

## Sunday School 3/28/21

### God's Love for His Elect and the Law as His Grace

I wanted to go ahead this morning and teach the next installment in the Does God Love Everyone sub-series of the Wednesday Gospel of John Bible Study. I intended to get to it last Wednesday but it took most of the class time to deal with John 3:16-18 – for God so loved *the world*. Which at first glance is taken to mean that yes, God does love everyone because He loved the world.

In this consideration of the question, Does God Love Everyone? – we are dealing with the gospel itself. A wrong answer to this question will necessarily result in a false gospel that says:

- God's attitude toward every human being is the same
- God's love does not involve His election of His chosen people, but is something that is in itself not irresistible power to save
- The cross as an expression of God's love did not actually accomplish the salvation of an elect, chosen flock, but is just a picture of God's love toward all
- It perverts the doctrine of the holy justice of God
- It excuses sin – “well after all, God loves me anyway”
- And the idea that God loves everyone will necessarily move toward universalism – the idea that in the end, everyone will be saved.

And practically, the unthinking, careless pronouncement that God loves everyone, causes real damage to people, particularly to people who have been victims of evil. Why? Because it is a very loaded statement that also says, “You must be like Christ. You must love your persecutor

and work to save him, and to desire only good for him and continue in a relationship with him.....”. The statement, “God loves everyone” is like a knife stabbing such people in the heart. It says in unspoken yet very clear words that it is evil to seek justice and to look forward to the day when Christ comes and takes vengeance upon the wicked.

Now, what I want to do this morning is to have us think about this question which, as I have mentioned, our friends the Austins have discussed and asked me about: *What is God’s attitude toward the elect before they are actually born again? Does God regard all unregenerate people the same? Was there a time when God looked at me in the same way as the rest? And if so, why is it then that I am a Christian and my neighbor isn’t?*

Does God love all unregenerate people the same? Or does He love them at all? *Was there a time when God did not love me at all?*

After all, does the Bible not say-

- Eph 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.**

The London Confession of Faith says this:

God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect,<sup>11</sup> and Christ did in the fullness of time die for their sins, and rise again for their

justification;<sup>12</sup> nevertheless, they are not justified personally, until the Holy Spirit in time does actually apply Christ to them (Chapter 11, sub 4)

Before I was born again, I was dead in my sins just like every other unsaved person. So at that time did God regard me like all the rest? I am not asking if there was something in me that would have caused God to love me in some way, but what I am asking is *Did God, by His own choice set His love upon me at all, and if He did, did He do the same to all the rest? Because if God loves everyone, then surely this means He loves all people in the same way, and does that not preclude the doctrine of election?*

### Keep Reading in Ephesians 2

Eph 2:4-10 But God, being rich in mercy, because of **the great love with which he loved us**, (5) even when **we** were dead in our trespasses, made **us** alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (6) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (7) so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (8) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Now, in one sense we were just like the rest before we were born again – we were children of wrath. We followed the course of this world. We were dead in sin. BUT there was a huge difference between us and the rest – we were objects of *the great love with which he loved us*. The rest were not. Clearly the pronouns here “us,” “we,” “our,” are not being applied here to all unsaved people. Some God loved with a great love and in that love saved them. Others He did not love. That is quite clear,

is it not?

Does God love all unregenerate people? The answer is, no.

Does God show kindness (and even a kind of love) toward all? Yes. But this is not the same thing as this “great love with which He loved” His elect.

Rom 9:10-13 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, (11) though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— (12) she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” (13) As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

We see the same thing here. When did God love Jacob and hate Esau? It was before they were even born. Did God love Jacob AND Esau? No. He chose Jacob and rejected Esau. And the choice was not based upon anything “loveable” in Jacob.

### The Law as Whose Tutor?

Now, I am asking questions here and not dogmatically teaching that this is so – *Is it then possible that God, because of this great love with which He loves His elect even before they are actually born again...that God gives His Law to the elect at least in a way that He does not give it to the rest? And if this is so, do we not see that God's electing love for us was actively at work in us before we were born again, for the purpose of leading us to Christ and this leading by the Law was not something God does in the rest?*

**Practical Point:** How many of you can look back in your life now from your present perspective, and see points in your past life when God was leading and directing you *through His Law, through His Word, to Christ?*

Could it be then that verses like these in Galatians 3-4 are only speaking of God's Law-work *in the elect, and not in all human beings*:

Gal 3:21-26 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. (22) But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (23) Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. (24) **So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.** (25) But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (26) for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Gal 4:1-7 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, (2) but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. (3) **In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. (4) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,**

**(5) to redeem those who were under the law,** so that we might receive adoption as sons.

(6) And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (7) So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

My point is this: *God's Law is given to the elect at least in a way that it is not given to the rest. It functions as a tutor or guardian to lead us to Christ. Christ redeems those who were under the law. He does not redeem everyone.*

*And if this is true, then what we see here is still another aspect to the amazing love of God for us. He gave YOU His law and made you sensible of your guilt and condemnation and by it led you to Christ.*

### The Gentiles' Conscience – Do all Have the Law on Their Hearts?

Rom 2:12-15 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. (13) For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. (14) For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. (15) They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

Rom 7:7-25 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." (8) But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. (9) I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. (10) The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. (11) For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. (12) So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (13) Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. (14) For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. (15) For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. (16) Now if I do what I do not want, I agree

with the law, that it is good. (17) So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. (18) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. (19) For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. (20) Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. (21) So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. (22) For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, (23) but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (24) Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (25) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.