

# Behold what manner of love

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[ 0 : 00 ] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let us for a little time turn to the portion of the word we read, the first epistle of John, chapter 3, and read again verse 1.

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[ 1 : 31 ] 5. 5. 5. 5. 6. 6. 6. 7. 7. 6.

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14. 14. 15. 15. 15. 16. 15. 16. 16. 17.

[ 2 : 26 ] 17. 18. 16. 16. 17. God, the children of God and ask what they were and then think a little of this love that is spoken of, the love that was in operation in the change that took place in the lives of those who are now the children of God and then we ask what they are now and finally a little word on what they ought to be, how their love to the one who so loved them can be displayed. First of all then, what were they? The modern idea as we all know is that that Jesus when he spoke to his disciples of your heavenly father taught the universal fatherhood of God.

The idea that we are all children of God is no doubt a very pleasant one and comforting for many people but it finds no place in the Bible and what it means of course is that nobody needs to seek God. Nobody needs to be converted because nobody is lost because nobody is without Christ having no hope and without God in the only gospel that is needed according to them is the social gospel and all that is required is a call to make the world a better place for the children of God to live in. Now this is soul destroying teaching. Yes and that is what people are being given in our day. A message that stifles the the preaching of conversion and does nothing for soul for souls in trouble except misdirect them. Now the Bible nowhere teaches that men by nature are children of God. what it does say is something very different. Namely that we are all the by nature the children of wrath even as others. That's what they were then and that's what they who are called the sons of God the children of God are the sons of God.

are willing to acknowledge. They were the children of wrath even as others. They were the heirs of hell.

the wages of sin the wages of sin is death. The wicked shall be turned into hell.

[ 6 : 53 ] they had no portion with the Lord's people. They had no portion with the Lord's people but they were liable to eternal misery. They were spiritually dead. Destitute of spiritual life and energy. Dead in trespasses and sins.

they were the children of sin. Can such as these become children of God. Rational creatures who have broken God's law. Whose nature is corrupt in his sight. Can they?

those who merit those who merit those who merit only condemnation and final banishment from his presence.

can they? can they become children of God. they become children of God. Yes. For such were all those who can now call God Abba Father.

It is amazing that God should love sinners. sinners. And yet it is true. God loves creatures who have become unlovely and one would have thought unlovely.

[ 8 : 39 ] that that is what they were.

they were enemies to God. and they were children of wrath. even as others. they were they were they were they were now John speaks about the love that has been bestowed on them of whom

these things were true.

the love of God. the the theologians or some of them at any rate say that this is the most wonderful and interesting subject in all theology and I'm sure we would not argue with that opinion.

the most wonderful and interesting subject in all theology. the love of God. Now the believer loves to dwell on this subject.

although most of us realize when we do meditate upon it in our own hearts that we that we can understand very very little about it and yet we cannot but think about it.

[ 10 : 20 ] it is so real so personal to those who are now children of God so passionate in their lives.

Roland Hill once said God loved me I cannot tell why. And it was the same man who was one day endeavoring to convey to his people some idea of his his own conceptions of the love of God and suddenly he stopped and he cried out but I am unable to reach this lofty theme.

and yet I do not think that the smallest fish that swims in the boundless ocean ever complains about the immeasurable vastness of the deep.

And he said so it is with myself I can plunge he said with my puny capacity into a subject the greatness of which I shall never be able fully to understand.

And so we come to a subject like this in just that way we trust. It's good to think about it and try to learn a little more while recognizing that it is far to ourselves.

[ 12 : 03 ] Now we should say at the outset that it is not the death of Jesus Christ which moved the Father's heart to love us.

The truth is that the love of the Father is the reason why Jesus was given.

And John's words impressed that upon us. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.

this is love that was in operation before the foundation of the world. As the apostle says according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.

That we should be holy and without blame before him. It's an ancient love. It's not a love that was first bestowed upon you when you became conscious of it.

[ 13 : 21 ] No, God loved from eternity. The Lord, said Jeremiah, hath appeared of old unto me saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

And this is love that is sovereign. for we must never forget that God was under no obligation to love any of us.

He wasn't dependent upon us for the increase of his happiness for the enlargement of his bliss.

God as a sovereign God, an offended sovereign, he might have consumed us in his anger.

But the apostle says, God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.

[ 14 : 38 ] for by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Now, when we love one another we we know that that love is awakened by something in the other other passion.

The one on whom our love is to be bestowed throughout our love to him or her.

Something in that passion awakened our love for that passion. But God's love is not like that.

It is sovereign love. It is free, it is spontaneous, it is not caused by anything outside of himself.

[ 15 : 46 ] God loves men because he has chosen to love them. And no reason for his love can be given save save his own sovereign good pleasure.

Now, this love that is spoken of here is displayed most wondrously in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Flavelle puts it like this, all other measures are as nothing in comparison with the love of God in giving his son to be our savior.

They are all, he said, swallowed up in this as the light of candles when it is brought, when the candles are brought into the sunshine.

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.

[ 17 : 02 ] And as John puts it here in the fourth chapter, in this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him.

Here in his love not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Now the believer finds in the cross of Christ assurance that he as an individual is beloved of God. The son of God said Paul loved me and he gave himself for me. and the greatness of this love is seen in the in the dignity and the glory of Christ Jesus the great gift of God oh think who Christ is he who in the beginning was with God he who was God he by whom all things were made he who is described as rich now what did he do he became poor that you through his poverty might be rich truly the love of God was expressed in this the gift of his son his only begotten son now among ourselves we may we measure love by how much it gives someone who gives a great deal to someone else they said well to love that person very much he shows his love to the person by giving much and can't we measure the love of God in just that way in what it has given that God the Father gave his son his only son to be made man to die for sins and so to become the one mediator who can bring us to God no wonder Paul speaks of this love as great a love that passes knowledge he argues that that this supreme gift is itself the guarantee of every other gift he who spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all how shall he not with him also freely give us all things all things God commends his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners [ 20 : 18 ] Christ died for us now had God loved the saints those who did love him we might well say what love that was if God had taken the holy angels closer to himself what wondrous love that would be but when he well we can put it this way when he raised beggars from the downhill and this by such a wonderful plan of mercy as the incarnation and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ who can ever estimate or calculate the extent of such love love and such grace the love of God and this is unchangeable and everlasting love the love between people in this world can indeed be strong and yet circumstances can bring about a change in in Isaiah 49 we read can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb and the question you feel calls out for the answer no never but God says yes she may but my love for you is stronger than that yea they may forget yet yet will I not forget thee earthly parents are sometimes so unnatural as to forget their own child but

God says that such unworthy thoughts must not be entertained of him and to those who may be afraid that they passed out of his sight there is his own precious promise in that same passage in the book of Isaiah behold I have graven thee on the palms of my hands oh let us let us rejoice that that is our promise that is never out of date never out of date and that it is spoken to ourselves to ourselves now just as surely as it was to the the people of God who suffered and wept in Babylon long long ago the love of God and let us seek to dwell much upon it upon the love of God I heard someone say not long ago that that at the end of his ministry Dr. Macdonald Ferrantosh said that he he regretted nothing so much as that he did not speak more of the love of God in his ministry well Macdonald spoke a great deal about this love and yet that is the way that he felt now what are they who were children of wrath well the the the present condition of a believer notwithstanding its imperfection is a state of much honor friends what is it to be a son of the greatest worldly ruler compared to being a son of the most high the believer believer can boast a higher descent than the proudest king who ever filled a throne nor is it an empty boast it's not an empty boast for all who are the children of God are partakers of his nature by the work of his sons of

God now this high title belongs only to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in the first chapter of John's Gospel we learn that that men do not become sons of God by being naturally descended from this or that father no nor by having that title conferred upon them by men like themselves but by God's granting them that privilege through faith and friends it is not something to be taken for granted it is through the grace of God through the grace of God and it ought to fill our souls with wonder like the wonder to which

John here gives expression what manner of love has been bestowed upon such as you and I that we should be called the children of God children of God people united to Christ in the nearest and tenderest relationship he is the firstborn among many brethren he is not ashamed to call them brethren no this elder brother is their representative their husband their head he he dwells in their hearts by faith and he ever lives in heaven to intercede for them sons of God daughters of God heirs of God and joint heirs with

[ 28 : 05 ] Christ now that is to reach the highest eminence chosen generation a royal priesthood and holy nation a peculiar people unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and made us kings and priests unto God and his father heirs of salvation salvation heirs heirs of eternal life of the grace of life of righteousness heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to

them who love him the the the expectation of the believer cannot at present be fully described it cannot be imagined and

John makes the point here it doth not yet appear what we shall be but oh what a prospect it is dr john duncan heard a sermon on the kingdom of heaven one day and in that sermon the blessings of the new covenant were likened to a market a market in which a man could buy everything needed for eternal life and at the close of the service he met dr moody steward and he said to him when when i heard when i heard of the good things that were offered in the market i said to myself i will marry the merchant and they will all be mine and while the believer cannot know in detail what what he what will yet be his he may adopt that attitude he it may be said has married the merchant and all the good things in the market are his and a great deal more is to follow they are children of God and in life or death in time or eternity they are secure they are blessed yes they are children of God even though the enemy of their souls may sometimes have whispered doubts about their standing they change man changes but God's love is unchangeable the word says that it is strong as death many waters cannot quench it nothing can separate from it those whom it has once embraced and the believer can apply to himself that precious promise that all things work together for good to them who love God Luther was was once asked do you feel this morning that you are a child of God and he answered

I cannot say that I do but I know that I am ah what a difference that makes knowing not feeling perhaps but knowing certainly and so even when the believer cannot perhaps see the reasons for God's dealings with him he may know that in those dealings and behind those dealings which may seem very harsh to him there is love there is love there is love and this being so he can rejoice always even when things humanly speaking are going wrong John says therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not the sons of God and the world are so different that the world knoweth us not and the reason for this is that it knew him not which

I surely must refer here to the Lord Jesus Christ now the question that is vital for ourselves as individuals tonight as every other night or day is am am I a child of God well friends we believe we do believe that there is love in the heart of everyone who has been turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan and to God and if one is without love to God in his soul though that passion bestow all his goods to feed the poor though he give his body to be burned his spot is not the spot of

[ 34 : 35 ] God's children be sure of this whosoever is born of God loves God now this love for God or to God is not something that we can work up in our own hearts no it is simply the love of God reciprocated we love him because he first loved us he first loved us and you are perhaps here tonight who are sorrowing over the faintness of your love and wondering if there is any love there at all well isn't it a good mark there's no smoke without a fire the the doubts and the fears may we believe rightly be considered as tokens for good not that any of us should be happy to have doubts and fears in this matter this matter are you saying tonight as one of the poets said

Lord it is my chief complaint that my love is weak and faint yet I love thee and adore oh for grace to love thee more Paul says for the love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge that if one died for all then were all dead and that he died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him who died for them and rose again and the believer looks at the the depth of the misery from which the love of God has drawn and looks to the dignity and the blessedness to which that love has raised and his heart is touched and it's filled with gratitude to God for his love to him as an individual how then are we to display our love well we are to do that by showing concern and effort to advance

Christ's kingdom in the world and by making sacrifices when necessary remember the self-denial of Paul but none of these things move me neither count am I life dear unto myself that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry that I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God O love is to be displayed by loving the things which God loves holiness and God's house and God's day and God's work and God's people communion with God communion with God yes and by boldly professing Christ before the world for we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for we know that it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes and friends open confession open confession is a most important duty

Christ requires it of his children and more than that we believe that it is needful to the completeness and the healthiness of the Christian life Jesus said whosoever shall confess me before men him shall the son of man confess before the angels of God but he who denies me and that in in the

context means I believe he who does not confess me before men he shall be denied before the angels of God now if you have love to Christ see that you profess it see that you make use of this means of grace love is an evidence of grace if you have love in your heart for the Lord there is evidence or you may not feel it to your comfort tonight but nevertheless evidence indisputable on scriptural grounds of your being born again and of your being loved by the Lord himself love is an evidence of grace you wouldn't love him if he hadn't done something for you something for you now on the on the eve of a communion sabbath we we believe that the Lord's people would say that they have no doubt whatever that they are not what they ought to be they have no doubt whatever that they are not what they could be or what they would like to be and yet they will say that they are not what they were there is there is a newness towards God the command is played do this in remembrance in remembrance of me it is the Lord who is remembered in his sacrament and this friends is the command of the king himself the command of the king it is a serious matter to be disobedient to a plain command the one the one whom we profess to love as our Lord and our Saviour may God help us then if we are his to show that we are his and to love to show our love to him that we are concerned for his glory at his table on the morrow let us pray let us pray gracious God we thank thee for thy great love to us in Christ and we pray that those who are thine will delight in showing whose they are and whom they wish to serve bless us and prepare us oh prepare our hearts for thy day what need we have to be prepared by thee remember each of us watch over us through the night and bless our loved ones at home or away from home oh remember us with that love which thou to thine dost bear and pardon us our sins for Jesus sake amen