, because he owned a lot of property and he wanted to control his life and he didn't think he was a sinner, he went away. And that was the last we ever see of this man in the New Testament. Sad. But verse 21 says, "And looking at him Jesus...what?...loved him." The love of God manifest in Jesus Christ is not just reserved for His own. Here He loved and overt, open, non-repentant, non-submissive rejector. He loved him.

Now I want you to go with me back to Isaiah chapter 63 and here in a micro-cosm of the nation Israel is the way to understand the unlimited extent of God's love as manifest in Jesus Christ and in the gospel. Back to Isaiah 63, and you're going to find this very, very insightful. The prophet Isaiah is going to write about God and about the Lord, but in one particular area, verse 7 of Isaiah 63, he is concerned about the loving kindnesses of the Lord. He wants to write about God's love. And so he talks in verse 7 about the great goodness of God toward the house of Israel. And he talks about His compassion. And then he closes verse 7, he talks about the multitude of His loving kindnesses. This is all about God's love. And God's love manifest itself in goodness, mercy, pity, kindness. I want to make mention of God's love, he says, let me talk about God's love. Verse 8, "For He said, Surely they're My people, sons who will not deal falsely...listen to this one...so He became their Savior." What? Who is he talking about? He's talking about Israel. God became the Savior of Israel. You say, "You mean just a blanket?" That's right. God became the Savior of the nation. He was the official divinely designated Savior of Israel. And He really did identify with them.

In verse 9, "In all their affliction He was afflicted. And the angel of His presence saved them." Who was the angel of His presence? Probably a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. So God even dispatched the angel of His own presence, perhaps a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ to be the special Savior and deliverer of Israel. Then it says, "And in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them." He became their Savior. He suffered with their suffering. He sent His angel of presence to save them. In His love and mercy He redeemed them. He lifted them. He carried them all the days of old.

Now here in a general extensive manner God identifies himself as the Savior of the whole nation of Israel. But then verse 10 says this, "But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit, therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them." That's an amazing statement because here you have God defined as the Savior, the lover, the redeemer of a people who are His enemies, who have rebelled against Him, who have grieved His Holy Spirit, who have chosen a life of sin.

Follow along down in to verse 16. In the middle of the verse, "Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is Thy name. Why, O Lord, dost Thou cause us to stray from Thy ways and

hardened our heart from worshiping Thee?" Amazing. Now God is actually causing to stray and hardening the hearts of a people to whom He is identified as the Redeemer. He is the Savior and the Redeemer of a people who are His enemies, against whom He fights, who are rebels. He is causing to go astray and whose hearts He is hardening.

Go down to chapter 64 verse 5, the middle of the verse, "Behold, Thou wast angry for we sinned and we continued in them," that is in the sins, "a long time." And the question, "And shall we be saved?" Is it possible then that God is the Savior of the unsaved? He is the Savior of the enemies. He is the Redeemer of the rebellious. And here He is the Savior of the unsaved. Verse 6, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean. All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment. All of us wither like a leaf and our iniquities like the wind remove us, destroy us. There is no one who calls on Your name, who arouses Himself to take hold of You, for You have hidden Your face from us and delivered us into the power of our iniquities." He has to be describing unconverted people...unconverted people. "But now, O Lord...verse 8...Thou art our Father. We are the clay and Thou our potter. All of us are the work of Thy hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord. Do not remember iniquity forever." God, You're sovereign, You're the potter, do something with us. You've said You're our Savior. You've said You're our Redeemer. And we are unredeemed and unsaved. God says I've tried to do something with you, chapter 65 verse 2, "I've spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts, a people who continually provoke Me to My face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks, who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places, who eat swine's flesh and the broth of unclean meat is in their pots." In other words, you're in to idolatry.

"Who say...imagine the gaul of this...Keep to yourself, do not come near me for I am holier than you. These are smoke in My nostrils." Do you ever get smoke in your nostrils? It irritates, doesn't it? It's like a fire burns all day. "Behold, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent, I will repay but I will even repay into your bosom both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together, says the Lord, because they have burned incense on the mountains and scorned Me on the hills, therefore I'll measure their former work into their bosom." I know what I'm going to do, I'm going to judge you.

Why am I going to judge you? Because when I was your Savior you refused to be saved. When I was your Redeemer you refused to be redeemed. I came with the angel, a presence, to deliver you and you refused the deliverance. I came to show you mercy, you refused the mercy. I came to show you compassion you refused the compassion. The point that I'm making here is that it is very, very obvious in this text that the indictment of the people Israel is that God was their Savior, He was their Redeemer, He brought to them the offer of His blessing and His goodness and His kindness and His mercy, and they spurned it so that God can be the Savior of those who are His enemies, He can be the Redeemer of those who rebel against Him.

You say, "Why are you saying that?" Only to say this, God loved the people of Israel and became their Savior, yet they refused Him, chose sin and experienced judgment. So when we say that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, we must understand that He gave His Son to be the Savior of the world in the same way that God identifies Himself as the Savior of the nation Israel, though not all Israel by any means believed in Him. He was still their officially designated Savior.

Now let's go to John in his gospel and I want to pull you into this a bit. John 3, back to the verse we sort of started with. I'm going to take just about ten or twelve minutes and I want to really stay tight with this because it's very important.

In John chapter 3, it could be a little more than that, pray for me, John chapter 3 verse 16, this is the heart of it, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." That doesn't say God loved the elect, it says He loved the world. And it assumes that the world He loves may or may not believe. The context demands that "world" cannot be narrowed. And then you come to verse 20...verse 19 rather..."Light has come into the world," there's the word again, "and men love the darkness rather than the light." The world then must be a world that includes men who love darkness. The world is the widest possible reference. God loves the whole world. He gives His Son to the whole world and within the whole world there are some who believe and some who don't believe. There are some who love the light and come to the light. There are some who hate the light and remain in the darkness.

In another section of John's gospel he put it this way. "He was in the world and the world...what?...knew Him not." That's not the world of the elect, it's not the world of the elect that don't know Him, it's the world in general. Look at John 4 verse 42, "And they were saying to the woman," this is a Samaritan woman and the people in her town who had believed because of her testimony were saying to her, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one...that's Christ...is indeed the Savior of the world...the Savior of the world." John knows what he means when he says world. And the Samaritans were awed by that. Why? Because the Jews had always said, "Love your neighbor and hate the outcast Samaritans and the Gentiles." And here comes Jesus and says, "God so loves...what?...the world," and really overturns what was at the heart of the racism of that time. He overturns it and he says he loves all of us. And they're just basking in the fact of that. First John 4:14, "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." That's why God can say He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. That's why God can say He's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. That's why God can say He will have all men to be saved.

His love is unlimited. And because His love is unlimited there are therefore unlimited realities concerning Christ. If God loves the world and sends His Son to the world, it is to be as the Savior of

the world. And you can't limit that.

Now I'm going to close with this, this is what I want you to grasp. There are four ways in which this unlimited extent is manifest...four ways in which the unlimited aspect of God's love is manifest. Number one, common grace. Common grace is an old term but it's a good one, it means there are certain kindnesses and goodnesses that God does commonly and we see it in the world. If you question the love of God then you should look again at the world in which you live. You say, "Well there's a lot of sorrow in the world." Well the reason you recognize the sorrow is because there's so much...what?...there's so much joy. The reason you recognize the ugliness is there's so much beauty. The reason you recognize the disappointment is there's so much fulfillment. I mean, just look at the other side of it and understand that you are a fallen and unworthy sinner and God, the only reason God ever gives you anything to laugh at, smile at and love and rejoice with is because He is just a loving God. And though you are an unworthy sinner, He demonstrates His love even toward you and toward me as unworthy sinners. That's called common grace.

In Matthew where we were earlier in that very same verse, chapter 5 and verse 45, our Lord Jesus continued the statement that He had made about God the Father loving and we loving as His children. He says, "Here's the proof of God's love, He causes His Son to rise on the evil and the good, He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." It rains on everybody. The sun shines on everybody. Flowers grow in everybody's garden. Lots of people have lots of fun and lots of joy and lots of happiness and it has nothing to do with whether they know God or not, right? That's just how it is in life.

In Acts chapter 14 you have another statement of common grace which is worthy reading. It starts in verse 15 of Acts 14 where Paul is talking to the pagans in Iconium. But he says in verse 17, the God who made the heavens and the earth and all of that, in verse 17 he says, He didn't leave Himself without a witness, a witness to His love and His kindness because He did good gave you rains from heaven, fruitful seasons, satisfying your heart with food and gladness. Hey, I mean you go out to dinner at the fanciest restaurant and you're going to see common grace. You're going to sit there at your little table and you're going to say, "Thank You, Lord, for this \$30 meal." And your wife is checking her bankbook, you know, you're going to splurge. And that place is full of people who are enjoying every bite and they're not thanking God at all...but it's common grace. That's how God's love manifests itself.

Secondly, it manifests itself in compassion...in compassion. It is a love of compassion. To say it another way, it is a love of pity. It is a love of broken-heartedness. It's...it's kind of a pathetic love. You know, you hear people say this, and I want to correct this because this is not true...you hear people say, "Well, you must be very special because God loves you." I hear that all the time. That's a psychological ego boosting that has nothing to do with the Bible, the Bible doesn't say that. God does not love you because you're so lovable. You are not, neither am I. We are despicable, vile sinners

who if we are not saved by the grace of God will be thrown on the trash heap of eternity which is hell. We have no intrinsic value, no intrinsic worth, there's nothing in us to love. God is not...you cannot say to people, God loves you, you must have high value, you've got to have some self-esteem, after all God loves you for what you are. No. It is not the love of value, it is the love of pity for that which could have had value and has none. It is the love of compassion. It is the love of sadness. It is the love of pathos. It is the love that says, "Oh, if the image of God had not been so irretrievably marred." It is universal pity, it is universal grief. God doesn't have any pleasure in damnation. It grieves Him that the image of God has been so marred and wasted.

In Jeremiah chapter 13 Jeremiah cries the tears of God, for God is a spirit and it says, "Give glory unto God" in verses 15 and following, "And if you don't...he says...mine eyes will run down with tears and I will weep with sorrow." Those are the tears of God. God weeps over the marring of His creatures. If you go to chapter 48 of Jeremiah, start in verse 30, go down to verse 36, read the tears of God there. Come into the gospels and come to Matthew 23:37 and hear Jesus say, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her brood and you would not." And then go to Luke 19:41 and read this that Jesus looked over the city and...what?...and wept. He wasn't looking down there saying they're so wonderful, they're all irresistible. It was pity. It was compassion. It was sadness, not love motivated by present value. Love motivated by wasted value, lost value. It's the same kind of thing you might feel when you drive through the worst part of the city of Los Angeles and you see some drunken sot in the gutter...there's nothing about that man that attracts your affection, but there's a heart-wrenching sense of pity, isn't there, over what he might have been or maybe was. That's the love of God in the realm of compassion.

Thirdly, there is not only the love of common grace and the love of compassion but there is the love of warning. One would be remised if he didn't identify this. Nothing is more evident in terms of demonstrating God's love than the replete warnings of judgment to come throughout the pages of Scripture. I mean, if God really didn't love mankind, then He didn't have to warn him cause He didn't care. But He does love and He does care and He does warn. Every single person who knows anything about Scripture knows it is filled with warnings about judgment, judgment, judgment, judgment, followed by hell, eternal hell, the Lake of Fire, punishment. Why? Because God loves men enough to warn them. Jesus, Luke 13:3 and 5, both verses separated by verse 4 says exactly the same thing. He says this, "I tell you, unless you repent you will perish." And that's the message of the New Testament, and that's the message of the Old Testament and that's the whole message of the Bible. There is a God, God is a holy God, He has a holy standard. If you don't live up to it you are on your way to hell. Now there's only one remedy and that is to come with a repentant heart and ask for forgiveness and plead for mercy which He grants you by virtue of Christ. But apart from that, you're on your way to hell. That's the message, be warned, be warned, be warned. God in flaming fire, 2 Thessalonians 1 says, will come with His holy angels taking vengeance on all those who know not Him and obey not the gospel. That's love...that's love that warns. Love is not just a cuddly emotion. Love is an honest concern about a person's destiny.

And then lastly, this unlimited aspect of God's love is manifested in the gospel offer...in the gospel offer. You say, "What do you mean by that?" Well, when Isaiah says come buy and eat, come buy wine and milk without money, without price, when Jesus teaches in Matthew 22:2 and 3 the Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king which made a marriage for his son and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding and they wouldn't come, and then it says he went out into the highways and byways and called some others. Do you notice there that it says he went out and called those that were bidden to the wedding and they wouldn't come? That's very important, Matthew 22:3. The gospel call goes to people who won't come. And that's the love of God calling them. Luke 14 verses 16 to 18, "A certain man made a great supper. He called many. Sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were called, Come. All things are not ready, they all with one consent began to make excuse." That's the gospel call. That's the King calling sinners to come to the banquet and they don't come. That's the love of God. The love of God not only warns about judgment, the love of God calls to salvation. Jesus says, "Come unto Me...who, all you elect?...come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy laden, who labor and I'll give you rest." Luke 2:10 arrives, the angel said to them, "I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all people. There is born this day in the city of David a Savior." That's good news for all people...for all people.

God's love for mankind then is evident in the offer of the gospel to all people. And the path to the gospel has been given to everybody. Look at Romans 1, start the path there. It says in Romans 1, "That which may be known of God is in them," right? Romans 1:18, 19. "That which may be known about God is in every individual." And not only that, creation all around you demonstrates the wonder of God. And if you don't live up to that knowledge, Paul says in Romans 1 you are without excuse.

You come to Romans 2 and it says that even the pagans who have no Scripture have the law of God written...where?...in their heart. It's the law written in the heart. Everybody coming into the world then can take step one on the path toward God, step two on the path toward righteousness. And there's even a conscience there to excuse or accuse you, depending on how you react to the law that's written in your hearts.

And then you come in to John's gospel chapter 1 verse 9 and it says, "Christ is the light that lights every man that comes into the world." I believe you can take it a step further and if you take step one and step two, the light of Christ can become clear to you as well...until you're led to the understanding of the gospel.

Why else would Jesus say in Matthew 28 what He said? The very end of this great gospel, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." Why would He make sure that it was recorded for us and brought down to us at the very end of the gospel of Mark in chapter 16 and verse 15? "Go into the all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Because that's the love of God extended in its unlimited sense, His love for mankind, back to Titus 3:4. Or 1 Timothy 4:10, "He is the Savior of

all men, especially those who believe." Or, "God our Savior who will have all men to be saved, for there is one God and one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus."

Look, God loves the whole world. You see it in common grace. You see it in compassion. You see it in warning. And you see it in the offer of the gospel. And Jesus is the Savior of the whole world. He is designated as the Savior of the whole world. He is called the Savior of the whole world. The atoning work of Christ, the work of Christ on the cross is identifying Himself as the Savior of the world has implications to the whole world. And it was designed to reveal...listen...God's universal love for sinners...the whole guilty human race. Because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross as the Savior of the world, all sinners are called to repent and to believe and to be forgiven and if they are refused they are guilty and they will be punished. And they have spurned the love of God...the love of God is to the whole world. And that is the first and essential establishing principle.

Now I've gone over but we started a little late. I'm going to close with one word from John 6, I want you to turn to it. You're somewhere in that zone, John 6. And I want to just pull it together with this one comment from John 6:31, Jesus is talking to the Jews about who He is after having fed them, as you remember. And verse 31 the Jews say that our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written He gave them bread out of heaven to eat. Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, it is not Moses who has given YOU the bread out of heaven, it is My father who gives YOU the true bread out of heaven." Who is He talking to? He's talking to unbelieving Jews, right? And He says My Father has given YOU the bread. Verse 33, "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world."

So He says it's come for the world and it's been offered to you. Down to verse 41, "The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him because He said I am the bread that comes down out of heaven." So let's see how...He says to them, the bread is for you, the bread is for you, the bread is for you. And they say we don't want it. Verse 52, "The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, said how can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Verse 61, Jesus was conscious even some of His followers were grumbling and then down to verse 66, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, were not walking with Him anymore."

What do you have there? You have a clear offer of the gospel. That offer is the widest group of people. It is to the Jews who fully reject it. It is even to His followers, they are only temporary followers, not true believers, who turn and walk away. The point I'm making is, Jesus can say to them, "I am the bread come down from heaven for you." And, beloved, we have to be able to say that to every sinner, right? He is the Savior of the world.

Father, thank You for our time this morning. Thank You for leading and guiding in my own mind and heart as we went over these things and we trust that this will bring glory to Your name. Help us to understand Your great love for us and not to question it at all. Help us, Lord, to share that love with

all who cross our path, particularly at this season when we can announce that God does love sinners.
We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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