

“God Is Love”
(1 John 4:8)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Tonight, we’re going to begin a new series looking at the question: Why should you love God?

a. It naturally follows from what we’ve just been studying.

(i) We’ve looked at what it means to live in His presence – to walk with Him under His watchful eye.

(a) You know by now that being a Christian doesn’t mean you just believe certain things to be true.

(1) In the Trinity (that God is three persons and not just one),

(2) That Jesus is both God and man (and not just one or the other),

(3) That you are saved by placing your whole hope of entering heaven on the obedience and death of Jesus Christ (and not all or even a little on what you do),

(4) And other things– though it certainly is that.

(b) It also means that you do certain things.

(1) That you are trusting Him.

(2) That you are doing what He tells you to do both towards Him and others.

(3) That you do this from time you get up in the morning, to the time you lay down to sleep at night.

(4) And that you do these things because you want to do them, not because there’s a sword hanging over your head, or a rod hovering over your hind quarters waiting to strike you when you step out of line.

(ii) And we’ve looked at one of the reasons why we should live this way: because of all the blessings God will give us if we do.

(a) The things He has promised to give us to take care of us in this world – the ultimate insurance plan.

(b) And the things He has promised to take care of us when our lives in this world are over – the ultimate retirement plan.

b. But there are many other reasons – reasons found in God Himself, and not just in the things He gives us.

(i) Not too long ago, my daughter Sarah asked a very good question: How can you know whether or not you love God? In other words, how can you know that you love the Giver of the gift and not the Giver for the gift only?

- (ii) Most Christians, when you ask them why they love God, will say something like this: Yes, I love God because,
 - (a) He made me.
 - (b) He provides for me.
 - (c) He gave His precious Son to save me.
 - (d) He commands me to love Him in return.
 - (e) And yes, you should love Him for these reasons.
- (iii) But how many do you ever hear say, I love God because,
 - (a) He is holy.
 - (b) He is just.
 - (c) He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable.
 - (d) That they love *Him* because *He* is beautiful?
 - (e) Not too many.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, we're going to begin looking at why you should love Him.
 - a. If you find yourself struggling with loving God, perhaps,
 - (i) Seeing Him more clearly,
 - (ii) Understanding why He loves what He loves and hates what He hates,
 - (iii) Why He is just and holy,
 - (iv) That He is gracious and good, might help.
 - b. I think a good place to start is with that particular characteristic/attribute that makes everything else about Him beautiful, the one that is the fountain from which all the others flow, the one without which He would be the greatest monster rather than the most beautiful and glorious Being: His love.
2. We'll look at two things:
 - a. First, that it is possible to know that you love God.
 - b. Second, that the first reason you should love God is because He is love.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, it is possible to know that you love God.
 1. You can tell whether you love God in pretty much the same way you can tell that you love others – and here, we're not talking about that kind of love that is a commitment to do good to someone whether we are inclined towards them or not, but the kind of love that is attracted to what it loves.
 - a. How can you tell whether you love someone? There are at least five things that can draw your love out towards others:
 - (i) You can love someone because of their physical beauty.
 - (a) It's possible to love someone purely for their appearance.
 - (b) Even if they're not a nice person, even if they're mean or cruel.
 - (c) The way they look/their beauty can be enough by itself to draw your heart out after them.

- (ii) You can love someone for their abilities – what they're able to do.
 - (a) Because of their ability to act – actors are some of the most popular people in the world.
 - (b) Because of their ability to sing well – pop singers are also very popular.
 - (c) Because of their athletic ability – baseball, football and basketball players are also popular.
 - (d) Your heart can go out to them because you admire what they can do.
 - (iii) You can love someone for their personality.
 - (a) You like the way they talk, the things they talk about.
 - (b) They make you laugh, or feel important.
 - (c) They have a certain presence about them.
 - (d) You like the things they do and the way they do them.
 - (iv) You can love someone because of what they have.
 - (a) Some people are desirable because they're very rich.
 - (b) The queen of Sheba was overwhelmed not only by Solomon's wisdom, but also his wealth.
 - (v) Or you can love them because of their relationship to you.
 - (a) Parents, you love your children no matter what they're like – they're your flesh and blood, in many ways they are your image.
 - (b) Children, you love your parents, not only because they love you and take care of you, but because they are your parents.
- b. How can you know whether you love God? In pretty much the same way.
- (i) He is beautiful – He doesn't have physical beauty because He is a spirit – but He is beautiful.
 - (a) He is an absolutely holy Being.
 - (b) He is a perfect Being.
 - (c) But He is also able to reveal something of His beauty in the Creation and will reveal it in heaven – in the Beatific Vision.
 - (ii) God has limitless abilities.
 - (a) Do you admire an athlete for His strength? God has the strength to move worlds. He can speak and create a universe.
 - (b) Do you love someone for their brilliance? God is further beyond the greatest genius who's ever lived than you are beyond a rock.
 - (iii) God is the most fascinating person that has ever lived.
 - (a) Do you admire someone for how interesting they are? God is infinitely interesting in every way.
 - (b) He is the most complex and virtuous and gracious Being that has ever been or ever will be.

- (iv) God has more than anyone could ever possibly possess.
 - (a) He owns this world and all its riches, as well as the wealth of an entire universe.
 - (b) And if that wasn't enough, God could create a million more like it.
- (v) And God is related to you.
 - (a) He is your Father.
 - (b) You are His children.
 - (c) And He takes care of you – everything you have ever received in your whole life has come from Him.
- (vi) The Lord is beautiful, limitless, fascinating, rich, and He is your Father.
- (vii) Together, or apart, each of these should draw your heart to Him.

2. God can be known; He can be loved; there are many reasons He should be loved; which is why we see examples of the deepest kind of love towards Him in the Bible.
 - a. The sons of Korah write, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” (Ps. 42:1).
 - b. David writes, “O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (Ps. 63:1).
 - c. Paul writes, “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf” (2 Cor. 5:14).
 - d. Why did these and so many more love Him so much that they would even give their lives for Him?
 - (i) Ultimately, it's because God gave them this love through His Holy Spirit.
 - (ii) But the way you know that He has given you this love is by seeing these things about God and loving Him for them.
 - (iii) The Spirit doesn't make you love something that isn't lovely – He opens your eyes to see His beauty so that your heart will go out to Him.

- B. So what is there about God that is lovely? The first thing we'll look at is His love.
 1. His love is that attribute that adorns all the others – that makes them all beautiful.
 - a. One thing you need to understand about God is that His attributes aren't parts of Him – each of them describes His whole being: John doesn't say that God loves, but God is love.
 - b. The thing that's unique about this attribute is that all of His other moral excellencies flow from this one:
 - (i) His righteousness, or love for what is right,
 - (ii) His justice, or love for what is just,
 - (iii) His faithfulness, or His love in following through on His commitments.

(iv) And all the rest.

- c. His love also adorns all His natural attributes.
- (i) His limitless strength,
 - (ii) His all comprehensive knowledge,
 - (iii) The fact that He always has been and always will be,
 - (iv) That He doesn't depend on anyone or anything for anything,
 - (v) That He is everywhere at once.
 - (vi) The fact that His whole Being is saturated with love makes Him infinitely lovely.

2. And so what is this love?

- a. It really boils down to holiness.
- (i) If He didn't have this, all of His power and knowledge would make Him infinitely dangerous, but not lovely.
 - (ii) Edwards writes, "Strength and knowledge don't render any being lovely, without holiness; but more hateful: though they render them more lovely, when joined with holiness."
 - (a) Lions and gorillas are very powerful creatures.
 - (b) So are the devil and his angels.
 - (c) But why wouldn't you want to be in the same room with them?
 - (d) Because of their natures – they aren't holy, they aren't loving.
 - (e) If God wasn't holy, you certainly wouldn't want to be in the same room with Him.
- b. What is holiness?
- (i) Again, Edwards writes that it is the "excellency and beauty of God's nature whereby his heart is disposed and delights in everything that is morally good and excellent."
 - (ii) It's also His infinite hatred of sin because that is the opposite of what He loves.
- c. His holiness is His love and the reason why you can love Him.
- (i) The last thing you could love is a god that delighted in evil.
 - (a) You would never be able to trust what He said.
 - (b) You would never know if He was waiting to stab you in the back.
 - (c) An evil god might bring you to heaven, but then cast you into hell for no other reason than He wanted to.
 - (ii) You could only love a good God, a loving God, a holy God.
 - (a) One who will be faithful to do the right thing forever without changing.
 - (b) One who would do what is best for you at all times.
 - (c) One who would never go back on His Word.
 - (d) One who could never do anything wrong.

- (ii) This doesn't exhaust what it means that God is love, but it is a beginning.
 - (a) We'll start here and begin to work our way through all the expressions of His love, to see just how lovely He is.
 - (b) But begin thinking about what you've seen – would you change this attribute of God? Would you have Him to be something else?
 - (c) Can you love this God? Do you love Him?
 - (d) If so, you have His grace in your hearts. Amen.

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