

Searching the Scriptures / 26 / What Is Biblical Love? / Part 1

Today we want to look at what the Bible says about love. In doing so we will be learning how God, the Author of love, defines this very important word and topic. In our time together we want to focus on the following three aspects of love:

1. Love for God
2. Love for Oneself
3. Love for Others

Love for God

Let's begin by looking at our first point about a believer's love for God. We read of Jesus' response to a question posed to him by a scribe in Mark 12:28 that was designed to trick Him: *“Which is the first commandment of all?”* When we read the parallel account in Luke we also learn that this same individual was also asking, *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Mark 12:29-30 states, *“... the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”*

These two principles of loving God with our entire being and inheriting eternal life are actually very closely related. In fact, we can't have one without the other. In all candor, only the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is God in the flesh and perfect, had the capacity to love God with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength. We see this very clearly in verses such as John 15:10, *“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.”*

However, we must remember that when people have received eternal life, or salvation, in their souls, they have been made righteous as God Himself, and thus have been qualified through the sacrifice of Christ for their sins to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Therefore, when we consider the whole Bible, we see that no man can properly or fully love God or even come close, but the Lord Jesus did and does. He grants this perfect love of His Father to His own people – those He came to save.

Love for Oneself

Next we want to look at a believer's love for oneself, which the Lord Jesus explains in context with the second commandment in Mark 12:31-33: *“And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”* Before we look at what it means to love one's neighbor (our last point), we need to define what it means to love oneself. To love oneself is to desire that which is most beneficial – the highest possible good – for ourselves. And what could that be? The world would tell us we need a new house, a new car, a new job, a wife, a family, more money, a healthy lifestyle, religion, etc. Are these things really going to provide that which is of utmost importance to me?

The Bible informs us in Mark 8:36-37, *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* The reason God places so much importance on the soul is because it is that part of us that will last throughout eternity. In Mark 12:31-33 Jesus continues his dialogue with the

scribe: *“There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”*

This is an enormous change in tone from how this man started out his line of questioning. He is indicating that the sacrifice that God is looking for is the sacrifice of Christ Himself, as we see from Psa 51:16-17: *“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”*

Love for Others

So far we’ve looked at the love of God, the love for oneself, and now we come to our final point, the believer’s love for others. What does it mean to love our neighbor? Jesus gives us the answer in response to the lawyer’s question in Luke 10:29 *“... and who is my neighbour?”* by detailing the account of a man who was rescued after he had been robbed, beaten, and left *“stripped”* and *“half dead”*.

This is a marvelous picture of unsaved man as we find in Eph. 2:1, *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”* Luke 10:33-34 demonstrates what it means to love our neighbor – it is to share the Gospel of Grace with them: *“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”*

The oil represents the Holy Spirit and the wine points to the Gospel, which God can use to heal our sin-sick souls. If we had even a tiny portion of true love for our fellowman, we would never want to see them judged in Hell eternally. We would want their spiritual wounds healed by salvation. We would want to give them 100% of the life-saving, life-giving Gospel of the Bible.