

CHRIST WILL BE ALL IN ALL

Chapter 3

THE LOVE AND CHARACTER OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

Having established beyond question the infinite sovereignty and limitless power of God, and having also begun to examine His beautiful plan and purpose, it would be appropriate to look into the character of such a Lord. What propels His sovereignty? What is the nature of Him exercising such awesome might? What is the essence of He whose plan leaves us so breathless and excited? Brethren, the great revelation that broke in upon mankind as the light of the Gospel dawned in human hearts, is that God is Love! I would hasten to clarify that love is not a decision God makes, or an attribute of God, but the very essence and substance of *who He is*.

⁸He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:8)

The apostle John makes this awesome statement: that Love is who God is, to the degree that one who does not love does not know God! What a stunning truth! This is not taught much in the religious world, but the implications are staggering. One may have all kinds of attributes, but if one has not love, *they do not even know God!*

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

It is important to specify that God, being the very embodiment of Love, must therefore be a God of unconditional love, because His loves stems from His *very being*, not from the object of His love. For centuries, many Christians have felt as if they may cross an invisible line somewhere that causes them to lose the love of God. Indeed, many have been held in bondage to a works mentality simply by making an effort to ‘stay on the right side of God’. Yet the truth liberates us all from such shackles of doubt. God’s love is not subject to the ebb and flow of circumstances, because God is Love as much as God is God! What joy is ours when we realize that God cannot do anything but love, because He cannot BE anything but love!

In pursuing the theme of this great love, let us read the next two verses in the first epistle of John:

⁹In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰In this is love, *not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (1 John 4:9-10)

We see here the source of love, and also the impossibility of fallen man generating this ‘agape’ love. If God is Love, and Love is God, from whence comes the ability to love

Him, except from He Himself? And again, we see the sovereign purpose of God being fulfilled in Him manifesting this Love toward mankind in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. This love is a love that will not let go, nor forsake, and in the book of Romans we find one of the most majestic chapters in the Bible, dealing with the impossibility of being separated from the love of God in Christ:

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written:

**"For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." [E]**

³⁷Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-39)

This beautiful passage, breathed of divine breath, awakens us to many glorious truths pertaining to the Almighty and the Gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ. It shows God as completely on the side of His creatures, beginning with the elect. Giving up His Son, who has risen and also stands interceding! It shows that, God having sovereignly justified, none can now condemn! And to the thrill of our hearts, it reveals that we can rest in God's love without fear of rejection, for there is nothing that can separate us! Brethren, it has been said by religious men that "no-one can separate us from His love, but we can walk away." Saints – give credence to no such rubbish. *Nothing* can separate us from this great love of God! Nothing in heights nor depths, nor any other created thing! And if thy gaze, Oh saint, should cloud with doubt, lift thine eyes again to the cross, where the infinite, limitless, unconditional love of God was displayed for all ages in its perfection!

NO PROFIT WITHOUT LOVE

Paul, in the twelfth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, presents the mystery of the working of the Body of Christ. We are given a vivid insight into the distribution of gifts by the Spirit, and how the Body edifies and builds itself up in love. These truths are described by the Spirit so beautifully, that one might think the very fulfillment of our lives as Christians was contained therein. Yet, after these timeless words have been recorded, the Spirit moves Paul to reveal "a more excellent way."

¹ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ²And though I have the gift of

prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned,^[a] but have not love, it profits me nothing.

⁴Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:1-8)

This passage is parroted endlessly by religious men, and has become somewhat of a pious cliché when falling from carnal lips. But let us take in what is being said here. Love is spoken of, not as an emotion, nor yet as a choice (as many say), but it is personified – it is shown to be *a nature*. The Spirit reveals the necessity of this nature being found in us:

¹ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

One can be in possession of an impressive eloquence, and yea, can even speak in angel's tongues, but be profited NOTHING, if such gifts are not propelled and motivated by a character, a being of love. Saints, when I think of this verse, I think of the grandiose preaching, the showy messages, and oratorical gurus that stand behind the pulpits. And yes, I even think of those among us who have been blessed with the gift of tongues. Such men, such giftedness, must surely be due great reward? The answer: only if they ARE Love! Only if their nature is that of Jesus Christ, coming to fruition and conformity within them. If not? They are merely a clanging, discordant cymbal.

²And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

What now? If one has the gift of prophecy and faith that moves mountains, such a one is still nothing without love? Brethren, faith is a beautiful gift, and indeed necessary to our growth in the Lord – yet it can be empty and yes, might even become an *idol* without love, (for indeed, there are many who make an idol of their faith). Yea, one may have such faith to the degree of moving those very mountains Jesus spoke of in the days of His flesh, and yet be NOTHING without love!

³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned,^[a] but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Ah, another religious banner is torn down – that of *service*. How many times are 'good works' lifted up as a justification for some organization or ministry, or one individual or

another – yet such deeds are stated here to be worthless without love! They profit NOTHING! Yea – even a valiant martyrdom would profit NOTHING without love!

⁴Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never fails.

It is now we see Love personified, and presented as a nature. This, my beloved brethren, is the nature of God Himself! This is what is of value! This is what makes our faith, our preaching, our service, and our martyrdom worthy! *Having the nature of God!* Knowing Him! Being found with His character! God suffers long and is kind, God does not envy, God does not parade Himself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek His own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices with the truth! What a God! What a beautiful nature and character! Bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring all things! Yet brethren, what sweet words are the last three quoted!

⁸Love never fails.

True love – the love that is the essence of God's being, *never fails!* Here we see that, not only must God's love be unconditional, but that *true love can never be conditional!* What joy, when we realize that this is the God we serve, who loved the world so much that He sent Jesus Christ His only begotten to save it! *A God of unconditional love that never fails!*

CORRECTIVE LOVE

It is appropriate at this juncture to contemplate and acknowledge the truth that God's love is not a saccharine, sugary, sentimental love, with no strength of character behind it. We do the truth great harm if we present God as a senile old man who can't stop smiling and handing out candy – and we are destined to resemble that which we follow, there being many 'sweet-tooth' believers, who just want another chocolate from God (though strangely, some of these are the staunchest defenders of a ceaseless hell!). Indeed, one of the surest evidences of His love is His discipline, and His judgments, which He measures into our lives to bring us to repentance, to restoration, and to growth in Him. The very words disciple and discipline are of the same root, and we would do well to understand the connection:

³For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. ⁵And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

**"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;**

**6For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives."^[a]**

⁷If^[b] you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He *for our profit*, that we may be *partakers of His holiness*. ¹¹Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:3-11)

This truth illuminates our understanding yet more, as we realize that the love of God is a love that will chasten and prune, with the best interests of the child at heart. It is vital to comprehend this aspect of God's love, if we are to perceive and embrace the truth behind the suffering in our life, and His righteous judgments upon all mankind. If we add this revelation to what we have already established, we now see a His love as an unconditional love that chastens and disciplines in order to correct.

THE ESSENCE OF LOVE

Brethren, though we have established that the love of God is unconditional, and that it is His very nature, it would still be possible to err concerning the essence of what love is at its root. We in the western world are constantly bombarded with an idea of love that is based purely on emotion, or indeed is not love at all, but lust. We are told that one may "fall in love", "fall out of love", or indeed "lose love" for someone. We must fully understand that the greatest identifying trait of true love is that of *self sacrifice*:

**¹²This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
¹³Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. ¹⁴You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. (John 15:12-14)**

Understand, saints, that the cross of Jesus Christ was the very peak and apex of history, and the definitive revelation of the love of God. And at the very heart of it, was self sacrifice. The cross could not be a response to the merits of man, for our very natures were at enmity with God. No, brethren, the cross was a freely given sacrifice of God Himself, with His own blood being shed for those who hated Him, and His own life being poured out for those who were hopelessly unworthy of such an atonement. When seeking the essence of love, we must fix our gaze upon the scene of Christ's sacrifice, for it is never seen more fully than on that hill. And this, brethren, is the love that now resides in us, that must flow out as a river of life both to the Body and to the broken world:

³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this *all will know that you are My disciples*, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Having just contemplated the cross, and the amazing sacrificial love of God, we must solemnly receive this commandment, as it entails loving one another even as He loves us! And not only that, but Christ reveals this to be the mark of His disciples! Too long has religion tried to ignore or smother these words! Too long has the carnal mind rejected the love of God in favor of a fleshy self righteousness! Brethren, this love must become our nature, even as death and rebellion was once our nature!

THE FRUIT AND AUTHORITY OF GOD

Brethren, we are encouraged in God's word to bear fruit, to test fruit, and to know people by their fruit. This point cannot be emphasized enough. For alas, we live in such an age that lip service has taken precedence over genuine love, and style has triumphed over substance in the minds of many. The apostasy is so deplorable, that a man may bear all the fruits of unrighteousness, yet be acclaimed for his works, sermons, or theology.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

These fruits are the very fruit of God, brethren! The fruit of an abiding in Jesus Christ, the fruit of the working flow of His Spirit – and the very fruit of Him we worship! His very nature and character is demonstrated through these attributes, and those who are born of Him are brought up to bear such fruit also!

Brethren, consider the following account of Jesus as He taught:

²⁸And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, ²⁹for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matthew 7:18-29)

Jesus taught with authority, not because He had spent endless hours inside a dusty library, poring over the scriptures, nor yet because He had sat at the feet of 'great theologians' for years on end. He had done neither of these things. Indeed, being a peasant, He had not even gone to school! You see, Brethren, Jesus taught with authority because He spoke of God, whom He knew personally, whom He had been sent by, and whom He was the express image of! Think of it, saint – if your earthly parents were memorialized, to the point where men who had never met them wrote great speeches about them, and wrote a multitude of books concerning them, you would still be a far greater authority than them all! Personal relationship trumps distant intellectual reasoning every time! Christ spoke of that which He knew, which He was a partaker of, and He was also the perfect embodiment of every word He spoke! If He spoke of Love, behold, He IS Love! If He spoke of forgiveness, behold the spotless Lamb! If He spoke of judgment, behold, the great Judge! And saints, this is the same authority that all the saints are destined for! To speak of that which we know! That which we have tasted in the Spirit, that which we have become the *very embodiment of*!

GOD'S LOVING PLAN

Having contemplated God's nature, character, and person, and having established His great, unconditional love, let us look again at His plan and purpose. Can we not safely establish that, if God loved us while we were yet sinners, He loved ALL mankind while they were sinners? For He is no respecter of persons. And furthermore, if we look at some of His commands, can we not see that He must be exemplifying what He requires?

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor^[g] and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,^[h] ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet your brethren^[i] only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors^[i] do so? ⁴⁸Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

Jesus here is plainly declaring the nature of God. He loves His enemies, blesses those who curse Him, and does good to those who hate Him! Brethren – if this is God's *nature*, at what point does the unchanging God suddenly turn and become eternally vindictive? Now, I would hasten to add that the good God does His enemies will undoubtedly involve judgment, *just as the good He does the firstfruits involves judgment*. My point is that a God whose nature is Love, will judge correctively and redemptively.

It is a sad testimony to the blindness of religion that the majority of those who profess to know the love of Jesus Christ claim that His love entails mercilessly torturing the vast majority of His creatures without end. To be sure, the carnal mind tries to make excuses for God, such as "He didn't mean anyone to go to hell – He has tried His best." Brethren, understand that it was God who framed the ages, who spoke the oceans and mountains into existence, and who knew every detail of His plan before the foundation of the world! If you are one of those who subscribe to the senseless idea that God is giving man complete free will and that salvation is our choice, consider the following: The result of creation, according to that belief, would be worse than if God had never begun it! His great plan, according to tradition, culminates in a tiny island of saints, angelic and pious, strumming on harps, while the rest of humanity is in complete agony! This is what religious tradition testifies that the plan of God is! To finish with things in a far worse state than when He began! What kind of a plan is that? Far better to have never created than to create only to condemn! It would be like drawing up plans to build a beautiful city on the site of a gorgeous, verdant pasture, and instead build one impressive mansion with a gigantic trash heap stretching out around it for mile after endless mile! Far better to leave the pasture alone, yet this trash heap is the 'gospel' of so many in the religious realm!

But indeed, those who claim to believe in endless hell contradict themselves. On the one hand, they say ninety nine percent of mankind is going to burn forever. Then, they say the little babes and unborn fetuses will be saved because they have not yet reached the 'age of accountability'. Finally, they fight abortion tooth and nail!!! Brethren, if babies are all going to be saved because they have not reached the age of accountability, abortion is the best evangelistic tool in the world! Far better to kill at birth to guarantee eternal life, than to allow them to take their chances at passing the age of accountability and having a ninety-nine percent chance of being tortured forever! So you see, the hell preachers do not even fully believe their own lie.

But let us move on from such darkness. Dear saints, God is indeed love, and He indeed has a loving plan that will result in all being established in Jesus Christ:

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

¹⁸He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:16-19)

It is important to emphasize the mission of Christ: to save the world, not to condemn the world. John 3:16 is quoted endlessly, but the passage is rarely taken as a whole. We must understand that Christ did not come to condemn – he who does not believe is already under condemnation! (verse 18). He who does not believe is already under the penalty of Adam's transgression, is already in decay and corruption, is already blind and wretched! This verse is one of the strongest testimonies to the nature of fallen man. Condemnation is not some future verdict as much as something that is already being experienced as a result of our death in Adam. Only faith in Christ can save, and that faith only comes by grace, as we examined previously.

The point at which tradition has cast a stumbling block is to assume that condemnation is a future verdict that endures forever, and that there is no restitution or restoration. But how then could it be said:

¹¹He shall see the labor of His soul,^[b] and be satisfied. (Isaiah 53:11)

If Christ was sent to save, are we going to believe He is satisfied with His labors if He only saves a mere one percent? Is a one percent success rate cause for satisfaction in any area known to man? Brethren, there is a reason Christ shall be satisfied:

⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven,

and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

Christ will be satisfied because He is fully triumphant! His love has conquered the world. He gave everything He had to purchase the pearl of great price.

²⁹Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. (Matthew 12:29)

The Lord has indeed bound satan, and has plundered his house also. Everything that was under the sway of the wicked one has been purchased back, and Jesus Christ is going to subdue every power and every principality, to the point where there is one enemy left, even death itself. Death – the carnal mind, the corruption of a godless existence, the decay of sin. And when He has beaten down every other mountain, behold, by His great and limitless love this final enemy shall fall too!!!

²⁵For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. ²⁷For "He has put all things under His feet."^[a] But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. ²⁸Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians: 25-28)

Consider that awesome statement – the last enemy to be destroyed is death! The wages of sin is death, yet instead of receiving these wages in waves of endless agony, all shall be subdued and reconciled. All shall be made subject to the Lord Jesus. This is such a plain statement of God's final intent and such a wondrous declaration of His abounding mercy that I grieve to see how ignored this truth has become.

LOVE CONQUERS ALL

Dear saints, we must soberly understand that we will never know the love of God unless we believe in the love of God. We will never love all men dearly unless we believe that God loves all men dearly. And we will never become ministers of life until we believe that Christ became a life-giving spirit. There is so much death preached from the pulpits that saints become more burdened than before they believed! Brethren, I would encourage you this very day to spend time contemplating God's nature, His character, and His love, and ask Him to reveal this great love to you yet more and more. Become alive to Him, become aware of Him, because He will lead you into all truth, and the truth shall set you free.

For His love never fails!

