

10. GOD IS LOVE

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. **God is love**, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4.16 NASB)

It seems fitting that this volume be concluded with these three mighty words: ***God is love!***

The grace of God, the love of God, and the glory of God are foundational in our pursuit of understanding the purpose of the eons.

Grace is the way to the full expression of the love of God. *Glory* is the full expression of the love of God. In fact, all the attributes of God come forth from His love. He is gracious because He is love. He is merciful because He is love. He is faithful because He is love. He is longsuffering because He is love.

God is love encapsulates and sums up the purpose of the eons. The love of God is the very heart of the purpose of the eons. *For thus God loves the world!*

Why has God made the eons through His Son? Why has God suffered long with mankind throughout the eons? Why did He send His Son to this earth, and allow Him to suffer and die on the cross for the sin of the world? Why did the Son willingly submit to the will of His Father and suffer the shame of the cross? Why will the Son willingly subject Himself to the Father to consummate the eons?

He first loved us.

The answer to all these questions is discovered in *God is love*. He first loved us (1 John 4.16, 19), and He expresses His love in and through His Son.

By this **the love of God** was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (1 John 4.9 NASB)

We **know love by this**, that He laid down His life for us.... (1 John 3.16 NASB)

But **God demonstrates His own love toward us**, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5.8 NASB)

But when the kindness of God our Savior and **His love for mankind appeared**, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.... (Titus 3.4-5 NASB)

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

But God, being rich in mercy, because of **His great love with which He loved [loves] us**, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places [among the celestials], in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2.4-7 NASB [CVI])

God's love is not merely a past-tense love; it is an ever-present love. ***His great love with which He loves us!***

This love has been extended to us who believe in this wicked eon; but do we honestly think that this same love will not eventually be extended to all mankind? Paul, the beloved apostle of the nations, wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith: *Faithful is the saying and worthy of all welcome (for for this are we toiling and being reproached), that we rely on the living God, Who is the Saviour of all mankind, especially of believers. These things be charging and teaching* (1 Timothy 4.9-11 cv). Notice how Paul told Timothy to teach *these things*. What is included in these things? *God is the Savior of all mankind!*

I realize that many say it is impossible; it cannot be! After all, they declare that God's love must be balanced with His justice; that is, He must judge those who reject His Son, with the ultimate penalty being eternal torment. They declare that if He does not so judge, then He is not a just God. After all, God is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4.24; Hebrews 12.29). Truly, God must judge, and so He will. However, what they do not understand is that God's spiritual fire is a good thing, for its purpose is to purge and cleanse all from dead works. It does not destroy or endlessly punish anyone; its purpose is for restoration, so that God may be *All* in all.

Interestingly, a recent poll of Americans revealed that 31% of those polled see God as an angry, authoritarian God. Unfortunately, this impression is reinforced by many preachers who know little to nothing of *the word of the conciliation*. A very well-known preacher recently declared: "The only thing equal to the love of God is the wrath of God. More is written on His wrath than on His love."

He loves through judgment.

I have not found a Scripture that declares God is wrath; but it does declare *God is love*. Nothing, absolutely nothing, equals *God is love*! Wrath must come forth from the love of God, for this is who He is. Unfortunately, man defines *wrath* from his perspective, which is more like torture. God is not like man and neither is His wrath. God's wrath is corrective, not penal; it is constructive, not destructive.

Our God is not angry or mad. These are attributes of man who does not know the heart of God. All judgment has been given to the Son of God, who is the Son of His love.

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And He is treading the wine trough of the **fury** of the **indignation** of God, the Almighty. (Revelation 19.15 cv)

Most reading this verse probably see the words *fury* and *indignation* and quickly come to the conclusion that this means God is really mad at mankind. But if we look at the meaning, or we could say the heart, of these words, we discover that they express passion, very strong passion and desire.

The Greek word for *fury* is *thumos*, which means “feel” or “passion, as if breathing hard.” The Greek word for *indignation* is *orgē*, which means “properly desire, as reaching forth or excitement of the mind.”

Given the root meaning of these words, we see that there is a passionate desire driving this action. Again, many look at wrath or fury as an out of control passion of man, an emotional response that seeks to utterly destroy or get vengeance. When man is enraged he often seeks revenge or, as the saying goes, he seeks for blood.

But the Lord Himself is never out of control. When He acts, He has the utmost of control. He is not out to destroy. He is driven by a passion for mankind, a passionate desire to see mankind freed from the bondage of sin and corruption. Why shouldn't He act out of deep passion for that which He brought forth out of love, even if it leads to severe chastisement? Even amongst mankind, parents who deeply love their children must administer what we call “tough love” to train them. Why would we think that our Lord would react otherwise with those He created to be in His image? He is deeply passionate. His desire is for man.

Is justice served when some of God's created beings are forever cast out of His presence with no chance of restitution or rehabilitation? Is justice served when there is no end to the punishment? Doesn't a deep, passionate love keep reaching out until the hardened heart is fully won to the Lover? How do we explain God's justice for those whose hearts He hardened to serve His purpose? How do we explain God's justice for the vessels of dishonor that He created to serve His purpose? If He punishes and tortures them endlessly, where is *God is love* in this type of justice?

God's justice will be served at the great white throne judgment, which will result in the second death for many. But does this justice demand eternal torment or, as some see it, torture? Does it demand an eternal existence away from the presence of God? God is a consuming fire means that God will purify all that is evil in accord with His divine law. The fire of His law is a purifier. But does it mean that He will torment some of His creatures in a never-ending fire without any chance of reprieve? Does the love of God for the world and mankind that was created in His image never enter into God's justice? May it not be coming to that! ***Our God is love!***

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

God must judge, but He must judge in love, and He must judge according to His divine law of perfect justice that is underpinned by His love. He is love, and love must trump all. We know that today we are to abide in faith and love; but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13.13 NASB). However, when the perfect comes, faith and hope will be no more, for these will be fulfilled when we see our Lord face to face. We could say that faith and hope are temporary things. In like fashion, justice, grace and mercy are all temporary measures until love conquers all; until love ascends the throne of the heart of all creation and leads mankind to the heights of glory. When love reigns supreme there will be no need for justice, for all will be in the perfect will of God. Of all the attributes of God, love is king. Again, love must trump all, for God is love.

How could God continue to be the Supreme and the Sovereign of His creation if some of His creation is forever outside His will? Will He not cease being God of *All*? Will His purpose and plan be deemed an absolute success?

Some say man has a free will, and many have chosen to reject God's Son, so they will get their due justice. But where was our will when we were born? Where was our will when we were born to die? Where will our will be when our last breath leaves our body of corruption? Where was our will when the Son of God died for us to save us from our sins? Where was our will when the grace of our Lord overwhelmed our unbelief with faith and love in Christ Jesus?

Conquered by love.

Today, man thinks that his will rules the day, but do we think for a moment that mankind can or ever will trump the will of God? Doesn't the potter have full responsibility for the pot that he forms? Does the pot have the right to question the potter why it was formed a certain way? Is God not the Potter and we are the pot, the clay? Are we, the created, able to resist the will of the Creator? Who are we to think that our will is greater than the will of God Who wills that all mankind be saved, that somehow we can and will overrule God's will? If God has set His will to save all mankind, then He will save all mankind. Read Romans 9.

God's will is greater than man's will, and all will be conquered by His love expressed through His Son. Consider these verses.

“All was given up to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and whomsoever the Son may be intending to unveil Him.” (Luke 10.22 CV)

And this is the will of him that has sent me, that of all that he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up in the last day. (John 6.39 DNT)

“And I, if I should be exalted out of the earth, shall be drawing [lit. dragging] all to Myself.” (John 12.32 CV [ALT])

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All has been given to the Son; the Son will lose nothing; and the Son shall draw all to Himself, which literally means that He will drag all to Himself. Can Scripture make it any clearer? This is love! Love conquers all!

The Son of God will gather all in heaven and on earth to Himself. He is like a magnet that will draw everything to Himself. Once a magnet is set in place it *drags* all metal to itself. He is like the mother hen that broods over her chicks. As He brooded over Jerusalem, so He will brood over all (see Matthew 23.37). All will come under the shelter of His wings, forever kept in the love of the Son.

Love is the greatest law.

The foundation of God's divine law is His divine love; the royal law is love.

Love sums up all the commandments.

And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. **This is the great and foremost commandment.** The second is like it, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22.37-40 NASB)

Love is the ultimate law of God, for it is the foundation of the Law and the Prophets. Everything is to be judged for how much love has been manifested. All mankind will be judged by their works of love.

James called the commandment to love the royal law.

If, however, you are fulfilling **the royal law** according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL **LOVE** YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. (James 2.8 NASB)

The Greek word for *royal* is *basilikos*, which means "belonging to (or befitting) the sovereign; the king's." This law belongs to the King, the Sovereign of all. The Greek word for *love* is *agapaō*, which is the verb form of the love that is attributed to God. We are commanded to love our neighbors unconditionally as we love ourselves unconditionally.

Jesus Himself has given us the commandment to love.

"If you **love Me**, you will **keep My commandments.**" (John 14.15 NASB)

"If anyone loves Me, he will **keep My word**; and **My Father will love him**, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. **He who does not love Me does not keep My words**; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me." (John 14.23-24 NASB)

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“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15.12-13 NASB)

Consider Jesus’ progression of thought. First, He tells His disciples to keep His commandments out of love for Him. Then, He defines His commandments as His word. Those who keep His word (commandments) will be loved by the Father. So now we have a reciprocal love. *Love Me, keep My word and My Father will love you in turn.* Finally, love itself is the commandment of Jesus to His disciples. His commandment to us is to love one another as He has loved us.

In his first epistle, John, the apostle of love, wrote: *This is **His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us*** (1 John 3.23 NASB).

Faith (trust in the Son) and love (love of the Son) go hand-in-hand.

Paul, the striving apostle, reinforced all that John wrote on the matter, for he encouraged brethren to pursue love and faith. He looked for it in them and commended them when he saw or heard of it in their midst (e.g., Ephesians 1.15; 3.17; Colossians 1.14; 1 Thessalonians 3.6; 5.8; 2 Thessalonians 1.3). Paul referred to it as *the faith and love in Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 1.14 cv).

Paul was looking for the relationship of love manifested amongst the brethren, for this is the heart of God.

Paul should know. He called himself the least of the apostles because he had persecuted the Lord’s body on earth, even making believers blaspheme, before the risen Christ met him on the road to Damascus. Paul knew that he did not deserve the love of God, for he was the foremost of sinners. But he came to know the love of God that reached down and overwhelmed his unbelief and ignorance with faith and love in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 1.14; 2 Timothy 1.13). Paul knew the depths of God’s love for him, and he expressed that love to the brethren by pouring out his life daily for them.

Love, a relationship.

Love must be expressed, and it is expressed through relationship. *God is love* means that with the consummation of the eons, God will be in a love relationship with His entire creation as a father is in relationship with his family. However, we must see that the genesis of this relationship is a love relationship between the Father and the Son. We cannot and must not separate the love of God from the Son of His love, our Lord Jesus Christ. The relationship between God the Father and His Son is a love relationship that existed before the disruption of the world (John 17.24).

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“Father, those whom Thou hast given Me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me, that they may be beholding My glory which Thou has given Me, for **Thou lovest Me** before the disruption of the world.” ... “And I make known to them Thy name, and I shall make it known, that the love with which **Thou lovest Me** may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17.24, 26 cv)

God’s love is expressed for, in, through and by His Son. If we want to know that *God is love*, we must know *the Son of His love*, the visible image of the invisible God. On the one hand, the Father’s love for His Son desires to give His Son all creation as His possession and allotment, and on the other hand, the Son’s love for His Father desires to give His Father His rightful place as the Father of all creation.

Their love cannot be contained between them but has to be expressed throughout the creation of God. Love demands an expression of itself that reaches beyond itself to touch something outside itself. In this case, the object of God’s love is mankind that was created *to be* in the image and likeness of Jesus. We could say that the love between the Father and the Son birthed creation and man who was made *to be* in the image and likeness of God.

The love of God reached down to touch humanity and to raise mankind to the heights of glory. The love of God is the thread that has been woven throughout the eons that have passed and the thread that will flow through the glorious eons yet to come. The love of God in Christ Jesus is the thread that binds all the eons together and will close out the eons of the eons. The love of God in Christ Jesus is what will consummate all the eons when the Son of God gladly delivers up the kingdom to His God and Father, so that God may be *All* in all. The love of God in Christ Jesus is what will sweep us into eternity.

The highest form of love is discovered when One willingly sacrifices His life for others and then willingly subjects Himself to *Another*, so that the *Other* will receive all the honor and glory. This is the love of God in His Son.

Love never fails.

Our current era has been reserved to express the love of God to the vessel that Paul calls the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ. Christ loves the ecclesia and gave Himself up for her that He might present her to Himself in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle, that she would be holy and blameless (see Ephesians 5.22-33). What love! Later, this love will be progressively expressed to the nations until all mankind is brought to know the love of God, to the praise and honor and glory of God. When all come to this place of glory, then the word will be fulfilled that declares that *at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Philippians 2.10-11; also Isaiah 45.23). With this declaration, all that the Son of His love was given to do for His Father will have been accomplished.

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The plan of the eons is to express the love of God to His creation and to fill creation with His love. At the consummation of the eons, all creation will know the love of God in all its dimensions. Love means that God's creation will operate as one family with one Father. There will be no need for governments or kingdoms as we know them today. Love will rule the day, and all will be in God's perfect will. In that day, love will fulfill the law of God in the whole creation. No longer will anyone do wrong to his neighbor.

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13.10 NASB)

Paul knew the very love of Christ as he experienced God's love poured out on the foremost of sinners. He willingly died daily that others might know this love. Paul asked: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ* (Romans 8.35)? He declared: *Love never fails* (1 Corinthians 13.8). If love never fails, and we know that God is love, then how can we say that His love will not save all mankind and reach out into His entire creation? If it does not, then Paul is a liar and we cannot trust his word. But Paul testified: *I am telling the truth, I am not lying*.

It is only fitting that we conclude with Paul's words that best describe the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord, as it relates to those called and chosen during our present era.

Now we are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to the purpose that, whom He foreknew, He designates beforehand, also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren. Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also. What, then, shall we declare to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? Surely, He Who spares not His own Son, but gives Him up for us all, how shall He not, together with Him, also, be graciously granting us all? Who will be indicting God's chosen ones? God, the Justifier? Who is the Condemner? Christ Jesus, the One dying, yet rather being roused, Who is also at God's right hand, Who is pleading also for our sakes? What shall be separating us from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Affliction, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? According as it is written, that "On Thy account we are being put to death the whole day, We are reckoned as sheep for slaughter." Nay! in all these we are more than conquering through Him Who loves us. **For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor messengers, nor sovereignties, nor the present, nor what is impending, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.** (Romans 8.28-39 CV)

How do we sum up the purpose and plan of the eons? The love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord!

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Someone recently asked those gathered for a worship service if anyone understood why God does things the way He does. The brother asked if there was anyone in the room who could answer the question. I was tempted to respond. The answer is that *God is love*.

Beloved of God, no matter what you are going through in your life today, or you will encounter in the days ahead, never lose sight of the fact that God loves you and nothing, absolutely nothing, can or ever will separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Nothing! We may have more trials, uncertainties and even major changes to face, or perhaps death itself before the treasure hidden in His body of conquerors bursts forth, and they are transfigured into the body of His glory; but be assured that His love for us will never change.

Be encouraged that when He appears to us, we will forever be with the Lord from then on. No matter where the Lord is or what the Lord will be doing during the eons of the eons and beyond, we will be with Him.

As I meditated on this thought, I thought about when God spoke to Job about the sons of God shouting for joy when He laid the cornerstone of the earth (Job 38.4-7). Then, I thought about the heavenly host that praised God and gave Him glory when Christ was born (Luke 2.13-14). We cannot see the heavenly host with our physical eyes today; nevertheless, they exist and, most likely, are looking upon us today, marveling at the multifarious wisdom of God. The point is that, in some measure, we will be like the heavenly host as we will be able to observe and participate in all that our Lord will be doing.

As sons of God, we too will shout for joy over all the marvelous works of God that undoubtedly will come forth. When the nations begin to turn to the Lord and His righteousness is established in the earth, we will be looking on and shouting for joy, giving glory to God. When the new heavens and the new earth come into view and the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven, having the glory of God, we will be that city of glory, and we will be shouting for joy. When the Son abolishes all rule and all authority and all power, abolishes death itself and then hands over the kingdom to His Father, we will be looking on and shouting for joy, giving glory to God. When the consummation of the eons finally arrives and all mankind sees the absolute victory of the cross of Calvary, we will be that celestial body looking upon the glory of God as He fills all that is new with His love. Along with all creation, we will be that celestial choir singing the praises of God and His Son.

Through Joel the prophet we are told that the Lord will pour out His spirit on all mankind (Joel 2.28). Paul tells us that we have been given the spirit of love (2 Timothy 1.7). It is the spirit of love that will be poured out on all mankind.

What is the purpose of the eons? ***All in love!*** All in love with God the Father and His Son! What is the character of what lies beyond the eons of the eons? Love!

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May the Lord direct your heart into the love of God and may you know the love of God in Christ Jesus that surpasses all knowledge, for this is in accord with the purpose of the eons! Amen!