

# OpenTheo

## The Love of God



### Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In a recent discourse, Steve Gregg expounded on the multidimensional love of God, as depicted in both the Old and New Testaments. He emphasized that God's love is unwarranted, sovereign, committed, and demanding. While we may sometimes struggle with obedience to God's commands, understanding and embracing His committed, jealous love is essential for living a fulfilling life and experiencing eternal happiness and fulfillment. Gregg maintains that this love is contagious and inspires us to love God and others.

### Transcript

Please turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 7. I'd like to read verses 7 through 11. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples. But because the Lord loves you and because He would keep His oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments. And He repays those who hate Him to their face to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him.

He will repay him to His face. Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you to observe them. Is the God of the Old Testament really a God of love? It's a very common thing for people to think of the God of the New Testament as a God of love, but the God of the Old Testament seems different, more difficult to get along with.

He has a short fuse. He's peevish. He's picky.

I mean, a guy just touches the ark and drops dead. And the guy had good intentions in touching it. I mean, what kind of God is this? Is this a God of love? This God who tells them to get out and annihilate all the Canaanites, men, women, and children.

This God who floods the whole earth to wipe out everybody, men, women, and children, except for a handful of people. Is this a God of love? And yet in the New Testament, there's no doubt that the New Testament affirms the love of God and demonstrates the love of God in Christ. And that is a clear emphasis of the New Testament.

But is the God of the Old Testament a God of love? This is something many people wonder. The answer is, of course, yes, He is a God of love. There are as many or more affirmations of the love of God in the Old Testament, including the passage we just read in Deuteronomy, as you will find in the New Testament.

The only reason any doubt arises about this is because as you read through the Old Testament, you find far more instances there than in the New Testament of God exhibiting anger and executing wrath on people who do wrong. I think the principal reason we have more such cases in the Old Testament is because the Old Testament covers far more history than the New. From the first chapter of the New Testament to the last, there are probably not more than 70 years covered.

In the Old Testament, there's a good 4,000 years covered, and in that number of years, there were more instances where God had to take matters in hand to judge wicked people, societies, and individuals that were going in a direction that was very damaging to those surrounding them and had to take them out. But in the New Testament, we find the same disposition to judge in the God of the New Testament. In the book of Revelation, we read of the wrath of the Lamb.

That's Jesus. The wrath of Jesus. We read in Mark chapter 3 that Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth looked upon the Pharisees, it says He looked upon them with wrath, being grieved, or with anger, it says, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts.

We see what looks like Jesus getting angry, although it doesn't use the word anger in the text, when He drives out the money changers of the temple, or when He denounces the scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew 23, which doesn't sound like a very gentle treatment of them. In the book of Revelation, we find Jesus addressing seven churches, and five of them He has to call to repentance with great threats of judgment that He will bring upon them if they do not repent. So even though we have far less historical time treated in the New Testament than in the Old, and therefore we have fewer instances of God's anger in the New than in the Old, it's only a matter of quantity of instances.

But the God of the Old Testament is a God who is, as it says in Psalm 103, slow to wrath and plenteous in mercy. He is a God who has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. He is like a father who pities his children, so the Lord in the Old Testament pities them that fear Him.

He is the same God revealed in Christ, and therefore I want to make it clear that when we talk about the love of God, we're not simply talking about a phenomenon that we see

in the New Testament. It's the God that has revealed Himself from the first page to the last of the Bible, whose love we're talking about here. Does the Father really love us, or is it Jesus who loves us? Now that shouldn't really be a problem for us to answer if we've been Christians much time, but there are Christians who do seem to have more difficulty seeing the Father as a God of love than seeing Jesus as a God of love.

In fact, I've known many who quite obviously feel more comfortable approaching Jesus, addressing Jesus in prayer, and so forth, than they feel about approaching the Father or addressing the Father. There are some who feel awkward, apparently, around the Father, but not around Jesus. Jesus seems like our friend.

The Father seems maybe more unpredictable, and that is how some people perceive it, that Jesus is the one who loves us, and the Father is the one who Jesus had to protect us from. The Bible says it was God who so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son. It was the Father whose love was demonstrated in Christ's coming.

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He sent His only begotten Son to be the Savior of the world, it says in 1 John. The Father's love is manifest to us by His sending of Jesus. So, we need to get those things clear at the beginning.

Certainly, the God of the Old Testament, the Father, as we might speak of Him in the New Testament, is every bit the God of love that Jesus is in the New Testament. God does not change. In fact, it's because God does not change, He says in Malachi, that we are not consumed, because He is a God who keeps His promises, and if He ever loved you, He'll always love you.

The fact that you are loved by God means that you will be loved until the day you die, and beyond that as well, because nothing can separate us from the love of God. What then is this love of God like? We need to understand it, because in many cases, if a preacher says, I'm going to preach a sermon on the love of God, we get ready to have a feel-good kind of warm fuzzy message about how much we're loved by God. Well, we are loved by God, and that's what I want to talk about, but it's not exactly a warm fuzzy message.

It's based on this text. The love of God is mentioned, of course, in the first of these verses, verse 7, Deuteronomy 7, 7, and expanded on through the passage that we read. I'd like to identify four things.

They are important for us to understand. If we're going to relate to God, we need to understand the love of God, and very importantly, we need to not misunderstand the love of God, because there are many who think of God's love rendering Him to be a sort of a non-judgmental, grandfatherly type, who says, well, boys will be boys, and aren't they cute when they do wrong? God obviously does not reveal His love that way here, nor in the New Testament does He. The love of God is, we could say, of sterner stuff than

many people have thought, but it is every bit as gracious as anyone has ever imagined.

It is simply the case that it is a multi-dimensional love, and if we do not take full consideration of all dimensions of His love, we are likely to misapprehend it and then relate with Him incorrectly. The first thing I'd like to point out about the love of God in this passage is that which is brought out in verses 7 and 8. The Lord did not set His love on you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any other people, for you were in the least of all peoples, but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep His oath, which He swore to your fathers, the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and so forth. Why does God love you? Well, He said, you want to know why I love you? I'll tell you why I love you.

I love you because, well, because I love you. That's what He says. That's all there is that can be said about it.

He loved you because there was very little else He could do because of who He is. It is His nature to love you. It is, therefore, as we could say for our first point, it is, the love of God is an unwarranted love.

It is not warranted by our loveliness or lovable-ness, by our deservingness, by our performance. He does not love us because we perform better than others. He does not love us because we're more talented or intelligent or, in any sense, more righteous than others.

After all, why should He credit any of those things to us? We're the ones who make the mistake of crediting those things to us. All those things are things He gave us unilaterally. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4.7, he says, what makes you to differ from another? And what do you have that you've not received? And if you've received it, why do you glory as if you had not received it? Obviously, anything that sets you or me apart from anyone else out there that might make us flatter ourselves that we are more lovable or more worthy of God's attention and mercy and blessings and so forth than others, whatever those things we are that we are considering to accrue to us in that category are things that He has given us, if they exist at all, if we're not simply delusional about ourselves, if there is indeed anything about us that is an improvement over what we used to be or what other people still are, that improvement is all of God.

There is no way, there's no possible way that God could have loved us because of factor X in us, because factor X doesn't exist in us for the most part. And if it did, God put it there. And so, His love for us is unwarranted.

And that should be encouraging, because it means that if He has ever loved you, He loved you independently of anything that can be said positively about yourself. And that would mean, of course, no matter how few things can be said about you positively, it doesn't change the question of whether He loves you or not. His love is, we could say,

sovereign.

His love is unwarranted. So His love is an unwarranted or sovereign love. No one twisted His arm to force Him or to convince Him to love us.

He loved us because He loved us, because He wanted to love us, because that was basically what He's all about. God is love. And so, God's love for us does not wax and wane, increase and decrease according to our behavior.

His love for us is constant. Now, His treatment of us, I believe, the Bible indicates His treatment of us. And what He gives us in many cases is very much affected by things we do.

But His love for us is unchanging because it is unwarranted. We see that in the New Testament stated probably nowhere more clearly than in Romans 5, verses 6 through 8. It says, "...for when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.

Yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." That's a New Testament declaration of the unwarrantedness of God's love for us. And while that does not mean that there is nothing we can do to put ourselves on bad terms with God, and I do believe the Bible makes very clear there's many things that men can do and women can do to put themselves on bad terms with God, being on bad terms with God does not cancel the fact that He loves us.

Being on bad terms with God may mean that we lose any benefit of His loving us. I believe God loves those who go to hell and wishes they didn't go there. But it doesn't help them because they're on bad terms with God.

God loves even His enemies, and that's why He tells us to do the same. But He must judge His enemies as well, and therefore we must be prepared for the fact that our behavior does have something to do with our enjoyment of God's love for us, but it does not have anything to do with His actual loving us. And the benefit of that is this, that even if we do those things which could put us on bad terms with God, and the fact that He still loves us even then means that it is possible to be put back on good terms with God.

If God at that point where I have done that which offends Him decided, well that's it, I loved you up till now, but I'm tired of loving you. It's hurting me too bad. It's costing me too much.

You're out. Well, then there wouldn't be much hope for me. But because God's love is constant, there is eternal hope that even if I have erred, even if I have gone the wrong way, even if I know I've done those things which offend God, yet I can return.

Like the prodigal's father who was waiting for his son to come back. His son underestimated the unconditionalness of his father's love. Now, the son was dead when he was away from his father.

He was not saved. His father, when he came back, said my son was dead. Now he's alive.

So, I mean, the son was not benefiting from his father's unconditional love to him. And he did not even grasp how unconditional his father's love to him was. He said, I'm going to return to my father and say, Father, I've sinned against heaven and in your sight and I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.

All of that was true. He wasn't wrong on any of that. But then he said, just make me like one of your servants.

I would not be so bold as to ask to be restored to the role of being your son, but just make me a servant. Well, his father greatly, I suppose, surprised him when he didn't even let him finish his speak. And he just unilaterally, when he saw his son coming back, he just said, get the ring, get the robe, kill the fatted calf.

My son is back and he's my son again. The unconditional love of God means that those who are on bad terms with God because of things they've done can be restored to good terms with God simply by repenting, by turning to God, by confessing and coming back to Him who though offended is still waiting as one who unconditionally loves and therefore unconditionally wishes that all would return to him. The first dimension of God's love found in this passage then is the unwarranted nature of his love.

A second I find in verse nine, the next verse. Therefore know that the Lord your God, he is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commandments. This suggests that God is a God who is committed forever.

His love is a committed love. He'll keep covenant for a thousand generations and we shouldn't suppose that that would be the end of it if there were more than a thousand generations. The number thousand simply means a big undetermined number, but it certainly suggests and is intended to suggest there's no end.

He keeps covenant to a thousand generations. His is a committed love. His love is committed to his people who love him, notice, those who love him.

He is committed to them as a father is committed to children. If the unwarrantedness of God's love in verses seven and eight speaks of the sovereignty of his love, his sovereign choice to love, his committed love resembles that of a father. It's a fatherly love.

That is that which Jesus emphasized probably more than any other thing in his teaching

about the father was that the father's love to us is like that of a father. It's committed to the child, a good father. There are earthly fathers who are not committed to children and they do not make a very good role model from which to reflect God's fatherly love.

But Jesus, when he talked about fathers, always assumed the best, even about the worst father. He said, if you fathers even being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give good gifts to those who ask him? Even fathers who Jesus acknowledged to be imperfect, yet there is some manifestation of their committedness to their children in that when there are good things to be given to their children, they delight to do so. And God is even more like that than that.

How much more shall your heavenly father give good things to those who ask him? God's love is a committed love. That commitment means that he doesn't just coddle us. He doesn't just humor us.

He's not an indulgent father because the Bible indicates that indulgent fathers really don't love their children. He that spares the rod hates his son. And therefore, even though God's love renders him a committed father to us, it does not mean that he's a non-disciplinary father.

It does not mean that it's all just fun and games. Since God loves me, I can do whatever I want. He'll smile on it and say, well, I can handle it.

I'm good-natured. He's committed to our correction, just like a father is committed to his son's well-being in the long term. And the Bible makes it very clear that a good father loves his son so that he directs his son and he guides his son into that path which will be good for the son in the long term.

Every father hopes that his son will be a productive, decent, fulfilled, happy adult in the long term. And therefore, the father curtails some of the son's activities when he's young. He gives restriction to his son.

He gives instructions. Sometimes keeping those instructions is not really what the son would have naturally preferred to do. But the father does all these things because he knows that those things are good for his son.

Just in the previous chapter of Deuteronomy to that which we're reading. In Deuteronomy 6 and verse 24, Moses said, the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes to fear the Lord our God for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as it is this day. Now, God put restrictions on us.

God gave us commands. Some of those things really cramp our style. Some of those things really curtail what our natural bent and natural cravings would prefer.

But he has done all of that for our good. He's given us all these commandments and statutes for our good always. As a father who restricts his child's behavior, even against the grain of the child, is doing so because he wants that child to grow up to be wise, to be good, to be fulfilled, to live long, happy and healthy lives.

Because of that, the father must curtail activities of the children. God is curtailing our activities through his commandments. God disciplines those whom he loves.

It says in Proverbs 3.12 and quoted in the New Testament, Hebrews chapter 12, that whom the Lord loves, he disciplines. This is the committed love of a father for a son. This is the committed love of God.

But we have to understand that this curtailment of our activities exists for our entire training period or childhood, which is this whole life. That life for which God is preparing us to be happy and fulfilled is eternal. It begins when we leave here.

It begins when this life ends. Then we transition into that life that God has in mind for us to be happy, fulfilled forever. But in order to get there, just like in order for a child to be a wise and good adult, his life has to be controlled by his father's wishes when he's young.

So, in order to have a fulfilling eternity, we must follow the discipline and the guidance and the commands of God through our entire lifetime. It is because he loves us that he gives us these commands, even though they are commands which we will have many instances where we would rather he hadn't given us that particular command. We would rather there were no instructions along those lines, because they go against our grain.

But it is that part of our grain that they go against that is itself misaligned with eternity. And therefore, we need to think of the love of God, especially at those times when disobedience to God's commands is so tempting. To realize that if the thing I want is good for me, my father would not deprive me of it.

It says in Psalm 84 11, no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly. No good thing will he withhold. Is there anything God has withheld from you? Yeah, there's a lot of things God has withheld from you, but no good things.

And if there is a good thing that he has withheld from you up to this point, it is because it is not good for you now. It may be something he intends to grant you later, maybe only in eternity. This is very important for us to remember when we are struggling with temptations to do what we know God has withheld or what God has forbidden us to do.

When I'm tempted to do something or look at something or respond in a certain way that I know is what the Scripture says not to do, that doesn't mean I don't want to do it. It doesn't mean that there's no temptation or drive or urge to do that thing, but I reason thus. The reason I'm tempted to do this is because I think it will enhance my happiness.



But God knows better than I what will enhance my happiness. And therefore, if it were good for me to look at that thing or to respond in this way or to do this act that God has forbidden, if it were good for me, he would not have forbidden it. And if it really is good for me, as I sometimes am tempted to think, then I'll have it in heaven.

If they won't be in heaven, then they must not be good. Because heaven is that place where only good things are, only the things that really are fulfilling to us in the nature that God has made us to be. Therefore, if young people are told to obey their parents, and the parents seem to be really putting a lot of restriction on the kids that the kids don't appreciate, the child could justly think, well, if God knew that it would really make me happier and more fulfilled to be disobedient to my parents, he would not have commanded me to obey.

Not only does it say no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly, it says in Psalm 34, the young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not lack any good thing. So if you lack anything, if God has withheld anything, it is not a good thing. When Eve was in the garden, she had all things in the whole world at her disposal legitimately, but only one thing was withheld.

And the devil got advantage over her by convincing her that that one thing that was withheld was indeed a good thing for her to have. And thus she was convinced to seize that to herself as well. And we all know in retrospect it was not good for her, it was not good for us, it has not been good for human history that she did that.

The devil made her think that God was withholding a good thing from her. If the devil can convince you of the same, what he's doing is convincing you that God really doesn't love you. His love is not really committed to your happiness.

He's just on his own trip, his own agenda, and whatever he keeps you from is just because he wants to have fun, you know, like some bratty little kids like to have fun pulling the wings off flies, that God must like to get his jollies by seeing us burn with unfulfilled desires that he won't let us fulfill. That's not the way God is. We need to understand the love of God, that his commandments he has given for our good only, always.

His love to us as a father is committed to his child. Remember Jeremiah, Jeremiah 29 11, God says, For I know the thoughts that I think towards you. Some translations say I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Why would it God have to tell us that his plans and thoughts for us are not evil? Because they often go against our grain, and what our instincts would tell us is this would make me happy, this would be good for me, but for some reason God hasn't given it to me, or God has written that I can't do that. What's the deal here? Well, God says it's it's not that

I have evil thoughts or plans for you, it's that I have in mind a future and a hope for you, that your instantaneous gratification is not what will indeed make you happy at this time, though you think it will. Your eternal and future happiness is contingent on you fitting in to these plans that I have for you right now, and embracing them, and trusting me that it is out of my committed love to you that I have made these arrangements.

There is another dimension of God's love in Deuteronomy 7, this one in the next verse, verse 10. It says, and he repays those who hate him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates him.

He will repay him to his face. Now, before I tell you what I understand to be, or before I give a label to this particular aspect of God's love, I'd like you to cross reference this statement with Exodus chapter 20, because this verse in Deuteronomy is an echo of Exodus 20, where God has given the Ten Commandments for the first time, and he says in verse 4, beginning with verse 4, he says, You shall not make for yourself a carved image, any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me.

Now, there again is a reference to what he does to those who hate him. What is it that he defines as hating him? Well, having other gods. Having other gods than him is hating him, according to God's own definition here.

In the context in Exodus 20, God seems not at all ashamed to say, I'm a jealous God. Now, in Exodus chapter 20, we are given to understand by not only the passage itself, but by later references back to it throughout the scripture, that in Exodus 20, God was entering into a covenantal relationship with the people of Israel. And that covenantal relationship is more like that of a husband and wife's married relationship, marriage covenant, than it is like anything else we know.

It was, in fact, an instance where God was entering into a married covenant with Israel. And it was in that context, he says, I am your husband. You are my wife.

If you go after other gods, I will be very jealous. I get jealous of my wife. As you study it out, especially in the prophets, in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, perhaps most of all, and Hosea, we find that God is speaking about Israel as if she is God's wife.

And he is jealous because, as he puts it, she has been committing spiritual adultery by going after other gods. He, the true God, is her true husband. Other gods are not her husband, but she often renders to those other gods what is owed only to her husband.

And God is jealous over that. He's a jealous God. Now, we think of jealousy as bad, do we not? When we think of a jealous person, we usually think of somebody who's sinning.

In fact, there is a verse in Ephesians that says, put away all jealousy and wrath and anger and envy and so forth. And so we have, from that verse probably more than any other, decided that jealousy is always wrong. Well, we could easily argue that anger is always wrong.

From that verse it says, put away all anger. And yet Jesus got angry. There is anger in the Scripture that is not sin.

In fact, the same chapter in Ephesians says, be angry and do not sin. Which means there must be a way of being angry and not sinning. Not all anger is wrong.

And I dare say that in the same sense, not all jealousy is wrong. Most is, and most anger is. But there is a jealousy that is not wrong because it is God's own jealousy.

I used to be embarrassed by this because I always teach it's wrong for you to be jealous. But then I read that God was just like, oops, what do I do now? You know, how do I answer this? And I used to say, well, God can be jealous because He deserves to be jealous. You know, He's God.

He can do whatever He wants. While that may be true, I've come to realize from reading the Scriptures more carefully that jealousy is not always wrong. Jealousy is possessiveness.

And possessiveness, in most instances, is wrong. If I'm jealous over my friend because they're starting to hang out with somebody else more than they're hanging out with me, and I'm getting possessive and jealous, that's bad. If I have some blessing I didn't get, and I'm, you know, possessive over that blessing or that position or whatever, I'm jealous, that's bad.

But God is jealous over His wife. And there's not one thing wrong about a man being jealous and possessive over his wife. Paul said, a man does not have the right over his own body, but his wife has it.

And a wife does not have the authority over her own body, but her husband has that. There is indeed a God-ordained possessiveness that exists, and I believe ought to exist, between husbands and wives. I think it's for lack of that in modern marriages that husbands' wives split up as readily as they do in our society, because they're not all that possessive.

And because we've been taught that jealousy is always a wrong thing, therefore we don't want to let on that we're jealous when our husband or our wife is showing any kind of attention or being shown attention by someone of the opposite sex. Well, I need to be a 21st century person here. We don't get jealous.

It's not politically correct to be jealous. Well, God's jealous. He's jealous like a husband is

jealous.

His love, he says, is a jealous love. It's a husbandly love. Just as he has a sovereign love that is unwarranted, he has a fatherly love that is a committed love.

He has a jealous love which is husbandly. By the way, in Numbers chapter 5, there's actually a ritual given for the husband who thinks his wife has been unfaithful, but he can't prove it. Now, what does it say? If the spirit of jealousy comes to him.

Now, the Bible doesn't critique this and say he shouldn't be jealous. It says if he has a spirit of jealousy, he needs to find out if she's been unfaithful or not. So, she goes to the tabernacle and they have this strange ordeal of jealousy that's given there, but it's interesting.

The jealousy of the husband over his wife when he suspects she's been unfaithful is a given. It's not critiqued. It's not, I mean, it's just a given.

It's just something you, you know, thinks his wife's been unfaithful. He gets jealous. What else would he do? It says in Proverbs chapter 6, jealousy is the rage of a husband.

It doesn't say that's right or wrong. It just says that's a fact. If people understand the possessiveness that is appropriate between partners who have married one another, then the possessiveness that we refer to as jealousy is not always inappropriate.

In many situations it is, but it is certainly not when it is godlike. Sin is never godlike. In fact, we could define sin as that which is unlike God, and God described himself not once or twice, but frequently as one who is jealous over Israel, his wife.

Now, I'm not making a case for being jealous over your wife so much as I'm trying to argue that the love of God has this dimension that we need to take into consideration. He's a jealous husband because he loves us. It's because he loves us in the way that he does that he is intolerant of sharing our affection with other gods or with other suitors.

God wants all of our love and he's jealous when he doesn't get it. He deserves it. We're covenanted to him and that covenant is one of forsaking all others and cleaving only to him for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, for better, for worse.

That is our covenant relationship with God. He has every right to be jealous if we are flirting with the world or letting anything else take the place in our hearts that belongs to him alone. I won't go into this in detail, but it certainly means this, that the love of God for us, profound as it is, is a love that you cannot trifle with.

If he loved us less, we could get away with more. If he loved us less, we could get away with more. But his love is a jealous love over his people.

He does not take it lightly when we flirt with the world or with other idols. When anything

begins to usurp his place in our hearts, that is not something he smiles upon. When a man's wife begins to play the harlot, he of course can forgive her and that's what God is always inclined to do.

Notwithstanding his jealousy, he's always again and again and again and again tried to restore his wife, try to cure her of her incurable harlotry. But finding this impossible with Israel, he finally gave up on her. As we see many times referred to in Scripture, we won't go on to it now.

See, this isn't a feel-good topic. I feel great that God loves me, but there's some ramifications there that he has revealed about his love. It's an unwarranted love, thank God for that.

It's a committed love, that's good. It's a jealous love, well that's good too, but it's not so pleasant if I'm considering other gods, other options, other paths. I don't worry too much about the issue of eternal security as some people do.

The reason I don't worry about it is I think it's mostly a concern for those who are flirting with the world. Can I lose my salvation? Can I not lose it? What do I care? I don't care if I can lose it or not, I'm not going to. The only reason I'd be really too concerned about that is if I'm thinking about maybe cheating on God a little bit, then I'd be worried about that.

But that's not even a frame of mind that is allowed to exist in my heart. That's like saying, well if I committed adultery against my wife, would she still stay married to me? Well, I don't know, but I'm not even thinking about it. I don't have to worry about that.

Oh, will my wife leave me if I commit adultery? No worries, it's not even in my mind. It's not going to happen and because of that, I don't have to worry about that question. The love of God, when it is perceived as it really is by the Christian, as a jealous, possessive love, governs our minds when they begin to go a little bit astray to consider, you know, how much can I get away with? How much can I love this other thing? Rather than loving and obeying God, remember there is a jealous God with whom we are in covenant and that jealousy is His love for us.

It's not some other thing. It's not something in contrast or in contradiction to His love. It is His love.

One other thing is here in Deuteronomy, I find in verse 11, the next verse, Deuteronomy 7 and verse 11. Therefore, you shall keep. Therefore means because of this.

Because the Lord has loved you, because He would keep covenant, because He repays those who hate Him, because His love is this kind of love, it is this kind also. Therefore, you shall keep the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which I command you today to observe them. What I find here is that the love of God is a demanding love.

There's a line of a hymn that we've all sung hundreds of times. Love so amazing, so divine, demands. Right? Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all.

It is a demanding love. You see it probably more clearly, I do anyway, in a statement about Jesus, than probably anywhere else in the Bible. In Mark chapter 10, Jesus is confronting the rich young ruler, who by all accounts was a very good man.

He was a moral man, a zealous man. He came running to Jesus. He didn't walk.

He ran to Jesus. He said, good master, what must I do to be saved? I dare say this man had more concern for his soul than the average person I've met. He had lived a moral life.

He was a respectable man. He was actually a ruler of a synagogue. He was a religious leader in his community.

And Jesus said, well, keep the commandments. The guy said, well, I've done that. What do I lack still? And Jesus, it is very interesting to me, in Mark chapter 10 and verse 21, it says, then Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, one thing you lack.

Go your way, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you'll have treasure in heaven. And come, take up the cross, and follow me. The other Gospels, some of them record this encounter as well.

But only Mark tells us this, before Jesus made that command, it says, Jesus looked at him and loved him. Obviously, Mark is trying to tell us that it is because Jesus loved him. It was from this love that Jesus had for this man that he was compelled to say, you can be perfect.

There's one more thing you've got to do. I'll give you the secret. You've got to give everything else up.

You've got to be rid of everything but me, because I love you. I'm telling you this. That's pretty demanding.

It's a demanding love. Now, some might say, well, doesn't that contradict the idea that it's an unconditional love? No, it doesn't contradict it at all, any more than it would contradict the doctrine of justification by faith to say that we should follow Jesus, that we should obey God. We're not saved by obeying God, but the Bible doesn't indicate anyone's ever saved without obeying God.

We're not saved by obeying. It's just that obeying is what we are called to do and are obligated to do. And God's love toward us is unconditional.

He loves us whether we do good or bad. He grieves over us when we do bad. He's jealous over us when we seek other gods than Himself.

And He gets angry even. Again, that is a function of His love. If He didn't care, He wouldn't get angry.

All those things are true. His love is unconditional for us, but since He loves us, He makes demands of us. Now, this man went away sorrowful because he had great possessions and Jesus looked at him sorrowfully.

Jesus was sad to see him go. The man was not interested in the terms of discipleship. He was not interested in obeying and keeping those things that Jesus required of him.

And that didn't make Jesus love him any less. It made him grieve over the loss because the man did not wish to fill the demands of that love that Jesus was exhibiting to him by giving this command. In 2 Corinthians 5, verses 14 and 15, it says, for the love of Christ compels us.

It demands something of us. It makes us do something. The love of Christ does.

Not the anger or the threats of Christ, but the love of Christ compels us, Paul says, because we judge thus that if one died for all, then all died. And He died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. This dying for them and raising them again is the manifestation of His love.

He died for us and that compels us to judge reasonably. If He died for us, then we ought to live for Him, not for ourselves. Now, I don't know if you've ever followed that logic yourself in your own mind independently.

If you haven't, Paul's done it for you and he's right. If Christ died for us, then those who live as a result of that should live no longer for themselves. You've been bought with a price.

You're owned. There are demands now upon you that are called forth logically and inevitably from the fact of God's love for us. His love places demands upon us and, of course, one reason is because it seems demanding to us when He says, you've got to sell what you have and give to the poor and take up your cross from all of me.

That seemed a little bit stringent to the man to whom that was said. It was more stringent than he wished to comply with. He went away sorrowful rather than complying.

It seemed too demanding and yet why did God make such a demand of him? Well, the man manifested why that demand had to be made of him. He couldn't give up his money. It was his bondage.

You cannot be a follower of Christ and be in bondage to money. You cannot serve God and mammon. Jesus said that and serving God is the best thing for you too.

It's good for, I mean, it's good to do so for the glory of God but it's good for you as well. If

there is something in your life that prevents you from being able to serve God out of love, He will demand it to be surrendered. It's a demanding love and it's a good thing that it is.

I hate seeing children whose parents only request of them that they do things and when the children rebel, the parents just, they don't demand obedience. Obedience is essential for the child. A parent don't demand obedience.

He doesn't love his child. He's really not doing what's good for his child. The love of God is shown to be an unwarranted love.

It's a committed love. It's a jealous love and it's a demanding love. I would add one other thing very briefly and that is it is a contagious love.

We love Him because He first loved us. If you experience the love of God, it turns you into a lover like God. We're told in Romans 5.5 that the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love.

Jesus said this, by this all men shall know that you're my disciples if you have love one for another. Why? Because it shows that you have indeed come into contact dynamically with the love of God. Once you have, you catch it.

It's contagious. When you see the love of God demonstrated to you, you must a. love Him. Jesus said those who are forgiven much, love much.

He's referring to a sinful one who loved Jesus a great deal because He had forgiven her of much. His love for her inspired in her love for Him. But there's also that other manifestation of having caught the disease and that is that you don't only love Him back, but you love those that He loves.

You love others. If you love Him that begat, it says in 1st John 5, 1 and 2, you also love everyone that is begotten of Him. In other words, if you love the Father who begat them, then you love all of His kids.

Why? Because He does. If you love Him, you love those that He loves, if for no other reason than that He loves them and you love Him. Actually, that is an interesting revelation about why Jesus really died for us.

Many people are all backwards. They think, well, God was angry, Jesus loved us, so Jesus came in and intervened to, you know, get the wrath of God off our backs. But Jesus said, I'm going to the cross so the world will know that I love my Father.

He loved the Father and the Father loved us, so He loved us because He loved His Father. How could He not love who His Father loved? He loved us because the Father loved us. Thus, we who have received the love of God and we have caught that, we love



whom God loves, not because of any other reason, but that God loves them and if we love Him, then we love those that He loves.