

Faith Is Action

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HOW MUCH DOES GOD LOVE YOU?



How Much Does God Love You?

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One of the greatest invitations in all the Word of God is found in 1 Peter 5:7: “*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*”

This is one lie the devil cannot slip on me: God doesn’t care! God is unmindful and unconcerned about me, His child. God said in His Word, “*Can a mother forsake her sucking child?*” And the answer is *Yes!* But God said, “*Yet will I not forget thee! Behold, I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands*” (Isaiah 49:15-16).

Every time God looks at His hand, He is reminded of you and me, and He looks down. He said that His eye is upon the righteous, and His ear is open to their call. And He said that *in the time of trouble*—He didn’t say that *we wouldn’t have trouble*, but that in the time of trouble, *all we have to do is call on Him; for “He is a very present help in time of trouble”* (Psalm 46:1).

It is when we are being tested, when we are in greatest need, His presence is more evident. He is *always there*, but it is when we are in need that He is *very present* to help and assist. I found out in my own

experience that God is going to let me do what I can do. Like with our own children, He is not going to wash my face for me if I am old enough to wash it myself. But when I am in need, at the point of helplessness, when I am faced with overwhelming circumstances, He is going to step in to deliver me.

What Satan tries to do to the child of God is to create the illusion that God doesn’t care. Every thing he sees around him, and every event that occurs in his life, he interprets negatively with the help of the devil’s lies, until he is convinced that God does not love him. A Christian who has convinced himself that God does not love him has reached a very low spot and has been captured by the lie of the devil. I mean, *even the sinner cannot say that God doesn’t love him—much less the Christian!*

God Manifested His Love

Does God love *the sinner*? We know that He does: The greatest Scripture in the Bible says, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,*

but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

God so loved the world of mankind so much that *He cared enough to give the very best*, and He loved us when we were in our most unloveable condition:

“For when we were yet without strength...” When we were at our weakest and in greatest need of salvation; helpless to save ourselves.

“...In due time...” (when we needed Him the most) *“Christ died for the ungodly.*

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

“But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6-8).

The love God manifested to mankind was totally unselfish: a sacrificial love that was unheard of in that ancient Roman world. In fact, the New Testament writers, when referring to the love of God, used a word that had laid dormant in the Greek language until Jesus went to Calvary: **AGAPE**. There were four words in the Greek language which are translated *love* in the English, but until Jesus went to the cross, the word **AGAPE** was not used in Greek writing. Why? Because there had never been any display of this kind of love amongst mankind! This word could not fulfill its definition until Christianity came, *because there was no such thing as the kind of love that*

will give itself, knowing it will cost something; knowing it’s going to hurt, but loves anyhow!

Did you know that before the time of Christ, there were no hospitals, no place to take care of the sick or the aged or infirm? In those days a human life was not worth a plug nickel. Even in the great Greek civilization and the Golden Age of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates and such, if a child was born with a birth defect, he was allowed to die. In fact, the father had such absolute power, he could dispose of his child in the trash if he didn’t want it, and this was often done to female babies who were considered to be worthless. They were just thrown away in the trash! Sometimes they were retrieved by ruthless men who raised them as slaves and prostituted them for personal gain.

There weren’t any garbage collectors in those days, so the rich people had pools in the back of their houses where they kept flesh-eating fish. They would throw the food and meat scraps to the fish. They also had little lap dogs that sat at the table and ate the crumbs that fell during the meal. (The Syrophenician woman alluded to this when she asked Jesus to heal her daughter.) It has been recorded by historians that if one of these rich masters was displeased with his servant (perhaps if he broke a favorite cup), he would be thrown to the fish without mercy!

This was the state of the world that Jesus came into: *A world without love and without mercy.* This is why

they could invent such terrible punishments as crucifixion; it was the most agonizing death you can imagine, and I wonder how many Christians appreciate the true suffering it entailed. It was a slow, painful death that usually took a couple of days; this is why Pilate was so surprised to learn that Jesus had died in less than eight hours. But Jesus said, “**No man takes my life—I lay it down!**” (Jn. 10:18).

It was so agonizing that every bone in Jesus’ body was out of joint until He struggled to take each breath, intensifying the agony. Death by crucifixion was usually by asphyxiation after hours and days of struggling for each breath.

That Christless world never knew anything about love, about caring, about sacrifice. It was an age of cruelty and mercilessness. The **AGAPE** love that gives and doesn’t look for anything in return had never been manifested, until God, looking down on humanity and beholding our terrible plight, gave Jesus to redeem and restore our broken lives. He knew it was going to cost Him something to get us out and to deliver us, but He loved us and was willing to pay the terrible price.

This Is Love

John summed it up in 1John 4:10: “*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.*”

The companion word you will

almost always find with *love*—**AGAPE** as it refers to God, is *give*. “*God so loved the world that He gave...*” The kind of love that God displayed for us cost Him something, and in this verse *He gave His Son as a propitiation for our sins*. Most people think “propitiation” means *covering*, as in the Old Testament blood sacrifices, but the true meaning is *satisfaction* in the sense of “the satisfying price.” In order to save us, it was necessary for God to *redeem us*. *Redemption* means “*to buy back*” and requires a price or a ransom to be paid.

The term *redeem* comes from the background of the slave markets of that day where slaves were bought and sold regularly. The price to procure the freedom of a slave was usually thirty pieces of silver for a male and twenty for a female. But Peter said, “*We were not redeemed with such corruptible things as silver and gold: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (1Peter 1:18-19).

It’s interesting that Peter refers to silver and gold as being *corruptible*, when to man these are considered to be the most valued and costly metals known, and yet, even these were not worthy to purchase the redemption of the soul of man!

In 1Corinthians 6:20, Paul, admonishing his readers to remember that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that we are not our own, declared: “*For you are bought with a price...*” Once again the allu-

sion is to the slave markets as the Greek word for *bought* implies. Also, the word Paul used for “*with a price*” is the same Greek word translated *precious* in 1Peter 1:19. It refers to that which is *so costly* as to be *priceless!*

This is the terrible price God paid to *commend, manifest, prove* His love for us, and whenever the NT writers wanted to express and exhibit **the love of God**, they pointed to **the cross!** To show such love at such a price was unheard of in that world without mercy! Paul made this case in Romans 5:7:

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: but peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commended his love toward us while we were yet ungodly sinners!” This is why Jesus’ death on the cross was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and absolute insanity to the Greeks: *“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;”* (1Cor. 1:23).

To the Jews, death by crucifixion was an offense. It is written, *“Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree”* (Gal. 3:13, Deut. 21:23). But Jesus had to come under the curse to redeem those who were under the curse. To the Greeks, the very idea that someone who was supposed to be a king and a ruler had to die on a cross to save others was absolute *absurdity*. (KJV translates “foolishness”.) In that world of unkindness, slavery, and hatred, to die for another,

especially an undeserving sinner, was ludicrous.

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1Cor. 1:18).

There is no greater power than the power of love as it refers to God’s love for mankind, and there is no greater display of that love *than the cross of Christ!* And this is the very crux of the Gospel and the only message that will save! Paul stated in the verse 17 that he was not sent to “*baptize*” but “*to preach the Gospel*”—which he declared to be “*the preaching of the cross.*”

The Outgoing Love Of God

We have stated that it was the cross of Calvary that gave meaning to the definition of **AGAPE**, *the love of God*, and it was this very act of God that brought the word to life. Because it is difficult to translate **AGAPE** with just one English word—*love*—it is necessary to look at the synonyms whose meanings are included in **AGAPE**. One of these is *mercy*, a powerful word used in reference to God in both Testaments. To fully understand its potency, we must know its Bible definition, which is far greater than the simple modern English meaning.

The Greek **ELEEO** means “to feel sympathy with the misery of another, and to manifest that sympathy with action.” Today, we might describe it as “putting oneself in another person’s shoes.” A better way to think of

it: “to get into another person’s skin until you see things with his eyes, think things with his mind, and feel things with his feelings.” And this is exactly what God has done in Christ Jesus! “*He came in the likeness of men and was tempted in all points like as we, that He might be unto us an eternal and faithful and **merciful** High Priest Who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities*” (Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:15).

This is the mercy we have obtained through Christ. Generally, when we think of *showing mercy*, we mean it in a negative sense, that is, **not punishing** someone who deserves it—**not** giving them what they justly deserve, **not** being revengeful when it is expected. For example, one who has broken the law and is guilty, goes before the judge, and although he pleads guilty, he asks to be pardoned or to receive a light sentence: *He asks the court for **mercy***.

The Bible definition for *mercy* includes the idea of *forgiveness and kindness*. The OT **HESED** was usually translated *loving kindness* or *tender mercies* and referred to God’s love for His covenant people. Its NT counterpart is **AGAPE** which can be understood as “*love in action*.” This is what mercy is: **God’s love in action**, the *outgoing love of God*, and this is the mercy Jesus introduced to that Christless world. When we were ungodly, blasphemers, perpetrators of every evil deed, God’s mercy extended to us His loving forgiveness. It is

akin to *grace*, which is the unmerited, undeserved, *free gift* of God’s love, forgiveness, and salvation.

Paul said in Ephesians 2:8: “*For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast.*”

We didn’t deserve God’s forgiveness; if we did, then salvation would be a matter of works; it would be a debt that God owed us. No, Titus 3:5 clarifies, “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to **His mercy he saved us...***” According to His *outgoing love* that He commended toward us, while we were yet in our sins, through the cross of His Son.

We were out in the world of sin and sorrow, alienated from God by the wicked works of our mind which we served through our body of flesh, and the wages of our service to sin was death. But God in His great love and mercy, extended to us His gift, eternal life through Jesus Christ His Son!

Paul described in Ephesians 2:1-3 our previous state of being *dead* (spiritually separated from God) *in trespasses and sins*, at which time we were *the children of disobedience* controlled by the power and spirit of Satan. He said we were *by nature the children of wrath* which resulted in our fulfilling *the ungodly lusts of our minds and flesh*. This was our condition when God commended His love toward us:

“*But God, who is **rich in mercy**,*

for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened (made alive) us together with Christ,” (vv. 4–5).

You see, God not only loved us even when we were in a sinful, unloveable condition, but He expressed, He exhibited, *He put His love in action by hanging Jesus on the cross!* Not only did He **not give** us what **we deserved**, eternal death in hell, but He gave us what **we did not deserve**, His free gift of eternal life with Him!

Love in Action!

The **AGAPE** *love of God* is an active, positive force that seeks out the sinner where he is and draws him to the foot of the cross. Jesus, when defending His ministry to the Pharisees, declared, *“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance—I am come to seek and to save that which is lost”* (Lk. 18:10).

I am reminded of the testimony of the German theologian, Karl Barth, who told how Jesus had called him to Himself when he was in sin. He said that Jesus did not tiptoe up to the door of his heart a few times and whisper softly, “Let me come in,” but time after time, He came dragging His cross, and with the bloody end of His cross He kept beating and pounding at the closed door of his heart’s resistance, until finally, the door shattered, *and He came rushing in!*

Hallelujah! I can look back and recall so many times when He beat at the door of my heart, and I wouldn’t

let Him in. But the more I rejected Him, the more He beat at the door of my heart with His cross of love and mercy. His love kept beating at the door of my sinful heart until it gave way!

Calvary is God’s love in action. Love is active! Love is positive! He beheld us in our wretched plight of sin and all the consequences it brings, and not only loved us anyhow, but did something about it! He lifted us out of our despair and captivity.

When we could not benefit Him, but it would cost Him a very dear price, He did not turn away from us, but He said, “I will pay the price!” When He put just one soul on the scales of redemption, it plummeted to the bottom. And when He placed all of the silver and all of the gold to balance it, it did not move. He placed the whole world and put it on the scales, but it would not balance the debt of sin. But the songwriter said, *“When nothing else would help, love lifted me!”* God’s love manifested in the cross of Jesus *balanced the scales!*

You can understand why the final judgment of those who reject His Son will be so terrible in the end: They will have rejected and spurned the greatest manifestation of love ever displayed in the universe! No wonder John cried out, *“What manner—what kind of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God”* (1John 3:1).

How Much More?

We have seen through Paul's arguments that *God loved us when we were sinners!* Not only did He love us when we were sinners, but *He proved His love for us by paying the ultimate price to save us and make us His children.* Having established this, Paul went on to use a form of argument referred to as "the greater to the lesser" to further show that if He loved us with so great a love when we were ungodly sinners, now that we are His children, ***how much more will He love us and bless us?***

"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:9-10).

Now that God has done all this—did not withhold the very best—but has reconciled us to Himself through the cross of His Son, and has adopted us into His family, and made us His heirs and even joint-heirs with Christ, is He going to withhold any lesser thing? Is He going to spurn us or reject us now?

What Would He Now Withhold?

Oh, how this Book of Romans is so powerful in portraying the love of God to us even when we were yet sinners, and declaring our position of righteousness and acceptance now that we are saved by the blood of

Christ! No wonder the great patriot of the faith, *Martin Luther* declared that if he could only have *one book*, let it be the *Bible!* And if he could only have *one book* in the Bible, let it be the *Book of Romans.* And if he could only have *one chapter* in Romans, let it be the *eighth.* To this I would like to add: And if I could only have *one verse* in that chapter, let it be *verse 32:*

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

I believe this is the whole Bible in a nutshell. In this one little verse I learn that God had to make a choice between me and His Son. If I would have been God, that would have been easy: I would have chosen Jesus! He was the perfect Son Who came to be the perfect Servant. He always did those things that pleased His Father. In Him was no sin and no guile, and this is why He alone could become the perfect Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.

In essence, God said, "One of you will I draw unto My bosom and wipe your tears away, and upon the other I will pour out My wrath... One of you will receive My comfort and My salvation, My loving kindness and My tender mercies... And the other will I lead as a lamb to the slaughter and offer up as a sacrifice upon the cursed cross... Upon one of you My divine **AGAPE**-love will fall, and upon the other will fall My righteous judgments... To one I will turn

My face in love and grace, and to the other will I turn My back in rejection.”

And *whom* did He choose to show His favor? *Me!* And *You* and *You...!*

On Calvary God turned His back on the One of Whom He had testified: “*This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.*” I had never pleased God! My life was vile and unclean. I was a blasphemer and guilty of breaking every one of God’s righteous laws, but God chose to bestow His loving forgiveness and mercies on me, and to do so, He had to reject Jesus! He pushed Jesus away that He might draw me to His bosom of love! I am now only beginning to realize what it cost the Father to make me His son!—What it cost Jesus to pay the price for my reconciliation to the Father.

God did not spare, He did not withhold His own Son! But he delivered Him up for me! He delivered Him into the hands of the religious Jews; He delivered Him into the hands of the angry mob that cried out for His blood; He delivered Him into the hands of Pilate to be chastised without cause; He delivered Him into the hands of the cruel Roman soldiers; He offered Him up on the cross, only to turn His face from Him in His hour of sorrow, until He cried out, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Ps. 22:1; Mt. 27:46). This He did when I was unworthy of His love and guilty of His judgment.

How much more will He now freely give me all things? I mean, if He would do all this for me when I was a sinner, now that I have been made righteous in Christ, what is He going to do for me? Now our role has been reversed with Jesus’. When Jesus took our place on the cross, He became the sin-bearer of *our sins!* When God looked at Him and turned His face away from Jesus, it was because He could not look on *our sins!* Now when God looks at us, He doesn’t see our sins, but He sees the righteousness of Jesus! We are not righteous of ourselves, but our righteousness is in Christ:

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Cor. 1:30).

The Doctrine of Justification

When God looks at me, He sees the righteousness of Jesus. The doctrine of justification is the most powerful truth in the NT, and we need to understand the Greek words involved in order to understand this truth. First, we should know that even though the English translation gives the terms righteousness and justification two different meanings, this is not the case in the Greek. In the Greek text, *they both have the same meaning.*

The English meaning of *justification* is “to declare someone to be right by proving him to be right.” But the Bible doctrine of justification

teaches that God declares us to be righteous even though we were wrong and were guilty, and therefore He treats us and accepts us as though we had never sinned. Thus, to be *righteous is to be in a right standing with God.*

This is why we are acceptable in His sight and why He treats us as though we were right, and as long as we continue *“to walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with Him, and the blood of His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1John 1:7). His blood does not continue to cleanse us if we walk in darkness, but only as we walk in the light.

When we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus, we are just as righteous, just as sanctified and holy as He is! This may seem impossible, but this is what God’s Word says: *“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren”* (Heb. 2:11).

This is why the love of God is so incredible. God sees us in the same light that He sees His holy, beloved Son! Jesus is not ashamed to call His “brothers and sisters,” and God is not ashamed to call us His “sons and daughters (2Cor. 6:18).”

The Big Lie

Has the thought ever come to your mind, or has the enemy ever whispered in your ear: **“God doesn’t love you”**? I’m sure he has. We have all been attacked with this lie at some time in our Christian walk.

Now I want to ask you another question: Has the devil ever told you: **“God doesn’t love Jesus”**? Of course not! We would laugh at such a ludicrous thought. We know God loves Jesus! We know that Jesus is God’s *Beloved Son!*

Now I will remind you *“God has made us”—you and me—“accepted in the Beloved”* (Eph. 1:6). This means God loves us just as much as He loves His Beloved Son Jesus! So the next time the devil tells you the big lie, you know what to tell him!

We were not acceptable, but He made us to be, because of what Christ has done in becoming our righteousness. People who state that they have given up so much to come to Jesus have been deceived. I didn’t give up anything but my sins, heartaches, griefs, sorrows, sicknesses, diseases, fear, and *Hell!* All of these Jesus nailed to His cross! (Col. 2:14).

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4-5).

How much does God love you and me? He loved us so much, He smote His Son and *“laid upon him the iniquity of us all”* (verse 6). The Hebrew term for *iniquity* is very significant, because it not only refers to *“the depraved action, the sin, the crime, the guilt,”* but also includes

“the punishment and the penalty, the suffering and the misery” such action brings. God not only laid upon Jesus our sins and guilt, but the *consequences* of that sin. Both the totality of the deed and the consequences are dealt with in this verse. Sin and the results of sin were very closely associated in OT theology. How much more beautiful then is the praise of David in Psalm 103:2-3: *“Bless the Lord...Who forgives all thine iniquities...”*

How much did Jesus love you and me? He loved us so much, when they mocked Him and scorned Him, beat Him, and demanded Him to defend Himself, *“He opened not His mouth”* (verse 7).

Having won the battle of His self-will in Gethsemane to drink the cup of sufferings and death, He did not resist His tormentors, but He set His face toward the cross. Paul declared in Hebrews 12:2-3, that there was something that made Him endure the cross:

“...Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

The thing that caused Jesus to endure the cross, even though He despised its shame, the stumbling-block and reproach it was to the

world of that day, *was the joy of redeeming those who would believe on His sacrifice!* It was to become the ultimate expression of God’s divine love for a fallen creation that He desired to reconcile to Himself at any cost. Now that we have been reconciled to the Father and placed in the family of God as His rightful heirs, with the full privileges of His legal sons and daughters together with Christ, *how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things!* (Romans 8:32).

As it is written: *“No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11)—those who have been declared righteous in Christ Jesus!

Beloved, my fervent prayer for you today is that of Paul to the Ephesians: *“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, length, depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge...”* (Ephesians 3:18-19).

For someone who does not know Jesus as your Savior: You can receive His gift of salvation right now. You probably already realize that you are a sinner. God’s Word says, *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). It also says, *“The wages of sin is death...”* This means to be eternally separated from God. The good news is: *“...But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus*

Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

The gift of salvation has been given. You must receive it today. The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved*” (Acts 16:31). Believing takes place in the heart, but then you must confess with your mouth what you believe in your heart:

“That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God hath raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10).

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1John 1:8-9).