

HOW GREAT IS THE LOVE OF GOD?

IT IS DIFFICULT FOR A CHILD (NO MATTER WHAT AGE, YOUNG OR OLDER) TO KNOW HOW GREAT A LOVE PARENTS HAVE FOR THEM. IT IS ALSO DIFFICULT FOR A PERSON TO KNOW THE LIMITLESS LOVE GOD HAS FOR US!

Just think of the numbers of people who have lived since the first man and woman were created. God has dealt with each and every one on a daily basis to bring them close to Him so that they can have a right relationship with Him.

It all started with the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. God created everything for them, an environment suitable for life, all things needed for food, clothing, etc., even before He made them. Then God made them in His image (**Genesis 1:27**).

God created all living things, and then He formed Adam, the first man. There was no suitable companion for Adam and so God took one of Adam's ribs and formed woman and gave her to Adam. (**Genesis 2:20-22**). God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, a paradise, and gave them the responsibility to take care of it. (**Genesis 2:15**).

All of this shows the great love God had for man whom He had made. He furnished the world for their dwelling. He made them compatible so they would compliment each other. He placed them in a paradise garden with only one restriction (**Genesis 2:17**).

The first problem with the man and woman was when they broke the one rule God gave them – Not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When Eve was tempted by Satan to eat of the forbidden fruit and she ate and gave to her husband and he also ate (**Genesis 3:1-7**). They both knew the consequences of breaking God's law but they, choosing to be equal with God, a lie told her by Satan (**Genesis 3:1-3**), ate from the tree and chose death for themselves (**Genesis 2:16-17**). Having eaten and broken the law of God, they were driven out of the Garden away from the Tree of Life that had been sustaining their life and now they began to die.

God's love was manifested when He brought Adam, Eve, and Satan together, and **made the first promise of providing forgiveness for sin**. God said, "And I will put **enmity** between **you**" (Satan) "and the **woman**, and between **your offspring**^a" (Satan's offspring or seed) "and **hers**" (the woman's offspring or seed); "**he**" (Christ) "will crush^b" (or strike) "**your head**" (Satan's head), "and **you**" (Satan) "will **strike his heel**" (bruise Christ's heel). "To the woman he said, '**I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.**'" (**Genesis 3:15-16 (NIV)**). This simply states that God would bring Christ, the seed or offspring of woman into the world and Christ would strike or crush Satan's head (The power is in the head). Christ would take Satan's power over man (for those who desired to have their sins removed) away from Satan. Satan's power over man is sin, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that **by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.**" (**Hebrews 2:14-15**). The only way Christ could take away Satan's power was to live a perfect life, a life without sin, so that Satan would not have any charges against Christ to hold Him in the grave. This Christ did, and is seen in **Acts 2:24** when Peter explained the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, "But **God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.**" The only way Jesus could have been held in death was through committing sin, for this was Satan's power (**Hebrews 2;14-15 above**). Christ took on our sin on the cross paying our penalty for sin (death) and gave us His righteousness (2

a Or *seed*

b Or *strike*

Corinthians 5:21 “**God made him who had no sin to be sin^a for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**”). Satan could find no sin in Jesus and so he had to release Him because He had no power over Him. If we are in Christ Satan does not have the power of death because Christ, through His sacrifice for us, has taken away our sin (**Romans 8:1-4 (NIV)**) “Therefore, **there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,^a ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature,^b God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.^c And so he condemned sin in sinful man,^d ⁴ in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.**

God made these provisions for man’s salvation in spite of the way man (Adam and Eve) responded to Him – choosing to listen and obey Satan rather than the loving God who had made him.

When man increased in number on the earth they became very sinful and God, seeing their wickedness, determined to destroy the earth and all that was in it. However, there was this man Noah who, because he was a righteous man, found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord. God recorded that, “... Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.” God’s love caused Him to make a way of escape for Noah and his family. God waited while Noah and his sons built the ark and filled it with the animals God instructed them to take with them. In two places it states that Noah did all that God commanded him (**Genesis 6:22; 7:5**).

In the end, only eight people in all were saved out of the great multitude of people on the earth. They were saved because they **believed God** and obeyed what He told them to do.

After the flood God made another promise to a man named Abraham. Because Abraham believed and obeyed God, God told Abraham that through him and his **seed** all the nations of the earth would be blessed (**Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18**). Abraham and his wife Sarah were old, too old to bear children, but God told Abraham, “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies.” **Genesis 22:17 (NIV)**. God also assured Abraham that He would give him a son. Abraham believed God even though this was physically impossible considering Abraham and Sarah’s age. **Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness (Romans 4:1-3)**. Abraham received all the blessings promised to him. Through Abraham a great nation was developed and through his lineage, a Savior was born into the world who would save all those who believed (**Galatians 3:16; 26-29**).

God’s love provided a place for the Nation of Israel to develop through Joseph who found favor in Pharaoh’s eyes and was placed over all Pharaoh owned. Joseph was therefore allowed to give his people, the Israelites, a place to live where they would be blessed with great growth and possessions, in the Land of Goshen settling them in the district of Rameses (**Genesis 47: 6, 11**).

When a Pharaoh arose (from another dynasty) who did not know about Joseph, (**Exodus 1:8ff**) the Israelites were enslaved for four hundred years but God increased their number and possessions and delivered them by parting the Red Sea where they escaped while their enemies were destroyed when they tried to follow them (**Exodus 14:21-30**).

a Or *be a sin offering*

a Some later manuscripts *Jesus, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit,*

b Or *the flesh*; also in verses 4, 5, 8, 9, 12 and 13

c Or *man, for sin*

d Or *in the flesh*

God, because He loved them, was patient with them when they grumbled and complained out in the wilderness. He provided them with manna that came down from heaven. They could pick it up and eat it and it sustained them. Still they complained and finally God punished the unbelieving and all of the unbelieving died in the wilderness. Those who were younger were spared because when the Israelites went up to the Land of Canaan the first time to enter it as God had commanded them and through their lack of faith turned back, those twenty years and younger were not of the age allowed to make the decision to enter and so they were now given the opportunity to go over into the Promised Land, a land of plenty. They went in and took the land as God had promised they could.

The Israelites became influenced by the peoples around them and did that which the Lord God had forbidden in the Ten Commandments, had bowed down to other gods, gods of the peoples where they lived (**Judges 10:13**). While God condemned them for this, He did not destroy them but sent His prophets to teach and preach to them trying to bring them back to Him (**Isaiah 46:9**). Even though they killed the prophets sent by God to bring them back to the true God (**Nehemiah 9:26**), He sent other prophets because He loved them.

Later, they even killed those God sent to tell them about the Messiah they had been looking for. This He made known by asking, **“Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— Acts 7:52 (NIV).**

God, because of His love, sent the apostles with the gospel, God’s power to save, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (**Romans 1:16-17**). When the Jews rejected the gospel, Paul went to the Gentiles and shared the gospel with them as this was part of the promise made to Abraham in **Genesis 12:1-3**. Many of Gentiles received his word and Paul wrote, **“And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, *the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. For you, brothers, became imitators of God’s churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out.*”** They displease God and are hostile to all men (**1 Thessalonians 2:13-15 (NIV)**).

Even though most men through the ages have been rebellious, **“... *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.*”** John 3:16-21 (NIV)

God is the Creator! God is Sovereign (Supreme Ruler). He created everything and rules over everything! Since He created and rules over the universe, it is He who says what is right, wrong, what is acceptable and not acceptable, **NOT MAN**. If we were to get what we deserve, we would all receive condemnation because we have all sinned and the penalty of sin is death. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” [**Romans 3:23 (NIV)**] and therefore we would all receive the wages of sin – death (**Romans 6:23**). God is a just God, “Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? ***and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me***” (**Isaiah 45:21 (KJV)**).

God is both good and severe as revealed in **Romans 11:22** in the **King James Version** “Behold therefore the ***goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.***” Here He is speaking about the Jews and the Gentiles. He was severe toward the Jews because they, having received the gospel first, had rejected it. He was good toward the Gentiles who received the gospel and

accepted it. Yet, even though the Jews rejected the gospel at first, He would graft them back into the tree if they would turn and accept Him (**Romans 11:23-24**).

God's ultimate love is seen when He sent Jesus into the world, one who spoke only what the Father told Him to say (**John 12:48-50**). The Israelites, as a nation, still rejected God's Son and His message of salvation. Only a few believed Him. Jesus was finally killed because the majority, especially those who were most learned in the Law, would not accept what He said, because it did not fit with the concept of the Messiah they had conjured up in their minds, yet He fit every description of the Messiah revealed by God. Jesus revealed this in **Matthew 15:7-9 (NIV)** "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you."
"“**These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.**”^d

Jesus, in spite of all the hostility shown toward Him, *in love*, gave His apostles and disciples the Great Commission just before leaving to go back to be with the Father, “He said to them, **“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”** (**Mark 16:15-16 (NIV)**). In Matthew's account they were told to baptize the believers into the possession of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. This Commission was carried out and every apostle but one was killed for preaching what did not please the Jews, but they preached it anyway! Why would they not like hearing the truth of the gospel? Because it differed from the traditions they had developed, not because it wasn't the truth. They desired to hear what they wanted to hear – not what God wanted them to hear (**2 Timothy 4:2-5 (KJV)**) ² **Preach the word**; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. ³ For ***the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*** ⁴ ***And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*** ⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.).

Can we begin to fathom the love God has for man? Look at all the teaching, patience, and grace shown throughout all the time from Adam and Eve until now. Think of all the people God had to deal with who were rebellious, or slow to respond to His Supreme Authority. Think of all the good and great men and women who have lost their lives teaching and preaching the truth God revealed. Think of how earth bound and carnally minded people who claim to believe God have been. Think of how men have perverted the gospel to the point that it ceases to be the gospel of truth and becomes no gospel at all (**Galatians 1:6-9 (NIV)**) ⁶ ***I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—*** ⁷ ***which is really no gospel at all.*** Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ ***But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!*** ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”

God loves us, each one of us, ***has provided Jesus Christ to set us free from sin*** (**Romans 6:3-7 (NIV)**) ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, ***we too may live a new life.*** ⁵ ***If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*** ⁶ ***For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with,*** ^a ***that we should no longer be slaves to sin—*** ⁷ ***because anyone who has died has been freed from sin***). **Galatians 5:1 (NIV)** ***It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.***

d Isaiah 29:13

a Or be rendered powerless

If God's love set us free to serve Him (Matthew 6:24; Romans 6:18, 22), should we not, like God, serve out of love? Galatians 5:13,14,22 (NIV) "***You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature^a; rather, serve one another in love.*** The entire law is summed up in a single command: "***Love your neighbor as yourself.***"^b 22 But ***the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness;*** 1 John 4:7,8,11 (NIV) ⁷ Dear friends, ***let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*** ⁸ ***Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:11 (NIV) Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.***

If God was patient, extending His grace to us, should we not do likewise with our fellow man? Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV) ***Unity in the Body of Christ "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."***² ***Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*** ³ ***Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*** ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

a Or *the flesh*; also in verses 16, 17, 19 and 24

b Lev. 19:18