

The Wonder of God's Love and Grace

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you know you are loved by someone?

2. How would you describe the experience of grace?

“God’s love is an exercise of his goodness toward individual sinners whereby, having identified himself with their welfare, he has given his Son to be their Savior, and now brings them to know and enjoy him in a covenant relation.” (Knowing God, pp. 123)

How do we understand God's love in our relationship with Him?

1. The statement “God is love” is a partial description of who God is. God’s attribute of love must be understood in relation to all his other attributes.

“So the love of the God who is spirit is no fitful, fluctuating thing, as human love is, nor is it a mere impotent longing for things that may never be; it is, rather, a spontaneous determination of God’s whole being in an attitude of benevolence and benefaction, an attitude freely chosen and firmly fixed. There are no inconstancies or vicissitudes in the love of the almighty God who is spirit.” (Knowing God, pp. 121)

2. God is holy and righteous. God’s love desires us to be like him, just as a father desires his child to have the same character as himself. He desires us to live a holy life. God in his loving kindness will bless and discipline us so we may become more holy.

“God’s love is stern, for it expresses holiness in the lover and seeks holiness the beloved. Scripture does not allow us to suppose that because God is love we may look to him to confer happiness on people who will not seek holiness, or shield his loved ones from trouble when he knows that they need trouble to further their sanctification.” (Knowing God, pp. 122)

[²¹] For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you [²²] Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. [²³] And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. (Romans 11:21-23 ESV)

3. God's love is an expression of God's goodness. His goodness can be demonstrated by what C.S. Lewis describes in his book "The Four Loves":
 - a. Agape: Love that is selfless in order to benefit others - ^[16] "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ^[17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17 ESV)
 - b. Phileo: Love shared between friends, community, and common man. - ^[14] If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ^[15] For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ^[16] Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ^[17] If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 14:13-17 ESV)
 - c. Storge: Love shared between parents and children; a protective love. - ^[13] Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, ^[14] but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." ^[15] And he laid his hands on them and went away. (Matthew 19:14-15 ESV)
 - d. Eros: Love that is intimate and intertwining demonstrated in marriage and the relationship between God and his people - ^[29] The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. (John 3:29 ESV)
4. Knowing and having faith that God is love is comforting. This is especially true when we cannot understand the situations and trials we face in life. That means no matter what we experience in any situation, it is not wasted. There is a reason for each happening and the heart of it will always be God's love for us.

"Even when we cannot see the why and the wherefore of God's dealings, we know that there is love in and behind them, and so we can rejoice always, even when, humanly speaking, things are going wrong. We know that the true story of our life, when known, will prove to be, as the hymn says, "mercy from first to last" – and we are content." (Knowing God, pp. 123)

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Grasping the Gift of Grace

“The root of the trouble seems to be misbelief about the basic relationship between a person and God – misbelief rooted not just in the mind but in the heart, at the deeper level of things that we never question because we always take them for granted.” (Knowing God, pp. 129)

1. Grasping God's grace means that we have to accept the reality we are sinful people in the eyes of a holy and righteous God. God the Creator King has a right to destroy us where we stand for our sinfulness. We cannot save ourselves nor curry the favor of God to give us salvation from sin.

“...whereas grace is God's goodness confronting human demerit. (There is a difference between no merit and demerit. No merit is simply a lack; demerit means that there is not only no merit there but that there is the opposite of merit.)” (The Attributes of God, Tozer pp. 98)

“The grace of God is love freely shown toward guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their merit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity and had no reason to expect anything but severity.”

2. God's grace is a demonstration of God's goodness and motive for God's salvation to us. Grace happens when a person who is in disfavor is brought back into favor by the one who was the judge. Salvation is only possible in the believing faith of Jesus Christ who was crucified for the benefit of others.

^[4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ^[5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ^[6] and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ^[7] so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ^[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ^[9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ^[10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:4-10 ESV)

^[4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ^[5] he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5 ESV)

Conclusion

^[17] But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! ^[18] For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ^[19] For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ^[20] I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ^[21] I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Galatians 2:17-21 ESV)