

Christian Retirement

By [Thomas Reade](#)

1837

ON THE LOVE OF GOD

"God is love!" sweet truth! Oh my soul! rejoice daily in this blessed revelation, "God is love." Before all worlds, before any being was formed, "God is love"—love, eternal and unchangeable. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is love. How inconceivably great is the love of God! All worlds rolling in the infinite expanse; all beings inhabiting those innumerable spheres, which extend far beyond the boundaries of the most excursive imagination; all the myriads of angelic spirits which dwell forever in the bright effulgence of uncreated light, are only the overflowings of that love, which is inexhaustible. The immense fountain loses not one drop, though countless millions are filled by its streams. It is ever flowing, ever full. "Lord, you are love. Oh, fill my soul with your love! You can not be diminished, and I shall be made everlastingly blessed."

When the Almighty created the angels in heaven, and man in paradise, he endued them with powers suited to their distinctive degrees of excellence. Both were formed holy, and consequently happy. All nature proclaims the benevolence of the deity; the unbounded goodness of Jehovah. The moral law emanated from the love of God. This law was stamped upon the heart of Adam, when in a state of innocence. It is a transcript of the divine mind; holy, just, and good.

When man sinned, he broke the law of God. He fell under its curse. To redeem him from this wretched state, Jesus, the Son of God, assumed our mortal nature, expiated our guilt, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. He burst the bars of death. He ascended up on high; and reigns the sovereign Lord of angels and of men.

When the "royal law" of love was broken in paradise, how soon did Adam's first-born imbrue his hand in a brother's blood! Violence overspread the earth with awful rapidity; until God, in righteous judgment, swept the guilty rebels from the earth, by a tremendous flood of waters. Every succeeding age has been marked by miseries of every name, all flowing from one common source—an evil heart of unbelief. Sin is the cause of all misery, and sin originates with man.

If it be asked, what is the true cause of man's inability to love and serve God, may we not answer, a criminal indisposition of heart so to do? It is not that man

cannot love God, from a natural incapacity, arising from a total destitution of understanding, will, and affections; but rather that he will not, owing to a deep-rooted enmity against the holy character and commands of God.

This aversion of the heart from God, constitutes the chief guilt of man. Man is a responsible being, and must render an account to God, from whom he receives all his powers, for the abuse of those talents committed to his trust. He has a heart that can love the world; he can love sensual delights; he can love riches and honors, yes, every thing which tends to gratify his passions, and to exalt him in his own eyes, or in the estimation of others. He has a will to choose what is pleasing to his animal appetites, and to refuse what is painful or distasteful to him. He has an understanding to judge upon worldly matters; and a quick eye to discover the path to temporal advancement. He finds his hopes and fears, his joys and griefs, his love and hatred, brought into continual exercise with the ever-varying events of life.

Hence man does not labor under a natural incapacity. His inability is altogether of a moral kind. Sin has darkened and corrupted all the higher faculties of the soul; so that now "the world by wisdom knows not God." "Men choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;" for "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

This wrong state of the heart, this evil bias of the soul, this radical corruption of our nature, is universal. It spreads itself through the whole human race, without exception; for all are born in sin; all are by nature the children of wrath, and the heirs of hell. So powerful is this innate evil, this natural indisposedness of the heart towards God, that neither reason, conscience, nor philosophy can remove it. God alone can turn the heart of the sinner to himself. The language of divine revelation is, "you have destroyed yourself, but in me is your help."

While, therefore, in deepest self-abasement we bear the burden of our guilt, and acknowledge that we have destroyed ourselves; we must ascribe all the glory of our salvation to omnipotent love, in whom our help is found, and say, with the grateful Psalmist, "Not unto us, Oh Lord, not unto us, but unto your name give the glory, for your mercy and for your truth's sake."

The whole human race must soon stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. No plea will then be accepted in arrest of judgment. In that awful day, every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world will become guilty before God "for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." From this view of our fallen state, we may scripturally conclude, that sinners, if left to themselves, would never turn to God. And hence we see the blessedness and necessity of that grace which turns us from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

It is a true saying of Augustine, that without free will there could be no condemnation; and without free grace there could be no salvation. But the voice

of sovereign love declares to the great Melchisedek, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power." Here is set forth the power of God; the people on whom that power is exerted; and the blessed effects of it upon their souls. This power is the power of God unto salvation. When he works, who can resist it? It is convincing power, converting power, sustaining power. Oh that this divine power; this ENERGY of LOVE, may be felt in every soul! Lord, may I feel it in mine.

But on whom is this power exerted? When we view the whole human race sunk in sin and misery, in a state of open rebellion against the majesty of heaven, where shall we find "his people?" The very words, "they shall be willing," imply that they were not always so. Prior to this great change, they "were enemies in their minds by wicked works." They are "his people" in purpose and grace; chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love; predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son."

When Paul was at Corinth, the Lord appeared to his persecuted servant, and said, "Do not be afraid, but speak; hold not your peace: for I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you, for I have many people in this city." Oh! that my proud heart could submit to receive salvation as the free gift of unmerited mercy! Lord, make me willing in the day of your power, to yield myself unto you, a living sacrifice, as my most reasonable service.

We see what is the effect produced by this power on the minds of "his people." "They shall be willing"—willing to receive Christ—willing to suffer for Christ—willing to give up all for Christ. This change in their will is not effected by any natural effort of their own, or by the moral persuasion of others; but solely by the power of God, through the instrumentality of the Gospel.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," wrote the apostle to the Romans, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes." Those favored souls, who are thus made willing in the day of God's power, are not compelled by an unwelcome force to embrace salvation; but are sweetly and lovingly inclined, through the soft influences of heavenly grace, to choose, delight in, and appreciate the work and service of Emanuel. They are made willing. Their whole heart goes forth towards the Savior, as when Jesus said to Levi at the receipt of custom, "Follow me." They love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. They embrace him as their only Savior his precepts as their only rule—his promises as their only support—his cross as their only glory—his righteousness as their only boast—his people as their only friends—his heaven as their only home. Oh what a change! "Lord, may I long, and pant, and labor after this blessedness. Stir up my soul to seek it more and more."

I have here an evidence to judge of my own character. "Your people shall be willing." If, then, I belong to this happy number, I must be willing to be saved on God's terms; to delight in his salvation, to choose his ways. Do I feel my will

subdued, and cheerfully inclined to embrace, in humble faith, the whole revelation of mercy, as made known to me through a crucified Jesus? "Lord, put forth your mighty grace. Let this very day be the day of your power. Tomorrow may find me in the eternal world. Oh may I now be willing to be wholly yours; that every succeeding hour may only increase my willingness to do and suffer your whole righteous will."

How different is earth to heaven! Here on earth, an awful disinclination of heart to love God is discoverable in all the fallen children of Adam. Even the regenerate feel with grief this hated deadness of soul to God. "My soul cleaves unto the dust," was the lamentation—"quicken me, according to your word," was the fervent prayer of David.

In heaven, all is governed by the sweet constraining principle of pure, undivided love. Were a soul to leave this earth under the influence of alienated affections, how could such a soul be either fit for, or happy in, that blessed place, where every note is harmony, and every heart is love? Reason, even in its present beclouded state, must see the unfitness of such a soul for glory; when that glory consists in loving God with a supreme affection, and being made like him in all his communicable perfections.

How great, then, is the happiness of loving and serving God, while journeying through this valley of tears! This is the sweet peculiarity of the religion of Jesus. It diffuses joy and gladness wherever it is received in the simplicity of faith. "God is love; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God." To love God, and to be the object of his love, constitute the bliss of angels. The opposite of this is hell.

What poor miserable creatures we are while in a state of nature, and under the power of sin and Satan! We smile, when we should sigh. We laugh, when we should mourn. We appear gay and sprightly, when we should be of a sorrowful spirit. But, Oh the change which takes place when the Gospel comes to the heart, not in word only, but in power! Then we receive beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Then we are privileged to rejoice always, and to delight ourselves in the abundance of peace. Oh happy, blissful state! thus to be the genuine disciples of the blessed Jesus, who has assured his faithful people that he will manifest himself to them, as he does not unto the world; yes, even come unto them, and make his abode with them. Who can contemplate these wonders of grace, and not feel the holy influence of this precious revelation—"God is love!" Surely none but they who know not God; for thus says the apostle, "He that loves not, knows not God; for God is love." You trembling saint, cast off your fear,

Your mourning garments lay aside;
It is Jesus speaks: "Be of good cheer,
My love, my sister, and my bride."

Oh listen to the voice of love!
Its gentle accents whisper peace;
The Savior; from his throne above,
Delights to view your joys increase.

Blessed Jesus! cheer each drooping heart;
Uplift, revive, each fainting soul;
Your presence, gracious Lord, impart;
Oh make each wounded sinner whole!

Then shall your church more beautiful grow,
"As lilies" in Judea's vale;
Like widening streams "her peace shall flow,"
Whose "springs in you" can never fail.

You trembling saints, no longer fear,
Your mourning garments lay aside;
Since Jesus is forever near,
The church's husband and her guide.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill).
If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).