



*GOD  
IS  
LOVE*

W.E. BEST

# **GOD IS LOVE**

**by  
W. E. Best**

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## GOD IS LOVE

In this age of “Smile, God loves you,” it is imperative that the Biblical view of God’s love be boldly declared. The most tragic theological error of our day is the belief that love is the chief attribute of God. “God is love” of I John 4:8 and 16 connected with prejudice and Biblical ignorance have led to the error of “love is God.” The uninformed may think such statements minimize God’s love; whereas, the fact is, men have enthroned a deified love where holiness should reign. God who is love is maligned in this century by representing Him as loving without any regard for righteousness. The oversimplification of “God is love” has resulted in a dislike for doctrine in general and for distasteful passages, like “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:13), in particular. A system of doctrine built on the oversimplification of “God is love” leads to affinity with modernism and socialism.

God is light (I John 1:5). God is righteous (I John 3:7). God is love (I John 4:8). Light and righteousness are the leading thoughts in the first part of I John, and love is the ruling thought in the last section. Love, therefore, is the end to which the others are the means. It is the consummation of fellowship which is the theme of the Epistle.

As to the nature of God, “light” is the nearest approach of anything with which we are acquainted to immateriality or spiritual incorporeality. The sun, for example, bears upon its beams a multiform ministry to sustain life. The power put forth in a day is beyond calculation. Yet, all is done silently and gently. God said, “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” (Jer. 23:24). A consideration of the source of light reveals an emblem of the omnipresence of God. How insignificant is man as he walks in the midst of this vastness!

The diffusion of light is the most perfect illustration nature can afford of the immediateness of God’s communications with us. Not only was the message of Christ given immediately by revelation (Gal. 1:10-12), but Christ Himself shines immediately in the hearts of the elect (II Cor. 4:6), and the understanding of the message by the regenerated is immediately given (Matt. 16:17; Luke 24:45).

Positively, “God is light”; negatively, “...in him is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). Theologically, one would say darkness is not simply the antithesis of light, but it is the absence of light. Furthermore, light emanates from God, because “He is light.” However, no one can say darkness emanates from Him because “in him is no darkness.” Light and darkness cannot coexist. Where there is light, there can be no darkness. Hence, when the light of grace and love shines into the hearts of God’s chosen ones, they are no longer in darkness. Paul said to the Thessalonian saints, “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness....Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness” (I Thess. 5:4, 5). Christians are not in darkness, but they are in the light.

God is righteous (I John 3:7). As God is light and in Him is no darkness, God is righteous and in Him is no unrighteousness. The same thing can be said about the principle of righteousness that was

stated about the principle of light. Hence, one can say that righteousness emanates from God because He is righteous. However, no one can say unrighteousness emerges from God. Unrighteousness cannot rise from righteousness.

God has many attributes, but His nature is expressed by a single sentence—“God is love” (I John 4:8). The sentence does not state that God “was” or “God will be,” but “God is [present tense of *eimi*, I am] love.” Other things God does, but love is God’s nature. One may know something about human affection; but apart from grace, no one can know anything about Divine love. The stream that flows in the summer will be covered with ice in the winter, but God’s love is a stream that never freezes. On the other hand, a stream that flows in the spring from melting snow and ice will become dry in the heat of summer, but God’s love is a fountain that never runs dry. The sun that pours a flood of golden beams during the day sets in the evening. There is darkness in its absence. But God’s love is a sun that never sets.

The love of God acts only through righteousness. God is never addressed as “love,” “loving,” or “lovely.” He is addressed as “righteous,” “holy,” “just,” “faithful,” etc. God never used the term “love” in all His titles or names. Righteousness must necessarily be manifested and justice satisfied before man could understand that “God is love.” The greatest proof that God’s holiness is His chief attribute is the cross of Christ. Did the Father turn His back on Christ during the time He was being made an offering for sin because He loved Him or because He is holy? The love of God is manifested by the Father sending His Son (I John 4:9, 10), but love must be understood as God’s nature rather than as one of His attributes. The one word that best describes the essence of God’s being is “Holy” (John 17:11; I Pet. 1:15, 16; Rev. 4:8; 15:4).

God’s chief attribute is His holiness. Holiness gives beauty to all of God’s attributes. Nowhere in Scripture is God addressed in praise, worship, or petition as the “loving Father.” He is called “righteous Father,” “righteous God,” “holy God,” “merciful God,” but never “loving Father” or “loving God.” Those who speak of God as sweet or loving indicate they have no understanding of God’s character. Jesus Christ Himself never addressed God the Father as “loving God” or “loving Father.” Throughout His high priestly prayer, He called Him “Father,” “O Father,” “Holy Father,” and “righteous Father” (John 17:1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25). Although perfect love exists between the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ did not address Him as “loving Father.”

Among all the titles ascribed to God in the Old Testament, the title of love is not found. Righteousness must be manifested and justice satisfied before He could be known as loving. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ came and displayed righteousness in His death. The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17). The character of Christ is eternally righteous, but it was not known until His death. Therefore, righteousness was necessarily manifested and justice satisfied before any person could understand that God is love. New Testament believers are privileged to understand more than Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others did.

Holiness may be assigned to every historical act of God. The wickedness of man became so great that God destroyed the earth and all therein. Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives were the only persons saved. All others were destroyed in the flood. Love cannot be assigned to that destruction, but holiness, righteousness, and justice can. Likewise, God manifested His righteousness, but not His love, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. After the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, the Lord in righteousness, not in love, destroyed Pharaoh and his

army in the Red Sea. Not in love but in righteousness, God slew Senacharib and 185,000. Moreover, in righteousness, not in love, He opened the earth to swallow Korah and his followers. Holiness, but not love, may be assigned to every work of God in history. The only reason God deals with His elect in mercy is that His justice has been satisfied in their Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In holiness, the Father turned His back on His Son while He was made an offering for sin. God's holiness, not His love, caused Him to turn His back. The sins of the elect were imputed to Jesus Christ, and He was treated as they should be. God's holiness is magnified in Christ's atonement (Ps. 22:1-3). God's love is manifested in that He sent His Son (I John 4:9, 10). Love is God's nature. It is His character, not His characteristic.

Divine love is set forth in John 3:16—God “so loved” the world. This does not speak of the quantity but the quality of that love. There is a comparison in this text between the loving and loved. The most high, holy God loves elected, depraved sinners. The measure of God's love is infinite. It is without bounds. It is transcendent. It is incomprehensible: “May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:18-19).

God manifested His love by sending His Son. His love is manifested in other ways, but they all fade into insignificance in the light of the cross. Calvary was the extreme manifestation of love for God's covenant people—those whom the Father gave the Son in the covenant of redemption (I John 4:9, 10).

The fruit of Divine love is the gift of the Father's only begotten Son. He gave His best. The heathen themselves recognize that in making sacrifice the best should be given. The Father gave His Son in the counsels of eternity. He gave Him in purpose before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). There has never been a time in the thinking or the purpose of God when Jesus Christ was not His gift to those to whom He gave the Son in the covenant of redemption. The Son agreed with the Father to become the God-Man, the Surety. The Father gave the Son in incarnation. Jesus Christ came into the world, born of a virgin. He assumed the human nature. Hence, Jesus Christ possessed two natures united in the one Person, the God-Man. The completion of the Father giving the Son was when the Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross. The Father made His soul an offering for sin (Is. 53:10). The recipients of Divine love are chosen sinners whom the Father gave to Christ in the covenant of redemption before the foundation of the world. (Read John 10, John 17, Ephesians 1, and Romans 8).

The supreme Giver is the Father; the supreme Gift is the Son: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Until God's elect are regenerated by the Spirit of God, they are enemies (Rom. 5:6-8). Jesus Christ died for the ungodly. The cross is the greatest demonstration of God's love to all who are saved by God's grace.

The love of the Father is revealed in Jesus Christ and no other place. The elect are given to Christ, and Christ is given to all those the Father gave Christ. There is a twofold giving. The seventeenth chapter of John specifically states that the Father gave some to Christ and He gave Christ to them. He gave them to Christ in electing love, and He gave Christ to them in redemption. The Father gave

Christ power over all flesh that Jesus Christ might give eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him.

The love of God the Son is manifested in redeeming the elect. He delighted in His people before the foundation of the world (Prov. 8:31). The love of God is in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28-35). There is no love outside of Jesus Christ.

The love of the Holy Spirit is seen in His coming into the hearts of the elect to regenerate, convict, and convert. He applies the redemption wrought out for the elect by Jesus Christ in His love on the cross, fulfilling the purpose of God the Father. Man is not convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment until the Holy Spirit does His regenerating work in his heart. He gives that person a new disposition of heart and mind, sheds the love of God abroad in his heart, and converts him.

## **GOD'S PURPOSE GUARANTEES THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS LOVE**

God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11) guarantees that eternal love will be manifested (Jer. 31:3). Eternal election is the first step of eternal love. God's elective grace flows from eternal love. It provides eternal salvation through the eternal covenant (Heb. 13:20, 21). The eternal covenant is fulfilled in the Person and Work of the eternal Son. Thus, the eternity of Divine love is manifested not only in God's love for the elect, which is without beginning, but through the reciprocal action of the redeemed and regenerated, whose love for God will be without ending.

A statement by religionists that is frequently repeated is "God is a gentleman, He lets you make your own choice." Other statements are made by religionists: "By faith, you breathe Him (God) into your life, and He gives you spiritual life," and "By faith you control your own destiny." Three important questions are in order: (1) Is the way of man in himself? (2) Who first breathes in whom? (3) Is man the author of his own destiny? Solomon was inspired to write, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" (Prov. 16:9). Man may consider and purpose to himself what he will do, but God directs his steps by overruling and disposing all of man's designs and actions according to His foreordained plan. Who will you believe, God or man? The purpose of God preceded the foundation of the world (Eph. 3:11). By providence, He executes the foreordained plan in time. In other words, the purpose of God draws an outlined picture of human history; and providence lays on the colors, thus completing the picture. Hence, what one designs, the other completes; what one ordains, the other executes:

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph. 1:11).

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:35).

Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places (Ps. 135:6).

God's purpose is executed irrespective of man's will: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). God is subject to no man; furthermore, He is influenced by none. Being absolutely independent, God does what He pleases, to whom He pleases, and as He pleases.

God's eternal love may be described as follows:

1. **LOVE OF PURPOSE**—God's love of purpose means electing love. God's love extends only to those for whom He has purposed grace or has already applied it to their hearts in regeneration. This is the only way Romans 9:13, "...Jacob have I loved..." can be explained. God's love for Jacob is stated to have been before he was born (Rom. 9:11). Therefore, God's love is founded upon



purposed grace, because grace cannot be separated from love. Wherever there is love there is either purposed or saving grace (II Tim. 1:9; Eph. 2:4, 5; Rom. 5:5). If God loves everybody without exception, He had to purpose to save everyone. Furthermore, if He purposed to save everyone, all will be saved. However, that cannot be true because the same verse states, "...but Esau have I hated."

2. LOVE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT—God's love of accomplishment is revealed by the Father giving His Son to die for the world of the elect. The elect, therefore, was the object of God's love. Jacob, but not Esau, was part of that world. Hence, the salvation of the world is not the same as the salvation of every person in the world. John taught the universalism of Christianity contrasted with the nationalism of the Old Testament. When the process of salvation is completed, the renewal will be so encompassing as to issue in an ordered cosmos (John 1:29). The elect of God consist of men of every character, nationality, and age. As to character, consider such persons as Jacob the deceiver, Rahab the harlot, Paul the religionist, etc. As to nationality, John spoke of "...a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues..." (Rev. 7:9). As to age, we go from the Old Testament patriarchs to the last one that shall be saved (II Pet. 3:9).

God's love was manifested in a manner worthy of Himself. He gave His Son. The dignity of the gift was revealed—the Father and Son are one (John 10:30). The test of love is sacrifice; therefore, the Father sacrificed His Son. Matthew described a dramatic scene (Matt. 26:63-65). Two high priests were facing each other. One was an earthly priest after the order of Aaron; the other was the heavenly High Priest who, after His death, would assume His office at the Father's right hand. His priesthood would be after the order of Melchizedek. When Christ announced Himself as the Son of God, Caiaphas in mock horror rent his clothes. This put him out of the office (Lev. 21:10). He did not know that Christ was the true High Priest in whom God's love was manifested.

3. LOVE OF SATISFACTION—God's love of satisfaction is the goal of electing love. The purpose of God to save the elect was not accomplished at the expense of His own name, character, and government (Rom. 3:24-26; Is. 53:10, 11). Justice had to be satisfied, and the only way that could be done was for Christ to be treated as if He were the sinner. With the satisfaction of justice, the redeemed sinner is treated as righteous because he is clothed in Christ's righteousness. Divine love, therefore, is a saving love rather than a love which merely tends toward salvation. This love assured the salvation of Jacob. It was not a love which merely tended toward salvation for Jacob and Esau—a salvation which Jacob accepted and Esau rejected.

Two words that stand out in Romans 9:11 are "purpose" and "election." The Greek word for purpose is *prothesis* which means the setting forth or placing of a thing in view, a purpose. It is used twelve times in the New Testament (Matt. 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4; Acts 11:23; 27:13; Rom. 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11; II Tim. 1:9; 3:10; Heb. 9:2). It is translated "shewbread" and "purpose." This compound word is made up of the preposition *pro*, which means "before," and *tithemi*, which means to set, put, or place. In reference to the shewbread, *prothesis* means to set before as a public display, as the reminder of God's provision for Israel in her wilderness wandering. This was done in a physical sense. Concerning God's purpose, *prothesis* is used in an intellectual sense by setting before us in the Scriptures His determination or decree. We use the plural form "decrees" to speak of God's purpose, but it must be understood that our uses of the plural are all reducible to one purpose. Therefore, decrees—as we speak of them for our convenience—are not successively

formed as a so-called emergency arises, but they are all parts of one all-comprehending purpose or plan. This one purpose includes a number of events. These events are mutually related; therefore, we speak of decrees as many and as having a certain order. This certain order is by the One having supreme authority purposing what is pleasing to Himself without prejudice, respect of persons, or arbitrariness—as men view them.

According to the immediate context, as well as the overall context of Romans 9:11, election is always characterized by its own familiar formula—it comes not by human merit but by Divine grace. Thus, Paul's words in the same text are: "...not of works, but of him that calleth." The same writer said, this calling is "...not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Tim. 1:9). "Before the world began," like "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil," proves that election precedes the actual work of grace in men's hearts.

God's purpose is one, because He is of one mind: "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth" (Job 23:13). It has been said there can be no more a new thought or a new purpose in God than there can be a new God. Whatever God thinks He ever thought, always does think, and will think. Therefore, whatever God purposes He always purposed, ever purposes, and will purpose. Thinking and purposing are attributes of rational beings, whether created or uncreated. The thoughts and purposes of the infinite God are co-eternal with Himself. To illustrate this profound thought, let us consider the question that was asked a child: Does God consider anything? The child's answer was, "No, God is too perfect to reason. He knows everything without reasoning." No theologian could have given a better answer. God's thoughts and purposes are absolute. If this were not true, no being could possibly have existed. The fulfillment of God's purpose manifests the beauty of all His perfections. However, the fulfillment of God's purpose in providence often seems to run contrary to His eternal purpose. This may be illustrated by a watch or a clock. The wheels in a watch or a clock move contrary to one another. Some move counterclockwise, and some move clockwise; but all serve the purpose of the watch or the clock. The intent or purpose is to show the time. Some men go one way in the power of grace; others go the opposite way in their naturally depraved power; but all men, in conclusion, accomplish the purpose of the sovereign God.

To form a plan and then to alter it, or to have a plan and then fail in it, is one of the sad imperfections of humanity. In the case of the altered plan, some new information was revealed which was not evident before the plan was formed. Hence, an absolute plan cannot be devised by man. Finite man, who continually learns, can never absolutely purpose anything. In the case of the plan that failed, man cannot foresee the future; therefore, he does not know what obstacles will prevent the success of his plan. But who is so foolish as to suppose any of these things in God?

An altered plan with God is unthinkable. God, who is infinite in understanding, does not worry about any new information: "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:5). Infinite understanding means God's understanding is unlimited and therefore perfect. Since an intellectual is one who shows a notable mental capacity, or one who is guided by the intellect rather than by feelings, we must hasten to say that God alone can fulfill the requirements of an intellectual. Hence, God is the only one of superior—absolute, perfect—intellect. God sees future, present, and past all at once. God, therefore, has a fixed and settled purpose—not just a purpose, but only one purpose.

All history is but one. There may be many ages and events, but there is only one history. There may be many provinces and rulers, but there is only one Lord of heaven and earth. There is no succession in God's knowledge. Technically, there is no more foreknowledge than afterknowledge with God. Another manifestation of God's condescension is that He accommodates Himself to man's method of communication for man's benefit. How else could the infinite God communicate with finite men? Prophecy is proof of God's infinite knowledge. If He did not know future things, there was a time when He was ignorant. Every prophet's candle was lighted by the torch of God's foreknowledge (our way of thinking); but, better still, the prophet's candle was lighted by the torch of God's infinite knowledge. Thus, it has been said that God knows all things independently (who has been His counsellor?), distinctly (there is no mote or beam in God's eye), immutably (the knowledge of future things cannot be changed, because that knowledge arises from His will which is irreversible—"But the counsel of the Lord, it will stand," Proverbs 19:21 NASB), infallibly (God knows everything perfectly), and perpetually (God knows not Himself nor any of His creatures more perfectly at one time than at another).

Since God knows all things, it is unthinkable to suggest that, that which God knows will never happen. Who makes everything known by God certain to be fulfilled? Does this mean that God determined the acts of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, etc.? If they were not determined by God, there must be a force in time independent of God. The only escape for this conclusion is to deny that God knows all things. That would lead to deism. To say that Judas would betray Christ and yet to know that it might be otherwise would be contradictory. This brings up a difficult problem for many to handle.

One must learn to distinguish things that differ. For example, God purposing an action so that it shall be sinful is not the same as God purposing an action as sinful. God purposed that some actions shall be sinful for the sake of the good that He will cause to arise from the sinfulness thereof. Two indisputable facts of Scripture are Joseph's brethren and those who crucified Christ: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20). "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:22, 23). God purposed sin for the sake of the good that shall be accomplished. On the other hand, man purposes for the sake of the evil in wicked men.

Religionists acknowledge that God permits sin; therefore, no one can honestly say that God permits sin when it is against His will to do so. Edwards said, "God wills to permit sin, it is evident, because He does permit it. None will say that God Himself does what He does not will to do." It must be understood, however, that God's purpose does not compel depraved men to do evil. He only leaves them to the workings of their own depraved hearts. Therefore, His justice cannot be impeached, because He neither infuses an evil principle nor enforces evil actions. He only ordained what shall be. God's goodness cannot be impeached for suffering things which He could turn to such advantage for His own glory and the creatures' good. Thus, we see how the sun shines upon the dunghill without polluting its rays.

It has been said that God's purpose is founded in sovereignty, ordered by infinite wisdom, ratified by omnipotence, and cemented in immutability. Furthermore, let us say that God's purpose is

eternal (II Tim. 1:9), founded in Divine wisdom (Eph. 3:11), efficacious (Is. 46:10, 11), immutable (Acts 2:23), absolute (I Pet. 1:2), and all-comprehensive (Rom. 8:28); and it is more than a mere permission of His will with reference to sin. The problem cannot be solved by using the word “permission.” Such a term would suggest that God allows the sinner to freely decide against God’s command. If this is the teaching of Scripture, God in providence is no more than an observer of a contest whose outcome is never certain. Sin, according to the “permissive” view, lies in man’s power of action, and God’s action becomes His reaction to man’s action. The teaching of Scripture forces one to embrace the fact that whatever is done in time was purposed in eternity. Therefore, a time was fixed for the execution of that purpose, and it was brought about by the providence of God at that particular time. But does this not bring up the problem of determinism?

The alternatives, determinism or indeterminism, are true alternatives only on a horizontal, anthropological level. It is said they pose a dilemma which is resolved in the relationship man sustains to God. This vertical relationship between God and man alone gives possibility to a correct understanding of the problem of freedom. One has said that both determinism, which destroys free personality, and indeterminism, which declares personality sovereign as well as free, at bottom neglect the Biblical aspect of the problem. Determinism means man’s choices and actions are decided by antecedent causes. Conversely, indeterminism means man’s will chooses the motives which shall influence him rather than their being strictly determined by antecedent causes. It is interesting to observe that the Bible never speaks of God’s providence in its relation to human sin except in the historical actuality of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. Hence, the Bible never speaks of God leading Judas to his act of betrayal. Christ’s enemies are represented as men characterized by great initiative and energy, but they are unable to escape what God predestined to come to pass: “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:27, 28). The Greek word for “determined” is the aorist tense of *prooridzo* which means to limit or mark out beforehand, design definitely beforehand, ordain beforehand, or predestine (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29, 30; I Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11). This compound word is made up of the preposition *pro*, before, and *horidzo*, to appoint definitely (Acts 17:26), to fix determinately (Acts 2:23), to decree or destine (Luke 22:22), to appoint (Acts 10:42; 17:31). Scripture does not let us penetrate the harmony between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. However, faith does not flee from responsibility, nor does it seek to explain guilt in any way other than out of man’s own depraved heart.

The prediction of John 12:37-41 concerning the Jews did not free them from the guilt of their unbelief, but it does show that the event came to pass according to the prediction. A comparison of the prediction with the event shows the providence of God, without which nothing comes to pass in history. God overrules opposition to His own advantage. Therefore, He is so infallible in His providence that He will not be frustrated of His purpose. God’s providence had a hand in both the complaint of Isaiah and the challenge against the sinning Jews. Men are not saved on the ground of their virtues, but they are condemned on the ground of their sin.

There is some discussion concerning Romans 9:11 as to whether purpose or election comes first in the Divine order. The word election precedes purpose in the Greek text, but the word order of the Greek text is not to be relied upon in the interpretation as the Divine order. The word “purpose” expresses the determined will of the sovereign God; therefore, the purpose of God is related to His election. Some try to make much over the word order of Romans 9:11 in the Greek text. Others say

there is no difference between God electing some to eternal life and then purposing to save them and purposing to save some and then electing them.

Before and after, in reference to God's purpose, does not mean that one is before another in the order of time. All is from eternity. However, we must form an idea of one thing before another in God's purpose, inasmuch as God is the God of order. God's purpose to manifest His glory must be considered as prior to the creation and fall of man. Creation, for example, was the means of manifesting God's glory. As to order, God's purpose preceded creation. Since election is God choosing some out from among created and fallen mankind to be the recipients of special favor, this election is "in Christ" (Eph. 1:4). As to order, the election of Christ to be our Savior preceded our election "in Him" (Is. 42:1; Luke 23:35; I Pet. 2:4). Furthermore, since the elect are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, the means of obtaining conformation precedes the conformation.

One thing purposed by God becomes the foundation of another thing purposed. Therefore, the sinfulness of the reprobate is the foundation upon which God determines the punishment of his sinfulness. The justice of God is not to be considered as an end in itself but as a means to that end. Hence, Paul was inspired to write, "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" (Rom. 3:5, 6). On the other hand, while punishment is grounded on sin, grace is not grounded on man's faith. Grace is grounded on the redemptive work of the chosen Mediator and Savior of the elect. While punishment presupposes sin, grace does not presuppose faith. Hence, the sovereign God is not unjust to purpose to give one justice and another grace. God, therefore, is righteous to elect some to be saved by grace and just to pass by others who shall be eternally lost.

The events of time are the acts of God's will purposed before time. Therefore, the eternal purpose of God must be understood in the same order in which events are executed in time. The acts of God's will in time cannot be different from the acts of His purpose in eternity. Each act in the execution of God's will in time is the foundation for the act to follow. This may be proved by the following Biblical examples. Each act in the first chapter of Genesis was the reason for the act to follow. All the acts that preceded man were preparing for him. Each act in the life of Israel was the foundation for the act to follow. Consider this principle in Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan. Each event in the life of Christ from His birth to His death was the foundation for the event to follow. Bestowed upon the "elect of God" (I Thess. 1:4) are prevenient (coming before, antecedent, anticipatory) grace ("...grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"—II Tim. 1:9), saving grace ("...by grace you have been saved"—Eph. 2:5 NASB), sustaining grace ("...My grace is sufficient for thee..."—II Cor. 12:9), and glorifying grace ("...hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"—I Pet. 1:13). Each act of grace is the reason for the one to follow. God's act of giving grace to the elect is followed by His act of rewarding grace. However, both giving and rewarding grace were preceded by providing grace, and providing grace was preceded by purposing grace. God's act of punishing the reprobates is grounded on His purposing the fall. Punishment, therefore, presupposes guilt; guilt presupposes sin; sin presupposes the fall; and the fall presupposes God purposing the fall. Evil is purposed for the glory of God's justice, but God purposing an action so that it shall be sinful is not the same as God purposing an action as sinful.

## GOD IN LOVE ELECTED SOME

Having considered the word “purpose” in the statement “...that the purpose of God according to election might stand...,” we will now consider the word “election” in Romans 9:11. God’s purpose works according to the principle of election. No single word in Scripture has caused as much debate and division as “election.” Are we to think of God’s elect as those who have “decided for Christ”? No, it is the reverse. The elect are those whom the Father selected to be saved.

Men can be critical more easily than they can be correct. One does not have to know anything to criticize, but he surely has to study to be correct. Much of the criticism stems from ignorance, but a lot of it comes from prejudice. A “Greek student” said that predestination is used in about one verse out of 5,000 and this shows how much we should talk about it. Greek is a helpful tool to a person who has the Spirit of grace, but to one without the Spirit of grace, it is useless to help him understand spiritual things. Think of all the unsaved Greeks! If the Greek alone is sufficient, all Greeks should be saved. The same is true of the Hebrew. It, too, is a great tool; but it takes more than a knowledge of Hebrew. What about all the unsaved Jews?

God’s purpose would have been no purpose “according to election” if He had purposed to elect all without exception. Election means to select some from among all. God’s election of some could not be on the basis of foreseen faith, because God gave grace to the elect in Christ on the principle of election before the world began (II Tim. 1:9). Therefore, as many as God “appointed” *tasso* to eternal life believed. Believing is the result rather than the cause of God’s appointment. Men cannot beat the Lord to the choice, because God’s election preceded the actual existence of men.

God’s purpose according to election is displayed in Scripture to remind individuals and the nation of Israel that salvation is no afterthought with Him. Purpose is not the same as execution. For example, to purpose to create is not the same as creation itself. Furthermore, to purpose to save some according to the principle of election is not the same as salvation itself. God’s purpose is eternal, but its execution is in time. The purpose is not by reason of the faith in us, but the faith in us is because of the Divine purpose. God purposed to save some (Eph. 1:4; II Tim. 1:9) and to redeem those He elected to save (I Pet. 1:18-23).

The principle of Divine election is given by Paul in Romans 9:6-13. There is no passage in all of Scripture more neglected, hated, and misinterpreted than this section of Romans 9. Depraved reasoning seeks to harmonize what appears to it to be inconsistency in God’s character. It begins by rationalizing that God who loves the world of mankind cannot hate anyone. Therefore, God loved Jacob but loved Esau less. Such reasoning continues by saying that God is no respecter of persons. Others recognize the authenticity of Scripture and interpret the passage as referring to the nation of Israel and having nothing to do with the election of individuals to eternal salvation. They assert that the election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau are not personal but national; and election is not to eternal salvation but to earthly privileges. They maintain that the choice of Jacob and the rejection of Esau are not intended to establish the doctrine of unconditional election to eternal life and the predestination of others to eternal damnation but the unconditional election of the Gentiles to the

benefits of the gospel and the national rejection of the Jews. Finally, there are many religionists who, when confronted with Divine election, become angry and consign every one who believes in unconditional election to the pit of hell. They willfully neglect the passages that mention election. No effort is made by them to study the subject, because they are blinded by the so-called “free will” texts.

There have been varied interpretations by preachers on the meaning of election. Here are two views:

1.

A plan of salvation was elected by God. Christ was the means of carrying out that plan. It is man’s decision to reject it or accept it. God also elected a people to manifest this plan. Man’s free will is the determinate factor in both.

2.

The acceptance or rejection of Christ as Savior determines who is elected. God provided unlimited atonement. Election is accomplished at the time of salvation.

Arminians say that election is based upon God’s foreknowledge of who will actively co-operate with God in the saving of his own soul. Lutherans say it is based upon God’s foreknowledge of who will not resist His invitation to accept salvation as an outright gift. Methodists believe it is based upon God’s foreknowledge of who will persevere to the end. All have key verses to counterbalance the testimony of Scripture as a whole. They rely solely on the word “foreknowledge” without studying to know its true meaning. The “foreknowledge of God” is ignorantly and willfully misapplied by many. Some go no further than the English definition, “knowledge of a thing before it exists or happens.” Others willfully misinterpret the Biblical word. Sincere believers, on the other hand, desire to know how the verb *proginosko* (Acts 26:5; Rom. 8:29; 11:2; I Pet. 1:20; II Pet. 3:17) and the noun *proginosis* (Acts 2:23; I Pet. 1:2) are used in Scripture. These are not the same as *ginosko* of John 10:14.

Either God is sovereign and election is the expression of God’s eternal purpose, or man is sovereign and election is an expression of what God foreknew man would do. One must make a choice between the sovereignty of God in man’s salvation or the sovereignty of man in his own salvation. No one can straddle the fence on this issue. It is either one or the other.

The Greek verb *eklego* is made up of *lego*, which means to collect, gather, or pick out, and *ek*, which means out from. Hence, the compound verb means to pick, single, or choose out. This verb is used 20 times in the New Testament (Mark 13:20; Luke 6:13; 10:42; 14:7; John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16, 19; Acts 1:2, 24; 6:5; 13:17; 15:7, 22, 25; I Cor. 1:27—twice, 28; Eph. 1:4; James 2:5).

The Greek noun *ekloge* means the act of choosing out, election; election to privilege by Divine grace; the aggregate of those who are chosen, or the elect. This noun is used 7 times in the New Testament (Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; I Thess. 1:4; II Pet. 1:10).

The adjective *eklektos* is translated by the words “chosen” and “elect.” It means chosen out or selected. In the New Testament it signifies chosen as a recipient of special privilege, elect (Col.

3:12); specially beloved (Luke 23:35); possessed of prime excellence, exalted (I Tim. 5:21); choice or precious (I Pet. 2:4, 6). This adjective is used 22 times in the New Testament (Matt. 20:16—omitted in some MSs, but both *Englishman's* and *Strong's Concordances* show the word “chosen.” Nestle's Greek text omits the adjective—Matt. 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; 23:35; Rom. 8:33; 16:13; Col. 3:12; I Tim. 5:21; II Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:1; I Pet. 1:2; 2:4, 6, 9; II John 1, 13; Rev. 17:14).

Erroneous interpretations endanger one's understanding of election. The following are some of those interpretations along with replies to them:

FIRST—Election is based on foreseen faith.

What did God the Father foresee? He foresaw that sinners would not believe (John 5:40).

SECOND—Election takes place at the point of faith.

Such teaching makes faith the deciding vote that places Jesus Christ into the office as Savior. Thus, the will of God becomes subservient to the will of man.

THIRD—The “freedom of God” is emphasized to the exclusion of means.

Election is not salvation; it is unto salvation (II Thess. 2:13).

FOURTH—There is an elected plan of salvation rather than an election of individuals.

To say that God did no more than give a plan is not different from His giving the Holy Law. There was nothing wrong with the law. The problem is in man's depravity. As there was no grace in mere law, there is no grace in a mere plan. However, election is the “election of grace” (Rom. 11:5).

FIFTH—Election may be taken for granted so that it becomes an occasion for subtle self-justification.

The conflict between Christ and the religious Jews was a conflict concerning the gracious election of God. The Bible does not present election as a way to self-exaltation, but as the way to true humility and holiness of life (II Cor. 5:14, 15; I Pet. 2:10, 11; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 12:14).

SIXTH—Election relieves the nonelect of all responsibility.

Every man is responsible to God. Furthermore, who knows who are the nonelect? God alone knows. The increase of objective light increases responsibility (Mark 6:11).

SEVENTH—Election prevents the salvation of some who desire to be saved.

The question should be asked, From what do they desire to be saved? The desire to be saved from hell is a natural desire, but the desire to be saved from sin is a spiritual desire. (See Luke 14:12-14; Matt. 22:1-14).



EIGHTH—God would be arbitrary to elect.

Man is blind to live in his belief in the nonarbitrariness of his own works and morality but envision arbitrariness in the absolute freedom of the sovereign God who is His own law. God can do as He pleases without being guilty of arbitrariness as men view arbitrariness.

NINTH—Election makes God a respecter of persons.

God is charged with giving to equal persons unequal things. God's election is not an act of justice, but of sovereignty. Justice presupposes debt, but God is debtor to none. Man is dependent on God. Election is not a matter of right or wrong; it is God's free favor.

TENTH—The doctrine of election makes God guilty of partiality.

Was God prejudiced in favor of some? Partiality means injustice (I Tim. 5:21; James 3:17). Do sinners have a right to favor with God? There can be no partiality since none have any right to God's favor. If absolute sovereignty is partial, the Bible is full of partiality. (See Matt. 11:25-27).

## MAN CANNOT COMPREHEND GOD'S LOVE IN ELECTION

The major argument against Romans 9-11 teaching unconditional election to salvation is that it is to be understood in a national rather than a personal sense. Therefore, God loving Jacob and hating Esau is to be understood comparatively, not absolutely. They are representatives of a race, not of individuals. Love and hate refer to earthly, not heavenly privileges. The election depended on neither their repentance nor their faith; therefore, it is not true that this was an election to salvation of Jacob, or was it eternal reprobation of Esau. The matter in question concerned Jacob as a member of the theocratic family to which Esau could never attain because he spurned the birthright. The record states that "Two nations are in thy (Rebekah's) womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). Therefore, they conclude by saying that God was dealing with "nations" and "peoples" rather than electing one to salvation while passing by the other.

No one can deny the fact that Paul was discussing the subject of Israel in Romans 9-11, but neither can he deny that Jacob and Esau were individuals. Thus, two very important questions should be asked: Did God love only Israel and hate only Edom without first loving Jacob and hating Esau? Did not God make a distinction between one man and one nation over another man and another nation? No one can dismiss the idea of individual election by saying Romans 9 speaks of national election. Technically speaking, what difference is there between one nation being chosen from among the nations and some individuals being chosen from among mankind? The principle is the same in both cases.

The question of election or no election is the question of the testimony of Scripture on one side and the depraved opinions of men on the other. Holy Scripture instructs us in things that human reason can never know. Why would God give us a revelation of things we already know? Election is used several ways in the Scriptures: (1) Sometimes it refers to choosing persons of excellent or superior ability. When persons choose, they pick out the best. For example, the children of Benjamin chose the best and most effective warriors to defend themselves: "Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss" (Judges 20:16). (2) Election sometimes signifies the temporary designation of persons to a particular office. Thus, the disciples were chosen to go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit might remain (John 15:16). (3) Election is used in the sense of God taking a whole nation into covenant with Himself: "...the LORD thy God hath chosen thee (Israel) to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6). (4) Sometimes election refers to the eternal, sovereign, particular, and immutable act of God where He selected some from among mankind to be redeemed by Jesus Christ (John 10:15, 16; II Tim. 2:9, 10). There is no such thing as God eternally electing some to be His own and not determining who they will be: "...The Lord knoweth them that are his..." (II Tim. 2:19). "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth..." (Ps. 65:4). Unlike men, God does not choose men simply because they are superior to others in any way. He chooses the foolish, weak, base, despised, and things that are not that no flesh should glory (I Cor. 1:26-29).

The first instinct of depraved man is to rebel against God's sovereignty. However, since election is unconditional, its result is unconditional surrender to the will of the sovereign God. This must never be expected apart from the grace of God. It has been said that the word "grace" conveys three ideas. The first idea is that of power. It takes power to save. Men who are dead in sin need power, not instruction. How can a dead person be instructed? The first act of grace is to make dead men alive. The working of God's mighty power is described as internal in Ephesians 1:19 and 20. In the creation of man, God began on the outside; but in regeneration, He begins on the inside. Hence, there can be no external change that will abide until grace works an internal change. The same power that raised Christ from the grave is required to make men dead in sin alive in Christ. The second idea is that of love. Grace is not merely power, but it is power directed by love: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Eph. 2:4, 5). We have not only been saved but we are presently in a state of eternal salvation, because our salvation is a product of God's everlasting love. The third idea of grace is that it is gratuitous. Therefore, it is not only undeserved, but it is unearned: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:5, 6). Grace, therefore, is all from God in its purpose, provision, and application.

The reason election is hated is because it is contrary to the opinion, judgment, estimate, or view of man in his depraved condition. That is why man counts the election of grace a "strange" thing (Luke 4:18-5:26). The word "strange" (Luke 5:26) is *paradoxos*, which means uncommon, unexpected, or incredible. It is a compound word—*para*, contrary to; *doxa*, opinion, judgment, estimate, or view—and is used only in this verse. Election particularizes grace, and that is what the natural mind hates. The reason that men do not have the correct concept of election is because they do not go to the sovereign God. The one who begins with God will say, "...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). We must all learn the lessons that Eve, Sarah, and Rebekah had to learn. Concerning Cain and Abel, Eve learned that a spiritual seed is "not of blood." Concerning Ishmael and Isaac, Sarah learned that a spiritual seed is "not of the will of the flesh." The birth of Isaac was a miracle. Concerning Esau and Jacob, Rebekah learned that a spiritual seed is "not of the will of man." At every step, Christians are shut up to faith in God. When they go to the word of God, they learn that salvation is of God in its planning, provision, and application (Eph. 1:3-14).

Where there is election, there is sure to be salvation, because election is unto salvation: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 2:13, 14). Since election is "unto," *eis*, salvation, election must precede salvation. Therefore, Christ said, "...other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). The verb "I have," *echo*, means "to have already." All the elect were Christ's already, because they had already been given to Him by the Father (John 17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24). The next "I must bring" is a verbal noun, *dei me agagein*, the infinitive of *ago*, to bring. This can be translated "it is proper or inevitable for me to bring" those I have already by covenant relationship chosen to salvation. The means by which the elect are brought to salvation is given in John 10:15 when Christ said, "...I lay down my life for the sheep." This refers to particular redemption. The next verb, "they shall hear," is controversial as to its inflected form. Some think it is the future active tense of *akouo*, to hear. Others think it should

be the future middle tense of *akouo*. Whatever inflected form you choose, it still means the elect Gentiles as well as the elect Jews will hear the true Shepherd, because they recognize His voice (John 10:3, 5). The last verb is “there shall be,” and this verb, like the one that precedes it, is controversial. Some think the inflected form should be the future active tense of *ginomai*, to become; but others think it should be the future middle tense of *ginomai*. They shall come to be one “flock” (*poimen*, a flock). The first occurrence of the word “fold” of John 10:16 is *aule* in the Greek text, which means “sheepfold.” The second occurrence is “fold,” but the Greek word is *poimen*, which means a “flock.” Christ’s sheep are not restricted to the “sheepfold” (Jews, John 10:1), but they are also chosen from among the Gentiles.

Those who believe Romans 9:10-13 applies only to national Israel, and not to individual election, say the passage should not be studied except in the light of Israel’s history (Mal. 1:1-5). They contend that the doctrine of Divine preference of Israel to Esau appeared only after the respective characters of the nations were manifested in history. Furthermore, they affirm that the Old Testament doctrine of election is to service only. One has said that as Paul tried to teach the Christians in Rome, God chose Israel not for the sake of Israel alone, but for the sake of the whole world. To him this explained the apparent arbitrariness of the choice and the narrowness of the groove within which Israel moved. There may be a great deal to be said for the doctrine of election in the abstract, but when it is couched in the language of “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,” it is difficult to avoid a sense of favoritism. However, they conclude by saying when one looks behind the words to see the conclusion, such a thought is unwarranted, because behind the words there is a principle that God loves those who love Him.

The nation of Israel was chosen to a theocratic position, but among the members of national Israel some were elected unto salvation (Rom. 9:6, 7). It is true that the character of the nation was manifested in history. Furthermore, Israel was chosen not merely for her sake but also for the good of the elect among the nations of the world. However, it must be denied that the Bible teaches any such principle that God loves those who love Him. It is true that such a view is natural to natural minds, but the teaching of Scripture proves that God loved Israel with an everlasting love: “The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people” (Deut. 7:7). “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31:3). The word for “everlasting” comes from the Hebrew word *owlam* which means continuance, eternal, perpetual; endless and unlimited, whether past or yet to come. Men in actual existence are not everlasting, but in the mind of the Infinite they are eternal. God’s statement “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” came to Israel through His prophet when her sorrows were great and her sins were still greater. Often when the elect are at their lowest, the God of all grace comes in and brings to remembrance the love of their espousals. The same Divine principle is stated by John: “We love him (God), because he first loved us” (I John 4:19).

The elect are not only chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4), have redemption in Christ (Eph. 1:7), are made new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17), have obtained an inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:11), are sealed in Christ (Eph. 1:13), and have boldness and access in Christ (Eph. 3:12), but produce fruit in Christ (John 15:1-5), make known our petitions in Christ (John 15:7), perform good works in Christ (Eph. 2:10), and speak the truth in Christ (Rom. 9:1).

## **GOD'S LOVE IS DISCRIMINATING**

God is the discriminator in the plan of the ages, in prophecy, and in Old Testament history. The Bible represents God as omnipotent, but the Scriptures also state that there are some things God cannot do. Omnipotence does not mean God can do everything but that He can do everything He purposed to do. The Bible says God is love, but it also states that He pours out His wrath upon some from among mankind. Sentence against crime is not cruel. What would a righteous God be without His punishment? There can be no forgiveness without satisfaction.

Love in its very nature is particular rather than indiscriminate. God's love is not a public spectacle. One must have grace to know and see God's love. Many saw the cross, but they saw no manifestation of love. The Father's love is manifested in Christ's death, the Son's love is revealed in His work of redemption, and the Spirit's love is seen in His coming into the hearts of the elect, regenerating, convicting, converting, and shedding forth God's love. Apart from the work of the Spirit, like the many who witnessed Calvary, men see no manifestation of love. Telling persons who reject Christ that God loves them only gives them a sense of security in their sins. There is no love outside of Jesus Christ. Even the elect, although loved eternally by God, cannot know it until regenerated.

God is the God of distinction. Discriminating distinctions between men are given in the Scriptures, and God is the discriminator. He loves some and hates others. He chooses some and passes by others (Rom. 9:13). He appoints some to salvation and others to wrath (I Thess. 5:9). God has mercy on some and hardens others (Rom 9:18). He ordained some to eternal life (Acts 13:48), and He ordained others to condemnation (Jude 4). God knows some and does not know others (John 10:14; Matt. 20:28). God elected some and reprobated others (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 11). There are those who are not of this world, and there are those who are of this world (John 17:14, 16; 15:18, 19). God effectually calls some and passes by others (II Tim. 1:9). There are those to whom things are revealed, and there are those from whom things are concealed (Matt. 11:25, 26). God reveals spiritual things to the elect and conceals them from the nonelect (I Cor. 2:9-11).

The truth of restricted love is opposed and rejected by most religionists today. The principle of contempt prior to examination is a bar against all information and keeps man in ignorance. Truth always involves more than appears on the surface. There is nothing in the circle of doctrine which does not surpass the capacity of man. The tendency in our day is to despise laborious research and substitute human reason for Divine revelation. Divine revelation and not man's opinion will be the standard for judgment. Foolish men raise many quarrels with God, as though God were captive to their accusations. It is a serious sin for men to seek to subject that which has no bounds to the little measure of man's reason. God's wisdom is unlimited. God's knowledge is infinite (Ps. 147:5). Man's finite mind is not the standard by which God's infinite mind is to be measured. We all rejoice in the absolute power of God. Would man have God's power so limited that He would be unable to do more than his mind could comprehend? Would man limit the characteristics of God to his own limited understanding of them? The very thing that some men quarrel with God about is the thing

they love in themselves. They feel they have a right to do with their own as they please. The sovereign God of the universe has a right to do what He pleases with His own.

The truth of Divine election causes many to raise questions. Paul had declared God's choice of Jacob and His passing by Esau. Therefore, he anticipated the questions of Romans 9:14-24 before they were raised. The following questions were raised: "Is there unrighteousness with God?" "Why doth he yet find fault?" "For who hath resisted his will?" "Who art thou that repliest against God?" "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

Injustice is a violation of the rights of others, either by withholding good deserved or by inflicting evil undeserved. What good does man, the condemned sinner, deserve from the righteous God? The answer is obvious to every recipient of grace. He knows he was condemned, depraved, and deserved nothing from the righteous God. Whatever evil is inflicted upon a sinner is certainly deserved.

God claims the prerogative to do what He pleases with His own (Rom. 9:15, 16). He exercises that prerogative (vv. 17, 18). The objection, Does not election destroy personal responsibility? is irrelevant. God treats the rejected as they deserve (vv. 22-24). God is not unrighteous to give mercy to some and justice to others. He does not wrong some by showing mercy to others.

Arminians claim that the doctrine of election makes God guilty of injustice in that He gives to equal persons unequal things. It must be understood that God is not bound to any person. He alone has absolute freedom. One cannot go to law with God because God is His own law. Furthermore, there is no law higher than Himself. God chose not any man for any reason than that it pleased Him to do so.

God's purpose is not an act of justice, but it is an act of Lordship and sovereignty. Justice always presupposes debt, but God could not be a debtor to man because man is dependent on God. A decree is not a matter of right and wrong. It is God's free favor. How does the objector to election vindicate methods of providence in all the different instances? A person has nothing to say about when and where he is born. Will any attempt to say God is unjust to determine to save some when He would have been just to destroy all? Determining to choose men not for their works' sake does not make God a respecter of persons. Jacob was chosen, and Esau was passed by before either of them did any works (Rom. 9:11, 12). God saw all men alike and nothing to cast the balance of His choice but His own good pleasure. God does not value a man on either his nationality or his station in life. The salvation of the regenerated Gentile, Cornelius, when the Jew, Peter, declared God's word to him assured Peter that God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). This verse does not militate against either election or reprobation.

There is no unrighteousness with God. A superficial inspection of God's government leads men to false conclusions. One such conclusion is that God's election of some and passing by others manifests respect of persons. One person has said that God either has power and does not care or He cares and does not have power. The Biblical alternative to his statement is that nothing is more natural than that the government of the infinite God should present mysteries to finite minds. God's thoughts are not man's thoughts, and His ways are not man's ways (Is. 55:8, 9). God's providential

dispensations are, notwithstanding their great variety, impartial. Men enter into life in the same state of depravity. There is great sameness in the occupations of men while there are differences of rank and station. Men do not all have the same intellectual capacities. They do not all look alike, act alike, or have the same personalities. They are unable to accomplish the same things and do not have the same abilities. The rank or station to be preferred is difficult to determine when we contemplate the whole of our being.

If sovereignty is classified as partiality, the Bible is full of partiality. God can do what He pleases with His own (Matt. 20:15; 11:25-27). People must wait for the solution of that which appears to be partial in providence, such as circumstances, condition of body in health, natural abilities, and external advantages. Man's future alone can determine him happy or unhappy on the whole. Happiness is found in fellowshiping with the Lord and in enjoying spiritual blessings. It is not found in physical health.

Respect of persons is looking with favor upon persons with respect to their external privileges without any real concern about their internal state. Jude had this in mind when he said, "...having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16). It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. There is a tendency in all ranks—the wealthy, socially influential, and politically advanced wicked men—to overlook one's wickedness for the sake of personal advantage. This respect of persons is condemned (James 2:1-9). It was forbidden in the Mosaic law, particularly in judicial decisions (Deut. 1:17; Lev. 19:15).

All respect of persons is not sinful. If it were, there would be no place for authority in the local church or in civil government. There is a holy respect of persons by God. He accepts His people (Gen. 19:21). He first respects a man's person before his services (Gen. 4:4). Justifiable respect of persons by man include respect for their ages, offices, gifts, graces, and callings. It is lawful to respect persons for the difference that God has given them (I Cor. 4:6.). All are equal in salvation (Jude 3), but all are not equal in gifts and calling. Proper respect is due to persons for their gifts and calling but not for their own sakes.

There is a sinful respect of persons. Judgment that is corrupted by some external appearance or advantage is a heinous sin. There is a Divine principle of impartiality enjoined in Scriptures. The Lord said to Moses, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour" (Lev. 19:15). No special kindness is to be shown to the guilty poor nor flattery or overlooking of sin toward the guilty great. Respect of persons is manifested by making external things the ground of respect and affection and holding people in high esteem for personal advantage. One must never make greatness a cover for baseness and excuse sin by human honor.

Respect of persons is to respect anything besides the matter and cause itself. Hence, it is going from the matter to the man, from the thing to the person, and swerving from righteous judgment and true estimation of things. This evil cannot stand with Christian profession. A man is to be judged by his character and not by his coat. A poor soul may be a rich Christian, and a rich man may have a poor soul.

The observer sees the sun rising on the evil and on the righteous and the rain descending on the just and on the unjust. The conclusion drawn from the first observation is that the power above is

friendly alike to all mankind. The observer takes another look at mankind and sees what he thinks are irregularities. Some are rich and some are poor. Some are healthy and some infirm. Some are nice looking and some homely. Some have great advantages and others have none, etc. From the beginning to the end of life there seems to be inequality. The more carefully we observe these facts the more caution we will exercise in dealing with them. We must realize that this is not God's perfect world. It was perfect when He created it, but it is not now His perfect world. This evil system is far from being the "great society" of which men have dreamed. The present system is under the curse. We must also realize that poverty is not always a curse and wealth is not always a blessing. Wealth is often a disadvantage to children. They often become indolent and ineffective. Children born in these circumstances sometimes find poverty a stimulus for a desire for more. The same can be said for sickness and death. The more we investigate the facts of life, the less disposed we are to complain about the injustices and inequalities of which some talk.

There is no way for an intelligent faith without the admission that God's attributes are immutable and that His purpose is as inscrutable as His being. It is not our mission to vindicate the way of God to minds that are darkened by sin and alienated from the life of God.

Man pleading his freedom over against God's is folly. The execution of God's purpose is not dependent on man's will. Every person who becomes a Christian acknowledges God's absolute sovereignty in his salvation. Paul's great theme is that the love expressed by the sovereign God is that He does all for and in the elect. There is the comparison between the parties loving and the loved—the most Holy loving the unholy. The measure of God's love is infinite, transcendent, and incomprehensible.

The Bible states that God elects some and reprobates those He does not choose. Is God unjust or unequal to give one mercy and another justice? God ordains none but sinners to punishment. Nonelection is not punishment. It is only the withholding of free favor. God has the right to withhold His free favor.



## GOD LOVES SOME AND HATES OTHERS

The subjects of love and hate must be approached differently. “God is love,” but Scripture never says that “God is hate.” Does this mean that hatred is the direct opposite of love? The dictionary states that “hate” is the antonym of “love.” Theologically, one can say God not only expresses love, but “He is love.” However, he cannot say that God not only expresses hatred, but He is hatred.

God loved Jacob and hated Esau before their births: “...Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:13). One cannot deny that God first dealt with Jacob and Esau as individuals and then as nations (Gen. 25:32; Mal. 1:1-5; Rom. 9:10-13). Some say God’s choice was based on the foreseen but unaccomplished good works of Jacob. If this were true, God would be the responder and not the initiator. Furthermore, saying that election is national rather than individual does not eliminate the principle of election. If God is unjust to elect some individuals and pass by others, would He not be unjust to select the nation of Israel while passing by all other nations?

God does not love everybody. He did not love Esau. He did not love the Amalekites (Ex. 17:14-16). The Lord hates all the workers of iniquity (Ps. 5:5). A frequently repeated statement by men is that God loves the sinner but hates his sin. This statement is made out of ignorance concerning man’s depravity. God hates the “workers” of iniquity. If God loved the sinner and hated his sin, Psalm 5:5 would have to read, “God hates the works of the wicked.” There is no sin without a sinner.

All whom God loves He loves eternally. His love is everlasting. It is immutable. Did God love Amalek for a time and then because of his wicked deeds put him from His remembrance forever? Would you say that God loved Esau for a time, and then because of his wicked deeds, God’s love turned to wrath? An affirmative answer would contradict one of the great principles of Scripture—the truth of immutability. God does not change. Will the Lord put a recipient of grace out of His memory forever? No! He loves us with an everlasting love, and nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:28-39). The marvel is not that God hates some, but it is that God loves any. There is nothing in anyone to influence God’s love.

The sovereign God of the universe bestows love on whom He pleases. He has that right. To question His love is to question Himself. You say, “That makes Him arbitrary.” However, arbitrariness cannot be attributed to God as it is to man. God is His own law, and He can do as He pleases. He is the Creator of heaven and the earth. We cannot dictate to Him.

None can know the love of God until he first recognizes the wrath of the righteous judgment of God. Every person, therefore, must see himself as he really is. This is impossible until the grace of God comes into his heart and life by the sovereign Spirit. Every person is depraved, wicked, condemned, and hopeless outside of Jesus Christ. The potential to every conceivable sin lies within the heart of every sinner (Jer. 17:9).

God loved Jacob with an everlasting love. The verb “loved” is the aorist tense of *agapao*, which means to love, value, esteem, feel or manifest generous concern for, to delight in, or to set store

upon. The aorist tense refers to a finished action in past time. It is used in the constative sense, which means that God's love for Jacob is viewed in its entirety. The reason for God's love was not in Jacob but in God who is love (I John 4:8). Hence, the cause of God's love must be found in Himself; otherwise, God must love by rule or law. Since God is sovereign, He is His own law and exercises His love as the absolutely sovereign One.

God hated Esau. The Greek verb is the aorist tense of *miseo*, which means to hate, regard with ill-will, detest, or abhor. The "hate" of Romans 9:13 belongs to the transcendent realm of God's sovereignty. There is no human analogy for Divine hatred. God's hatred for Esau cannot be interpreted to mean "loved less." If "hatred" in this text means "loved less," the same principle would apply to "loved" which would mean "hated less." There is a holy hatred in God for evil which cannot be defined by the term "loved less." The verb tense of "hated," like the tense of the verb "loved," is aorist active indicative. Both are finished actions in past time. They are used in the constative sense, which means both are viewed in their entirety.

The idea that God loves everybody is refuted by Romans 9:13. Among those who embrace the theory that God loves everybody are some strange bedfellows, such as Universalists, Unitarians, Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, Modernists, Arminians, etc. The love of God can never be understood until one first recognizes God's holy hatred. God's love and hatred are not emotions but Divine principles. Thus, there is in God a hatred that cannot be explained in terms of not loving or loving less. One can assign "holiness," but not love, to every act of God in history. Did God love all men without exception so much that He gave His Son to die for them, and yet He loved some so little as to leave them to perish? "Loving" and "giving" are two expressions of God's sovereignty in redemption. Loving is eternal; giving is in time. God does not love and hate the same persons.

There is much discussion about the verb "hated" of Romans 9:13. Some say it is a Hebraism for not being chosen. They believe the hatred is not positive but negative. This would mean that those whom God did not positively elect to salvation were negatively passed by. Others believe the word is sometimes used to mean "loved less." They say the Hebrew word *sane*, like the Greek verb *miseo*, is not always understood in its strongest sense but must sometimes mean a "less degree of love" or "to show less favor." The following verses are quoted to support this view: Genesis 29:32-33; Deuteronomy 21:15; Matthew 10:37-38; Luke 14:26; John 12:25. There are others who believe the quotation by Paul refers strictly to an election to a Messianic line, not an election to eternal life. They say the prophet Malachi referred to Israel and Edom rather than to Jacob and Esau (Mal. 1:1-5). The prophecy, then, affected Esau and his posterity with wrath because of their sinfulness "for ever."

We will now investigate the aforementioned views. Positive election is on the basis of grace; whereas, the negative passing by of others is on the basis of sinful depravity. Election and reprobation proceed on different foundations. Giving to some what they do not merit is a manifestation of grace; but by not giving to all, God declares what all men deserve. Sin is the cause of damnation, but reprobation is not the cause of sin. Man is the cause of his own sinful nature and practice. Reprobation is not founded upon God's foresight of man being a sinner. If that were true, all would have been reprobated.

Distinction must be made between negatively "passing by" and "positively appointing to condemnation." Passing by does not make the nonelect sinners. Negative reprobation was before

sinners came into the world (Rom. 9:11), but nothing can come into the world either unknown or unpurposed: “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” (Lam. 3:37). The actual coming into being of persons does not give knowledge to God, but the perfection of His knowledge and power gives persons their being. God did not purpose a world of mankind because He foresaw there would be one. A world of mankind coming into existence is because He eternally purposed it. The same principle applies to reprobation in its negative aspect.

Negative reprobation makes no person a sinner, and neither does positive election make one a Christian. Sin did not enter the world from the act of either reprobation or election. If sin came by reprobation, only reprobates would have been tempted and fallen. The temptation and fall were universal, but reprobation was particular. Hence, the elected as well as the reprobated were under sin. On the other hand, positive reprobation has to do with God’s justice. Does anyone consider himself so much greater than God that he thinks it is a crime for God to make the same opposition against himself that he has made against God? Positive reprobation by God is agreeable with the treatment Christ has received by the sinner. Justice is giving everyone his due.

There are some who say the word “hated” means to love less or to regard and treat with less favor. They use Genesis 29:33 and Luke 14:26 to support that view. However, honesty demands that the “hatred” of Romans 9:13 belongs to the transcendent realm of God’s absolute sovereignty, for which there is no human analogy. Even in men there is a hatred that is entirely distinct from malicious and vindictive hatred. The hatred for Esau must be interpreted in the sense of positive disfavor. He was not merely excluded from what Jacob enjoyed. There is in God a holy hatred that cannot be defined in terms of loving less or treating with less favor. Absolute hatred of evil proceeds from absolute love. Therefore, holy hatred gives no countenance to evil men or to evil works. Holy love and holy hatred are two sides of the same coin: “The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Ps. 5:5). “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (Rev. 2:6). “So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate” (Rev. 2:15). None can know the love of God until he first recognizes God’s perfect hatred.

Finally, there are those who believe God in love gave Jacob the land of promise; but in loving Esau less, He gave him the dry and barren country (Mal. 1:1-5). Paul quoted from the Malachi prophecy in Romans 9:13. They believe it referred not to individuals but to the nations from whom they descended. They say the Divine preference of Israel to Esau appeared only after the respective characters of the nations were manifested in history. Malachi prophesied after the deaths of Jacob and Esau, but his prophecy was given to expose Israel’s ingratitude by showing that both Israel and Edom were descendants of Jacob and Esau. The difference between the nations can be traced to the One who put a difference between Jacob and Esau: “...Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” God put a difference between not only Jacob and Esau but the Egyptians and Israel (Ex. 11:7). Originally, there was no difference between either Jacob and Esau or Egypt and Israel. They all descended from the same source and were equally depraved. The difference is attributable to God, and the nature of the difference was God’s electing love. The reason for the difference was not because of any merit on the part of one or sin on the part of the other. The sign of the difference was that the world might know that the difference was the work of God. God is the one who puts a difference between the elect and the nonelect in every age (I Cor. 4:7).

Since darkness and unrighteousness are the absence of light and righteousness, hate is the absence of love. Therefore, the eternal love that reached Jacob was not experienced by Esau. Is one correct to say that hate does not emerge from God, but it is the absence of love? The Hebrew and Greek words for “hate” are used 204 times, but only eleven times is “hate” connected to God (Ps. 5:5; Prov. 6:16; Hos. 9:15; Amos 5:21; 6:8; Zech. 8:17; Mal. 1:3; 2:16; Rom. 9:13; Rev. 2:6, 15). Out of the eleven references to God’s hatred, only four are dealing with persons (Ps. 5:5; Hos. 9:15; Mal. 1:3; Rom. 9:13). Two of the four references refer to God’s hatred for Esau, one to God’s chosen nation, and one to the workers of iniquity. Does this present a problem?

Evidence is an absolute necessity for a proper decision. The Bible says, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Prov. 18:13). This is a “Proverb” that is verified in all walks of life, but the most damaging verification is in the realm of Biblical subjects. Too often we hear people break into a conversation and seek to answer a Bible question without waiting for or making an effort to get the facts. We should be more like Job who said, “...the cause which I knew not I searched out” (Job 29:16), or like Elihu who “...waited till Job had spoken” (Job 32:4) before he gave his opinion. He said, “... Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion. Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say” (Job 32: 10, 11). Speaking before one weighs the evidence is folly and shame, but it is a fact that people are quick to give their opinions on Bible subjects that are unpleasant to their depraved or prejudiced minds.

We have been investigating the Biblical evidence on the subjects of God’s “love” and “hate.” Furthermore, we have shown that God’s “love” and “hate” are related to persons. Let us now seek to draw a conclusion on these great and timely subjects. They are great because they are related to the great God, and they are timely because of man’s misunderstanding and confusion.

Since Biblical evidence is clear that God not only loves but He is love; it is also clear that God hates, but He is not hate. Hence, hatred no more emanates from God who is love than unrighteousness emerges from God who is righteous or darkness arises from God who is light. Hate, therefore, results from the absence of love. In regard to God, hatred does not mean “to love less.” God is as holy to withhold love as to give it. Divine hatred is not to be considered as an active principle emerging from God who is love. Hate is simply the absence of love. Jacob and Esau represent the elect and the nonelect who experience God in two different ways—love and hate or grace and justice. In the absence of love, no spiritual life was purposed; therefore, no love will be experienced. On the other hand, where love is present, spiritual life was purposed; and love has been or will be experienced. As Divine love is without human sentimentality, Divine hate is without human vindictiveness. Spiritual life is brought into the light of truth (II Tim. 1:9, 10); spiritual death remains in the darkness of falsehood.

If darkness is not simply the antithesis of light and unrighteousness is not simply the antithesis of righteousness, is it correct to say that hatred is not simply the antithesis of love? Since light flows from God into the hearts of the elect, giving them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the nonelect are left in the darkness of ignorance of God. The righteousness of God which clothes the elect leaves the nonelect unclothed. Finally, the love of God that is poured out within the hearts of the elect is not poured within the hearts of the nonelect. If light, righteousness, and love characterize the first relationship, darkness, unrighteousness, and hate

characterize the second. Therefore, it is an all-or-nothing situation. It is either light or darkness, righteous or unrighteous, or love or hate.

## GOD'S HATE AND WRATH DIFFER

Hate and wrath, with respect to God, do not appear to be the same. Hate is negative; whereas, wrath is positive. God's hatred for Esau is the subject of great controversy. Can it be said that God's hatred for Esau is negative? The verb here is the aorist tense of *miseo*, which means to hate. It is used constatively; therefore, it is viewed in its entirety. Since the verb is active, one cannot say that God's hatred for Esau is passive. The question arises, is there any difference between "negative" and "passive"?

The word "negative" may be used several ways: (1) It is used when expressing a negation. (2) It expresses a refusal to do something. (3) In philosophy, it is response in a direction away from the stimulus. (4) In mathematics, it is a minus sign. (5) In logic, it is denial of the truth of the predicate with regard to the subject. "Passive" means not to react to something, or not to participate actively. It is to be acted upon or affected by some external force rather than causing the action. In Greek grammar, passive is a voice of verbal inflection indicating that the subject undergoes the action of the verb.

One would be incorrect to say that God's hatred for Esau is passive. The verb is in the active voice. However, he would be correct to say God's hatred is negative. God's provocation was caused by the universality of mankind's depravity. This necessitates some comments on the order of God's decrees.

There has been a great struggle between the human conceptions of supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism with regard to the order of God's decrees. That struggle has not subsided. The word "lapsarian" refers to one who believes in the Biblical fact of man's depravity. The word "lapsarian" has been prefixed with supra and infra, each giving different views of the order of the decrees. Supra means "above" or "before" the fall of man. Infra means "below" or "subsequent to" the fall of man. There are three stages to the controversy: (1) It began with the questions, Was the fall predestinated? or Was the fall merely the object of Divine foreknowledge? Those who held the supra position believed sin was included in God's purpose, and those who embraced the infra theory taught that the fall was merely the object of God's foreknowledge. (2) The later development resulted in the theories of free grace versus free will—supras accepting the former and infras the latter. (3) Now, we have the more developed form of the controversy. The supras admit the decree relative to sin is permissive, but they add that God decreed to permit. However, supras emphasize the positive element to the extent that the system is accused of believing God made man to damn him. On the other hand, the infras believe the decree relative to sin is permissive rather than positive. Thus, they emphasize the permissive character of the decree until it is reduced to a bare permission.

There is a difference in the order of the decrees between supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism. Supras proceed on the assumption that in God's purpose that which is last in the realization is first in order. Thus, in the counsel of God, Christ stands first, and our election is in Him. The order is Christ, election, reprobation, creation, fall, and providence. On the other hand, infras embrace the

historical order of creation, fall, incarnation, cross, resurrection, parousia, and the tabernacle of God with men. Neither system gives a solution to the problems that arise. Although Christians do not fully understand God's decrees, they continue to walk by faith, knowing that the problems are not solved horizontally but vertically.

Having stated some things on the order of God's decrees, let us now return to the thought of "negative hatred." In philosophy, the negative means to respond in a direction away from the stimulus. The arguments by supras and infras on the order of God's decrees have been considered, but Scripture forces us to conclude that God's order is that He first decreed to manifest His glory, then to create man, then to permit the fall, then to elect some and pass by others, etc. God passed by Esau in His election of Jacob. In electing some, God responded in a direction away from the provocation incurred by the fall of all men in Adam. Some of the puritans said that God's hatred for Esau is not to be understood as positive but negative, i.e., not loving him. Thus, it is God's wrath that is positively inflicted upon wicked men for their sins. While the election of Jacob is grounded on grace, Esau's negative reprobation, or hatred, is not grounded on sin. God's wrath—positive reprobation—is inflicted upon the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction: "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Rom. 9:22). God passed by the vessels of wrath and left them to fill up their sins, or ripen for destruction (Rom. 2:4, 5). Sin is the cause of destruction (*apoleia*, utter destruction, eternal misery, or perdition), but negative reprobation, or hatred, is not the cause of sin. God does not positively fit the vessels of wrath for destruction; but in contrast, He previously prepared the vessels of mercy for glory (Rom. 9:23).

There are several important differences between Romans 9:22 and Romans 9:23—(1) The Greek preposition *pro* (before) is not used in the participle "fitted" of Romans 9:22. (2) In Romans 9:22, the Greek word for "fitted" is the perfect passive participle of *katartidzo*, "old verb, to equip or state of readiness" (Robertson). "Passive" means to be made fit, or ripened for—in this case—destruction. In verse 23, the verb is the aorist active indicative of *proetoimadzo*, which means to prepare or make ready beforehand. (3) The "aorist" in verse 23 refers to God's eternal act; whereas, the "perfect" in verse 22 is past action with existing results. (4) The verb "prepare" of verse 23 indicates the beginning of the development. Thus, it is used ingressively. However, in verse 22, the verb "fitted" indicates the result. The vessels of wrath have, by their sins, made themselves objects of God's wrath.

The evidence is beyond refutation, with regard to the vessels of wrath, that Paul does not say they were "prepared beforehand" for destruction. However, he does say that the vessels of mercy were "prepared beforehand" for glory. The "vessels of wrath" are the objects of negative reprobation, or hatred. On the other hand, the "vessels of mercy" are the objects of God's electing grace.

There are two Greek words translated "wrath"—*thumos* and *orge*. *Thumos* is used 18 times. It means a panting rage or a vehement surge of anger. This word indicates a more agitated condition of feelings or an outburst of wrath from inward indignation. *Orge* is used 36 times. It signifies an indignation that has risen slowly and becomes more settled. This word is used as a flower bud that swells, cracks open slowly, and then bursts into full bloom. Thus, the wrath of God will burst forth against this ungodly world. There are two verses where both *thumos* and *orge* are used (Rev. 16:19; 19:15).

There is a difference between wrath as it exists in man and as it exists in God. Wrath is an exciting passion in man. It shakes him to the very center of his being. Wrath in man is a malignant passion. It burns with a desire to make its object miserable. Wrath in man is both painful and selfish. Man who treasures wrath inflicts punishment to himself, because he has been personally affected. On the other hand, wrath with God is a principle which is the natural reaction of Divine justice. God is in no way disturbed or injured by inflicting His holy wrath on man for his sin. This is positive reprobation. The righteous God cannot equally view truth and error, honesty and injustice, or cruelty and benevolence. This truth corrects theological error, supplies a warning to sinners, and is even now revealed in giving up men to uncleanness.

The wrath of God cannot be restricted to the extraordinary precursory of wrath in the great tribulation or to the final judgment. There have been such manifestations of God's wrath as the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the downfall of Babylon, the death of Christ, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., etc. The present tense, "is revealed," the present passive tense of *apokalupto*, means to uncover, reveal, or make known. It is parallel with the same verb concerning God's righteousness of Romans 1:17. Thus, the word "revealed" can refer to manifestations other than those which are in the category of the extraordinary and miraculous acts of God. For example, God's wrath is perpetually revealed through the general course of providence. Men not only reap what they sow (Gal. 6:7), but the penal laws of punishment are mediums through which the wrath of God is revealed (Rom. 13:1-7).



## THE LOVE OF GOD IS A TRUTH FOR SAINTS

The love of God is a truth for only saints. The principle of “contempt prior to examination” is a bar against all information that keeps man in ignorance. Truth always involves more than what appears on the surface. Is a person justified in saying that Scripture gives no one the authority to say that God loves all men without exception? Out of all the references to God’s love in the Old Testament, only one speaks of His loving the stranger: “He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth (*‘ahab*, to have affection for) the stranger, in giving him food and raiment” (Deut. 10:18). God then said to Israel, “Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deut. 10:19). Apart from the great love story of The Song of Solomon, there are about thirty-three references to God’s love, and they all apply to either His people or to His righteousness and judgment (Deut. 4:37; 7:7, 8, 13; 10:18; 15:16; 23:5; 33:3; II Sam. 12:24; I Kings 10:9; II Chron. 2:11; 9:8; Ps. 11:7; 33:5; 37:28; 45:7; 47:4; 78:68; 87:2; 146:8; Prov. 3:12; Is. 48:14; 61:8; Jer. 2:2; 31:3; Ezek. 16:8; Hos. 3:1; 9:15; 11:1; 14:4; Zeph. 3:17; Mal. 1:2—twice). There is more than one Hebrew word translated “love.”

The principle object of the love of God is Himself. Self-love in humans is not condemned when it operates within its proper realm. Scripture teaches that we are not obligated to love others “more than” ourselves but “as” ourselves (Matt. 22:39). God first and chiefly loves Himself, and He has made His glory the ultimate end of all He does in nature, providence, and grace:

The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil (Prov. 16:4).

For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom. 11:36).

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created (Rev. 4:11).

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1:6).

Nothing outside of God adds to His essential joy and happiness. There is no cause of love outside of God. Men by nature are corrupt, abominable, and deserve to be hated rather than loved. God is a law unto Himself; therefore, He has the right to exercise His love as He pleases. That is why God loved Jacob but hated Esau.

There are two Greek verbs—*agapao* and *phileo*—for love in the New Testament. The verb *agapao* is stronger than *phileo*. The latter more nearly represents tender affection. It is never used in a command to men to love God; however, it is used as a warning (I Cor. 16:22). On the other hand, the former is used in the command to love (esteem) God. The two verbs are used in the narrative of John 21:15-17. The context itself indicates that the verb *agapao* in the first two questions suggests the love that values and esteems. It is an unselfish love, ready to serve (Rev. 12:11). Finally, in the third question, Christ used *phileo* rather than *agapao*. The difference is not warmth but character of

affection. One signifies the love based upon the appreciation of another; the other indicates personal attachment. One might be represented by saying, “I am your friend,” and the other may be portrayed by saying, “You are my friend.” Christ used *agapao* when He asked, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” In other words, do you esteem me more than the other disciples? Peter had professed this: “...Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended....Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee” (Matt. 26:33, 35). To love, *phileo*, life from an undue desire to preserve it, forgetting the real object of living, meets the Lord’s reproof: “He that loveth (*phileo*) his life shall lose it...” (John 12:25). On the contrary, to love, *agapao*, life, as expressed in I Peter 3:10, “For he that will love life, and see good days...,” is to consult the true interest of living. Here, the word *phileo* would be inappropriate. The questions were not for Christ’s information but for Peter’s examination. Peter never used *agapao* (high and devoted love) in any of his answers, but he used *phileo* (love as a friend). Although the words are often interchanged in the New Testament, we must observe a slight distinction between them. The verb *phileo* is used to speak of the Father’s love for Christ (John 5:20), Christ’s love for Lazarus (John 11:3, 36), and the Father’s love for His own (John 16:27; 20:2; Rev. 3:19).

In all the references to God’s love, whether it is *agapao* (142 times but 42 times when referring to God), *phileo* (25 times, but 6 times when referring to God), *agape* (116 times, but 30 times when referring to God), or *philanthropia* (Titus 3:4), only two references in the Gospels need any consideration (Mark 10:21; John 3:16). The Acts, which records the missionary messages of the apostles, never mentions God’s love. Hence, no one in all the missionary activities ever said, “God loves you.” Furthermore, the Epistles and Revelation, God’s message to the saints, tell of God’s love for only His own (Rom. 5:8-10; 8:28-39; Eph. 2:4-10; Heb. 12:6; Rev. 1:5; 3:9, 19).

In Mark 10:21, Jesus Christ is said to have loved the rich young ruler: “Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.” The verb “loved” is the aorist tense of *agapao*. The question is whether this verb is used ingressively or constatively. Some say that since God loves the elect, this young man must have been converted. However, this is reaching a conclusion that cannot be substantiated by Scripture. Others say it was natural affection, since Christ was pleased with his external regard for the law. Persons who hold this view believe *agapao* was gradually taking the place of *phileo* in Greek usage.

In view of all that has been said about Christ’s love for the rich young ruler, one must conclude that this love did not refer to the electing love with which God loves His own—those who were given to Him by the electing love of the Father. The things that occurred afterwards prove that the young man did not love the Savior. God’s constative love for a person results in reciprocal love by the loved for the Lover: “We love him, because he first loved us” (I John 4:19). Christ as the God-Man had love for the young ruler.

“God so loved the world” of John 3:16 is not difficult for the sincere student of Scripture to understand. The “world” *kosmos* is not used with uniform significance. It is used in the sense of “earth” (John 13:1), “system” (I John 2:15-17), “human race” (Rom. 3:19), “unbelievers” (John 15:18), “believers only” (John 6:33; II Cor. 5:19), and “Gentiles” (Rom. 11:12). (See John 1:10.) There are some significant “pairs” in John 3:16—(1) “God”, and “Son” show the supreme Giver and the supreme Gift. (2) “Loved” and “gave” show two expressions of God’s sovereignty in redemption. The first is eternal, and the second is in time. (3) “World” and “whosoever” show the

collective idea of the elect and the individualistic idea of each one of God's elect becoming a whosoever will. (4) "Believe" and "have" show the results of electing love (Acts 13:48). "Giving" and "receiving" are relative terms, the one supposing the other. God never gives something that is not received. This also explains Mark 10:21. Eternal love is in the eternal Son. Therefore, God's eternal love is declared to be covenant love with which He loved the elect; therefore, God the Father loves no man out of Christ (John 17).

The word "world" of John 3:16 does not include everybody. Jesus Christ is the light that enlightens every person who comes into the world—John 1:9. Here, "world" refers to the material system. The word "world" occurs three times in John 1:10—"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Let us paraphrase it to mean everybody: "He was in the everybody, and the everybody was made by Him, and the everybody knew Him not." Let us now paraphrase it differently: "He was in the heavens and the earth, and the heavens and the earth were made by Him, and the heavens and the earth knew Him not." That would be ridiculous. An inanimate object does not know Him. What does the verse really mean? It means that Jesus Christ was in the inhabited earth—the earth inhabited by man. This refers to His incarnation. He came into the habitable part of the earth. The world made by Him consists of all His creative works—the heavens, the earth, and mankind. The world knew Him not. If this last occurrence of the word means everybody, John the Baptist, the apostle John, all the other disciples, and all those who were following Him did not know Him. However, the Lord said He knew His sheep and was known by them (John 10:14). Conclusively, the word is used in a restricted sense and must be interpreted according to its use in the context.

The word "world" is also found three times in John 3:17—"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." This verse means that Jesus Christ was sent into the habitable earth among men not for the purpose of condemning the world of mankind. He did not condemn all mankind, but He came into the habitable part of the earth to save some. The word used with reference to "the world through Him might be saved" means the same as the word "world" in the first part of John 3:16. It does not mean everybody, but it means those the Father gave the Son in the covenant of redemption, which is referred to seven times in John 17. All mankind is divided into two worlds—the world of God's elect and the world of the nonelect.

The Lord's departure from the world was simply His leaving the earthly sphere after completing His mission here.

The Christian is commanded not to love the world (I John 2:15). This does not refer to mankind. The writer was talking about this world system. The word also means fashion. If any man loves this world's order, the love of the Father is not in him. This verse would contradict John 3:16 if it were interpreted to mean mankind.

The whole world lies in wickedness (I John 5:19). All mankind is not lying in wickedness. The apostle himself had been delivered from it. The word is used in a restricted sense here, because the saved are not lying in the lap of the devil.

Jesus Christ did not die for everybody (John 10:11, 15). He laid down His life for the sheep. He came to seek and to save the lost elected ones (Matt. 1:21). If Jesus Christ died for everybody, everybody's sins have been taken away, because John said as He pointed to Jesus Christ: "Behold

the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Christ died for those the Father loves with an everlasting love. God’s love is sovereign (Rom. 9), everlasting (Jer. 31:3), immutable (S. of Sol. 8:6-7), and uninfluenced (Deut. 7:7, 8). An atonement that fails to atone is worthless. A sacrifice that fails to deliver is worthless. Jesus Christ did not die in vain. Everyone for whom He shed His blood shall be saved. Jesus Christ shall see His seed and be satisfied (Is. 53:10).

The opinion of almost every person who quotes John 3:16 is that God’s love is so great that it covers all mankind. But that is not the meaning of the text at all. To say it is the world of mankind that God loves leads one to think of the greatness of the world rather than the greatness of God’s love.

“Whosoever” of John 3:16 must be interpreted in the light of Scripture. The conclusion is that they are those who have been drawn by the Father. The desire to come is given by the power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The “whosoever” are a specific people, in contrast to the world of mankind in general. “Whosoever believeth” is not believing in a preacher, a church, or a denomination. It is believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Churches have been concerned about increasing their church rolls by easy believism, human faith, and making decisions. They teach people can come now and receive Christ as Savior and then make Him Lord of their lives later. That doctrine comes out of hell. When a person comes, he comes because he wants to come. He comes in the strength of the Lord. He has a conversion experience, and when he comes he will never go back. Those who go back were never Christians (I John 2:19). They never came.

The grace of God must be bestowed within by the sovereign Spirit before anyone will want to come. By nature no person can come. By one’s own intellectuality, he can never come to Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:21). He can never know God by the wisdom of this world. It takes the wisdom of God to know Jesus Christ who is Wisdom personified. As man enters the world without his own volition, he also enters the family of God without his own volition. Entering the family of God by the power of the Holy Spirit is regeneration. Then, by faith that person embraces Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. God’s gift of faith is always received from without. It never comes from within. It is not something in a person naturally, but it is something that comes to him from without. A blind man cannot make himself see. A deaf man cannot make himself hear. A lame man cannot make himself walk. A natural man cannot make himself have supernatural faith.

John 3:16 teaches that God so loved the world of the elect that He gave His only begotten Son that through Christ’s redemptive work the elect would be enabled to believe and not perish. The Holy Spirit in regeneration separates the elect from all natural faith and gives them supernatural faith.

In John 3:16, Christ was speaking to Nicodemus, a master of Israel. Nicodemus was a lost Pharisee, but he was one of God’s elect. That makes a difference. He was one for whom Jesus Christ would shed His blood and about whom Christ could say, “I know my sheep.” Jesus Christ laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11, 15). It is true that at this time Nicodemus did not know Jesus Christ in a conversion experience, but later he did come to know Him in that manner (John 19:39). Jesus Christ said, “I...know my sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14). He knew, but men do not know. One would cast pearls before swine to tell a person living wickedly that God loves him. Unless an individual has been regenerated by the Spirit of God, he has no concern whatsoever for the love of God. He is an enemy of God. He hates the light. He hates Jesus Christ. He hates righteousness. He hates anything contrary to his own feeling.

To tell a person who rejects Jesus Christ that God loves him is to give him a sense of security in his sins. He must be reminded that he is lost and hell-bound apart from repentance. He cannot even repent unless the sovereign God grants him repentance (Acts 11:18) and gives him faith to embrace Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8). If Christ loves a Christ-rejecter, why should that person become a believer? God commends His love to His own people (Rom. 5:5-8).

## IN LOVE GOD CALLS THE ELECT

The purpose of God is seen in its true character when the Scripture says, "...not of works, but of him that calleth" (Rom. 9:11). Election is not traced to the choice by the chosen but to God who chooses. Paul's argument is based on the historical fact of the Old Testament Scriptures. God chose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc., in preference to others. The clause "...not of works, but of him that calleth" is closely related to the preceding statement, "...that the purpose of God according to election might stand...." God is not only the One who chooses, but He calls in time those whom He elected to salvation in eternity.

God's "calling" is effectual. Here is a present active participle of *kaleo*, which means to call, to summon, to call to participation in the privileges of the Christian life, or to call to an office of dignity. There is something determinate about this call; therefore, the elect are "...called according to his [God's] purpose" (Rom. 8:28). The Christian is the child of a Divine purpose. One must never forget that the purpose is not by reason of the love in himself, but that the love in himself is by reason of God's purpose. God's antecedent purpose is the cause of His love being shed abroad in one's heart (Rom. 5:5). Therefore, being God's called one secures the cooperation of all things for his good. God's purpose governs the events of his life. Since God's purpose in natural law is necessary to hold our physical creation together, His purpose in spiritual law is necessary to hold our spiritual creation together in a state of fixed purpose and progress until it reaches its consummation in the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29, 30).

Calling and regeneration differ. Regeneration takes place independently of the understanding and will; whereas, the understanding and will begin to act in calling so that one hears and understands. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit that causes the recipient to respond to the call. The Holy Spirit is the One who works upon the will, not by forcing it to respond but by making it willing because of the gift of grace (Phil. 2:12, 13). Calling is the Divine summons that appeals to the principle of life that causes the will to act. Regeneration is the begetting of the new life. Calling is the bringing forth, by Divine summons, of that life into the light of the gospel (II Tim. 1:9, 10; II Thess. 2:13, 14). The sinner is dead to spiritual life in regeneration, but the call appeals only to one who possesses spiritual life.

The chosen sinner's passivity in regeneration and the saints subsequent cooperation in the Divine call must not be confounded. There must be a clear insight into this distinction. The elect but unregenerate sinner can do nothing; therefore, the work of grace wrought in him must be by God. However, after the first work of grace is accomplished, the sinner is no longer passive. He has been made spiritually active by the Spirit of regeneration, and he comes when called. The "effectual call," therefore, gives God His rightful place in the salvation of the elect. Calling is entirely on the Divine side. The effect of God's call is that Jesus Christ becomes a personal reality to every one called. Both origin and destiny are high and holy (Rom. 8:28; I Thess. 2:12; Heb. 3:1; II Tim. 1:9).

The only way one can know that God purposed to save him is by the effectual call: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye

shall never fall” (II Pet. 1:10). Only by making his “calling” sure can a person make God’s purpose in his election sure. One can reach the fountain only by following the stream. The fountain is the eternal purpose of God. When the stream of sanctification is recognized in one’s life, he then follows it to the springhead of God’s eternal purpose which He purposed in Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:11). Knowledge of God’s purpose according to election is known only by the light of sanctifying grace in one’s life.

There are three questions that should be asked every professing Christian: (1) Is there a difference between you and the unsaved? The honest person will admit a difference. (2) Should not the Person who made the difference between the saved and the unsaved receive the glory? Any sincere person will admit that the Person who made the difference should receive the glory. (3) Did God or you make the difference? No one but a nincompoop would say he made the difference. When the person admits that God makes the difference (I Cor. 4:7), he will then say, if God was not wrong to make the difference, He is not wrong to purpose to make the difference according to election. If the person objects to God’s eternal purpose according to election by saying he will have nothing to do with “a religion” that arranges everything beforehand, ask if he objects to his parents being arranged beforehand. The conversation should go no further with a continued negative response.

God’s “calling” is without repentance (Rom. 11:29). This means the calling of God, with respect to a change of mind, is irrevocable. This is a bridge which can be passed but once. Once it is crossed, there is no going back. God’s calling, therefore, is unchangeable, irreversible, and irrevocable. The appeal is to the faithfulness of God. God does not change His purpose according to election. Hence, God’s calling has its foundation in His purpose according to election and its consummation in glorification—from God’s “eternal purpose” (Eph. 3:11) “unto his eternal glory” (I Thess. 2:12; I Pet. 5:10).

There is a great difference between the command to believe and that which is objectively displayed without an attached offer. Scripture teaches that hearing, believing, and repenting are conditional; whereas, man’s hope is in the unconditional promises of God to give a hearing ear (Prov. 20:12), grant repentance (Jer. 31:18, 19; Acts 11:18), and give faith (Phil. 1:29; Heb. 12:2). Man as a responsible creature is commanded to hear, repent, and believe, even though in a state of depravity he is unable of himself to do any of the aforementioned things. If men as men are not obligated to believe, the elect are not obligated to believe. One must understand that God is not the author of man’s depravity. Man was created upright; but in Adam, man became a fallen creature. He fell in Adam and lost his spiritual abilities through his own sin. Hence, God does not mock man when He commands him to do what he is incapable of doing through his own fault. On the other hand, proclaiming the objective Christ does not mean that grace is being offered indiscriminately. Presenting Christ objectively has a twofold effect: (1) It is the means of salvation (not regeneration) for the elect. (2) It renders the nonelect inexcusable and causes them to harden themselves. It has been said that God’s commandments are not an expression of His expectations but of His requirements.

From the standpoint of the hearers, the objective Christ is general to some but particular to others. Paul presented Christ in a general way when he said, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (I Tim. 1:15). However, the objective Christ becomes particular to the “whosoever will” in the Lord Jesus’ statement to John at the close of the revelation of Himself: “...whosoever will, let him take the water

of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). The will that determines is the will that has been determined by God. The sinner, apart from Divine help, is unable to be willing and unwilling to be able. The man of God presents Christ generally, but the Holy Spirit particularizes the message by giving a hearing ear to the elect.

Some foolishly argue that if God purposed to save a limited number of persons, what need is there for preaching, evangelism, or missions? There are some Biblical facts that cannot be ignored: (1) God did not purpose to save all persons without exception. (2) All men do not come to the knowledge of the truth. (3) Christ died for the “sheep,” “His people,” “many,” etc. (4) Scripture never indiscriminately states, “Christ died for you.” (5) There are no recorded sermons in the Bible where a personal statement such as “God loves you” is found. (6) The Bible does not teach a redemption that fails to redeem, a reconciliation that does not reconcile, or a propitiation that does not give mercy. (7) Scriptures are clear on the fact that the gospel of grace is universal in the sense that it is sufficient to save an men without exception, if God had elected all. It is to be proclaimed indiscriminately, and it is purposed to save some from among all nationalities and kinds of people. These facts do not contradict the commission Christ gave: “Go ye therefore, and teach (disciple) all nations...” (Matt. 28:19). Hence, the church is to disciple those the Holy Spirit regenerates. The gospel had nothing for the Romans who loved power, the Jews who loved ritualism, or the Greeks who loved wisdom. Moreover, it has nothing for the nonelect who love themselves above all—including God —because the love of God has not been shed abroad in their hearts by the regenerating Spirit. The gospel is to be preached to all at all seasons, because no one knows who will be capable of believing or when he will believe.

Paul was careful to say that his preaching was “...not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (I Cor. 2:4). The Greek word translated “enticing” is *peithos*, which means “persuasive.” This persuasiveness is not in the ability of preachers. Arminians believe they are responsible to generate conviction, and it is up to those who hear to respond to the things spoken. Thus, we see why Arminian preachers are always changing and improving their techniques to stir up their audiences. Paul, unlike modern-day Arminian preachers, knew that faith could never stand in the persuasive wisdom of man. According to the inspired apostle, faith stands in the power of God: “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost [Spirit], and in much assurance...” (I Thess. 1:4, 5).

The threefold way in which the gospel came to the Thessalonians is the crowning evidence of their Divine election. First, the gospel came “in power.” The gospel is always the “power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16) to those who are predestined to be saved. “Unto salvation” proves that the gospel does not come to the elect merely to inform them of a new objective state of affairs brought into being by the Son of God. It invades them as an effectual call to faith in Christ Jesus and a life of obedience to His will. While free will drives men to methods, free grace drives men to God through Christ by the Spirit. Secondly, the gospel came to the Thessalonians “in the Holy Spirit.” There is a difference between the word of the gospel and the power that manages that word. The Spirit of regeneration opens the heart and drives the gospel home to the heart thus producing conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. In this respect, one must distinguish between morality produced temporarily by the word only and persevering faith produced by the regenerating Spirit. The regenerating Spirit causes the recipient of grace to look to God for Divine strength to supplement his own weakness. Morality, on the other hand, never goes any higher than good



motives. Lastly, the gospel came to the Thessalonians “in much assurance.” In the Greek, this assurance is linked with the Holy Spirit, because there is no repetition of the preposition *en*. Therefore, the believers in Thessalonica were directed to the inward assurance the Spirit gives. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself...” (I John 5:10).

## **GOD SENDS MESSENGERS TO PROCLAIM HIS LOVE**

A true theologian thinks over God's thoughts and seeks to bring them into God's order, as the builders of Solomon's temple took the stones already hewn and put them into the places for which they had been designed (I Kings 5-7). As the Levites were responsible for placing every vessel in its Divinely appointed place, every man of God is responsible to accurately handle the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). What if the Levites had misplaced any of the vessels? God's order would have been distorted, and confusion would have ensued. Paul summoned Timothy to a correct straightforward method of dealing with the word of God. When the word of God is handled properly, there will not be, to the enlightened mind, a distorted view of God or His ways with men.

The universal proclamation of the gospel carries with it the duty of all men to believe. Men are obligated to believe because they are rational creatures. What man is obligated to do and what he is capable of doing are two different things. Facts contained in the gospel are self-evident. The incarnation, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and His resurrection out from among the dead are self-evident facts. Before the grace of God comes into a person's heart, he believes these self-evident facts. But the mental assent to these facts does not save. Refusal to believe what is self-evident is unbelief. Unsaved men acknowledge the judgment of God (Rom. 1:32). The self-evident facts of the gospel refer to God's glory. Every man is duty bound to bow down before such glory.

Without man's willing and running he cannot be saved (Rom. 9:16). The work of man in obtaining his salvation is compared to husbandry, building, racing, and all laborious occupations. God will not cast out anyone who comes to Him. One cannot dispense with running and willing. The conclusion is that all it means is that the original reason of salvation is in God and not in man. Human effort had nothing to do with starting the eternal idea. God's determination is entirely independent of all "willing and running." God's plan is to work by means. The principle of mediation fills and rules the universe. There is a Divine way, which, if not observed, all the willing and running, like the heathen, the Jew, etc., will prove futile.

Individuals may be persuaded to confess faith and be given false hope by telling them they are saved. But saving faith is not simply moral persuasion or decision. Man cannot be under moral obligation to do a supernatural work. He cannot regenerate his soul and give himself a new disposition of heart. No person can know himself to be elected by God prior to his faith in Jesus Christ.

The common statement heard from the lips of religionists is "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Such a statement is the fruit of oversimplifying "God is love." Do you suppose anyone ever said to Esau, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life"? Since no one knows who God elected to salvation and who He passed by, there is no Biblical authority to tell any one that God loves him and has a wonderful plan for his life. Therefore, behind the empty smile of the person who says, "Smile, God loves you," lies the biggest deception ever perpetrated by Satan. This deceiver has been able to convince religionists that depraved man is something wonderful and a loving God would never harm depraved man whom He loves. Such teaching has made religion

very attractive to the world. Neo-religion is being propagated by false teachers as God's own personal cure for life's problems and the guaranteed escape from the horrors of the coming wrath.

Preaching that "God is love" to the neglect of preaching that He is light and righteous is taking a verse out of the context of "the whole counsel of God." Such preaching reduces God to some kind of love-god who overlooks sin at the expense of holiness. The Bible declares that God is the God of holiness, justice, righteousness, truth, and wrath. In fact, God is so holy that He cannot look upon unholiness or be in the presence of that which is unholy:

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity... (Hab. 1:13).

But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation (Jer. 10:10).

The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him (Nahum 1:3-6).

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth (Rev. 11:18).

God is holy; therefore, He cannot forgive man merely out of love. Sin is against the holy God, and the penalty for sin is death. The great mystery of the ages is that Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, died in the place of the elect. Hence, the cross is the epitome of grace. It has been said that the cross depolarizes Divine love and justice, and it brings them harmoniously together. Thus, in the death of the eternal Son of God, God is just and the justifier of those He saves by His grace (Rom. 3:24-26). Justice was satisfied and the elect are legally declared holy, or justified, before God through Christ's death. Therefore, hope is found only in the "gospel of grace." How can the "gospel of grace" be the "love-gospel" to the nonelect, since they will not be saved from the second death?

Another expression commonly heard among religionists that must be condemned is "God loves you and I love you too." Such a statement wrongly equates Divine and human loves. Divine love is perfect; human love is imperfect. Furthermore, Divine love never fails; human love always fails. Depraved men have no difficulty understanding, expressing, or experiencing human affection; but when it comes to *agape* love, we must approach the subject with caution and reverence. Reason tells us that we humans cannot love one another as God loved His only begotten Son. God is not "love" in our finite understanding of the word. His love is unspeakable. Therefore, it is nothing short of blasphemy (impious or irreverent) to speak of our love on the level with God's love.

There should be no misunderstanding as to what one should preach. The Bible explicitly declares that the message which should be proclaimed is Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:1-5). In

preaching Christ, He is not offered. He is proclaimed, or displayed, in the message. Jesus Christ is to be presented objectively, but one must not think that the objective Christ is a bona fide offer of grace. Grace is not offered to the elect; it saves them (Eph. 2:5, 8). Hence, the grace of God that brings salvation appears to the elect (Titus 2:11-14). On the other hand, the facts of the objective Christ make no lasting impression on the non-elect. Please observe the statement “lasting impression”! One cannot say that the nonelect are not impressed at all, but the impression is not lasting. Numerous Scriptures demonstrate the fact that many nonelect persons are temporarily impressed: the first three soils of Matthew 13; those who wrought miracles in the name of Christ (Matt. 7:21-23); those who escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then turned from the objective message delivered unto them (II Pet. 2:20-22); those who draw back unto perdition (Heb. 10:39); those who went out from the fellowship of the saints (I John 2:19); etc.

The gospels nowhere record that God’s love is toward all sinners without exception. “God is love” cannot be the main theme of preaching. The message Jesus Christ gave Nicodemus and the message proclaimed by the apostles throughout the Acts of the Apostles differ. Jesus Christ could speak of the love of the Father because He knew who were His sheep, but the apostles could not use the word “love” indiscriminately. They did not know who the Father loved. Therefore, they preached the holiness, justice, and wrath of God. They preached subjects to awaken the consciousness of the hearer, but they never referred to the love of God in the sense that “God loves you.”

The word “love” is omitted from the entire book of the Acts of the Apostles. It records meetings, missionary journeys, and many messages proclaimed by God’s messengers, but not once did any of those messengers say, “God loves you.” On the day of pentecost, three thousand were saved and added to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2). Peter preached in the power of the Spirit, but he did not mention God’s love. He did preach God’s holiness and justice. Paul began his message to the Athenians of Acts 17 by asserting God’s eminence and rose to His transcendence, but he did not mention His love. He followed the same pattern in Corinth, preaching God’s holiness, righteousness, and justice.

That preaching which omitted mentioning God’s love brought them to their knees. To tell sinners that God loves them is a terrible mistake. God loves only those whom He elected. These elected ones remain unknown to men until after they are converted. God loves those who are in Christ.

All references to the love of God in either the church epistles, the general epistles, or the pastoral epistles were to the love of God in Christ Jesus experienced by the recipients of grace. One would be in error to say to the unsaved “God loves you” because he does not know that God loves them. However, that does not annul the fact that the gospel must be preached indiscriminately to every person under the sun. The Christian’s responsibility is to witness. He does not have an infinite mind.