

Eternal Life Only through Jesus Christ

John 3:16-21

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I. INTRODUCTION

God, as the Great I Am, has always been all that we needed Him to be, but most of all He is a God of Love. He loves us even when we do not love Him. It's because we have the wrong idea of what love is. Too often we confuse love with emotion and bodily functions. We have gotten ourselves into lots of trouble by letting how our body feels about love. God is entirely different. He does not give love, He is love. The Bible expresses God's love as "Agape". The Bible tells of three types of love.

1. Agape – is the highest form of love. Paul in I Corinthians 13 says that love is patient, love is kind, love knows no jealousy, love is never boastful, love puts on no airs, never acts dishonorably, never places her own interests first, and never loses her temper. Love conceals the faults of others, always believes the best, never despairs, and remains steadfast to the end. This is the love God has for us, and what He would want us to have for each other.
2. Eros – Sexual desire, passionate longing.
3. Phileo – Affection of friends or kinsmen.

The theological uses in both covenants concern the love of God

- a) God to man – The Old Testament representation of God's love to man is seen in His concern for all men Deuteronomy 33:3), but especially in His choosing Israel and His constantly renewed covenant pledge to them (Deuteronomy 7:9; I Kings 8:23; Nehemiah 9:32; Isaiah 54:5-10). This love secures for Israel God's protection and redemption (Isaiah 43:25; 63:9; Deuteronomy 23:5) and is extended to each individually (Proverbs 3:12; Psalm 41:12). The New Testament repeats God's love for all creatures (Matthew 5:45) but emphasizes the particular manifestation of Himself in Christ and Calvary (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 8:31-39), events which procure eternal life for the believer. God is revealed as loving because He is love itself (I John 4:8, 16). Love is His very essence. It is the other term along with "light" (I John 1:5) which describes the moral quality of His being.
- b) The love of man to God in the Old Testament is the total response of man (Deuteronomy 6:5, "with all the heart") to Israel's gracious God (Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 18:1). Love to God is expressed ethically especially in keeping the law and fearing Him. This concept of total response is repeated in the New Testament by Jesus (Mark 12:29-30). However, the response is to a new set of events—the incarnation (John 4:10; 19, 25-29, 39-42), the cross (Romans 6:3-11; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14), the resurrection (Philippians 3:10-11; Colossians 3:1-2), and the second coming (II Timothy 4:8). The

equation of love and obedience is also repeated (John 14:15; I John 4:21-5:3). Love is not a mere sentiment but a voluntary self-dedication to the point of self-slavery.

- c) The love of man to man in the Old Testament is founded on the previous love of God and is demanded especially for neighbors (Leviticus 19:18) and for foreigners living in Israel (Deuteronomy 10:19; Leviticus 19:34). Even the enemy is to be treated kindly (Exodus 23:4-5; Proverbs 25:21). Jesus set forth love). It must be expressed “indeed” (I John 3:17-18). It is emphasized by the oneness of the body (Ephesians 4:1-4; Romans 12:16) and the stress on the heinousness of the sin of faction. Jesus taught that love must include one’s enemy, just as Paul taught that practical love was to include all men (Galatians 6:10). Verse 18 emphasizes the fact that there are only two options: Life through Christ, or death.

According to the Bible, every person is guilty of sin, and deserves to be separated from God. Verse 18 says that those who do not believe are “condemned already,” in the present tense. We have already been declared guilty, because we are guilty. God’s love and patience cause Him to delay judgment, so we have the opportunity to let Christ pay our penalty for us. The Bible clearly says we are saved by faith in Christ, but also that we are saved only through faith in Christ. Those who don’t believe in Him cannot, and will not, find eternal life. The more frequent Greek word for condemn is (katakrino) and is to be distinguished from the previously mentioned words in that it refers either to the sentence or to the punishment following the sentence rather than to the simple act of deciding in judgment. Only the context can determine the precise nature of the sentence. For example in Mark 10:33 and Matthew 20:18 the condemnation or sentence is to physical death; in II Corinthians 7:3 Paul refers to a condemnation or reprimand of behavior before others. In some places the reference is to God’s condemnation and seems to refer to God’s sentence of permanent judgment upon the sinner and all that that implies (Matthew 12:41- 42; I Corinthians 11:32; II Corinthians 3:9; II Peter 2:6).

II. The Lesson: Eternal Life Only through Jesus Christ

JOHN 3:16-21

1. **vv. 3:16:** The verb “loved” (egapesen) has the prominent position in the sentence. Jesus wanted all to know that it was God’s love that was bringing eternal life in the world. The Son of Man who descended from heaven and is in heaven has brought to us the truth of this assertion. God’s motive (love), action (“gave”), and gift (His Son) are one inseparable unit. Love could not be love without its expression and its gift. Love such as this is a high, holy love that is a noble expression of God’s nature and will. Such love must be expressed in a tangible sense. It is constant in God, less often in man. Love brought heaven to man and will carry man to heaven. By love, God was manifested in Jesus Christ. All man’s graces and gifts flow from God’s love. Love is that supreme quality which is the means to the end and an enduring end in itself (I Corinthians 13). It does not deny the holiness and justice of God,

for behind them lies a longing and loving heart. God's love provides the most excellent plan for the object of His love. Both verb forms, "loved:" and "gave," are in the historical aorist tense to emphasized the act as a definite fact. The result of His love was "that he gave." Giving must have a gift to bestow. The term "only begotten Son" has appeared in this Gospel in John 1:14,18 and also in Hebrews 11:17 and indicates a unique, special relationship. The single Greek word translated "only begotten" is monogenes. "In him" asserts the simplest relationship by the preposition "in" (eis). The Ancient writers often used this adjective to describe a child's unique relationship with their parent. Moreover, the emphasis was on the specific relationship, not the physical begetting itself. In fact, monogenes is better understood to describe a relationship as "one-of-a-kind" or "unique." Consider when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac as an offering. God says to Abraham, "Take your son, your only (monogenes) son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (Genesis 22:2). Of course, before Abraham an carry out this command, God stops Abraham and says, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only (monogenes) son, from me" (Genesis 22:12). Eternal emphasizes quality rather than duration. It is eternal because it is Christ's life in us, not because we cannot lose it. It begins here and now with believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Its source and origin is in the life of God himself.

2. **3:17:** "For" links the previous verse with this one and provides the reason for the sending. God "gave" by "sending." God "sent" not that He might judge the world, but that He might save the world.
3. **3:18:** "Believeth on him." "Believeth" is a present participle and indicates continuous action. Those who keep on believing and trusting in Jesus are not condemned, are not under judgment. "Hath not believed" is a perfect tense meaning they did not and still do not believe.
4. **3:19:** The Lord himself reveals the cause of the condemnation, the basis of their judgment. He does not say they are very wicked, though some are. Light is the revelation of what God is. To reject the Light is to reject God. Excluding oneself from God severs unbelievers from the source of life. Their love of darkness leads to their rejection of the revelation (light) of God as manifested in the only begotten (unique, one-of-a-kind) Son. The love men have for darkness is a steadfast sort of love. It is a love to which they are completely devoted. "Because their deeds were evil" renders proof of the darkness they loved. Evil (wicked, vile, vicious, evil-intended, degenerate) deeds proceed from darkness. Conduct is the evidence of character. The greatest of all deeds of darkness is unbelief. Sin thrives in darkness. To receive Christ is to receive light, and to reject Christ is to remain in darkness.
5. **3:20:** "For" clarifies Jesus' reason for the statement in verse 19, just as verse 19 gives the reason for men's rejecting the light. "The light" is the revelation of God in the Son. Since man has chosen darkness, he "doeth evil", he practices evil; that is, he makes evil his lifestyle. This indicates actions with low or worthless motives. Verse 19 speaks of active evil

deeds. They are a moral cancer. Verse 20 speaks of base and worthless things and includes those things that may seem good but are not motivated by love. A selfish motive reveals the darkness in which the motive was born. The person who does these worthless things does not want his deeds reproved by being exposed and rebuked.

6. **3.21:** The one who has made his decision for Christ keeps coming to “the light.” He lives the truth. He keeps on putting the truth into practice. He is able to do this because he comes to “the light” and wants his practice to conform to the truth revealed in Jesus Christ. Thus, the blood of Jesus cleanses him continuously (I John 1:7). Such a one compares his conduct with that which is revealed in Christ. He studies the Holy Word and prays to be conformed to the image of Christ (James 1:23; II Corinthians 3:18); Romans 8:29). He comes to “the light” because he wants his deeds to be revealed, for it is in God that they have been accomplished or carried out. This does not mean that the believer ever makes mistakes or that he never sins. But when he does, he comes to “the light” in search of forgiveness and guidance. (I John 1:7 to 2:1).