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The Love of God

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Love is a word that is frequently thrown around without consideration of what it truly means. It is often thought of as feeling or attraction, but Scripture provides a much more profound understanding of what love is. Furthermore, it is God's love that provides the exemplar for all derivative forms of love. In this lesson, Dr. Lawson explores the depths of God's love, which is an infinite and eternally self-giving love.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1 John 4:7-12; John 17:20-26

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the implications of God's eternal and self-giving love
2. To recognize our inability to comprehend God's immeasurable love
3. To invite Christians to take refuge in the Father's love

QUOTATIONS

God's love is the most awesome thing about Him. It is not His justice, nor His majesty, nor even His blazing holiness, but the fact that He has made and keeps a covenant of personal commitment and love to His people.

—Sinclair B. Ferguson

Christ opens up the first cause, and, as it were, the source of our salvation, and he does so, that no doubt may remain; for our minds cannot find calm repose, until we arrive at the unmerited love of God.

—John Calvin

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. God's Love Is Intra-Trinitarian Love

- A. The love God shows toward humanity is a love that first existed within the Godhead (John 3:35).
- B. As the Father has loved the Son, even so He has now loved believers (John 17:26).

II. God's Love Is Infinite

- A. When Christ comes to live inside Christians, He brings the Father's infinite love with Him.

III. God's Love Is Sacrificial

- A. True love is a love that gives.
- B. This is most powerfully seen in the Father's giving His only Son to redeem sinners (Rom. 5:8).
- C. As the good shepherd who lays His life down for His sheep, Christ laid down His life for the lost (John 10:11).

IV. God's Love Is Volitional

- A. It is a choice of God's will.
- B. He chose His people not because of something inherently worthy of love in them (Deut. 7:7).
- C. God is the initiator and pursuer in His relationship with individuals (1 John 4:19).

V. God's Love Is Eternal

- A. There is no beginning or end to His love (Jer. 31:3).
- B. Predestination expresses the greatest love that there has ever been.
 - i. It is the love of the Father for His chosen ones as He eternally loved and elected (Eph. 1:4–5).

VI. God's Love Is Passionate

- A. God's heart is full of affection for His people (Deut. 30:9; Isa. 64:4).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Of the following words, the one that best describes a scriptural view of God's love is _____.
 - a. Feeling
 - b. External attraction
 - c. Self-giving
 - d. Faithfulness

2. Before God created the world there was nothing outside Himself; therefore, He could only truly love after He created.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. Dr. Lawson states that _____ is the highest form of love that there is.
 - a. *Eros*
 - b. *Agapē*
 - c. *Phileia*
 - d. *Alētheia*

4. Since God does not change, His love should not be viewed as passionate.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on God's self-giving love. How can you model this love in your relationships with others?
2. Many people conceive of love primarily as a feeling. Is this appropriate in light of the biblical view of God's love?
3. Are there other religious or cultural groups that you sometimes fail to treat lovingly, either implicitly or explicitly? How can reflection on God's love for the lost challenge you? Are there specific passages of Scripture that come to mind?
4. Some people envisage love as accepting another as they are, not requiring them to change. Do you think God treats individuals in this sort of way?