

God is Love

In his First Letter John writes, *"God is love,"* (1 John 4:8, 16). In the first place, the Father loves the Son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 3:35). The Son loves the Father (John 14:31). Not only does love exist within the Trinity, God also exhibits love toward the world. God's love shows itself in His providing creation with what it needs to survive. Psalm 136 tells us that the Lord *"gives food to every creature,"* (v. 25). His love showed itself in the highest way by sending His Son to save us. Perhaps the most well-known verse which states this is John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life."*

The love God has for us is not in any way based on anything in us. Because God is love, He loves us with a love that goes beyond all comprehension. His love for us moves us, in turn, to love our neighbour. Only when our hearts have been warmed and changed by His love for us, can we show love to others. Indeed, the more we become aware of the love God has showed us, the more motivation we have to show love to other people. The waters of the Dead Sea are unfit to drink and useless for irrigation because water only flows in; nothing flows out. In the same way, love needs to keep moving, or we will stagnate. If we love one another, says John, God's love is made complete, that is, we fulfil His loving purpose and continue the chain reaction. Love stimulates more love, and in this way hatred is melted, wounds are healed, grudges are forgotten, grievances forgiven, hope shared, emptiness filled, and loneliness eased in human hearts.

God's love is also related to His kindness (Titus 3:4), mercy and compassion (God's love as moved by man's misery - Titus 3:5; Matthew 14:14), His grace (God's love in its efforts to save mankind from sin - Titus 3:7), and His forbearance or longsuffering (God's love as it puts off punishment and extends the time of grace - Romans 2:4).

It should also be noted that God remains love while He condemns people for their sins. God could not sweep sin under the rug and ignore it. He could not make it go away by an almighty decree, for that would contradict His holiness, righteousness, and justice. But God's love found a way to satisfy His justice: He gave His only Son into death for us. Thus, God could declare us not guilty because His Son was condemned in our place.

Praise God that He is love! If He dealt with us as we deserved, we would perish eternally. Because God is love, His Son redeemed us from our sin and we have the assurance of eternal life. We also have the same assurance the Apostle Paul had when he said, *"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, for those whom He has called according to His purpose,"* (Rom. 8:28).

We can and should rest assured that everything involving our salvation has been taken care of by a gracious God who is love. From eternity He has been active in our salvation, and as a result of the love and mercy He has for us, one day He will call us from the miseries of this world into His heavenly kingdom.