

GOD IS LOVE: JOHN 3.16

The Communicable Attributes of God, Part 1 of 3

Theme: God is love and He has communicated (shared) that attribute with us, therefore we should love!

To know God means (at least in part) to have knowledge of and understand His attributes.

- God's attributes show us what He is like—His character and characteristics.
- Some of God's attributes are “incommunicable”: They belong to God and God alone (they are shared with—communicated to—no other person and no other thing; e.g., God's independence, omniscience, etc.).
- But, other attributes of God are “communicable”: They are seen in God and can also be seen (to a lesser extent, obviously) in us who are made in the image of God (He “communicated” those attributes to us).

This morning I would like to talk about one of God's communicable attributes: His love.

- (1Cor 13.4-7; *charity* is love in action, love expressed, love manifest) God's description of love: Love does not seek her own, but rather seeks the *well-being* of others.
 - ✓ Love does not seek after it's own well-being. Love sees the need in others and sacrifices personal well-being to meet that need in others.
- We need to understand God's love if we are to know and understand our God, because the Bible says that God is love.

I. Love Manifest: John 3.16

A. God's love had its most perfect and complete manifestation on the cross.

1. Think about the work of the cross: God did not have to do what did—God was under no obligation to die the death He suffered on the cross.
2. Also understand: The cross was not some sort of “Plan B” because sin caught God off guard and took Him by surprise (e.g., “Oh,no! Now what do I do?! I know! The cross!”).
 - a) God is omniscient: He knows everything always (He has never learned anything).
 - b) That is why God can declare the end from the beginning: He knows everything always.
3. So, you have to ask yourself: Why did God allow sin to enter His perfect creation if He knew it was going to happen?
 - a) One (main) reason: To put on display (for His glory and our good) His attributes that otherwise could not be manifest.
 - b) There are certain attributes of God that cannot be manifest (known, contemplated, appreciated) without the “backdrop” of sin.
4. God designed everything from eternity past to manifest, among other attributes, **His love**.
 - a) God created the perfect “setting” (the perfect stage or backdrop) to manifest his love.
 - (1) God made this world perfect, without sin and without wickedness (no evil, no bad).
 - (2) And then He gave man the freewill to choose: Man had the capacity to choose to love God in submission and obedience, or to rebel against Him in selfish disobedience.
 - (3) Man rebelled against God, and God allowed sin to enter into His perfect creation.
 - b) That created the perfect backdrop (stage, setting) to manifest His love... to exhibit His love for all of creation to see and admire...

B. (1Jn 4.10) God's love is manifest in Christ's sacrifice.

1. This is by God's design—this is by God's plan.
 - a) We need to understand that before the foundation of the world, God designed this whole thing exactly this way.
 - (1) He allowed sin to enter His perfect creation...
 - (2) He chose (from eternity past) to die the death He died on the cross...
 - b) Why?
 - (1) Because there is no better backdrop, stage, or setting—there is nothing *blacker*.
 - (2) There is no better way to set God's glorious love on display than the black backdrop of sin.
2. (John 3.16) God chose the cross as His “measuring stick” to show all of creation just how great is His love.
 - a) The cross shows us how God “*so loved*”: The cross manifests this attribute of God and shows us its greatness—shows us just what it is like.
 - b) God chose to love us, and therefore He chose to *give Himself* for our well-being (He chose to meet our greatest need and to provide for us in all things).

C. This, also, is why we must go to the cross if we want God's love.

1. Think about it this way: Sin caused a *conflict* between certain of the attributes of God.
 - a) God is perfectly and completely holy and just and good.
 - (1) Because of that, He *hates* that which is wicked and evil.
 - (2) That which is wicked and evil provokes God's anger and ultimately His wrath (which is the right and good response to the evil and wickedness that would harm that which is good).
 - b) We will never understand (much less appreciate or appropriate) God's love if we do not understand His holiness, righteousness, and goodness.
 - (1) (Rom 5.8) God's great love...
 - (2) (Rom 5.9) ...is to be understood in light of God's fierce wrath (and we are, Lord willing, going to talk more about this next Sunday).
2. The conflict begins with this: God hates sin.
 - a) *Hate* [def]: to dislike intensely or passionately; an extreme aversion for or extreme hostility toward something; to detest in the extreme.
 - (1) God *hates* sin! He is passionate to the extreme in His dislike for and hostility toward sin, evil, wickedness, that which is bad.
 - (a) Example: How do you feel toward child molestation—the rape, torture, and murder of little children for fun, sport, joy, entertainment?
 - (b) It provokes an extreme dislike for and hostility toward that act, does it not?
 - (2) Understand: You cannot separate sin from the sinner because the *act* was done *by choice*.
 - (a) This is why the Bible says that God not only hates the sin, but He also hates the sinner that chose to do it.
 - (b) Go back to our previous example...
 - i) If you willingly and joyfully (for fun) harm my child, don't you think I will feel “extreme hostility” toward *you* (and not just toward what you *did*)? Absolutely!
 - ii) How much more God who is perfectly and completely holy, just, and good?

- b) God hates sin, and therefore God hates sinners who chose willingly and gladly to sin.
- (1) We may not like it... it may go against what is ingrained in us through our emasculated self-oriented society... but Scripture could not be more clear...
 - (2) (Ps 5.4-5) God **hates** all (!) workers of iniquity (He hates the sin and the sinner that did it).
 - (3) (Ps 7.11) That is why God is **angry** with the wicked every day.
 - (4) (John 3.36) And that is why God's **wrath** abides on every sinner outside of Christ.
 - (a) *Wrath* [def]: strong, stern, fierce anger; punishment as a consequence of that anger.
 - i) Do not think that God's wrath is just anger out of control or selfish revenge.
 - ii) God's wrath is His *response* (vs. reaction) to sin, wickedness, and evil because He Himself is holy, just, and good.
 - (b) (Rev 14.10-11) God's wrath (His hatred for and anger toward the wickedness of sin and sinners) has its most complete manifestation in the lake of fire.
 - i) Sinners, by willful and joyful choice (for fun!), raped and destroyed God's innocent goodness in His creation.
 - ii) God **hates** that. God is **angry** with that. God's **wrath** will be poured out on that.
3. Here is the conflict between God's attributes: God is love and therefore *intensely desires* the well-being of each and every one of those wicked sinners that He hates and is angry with (angry to the point of eternal wrath).
4. That conflict is resolved in the cross: Romans 3.26
- a) **God is just**: In the work of the cross, God satisfied His justice by pouring out all of His wrath (for each and every sin, for each and every sinner—ALL of it) on Jesus Christ.
 - (1Pet 3.18) Christ is our innocent substitute, the Just who suffered for the unjust.
 - b) **God is the justifier**: Through that work on the cross by Jesus Christ, God has manifested His love toward all men.
 - (1) Through the cross, God has met our greatest need and has provided for our well-being.
 - (a) The cross is the most perfect and complete manifestation of God's love that there ever could be.
 - (b) On the cross, God gave Himself for our eternal well-being. He loved us!
 - (2) That is why the cross the focal point of all God's plan and purpose in creation.
 - (a) The cross split eternity in two: All else in God's plan revolves around the cross!
 - (b) The cross is primary; everything else is secondary.
 - (c) The cross is the principal thing; everything else is just the “setting” and the “stage.”
 - (d) The cross is the perfect diamond; everything else is the backdrop, the blackness on which God set the diamond of his love for all of creation to see and admire!
5. God's love is manifest on the cross: To know, appreciate, and appropriate God's love, you have to go to the cross.
- a) (1Jn 1.5) **God is light**.
 - (1) There is no darkness in Him at all. He is perfect, perfectly good, perfectly right and holy.
 - (2) Therefore, He will not allow even one sin to enter into His eternal kingdom. There will be no darkness at all in God's eternal kingdom.
 - (3) God will relentlessly seek out every sin and every sinner who chose to sin, and He will deal with them according to his perfect justice.

b) (1Jn 4.8) **But God is also love.**

(1) And because He is love, He desires to love us (to provide for us and our well-being).

(2) (1Jn 4.10 cf. 2.2) And because He is love and desires to love us, He offers His perfect, complete, eternal and unconditional love to each and every wicked and evil sinner that deserves His wrath.

(a) But the sinner will only find God's love at the cross.

(b) It was on the cross that Christ became the propitiation (the innocent substitute and sacrifice) for us and for our sins.

D. God's love is manifest at the cross.

1. God wants (intensely desires) to love the sinner. God is willing to love any and all sinners; the cross is proof that whosoever will, can come to God in Christ.

2. But the sinner must come to God on God's terms:

a) **Repentance:** The sinner must recognize his wickedness—he must recognize how deeply and gravely he has offended God—and turn from it.

b) **Faith:** The sinner must trust in Christ and Christ alone to save him (He is the only Saviour).

3. When the sinner does this...

a) God's love can be manifest in him (by God saving such a wicked and evil person, and then providing for his eternal well-being).

b) God's love can be manifest through him (because God's love is a “communicable” attribute)...

II. Love Communicated: Romans 13.11

A. The love of God is one of His “communicable” attributes (God shared it with us; we can love).

1. (Rom 13.11) The Bible says that love is the fulfilling of all God's will and desire for us.

a) If we love (as God loves), then we will automatically be fulfilling all of God's will.

b) What are the two greatest commandments? Matthew 22.37-40

(1) Love God and love your neighbor.

(2) Jesus said that on these two commandments to love hang all the law and the prophets (all of God's will for man as revealed in Scripture).

c) Why is that...? Because God is love and therefore when we love, we are acting “godly” and Christ-like (and that is God ultimate desire: to conform us to the image of Christ).

B. Firstly: (1Jn 5.3) By loving God, we do always those things that please Him—we do all His will.

1. Observe: To love God is nothing “romantic” (as portrayed in the vast majority of Christian music today), and it has nothing to do with “feeling.”

2. Our love for God is expressed (manifested) in our submission and obedience to His commandments. And herein we see the problem...

a) Many say they love God, but their refusal to submit to and obey Scripture says the opposite.

b) Many professing Christians have no idea what God even commanded them because they have no idea what the Bible says.

(1) They themselves don't diligently read and study the Scripture.

(2) And, sadly, most today attend churches where the pastor is more interested in entertaining his people than actually teaching them God's Word.

c) And then of those are actually learning Scripture, how many intentionally and diligently strive in practical ways each day to submit to and obey what the Bible says?

- Most don't want the hassle because God will most definitely interrupt our plans for our lives. And that would be uncomfortable for us.

3. (1Jn 1.5-6; 2.3-6) This means that the person who says he loves God, but does not (in some way) strive to walk in obedience to Scripture, is a liar. He does not love God.
 - a) And this is why Jesus said we could “judge the tree by its fruit.” You can tell if the person professing salvation (saying, “Lord, Lord”) is indeed saved by looking at the visible fruit.
 - b) True salvation comes with a true conversion: Repentance and Faith.
 - (1) Because without the repentance of the wicked sinner, God is still offended and His wrath abides on the sinner.
 - (2) It is the repentant sinner, trusting only in Jesus, that receives God's forgiveness and love.
 - (3) And, because he has repented and experienced God's great love, that sinner will love God, he will desire to please Him and make the effort to do so by obeying His Word.
4. God's love is a communicable attribute, and if we have God love in Christ, we should love God.

C. Secondly: We will also love our neighbor, and thus fulfill God's will..

1. God's will for the lost: Salvation.
 - We love our lost neighbor by meeting his greatest need: Communicating the Gospel to him so that he can be saved (so that He can escape God's wrath and know God's love).
2. God's will for the saved: Sanctification.
 - a) God wants to perfect each and every believe, conforming him to the image of Christ.
 - b) We love our saved neighbor by meeting his greatest need: Communicating to him (through word and example) the truth of Scripture so that he can grow in Christ and Christ-likeness.

Conclusion: God is Love.

Lost: If you have never repented of your sins (to come before your Creator whom you greatly offended by your willful and joyful choice to sin) and trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior... today is the day of salvation.

Christians: God's love is perfect, and as we grow in Christ, so we will grow in our manifestation of this attribute.

- We are not perfect, and so our love is not perfect—not our love for God, nor our love for our neighbor.
- But, we ought to be growing in love, because we ought to be growing in Christ.
 - ✓ We ought to grow in our hunger for God's Word, and our desire to love it, submit to it, and obey it.
 - ✓ We ought to be growing in our desire to evangelize the lost and edify the saved.
- And above all else... one thing we can and should do always: Glory in the cross!
 - ✓ Look at the cross and see God's great love that He manifested for such wicked, evil people.
 - ✓ And glory in that! Sit down and contemplate that! Thank God for that!
 - ✓ God is love and He loved us on the cross! In Christ, by His work on the cross, we now enjoy God's complete, perfect, infinite, eternal, unconditional love.