

SABBATH THOUGHT 2024-03-02—GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Protestants, generally speaking, have an aversion to God's Law. That is somewhat of a mystery to me because laws allow and benefit all manner of relationships among people as well as with God. So, if they reject the Law that defines our relationship with God, what is left? A skewed understanding of agape love (most of the time they talk in terms of human love rather than agape). But the Bible clearly says that God has rules of behavior required of people if they want a relationship with Him. In contrast, since their beginnings in the early 1900s, the COGs rejected the Protestants who exclude God's Law but, in doing so, they also relegated agape love as secondary to the Law to avoid sounding like the Protestants.

But both the Law and agape love are the foundation of The Way to The Life¹ established by God the Father and Jesus Christ. They cannot be separated—the Law defines behavior that leads to agape love. And that total perspective is the heart and soul of the Sabbath Thought writings.

However, there is a question that is common to both the Protestants as well as those who have had a connection with the COGs. Both certainly acknowledge that God loves mankind who are His creation of flesh and blood beings made in His image. This is clear by the sacrifice of God's Son at His own hands²:

JOHN 3:16 “For God so [lit. ‘in this way’] loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him [*Jesus Christ*] should not perish but have everlasting life.

All know this, at least intellectually or maybe in terms of the wider Body of Christ. However, many find it difficult to believe that God loves them PERSONALLY. There are many reasons for this but some arise from problems during childhood—difficult parents (especially fathers), not having one or both parents, abuse, etc. I have personally seen the impact—there were 27 foster kids that came through my door over time many years ago.

But I think there is another reason that makes it difficult to believe God personally loves us. Actually, I would guess it affects everyone from time to time if we are honest with ourselves but, for some, it is something they struggle with every day. And that problem is sin—whether it is sin that happens on occasion, a habitual sin, or just the fact that ALL have sinned and are imperfect before God. Basically, the problem is accepting that God loves us in our less-than-perfect state.

The solution to sin is sorrowful repentance—faith that the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ covers sin, which God then promises to forgive sin. Obviously that applies to

¹ John 14:6.

² For more information, refer to the 2023-03-11 Sabbath Thought [Who Killed Christ?](#)

the occasional sin, but what about habitual sin? How often does God forgive true repentance? Would God forgive less than He requires of us?

MATTHEW 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to **seventy times seven**.

Jesus answer to Peter’s question about forgiving a brother was an unimaginable 490 times. Is it even possible to sin against one person that many times? Would God the Father limit Himself to a lesser extent. Or is He a God of immeasurable grace and mercy who wipes away the tears of those who repent and will do so until the Kingdom comes? I believe you know the answer but, regardless of the reason for anyone doubting God’s personal love, the Bible proves that He does—and it started when you were CALLED:

ROMANS 1:5-7 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, 6 among whom **you also are the called** of Jesus Christ; 7 To all who are in Rome [*insert your town here*], **beloved of God, called to be saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren **beloved by the Lord**, because **God from the beginning chose you** for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

1 JOHN 3:1 Behold **what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us**, that we should **be called** children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

If we were enemies before our calling wherein God loved us enough to sacrifice His Son, consider how great His love is AFTER repentance, which honors Him THROUGH that sacrifice! One problem, though, is that we have never seen or heard His voice. Unlike a human family, we cannot hear His voice directly nor see His expressions when He gazes upon us. John, perhaps more than all the other apostles, understood the agape love of our heavenly Father. Notice what he said about God’s love for each of those He calls:

1 JOHN 4:12-16 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And **we have [come to know] and [come to believe] the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.**

I corrected verse 16 according to the Greek because it is *perfect indicative active*, meaning it applies a *past* action that has become the *present* state of things. In

other words, God's love for us started in the past and continues today so, to "come to know and come to believe the love that God has for us" takes time. And that is why our calling is the first proof. It caused us to recognize the depths of the sacrifice God the Father and Jesus Christ made for us, which leads to true, sorrowful repentance. And that is the true miracle—God showed us His love WHEN He CALLED us! Everyone who is baptized experienced that tremendous moment—God forgave our sins and begat us with His seed of a spiritual birth! He literally changed us from enemies to His children by calling us, which was an act of love.

That calling then led to baptism where ALL sins perish in a watery grave—we literally 'DIE to sin'³ and become a 'NEW creation.'⁴ But it can be hard to believe God's love has continued without ceasing from the time of our baptism; after all, we have sinned since that day. It seems impossible at times to avoid it. But that is exactly why God is doing a WORK in us:

HEBREWS 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 **make you complete** in every good work to do His will, **working in you what is well pleasing in His sight**, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 for **it is God who works in you** both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:6 And there are diversities of activities, but **it is the same God who works all in all**.

If baptism made anyone perfect, then why is God WORKING in us? If nothing is impossible for the Almighty God⁵, then how can anyone think God will FAIL you? But then again, He knew before He called you what would be required to bring you into His family. He loves us so much "that He who has begun a good work in you **will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ**." (Phil. 1:6). Now, that is an interesting phrase—"will complete it." It is *future indicative active* meaning God *will complete* His work but at the same time God *will BE completing* His work in us. In other words, His calling of you not only is proof of His love but also it was the beginning of His work in you. And whatsoever God does, it is guaranteed to be completed.

If you still have doubts that God loves you personally, then read the prayer of Paul. He actually got down on his knees and prayed for all of God's children to truly come to understand His love for us *personally*:

EPHESIANS 3:14-21 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom **the whole family** in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He

³ Rom. 6.

⁴ Col. 3:1-3, 10.

⁵ Luke 1:37.

[the Father] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that **you, being rooted and grounded in love,** 18 **may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height**– 19 **to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God [His agape love].** 20 Now to **Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,** according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him *be* glory in the *ekklesia* by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Paul did not pray just for the Ephesians; he starts by mentioning the WHOLE family of God the Father. He then prays that ALL the saints become “rooted and grounded in [God’s agape] love.” He goes on to ask God to help “ALL the saints” come to “comprehend” (lit. *seize* or *possess*) the depths of Christ’s love and the fullness of Himself. What is the “fullness of God?” God IS love so His fullness is agape love! Paul concludes by reminding us that God’s abundance EXCEEDS ALL that we ask or think! If Paul prayed all this for YOU, do you think God ignored this supplication of His greatest apostle⁶? How great is God’s love? Paul tries to describe it in several scriptures but, perhaps, his best words are found in his epistle to the Romans:

ROMANS 8:35-39 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” 37 Yet in all these things we [more than conquer] through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

God’s children will “MORE than conquer” through God’s love for us because NOTHING can separate us from His love. NOT. ONE. THING. Not the sins we struggle against, not the trials and sufferings of this physical life, and certainly not anyone who tries to destroy us. “What then shall we say to these things? [Do you still doubt God’s love for you?] **If God is for us, who can be against us?**” (Rom. 8: 31).

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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⁶ 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 11:23-28.