

The Obvious Mystery

By Arnold Sy Go

God is love. We've heard it many times. It seems obvious, but it is still a great mystery to us. Paul tells us that Christ's love passes knowledge: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:17-19) Yes, we can know many things about the love of God, but there is still a long way to go.

This poses a problem because the Gospel – God's good news – is firmly rooted in His love. Love is the foundation of the Gospel. And we are commissioned to go out and preach the Gospel. Therefore, it behooves us to know as much as we can about God's love.

We've heard about "love at first sight." But does that really happen? No. We can have "infatuation" at first sight, but love develops as we interact with each other.

But God is different. He loved us BEFORE He saw us. Jeremiah 1:5 says that He knows us even before we are born. And even going back to our beginning, when God created this world, we see that He lovingly created the perfect home for our perfect parents.

But it's easy to love perfect people. So it is more impressive when we see love manifested toward imperfect people. We see this when parents love their imperfect children. We see this when men and women love their imperfect spouses.

God is no less loving than we are. We read in Genesis 3:6-7 that Adam and Eve sinned. Our perfect parents made themselves imperfect by transgression, and they hid from God. Sin had so damaged them, in that short span of time, that they saw God as a severe judge, ready to punish every error and sin. Instead, God showed them a tiny sliver of His infinite love by replacing their fig leaf garments with tunics of skin. Yes, God loves the imperfect.

But what about the rebellious? Can rebels be loved? When our children rebel, do we love them? Yes, we do. We love them no matter what.

God is no less loving than we are. Mark 14:1 tells us that "the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death." Why did they want to kill him? We find the reason in John 11 – Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Here were the priests and scribes, tasked with teaching the people about God's plan to save them from death. And when He came and did just that, what did they do? They plotted to kill Him! Rebels if there ever was one! But those are exactly the ones that Jesus came to save. He came to save sinners, to call sinners to repentance. He died to save the ungodly, His enemies. See Luke 5:32, Rom 5:6-10, 1Tim 1:15.

Jesus always manifested God's love, especially to those who rejected Him. In Luke 9:51-56, when His disciples wanted to call down fire on those who rejected Him, Jesus told them that they were not working in His Spirit. In Matt 5:43-44, Jesus said that we should love our enemies. He practiced what He preached.

So, is God always loving? "For 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39) Nothing at all can separate us from God's love – not our sins, not our rebellion, not even our choice. He loves us no matter what.

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Why is this? Because God does not simply love. To Him, love is not merely something that He does; love is what He is. John tells us that God IS love. Love does not merely describe God's actions, it defines God's nature. It is much deeper than we realize.

So how about those who suffer the Second Death? Does God love even those who are ultimately lost? Yes, He does. God's love is manifested even in eternal death. We will study that in more detail in the next installment of this series.

What does that mean for us? It means that of all the things we can count on, God's love for us is the most unchangeable of them all. Furthermore – and this is where it is going to get really difficult – Jesus told us in John 15:12 that we are to love as He loved us. That's deep. That is so much against our nature that it is humanly impossible.

But the good news is that we are not left to human resources. If God told us to do it, we can be sure that He also gives us the divine grace to accomplish it. And when we allow Him to do that – to fill us with His love so that we can love each other as He loves us – we will be effective tools in His hands to spread the Good News that God is love.