

16 December

Advent 2018



*"I will heal their apostasy;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned
from them."*

— Hos. 14:4

—THE BIBLICAL THEMES OF ADVENT—

“LOVE: OF THE FATHER’S LOVE BEGOTTEN”

Introduction: The true meaning of Christmas?

- During this time of year, there is renewed emphasis on the importance on loving others.
 - ⇒ In relation to others in general, it tends to be associated with _____ - _____ or _____.
 - ⇒ In relation to family and friends, it tends to be associated with _____ of love as well as acts of _____.
- For many, the ‘love’ emphasized during the holidays is for its own sake, lacking a true foundation or basis.
 - ⇒ The danger in this kind of love is that there is nothing that guards us from our own _____ tendencies or compels us to give in a truly _____ way.

Key Point: *Biblically speaking, love must be understood both in terms of who God _____ and the specific _____ of love He undertakes on behalf of His people.*

A Theological Understanding of Love

1. Love is one of God’s *attributes*.

1 John 4:8b—...God is *love*.

2. This is possible because God is *triune*.

John 17:24— Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you *loved* me before the foundation of the world.

John 14:31—...I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I *love* the Father.

3. This attribute is *communicable*, meaning that mankind is also able to love because we bear God’s image.

Matt. 22:37-39—³⁷ 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. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall *love* your neighbor as yourself.

4. Because of sin, the love of man does not *consistently* mirror the way God loves.

Key Point: The people of God should desire that their love would properly _____ who God is.

The Biblical Terminology of Love

אהב (ä·hav’) — To have affection for (romantic or otherwise). A passionate feeling which impels action.

(1) **AHAV** is used primarily of love on a human level, both non-religious (Gen. 22:1) and religious (Deut. 6:4-6).

(2) **AHAV** is also used occasionally of God’s love for His people.

Hos. 3:1—And the LORD said to me, “Go again, *love* a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD *loves* the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.”

חַסֵּד (kheh’·sed) — Zeal towards another, love; benevolence, kindness, mercy, pity.

(1) **CHESED** refers to God’s covenant faithfulness to His people.

2 Chron. 6:14—“O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing *steadfast love* to your servants who walk before you with all their heart,

(2) **CHESED** is associated with God’s redemptive acts of mercy towards His people.

Exod. 15:13a—“You have led in your *steadfast love* the people whom you have redeemed

Hos. 2:19—And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in *steadfast love* and in mercy.

Key Point: God’s love for His people is not utterly dispassionate, however, it is shown in _____ acts of redemption that He plans, promises, and then accomplishes on their behalf.

ἀγαπάω (agapaō) — To have a warm regard for and interest in another, cherish, have affection for, love. In both the LXX and the NT, this term is employed to describe the love of God for His people as well as the type of love they should have for one another.

Rom. 8:37—No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who *loved* us.

Eph. 5:25—Husbands, *love* your wives, as Christ *loved* the church and gave himself up for her

- **The use of *AGAPE* in both the LXX and NT served to draw a contrast between the biblical conception of love and that of the Greco-Roman which was often referred to using the word *EROS*.**

“*EROS* is a general love of the world seeking satisfaction wherever it can. *AGAPE* is a love which makes distinctions, choosing and keeping its object. *EROS* is determined by a more-or-less indefinite impulsion towards its object. *AGAPE* is a free and decisive act determined by its subject. *EROS*, in its highest sense, is used of the upward impulsion of man, of his love for the divine. *AGAPE* relates for the most part to the love of God, to the love of the higher lifting up the lower, elevating the lower above others. *EROS* seeks in others the fulfillment of its own life's hunger. *AGAPE* must often be translated to show love; it is a given, active love on the others behalf.”

—*Erdmans Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

Key Point: A proper understanding of God's love from Scripture helps to _____ the selfish impulses which mankind is prone to interpret as genuine love.

Peace on Earth & Mercy Mild

The songs of both Mary and Zechariah (Zacharias) recognize that the events surrounding the birth of Jesus were occurring in accordance with the steadfast love and mercy of God which were described throughout the OT.

The Magnificat—Mary's Song

Luke 1:50-55—⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty, ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

The Benedictus—Zechariah's Song

Luke 1:68-71—⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;

Luke 1:76-79—⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Key Point: God had not removed His love from His people, but had instead purposed to demonstrate that love and mercy in its fullness by coming to _____ redeem His people.

The Personal Display of God's Love

1. **Throughout Jesus' life, it was affirmed repeatedly that He was the ‘_____ Son.’**

Matt. 3:16-17—¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is *my beloved Son*, with whom I am well pleased.”

Mark 9:7-8—⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is *my beloved Son*; listen to him.” ⁸ And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

2. **The love of God was demonstrated in the giving of the Son and His _____ on behalf of God's people.**

John 3:16—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.

3. **The work of the Son in the lives of God's people _____ how they are to love others.**

Matt. 5:44-45a—⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall *love* your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, ‘*Love* your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,’ ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

1 John 4:7—Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Questions for Reflection:

1. In what ways am I prone to ‘love’ in selfish ways? What do I need to repent of in this area?
2. In what ways can I show love that is self-sacrificial and deliberate this Christmas?