

The Love of God

1 John Series

1 Jn 3:1-3

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INTRODUCTION

A. We sing a song with words telling about the love of God, and they are among the most Beautiful, poetic, and true of all words of all languages

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the heav'ns of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretch'd from sky to sky.

Chaldee Ode, - Edythe Draper, Draper's Book of Quotations for the Christian World

B. The most amazing, the most important, the most dear to the heart, and the most life changing Concept contained in the Bible is the declaration of God's love for human beings

1. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world. . . .

2. Every act of God on man's behalf flows from that basic concept

C. You would think that remembering God's love for us would be easy

1. Perhaps, in a way, it is easy to remember in some intellectual sense, but it is quite often forgotten, neglected, ignored and even rejected

2. In our study of John's first letter, we have found a constant listing of things, about which John wanted to remind his readers

a. they are things that bring us back to the ground of our faith

b. they things that warn us to ignore the lies of false and faulty philosophies

c. they are things that are intended to secure us in the truth about Jesus Christ

3. It should not surprise us that John wants to get our attention by reminding us of God's love

D. 1 John 3:1-3

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. NASB95

1. Our modern translations lose the attention-getting beginning to this passage

2. The modern "see" comes across too weakly – it's more the older "behold," or even, "look!" or even, "pay attention!"

E. This morning I want us all to look! And pay attention! To the love of God

I. LOOKING AT GOD'S LOVE WILL ASTONISH YOU!

A. Translators sometimes struggle to communicate John's exact intent

1. CEV – “Think how much the Father loves us”
2. KJV – “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us”
3. We tend to try to define God's love in philosophical and theological thoughts, that while not necessarily wrong, are not the ways that love is expressed in the Bible
 - a. we say God's love is unconditional, and we stress that probably because the idea has become popular philosophy
 - b. the Bible doesn't say God's love is unconditional, but it surely does describe God's love in terms that amaze the mind

B. Biblical evidence of God's amazing love

1. Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. NASB95
 - a. God's love isn't just something we can discuss, it is something active from which we can benefit
 - b. look at when it was active – not while we were lovable, obedient to God, and doing everything right – rather it was active while we were sinners
2. Ephesians 2:4-5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), NASB95
 - a. it is mercy that provides us with respite from what we really deserve to get
 - b. mercy is the need of the condemned
 - c. God granted mercy, and did so on the basis of his love for us
3. John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. NASB95
 - a. I have believed, since I first read that verse as a boy, that the first phrase is the most staggering and important superlative statement in the Bible
 - b. it is what explains God's otherwise unexplainable action on our behalf, and for our good

C. Illustration (by: Ralph W. Seager)

More sky than man can see,
More seas than he can sail,
More sun than he can bear to watch,
More stars than he can scale.
More breath than he can breathe,
More yield than he can sow,
More grace than he can comprehend,
More love than he can know.

II. JOHN WANTED US TO SEE SOMETHING SPECIFIC ABOUT GOD'S LOVE

A. 1 John 3:1

See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children--and so, in fact, we are. TEV

B. William Barclay points out something that applies to this point

"It is by nature that a man is the creature of God, but it is by grace that he becomes the child of God."

1. Now, someone might want to protest that by virtue of creation that we are the children of God
2. There is certainly some degree of truth to that idea, but Barclay goes on to explain his thinking, and in doing so, clarifies a great truth about God's love
3. "There are two English words which are closely connected but whose meanings are widely different, paternity and fatherhood. Paternity describes a relationship in which a man is responsible for the physical existence of a child; fatherhood describes an intimate, loving, relationship. In the sense of paternity all men are children of God; but in the sense of fatherhood men are children of God only when he makes his gracious approach to them and they respond." (Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, p. 73)

C. The Bible talks about this in terms of adoption

1. Romans 8:14-17 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. NASB95
2. Galatians 4:4-7 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. NASB95
3. Ephesians 1:5-6 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. NASB95

D. David Jackman (*The Message of John's Letters*, p. 81-82)

"Adoption is a legal action by which a person takes into his family a child who is not his own, who has no rights within that family, in order to give that child all the privileges of his own children. . . the basic motivation would be pity, compassion, love. Love gives. So it is with God, who 'sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.' (Gal 4:4-5)

E. It was put this way as far back as Deut. 7:7-8

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. NASB95

III. THERE ARE THREE THINGS TO NOTE WHEN REMEMBERING GOD'S LOVE

A. It explains why the world doesn't know us

1. The world simply does not know or understand what it means to be a child of God
2. An unbelieving world can only have an uninformed, distorted view of what it means to be in a relationship with our heavenly Father, to constantly receive grace and mercy and to have someone in whom to place our confident trust for life and beyond

B. It explains that it is OK not to understand everything

1. This was one of the lying tricks of the false teachers – the claim to possess secret knowledge, to have answers to the questions that often elude us
2. John says that knowing you are a child of God is sufficient
 - a. we have all sorts of questions about what will happen when Christ returns
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:35 But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" NASB95
 - c. the truth is we don't know everything right now, but we do know that when Jesus returns, we'll be like him
 - d. this is a far better knowledge than mere intellectual satisfaction which is the realm of the philosopher and often the theologian, too

C. It explains our motivation to be involved in the process of being like Jesus now

1. We are the children of God – now!
2. If that is true, and it is, then how should that affect the way we live, the kind of people we are – now?
3. Someone (A.W. Tozer?) said: If God loved you as much as you love him, where would you be?
 - a. God loved you enough to make you his child
 - b. do you love God enough to make him your Father?

CONCLUSION

A. A lot of things amaze us that end up not being amazing at all, mere tricks we don't understand

1. Here is one thing that can truly amaze – the love of God that makes us his children
2. That's what you are today, if you've obeyed the gospel

B. Invitation