

# GOD IS LOVE

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The teaching contained within the Bible on this specific subject of God and His genuine love for us, should be considered as the most interesting and profitable one of the entire Bible. Each one will need and require the help of the Holy Spirit (along with His grace and promised wisdom), if we are to receive the benefits that we should from such an important lesson on a particular subject, which is that 'GOD is LOVE'!

The word 'GOD' is not a large word, but it is an extremely large subject to deeply consider and understand, about what God's character is, and what He is really like, so that we may become better acquainted with Him. The main object of the Gospel is to draw us into the 'will of God' and to clear knowledge of Him, and, therefore, bring us to really know and be well-acquainted with Him.

If there were a child who had been taken away from its parents before it knew them (when it was an infant), as soon as they discovered where that child was, their whole desire would be to bring their child back home with them, teach the child to know its parents and be restored to their right relationship. It is much the same way with us and our relationship with God, as we have been borne away from home (so to speak). We have not been stolen away but borne away via the efforts of a life of self, since we have not known our Heavenly Father by nature; in reality, we really have not known anything about Him.

People have said truthfully, that if man in his natural state (as he came into the world), would sit down and take a pen, and write out just what they thought about God: what God is like, His character, how and what He would be under various circumstances; that description and account given would have to be completely turned around to be anywhere near the truth about what God's true character really is. [ The Truth about this subject can only come from reading and hearing God's Word to learn about His true character of love and what He is really like.]

The natural man's idea of God is exactly opposite to the truth about Him: hence, the important thing in the Christian's life is to come to know God, because not only do our blessings here depend upon it; also, our prayer life, our faith, and everything else. Just to the extent that we know God, will it be easy for us to have faith in Him; and there would be no trouble for us about the 'faith question'.

As an illustration, if one desires to deal with a person in daily life situations, one will seek to become acquainted with

them, and it is just to the extent that one knows about a person, it is to that extent that they will trust them. It really is a question of how reliable they are, not about how much faith we have. One's faith on another person will be gauged by a knowledge of their trustworthiness. It is much the same with God; and if we knew God as He really is, all unbelief would have to disappear; because we would know that He is a 'God of Love'. Also, with our true knowledge of God every evil thing would pass out of our lives, as we would desire to imitate His Love.

There is an old saying which I think is a true one (the late Pastor said), that is, when we truly look at and study ourselves, we become filled with doubt and despair. Or, you could say, when we discuss our troubles and trials (and as we dwell only upon them), we become filled with doubt and despair; but one good look at God will fill us with quietness, confidence, and with God's peace that passes understanding.

This is also a common-sense plan as well; for if we looked at an empty plate and an empty cupboard, we would not be kept satisfied with food, but could suffer from hunger. Our supplies are to come from God, and so our view should be looking toward Him continually. It is written in Isaiah 45:22, "look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. Also, (Psalm 34:5)"They looked unto him and were lightened."

There are many other passages of Scripture like that for us to refer to such as (Psalm 121:1-8) "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

Then the confidence that we need to sustain our belief follows right up in the next verse "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

We will notice that all through the Psalms, it is always God Who is talked about and Who is held up for us to recognize. Also, in most cases, the life being referred to is a happy, victorious one.

We can also see the contrast to this in the Book of Job, where we first read all about what he did, and about what he was, namely, **the big capital letter 'I'!**

We can presume that we all may have noticed that prominent 'I' (in Job's speech), which brought him to the 'ash heap full of sores,' while in contrast a continual looking up to God and considering Him instead of looking to and trusting in 'I', brought the Psalmist to a place of great victory. There came a time however, in Job's life when he got his eyes off himself and on to the Lord, and he then began to grasp who God really is. He answered and said, "I have

heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Therefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:5). He had to pray only once after that, and then, not for himself, but for his friends. That one good look at God turned Job's whole captivity around, and he possessed twice as much after that as at the beginning.

In the beginning of our Christian life, we often see nothing but ourselves, what conditions we must meet, and then we go along in Christian life in a half-hearted way; half 'I', and half God; but thank God, there can come a time in our Christian life when we can be developed by God's Spirit. Our whole horizon is filled with God, we forget the 'I' altogether and constantly have the great Him before us.

That is the goal that the Holy Spirit is seeking to lead us to, where God Himself is the grandest, most glorious Being, the One altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand; and one look at Him will fill us with happiness and victory, and we will arrive at the place where He fills our whole horizon, which is Heaven itself.

We may have heard the story of the dear sister, whose husband treated her so badly; she was tormented by the devil; because of his actions they quarreled, and it made her life miserable (as well as the rest of the family). She went to her Pastor, who advised her to get legal evidence against him and have him arrested. Later, she came to talk about some other matters (not connected with family problems). However, as she was about to leave, she ventured to say something about her family trouble. We informed her there were just three things to straighten out that matter.

The first of which would be to get right with God herself; the second, to forgive that man of his wrong treatment of her and treat him with Christian love and forbearance. Also, instead of quarrelling with him, she must put him in God's hands to straighten out his life for her sake and the rest of the family. She looked as if she considered that to be a contemptible plan. She said nothing and just went away, but soon discovered that he was growing worse instead of better.

Later on, she came into a meeting one night and sat away back in the last row of chairs. During the last prayer that night, she decided to lay out her trouble before God (even though very reluctantly and while in an ugly mood). According to her own words this is what she said: "Lord, if I do what they have told me in this place, if I commit this matter into your hands, I would like to know what you will do, what will be the result, before I do it; I would like to know if it will amount to anything; I want to know the result."

"Of course," (the late Pastor said), "the Lord always deals with us better than we treat Him, and He revealed to her via His Spirit, just like someone speaking to her. It was God speaking to her mind and her heart, and telling her, 'I will give you the very best thing I have, if you will put this case into my hands'. Surely no one could ask more of man, nor God, than that! God revealed to her that His best gift to her was Jesus Christ, Who is God's expressed image. The result which came to her, as soon as her eyes got on Jesus Christ, was a wonderful result. As she was enabled to see God's side of it, the trouble, the anger,

malice, strife, unrest, and that great burden in her life disappeared so quickly she did not see it go. It just vanished like a flash in a second of time. When, where, or how it went, she did not know; but she was filled with a holy heavenly calm, which in her own words, "she would not part with for the world.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, that will be the result of getting our eyes upon God, or His Christ, Who is the express image of God's person. (Hebr.1:3-4) "He brightly reflects God's glory and is the exact representation of His being and upholds the universe by His all-powerful word. After securing man's purification from sin" (with His atoning sacrifice) "He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as far superior to the angels as the Name He possesses by inheritance is more excellent than theirs."

That is the inevitable result of getting our eyes upon God! But, when we allow ourselves to keep our eyes focused upon Satan and his works, our temptation and trials simply magnify, become burdensome, and overwhelm us; but, as was said before, one good look at God will fill us with quietness, and confidence.

That is the reason apostle Paul spoke as he did about the Christian race in the 12th chapter of Hebrews, (verses 1-2) "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience" (that means, with steadfastness and endurance) "the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." (Jesus is our pattern, and we are to keep our eyes upon Him and upon God the Father.)

Remember the subject of this message is, that the character of God is Love (and what He is meant to be for each one of us turn to with any kind of need of ours). So, there would be no more important subject, and none that could bring greater blessing, because it is a subject which applies to and counts for time and eternity.

Another recent lesson told us from (John 17:2-3) "You have given Your Son authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

In the closing (latter) part of that prayer (17th chapter of John) Jesus gave us the reason why the world is where it is today; the underlying fundamental reason why the earth is filled with sin, strife, sorrow (with sickness and trouble of every kind). (John 17:25-26) "O righteous Father! The world has not known You," (That is all the reason for the terrible spiritual condition of the world; that is, 'no knowledge of God'!) (Verse continues) "but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your Name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (And that is one of the most important truths in the entire Bible).

The Pastor said, we recall the story of a man who lived in Washington, and who had two nephews. One day they were standing in front of a moving picture theater, a very elaborate one, painted and decorated very beautifully, and the little fellow asked his older brother, 'What are these places for?' That question brought forth some remarkable words of wisdom, as he answered, it is "To make people forget God."

We all need to realize, that the whole object of Satan in those vain shows and worldly dazzling things of daily life, is to keep people from finding out anything about God. If Satan can keep them occupied with human affairs and attractions, keep them occupied with duties and with other interests just enough to take up all their time, then he will succeed in keeping them from learning about and understanding the true character of God, and from coming to know that He is a God of Love!

It doesn't make a difference what the duties are (we cannot even afford to allow one's Christian work (however valuable that may be), to take up the time that we should spend in getting that knowledge of God; we cannot afford to allow our household duties, however important they may be, to occupy enough of our time to shut out the opportunities of acquiring that much-needed 'knowledge of God'. We will have to meet God some day, face to face, either at the Great White Throne Judgment, or, in the marriage supper of the Lamb, and we need to know Him. If we do know Him, it will mean eternal life as well as His blessing in this Life.

That is the reason Satan has people to say and do things to us, and then he tries to magnify them to get us upset and worried about it. The sole object of Satan is to get our eyes off of God and on to other people. Thankfully (the late Pastor said), often-times people came to realize that, and have said— "The cause of my trouble was when I began to get my eyes on other people, looked at the inconsistency of professed Christians; looked at what they said and did toward me, and I began to go downhill" (spiritually).

Well, there is enough in Christian circles to get our eyes on, and many people use this to make themselves say and do things, which are not pleasing to the Lord. Often neighbors or people in business places will do some real contemptibly mean things, and then Satan will fill our minds and our whole horizon with thoughts about that mean thing; he will hold it up there and say— "Was that not a mean thing to do?" The real truth is that every time we look at the mean things and have discussion about them, we lose ground spiritually.

These things can be changed however, if we will behold God and become acquainted with Him, which comes through knowing His Word, which will expose the self-nature in our heart. God's Word is indeed like a mirror where we can see ourselves as we are, and where and how God is presented for us to see and understand. The Word of God is the only place where His true character is revealed for us. Nothing outside of it can stand for a moment; the Bible presents God as He is and is the only safe description of His character. That true knowledge of God is only found in that Book of Books, and there is nothing outside of this; whether it is nature, the things which

happen in the world as a whole or in individual lives. None of that can give us the least inkling of the character of God, as all those things may be controlled by Satan, and we will blame people and God.

God has been blamed for the great World War. We may hear unbelievers saying, "If God is all He professes to be, all He claims to be, why did He bring about the dreadful world war? Why did He permit it? They would make God responsible for every life that was lost. Why does God permit sin and sickness?" **But all evil things which happen in the world are caused by men and Satan who controls them.**

God made this world as it should be and made man as he should be; He even gave him 'the power of choice', the grandest gift He could give to a created being. Men misused that power of choice which turned the whole world and all in it over to the control of Satan, and the evils in this world are not according to the will of God; but are the result of man's will and of turning the whole world over to Satan.

The devil rightly told Jesus, that he would turn the world over to Him, if He would worship him, for he was controlling the world and is at this present time. He said— "It is in my hand to give it to you, if you will fall down and worship me."

It is also written in 1st John 5:19—and "the whole world lieth in wickedness (in the wicked one). Jesus also said— "for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." (John 14:30).

However, there is a Prince of peace Who is coming and Satan is going to be cast out, and the world restored to its rightful, God-created and planned condition; then, we will understand just what it means to have the will of God done in this world, to know God's will, because He says— "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

The only place we can receive the knowledge of God is from His precious Word, which reveals Him, His true character, just what He is and what He will do. In a summary remark, the best part of God's character, the real essence (which we all need to have) is LOVE! The love of God is the most beautiful part of His character; in fact, love is the most beautiful attribute of any character, (human or divine), and it always does the very best it can for people and their 'loved ones'.

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**The First Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia**