

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 24TH - 25TH, 2022 // BAPTISM WEEKEND

- Love is a word that has lost its meaning.
- God loves us—but what does that mean?
- How should we respond to God's love?
- What does baptism have to do with any of this?

THE LOVE OF GOD (PSALM 103:1-18)

The Book of Psalms is a collection of prayers, poems, and hymns that focus the worshiper's thoughts on God in praise and adoration (some were used in corporate worship).

- David wrote this psalm that calls us to praise (vs. 1-2a) and then gives us reason to praise (vs. 2b-19).
- David speaks of the quality and nature of God's love for His covenant people.

1. GOD'S LOVE IS GENEROUS (VS. 2-7)

David calls for all that is within his innermost being (his soul) to "bless the Lord" and not forget His benefits. It's easy in life to forget what God has done for us!

- For those who are His people, God has...
 - "Forgiven our iniquities." "Healed all our diseases." "Redeemed our life from the Pit." "Crowned us with faithful love and compassion." "Satisfied us with good things." "Renewed our youth..." "Executed acts of righteousness and justice for the oppressed." "Revealed to us His ways." We have done absolutely nothing to deserve any of these things: but God's love is generous.

2. GOD'S LOVE IS PATIENT (VS. 8-9)

In our natural fallen state as humans, we hold grudges and keep records of wrongs.

- We're also very quick to get offended, accuse others when they hurt or wrong us, and get easily angered.
- God is not like us: He is slow to anger and abounding in faithful, patient, steadfast love.
- David knew this aspect of God personally!

3. GOD'S LOVE IS EXTRAVAGANT (VS. 10-12)

- David's sins deserved much greater judgment or discipline than they had actually received.
- But God doesn't give us what we deserve because of our sins or repay us according to our iniquities (vs. 10).
- To those who fear Him, the faithful love of God is so vast, great, and unending that it's as high as the heavens are above the earth (vs. 11).
- To those who belong to God's covenant people, our sins, failures, rebellions, and faults have been removed by Him as far as the "east is from the west."
- Our sins and the accompanying punishment that our sins deserve are removed to an eternal distance by His extravagant mercy!

4. GOD'S LOVE IS PERSONAL (VS. 13-14)

If you're a parent, you show understanding, kindness, and love to your children because sometimes they just act like children.

- Like a perfect dad who cares for and even pities His children in their frailty and weakness, God loves and cares for those who fear Him in an intimate, tender, and personal way.

5. GOD'S LOVE IS ETERNAL (VS. 15-18)

Our lives as humans are so short and transient—like a flower in the field.

- But to those who fear Him and keep His covenant, God's faithful love is eternal and even generational ("... toward the grandchildren").
- Those that fear the Lord receive the benefit of this everlasting mercy, as do their children and children's children!

"TO THOSE WHO KEEP HIS COVENANT..."

These promises of everlasting love and mercy are given with conditions.

- These promises are only made to those who fear God, to those who are in covenant with Him, and to those who observe His precepts.
- The covenant of the Old Testament was a conditional agreement that God made with Israel.

In this "Old Covenant," Israel was required to obey God and keep the Law, and in return, He protected and blessed them (Deuteronomy 30:15–18; 1 Samuel 12:14–15).

- Israel couldn't keep the conditions of the covenant!
- This covenant established humanity's guilt before God, our need for a Savior, and pointed ahead to a New Covenant that God would establish with His people (Luke 22:20).v
- With His own blood shed on the cross, Jesus sealed the "New Covenant"—a promise that He will forgive sin and restore eternal fellowship with those whose hearts turn toward Him in faith.

The "New Covenant"...

- Is based on our faith in Christ's perfect sacrifice, not on our own works (Eph. 2:8-9).
- Leads to total, eternal forgiveness (Heb. 8:12).
- Involves inward transformation (Heb. 8:10).

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO GOD'S LOVE AND ENTER INTO THIS COVENANT WITH GOD THROUGH JESUS?

Under the New Covenant, we are given the opportunity to receive "God's benefits" and enter into relationship with Him through faith.

- Our responsibility is simply to exercise faith in Jesus: the One who fulfilled the Law on our behalf and paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. But what is saving faith?

REPENTANCE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF FAITH.

Repentance is sorrow for sin, walking away from it, and committing to leave it behind and walk in obedience to Christ.

- Acts 3:19

REPENTANCE IS...

- Turning from sin (Matt. 4:17; Acts 3:19).
- Turning from self (Luke 9:23; Mark 8:35).
- Changing of the mind and heart (Isaiah 55:6-7).
- A personal decision to make a clean break from lifestyles and patterns of sin
- A submission to the ways of God and the Word of God and what it says about us, our sin, life, and who God is (Psalm 51:4).

SAVING FAITH IS FAITH IN CHRIST: NOT IN RELIGION.

Saving faith in Christ is personal trust in Jesus as a living person that offers forgiveness of sins, eternal life with God, and a life in the Kingdom of God here and now.

- Acts 16:30-31

An active trust in the power, promise, and person of Christ for salvation (John 6:37).

- An absolute surrender to the Lordship and authority of Christ that is displayed through obedience (Romans 10:9).
- Praying a prayer?
- Since personal faith in Christ must involve an actual decision of the will, it is often very helpful to express that decision in spoken words.

A MATTER OF THE HEART.

- Repentance.
- Faith in Christ, not in religion or in ourselves.
- Surrender.
- The New Covenant has a spiritual means of entrance: someone must believe in Christ through genuine, repentant faith in their heart and be born again into salvation (Acts 16:31).

SYMBOLS AND SIGNS.

Someone born (physically) under the Old Covenant in Israel received the sign of that covenant (circumcision).

- Likewise, someone born (spiritually) under the New Covenant ("born again," John 3:3) receives the sign of that covenant (baptism, Col. 2:11-12).
- These symbols and signs don't save us; they simply display an inner spiritual reality.

WATER BAPTISM.

Baptism is our public, symbolic profession of faith in our allegiance to Jesus as Savior and Lord.

- It's our way as disciples of Jesus of publicly declaring before the people of God...
- "I've repented of my sins" (burial by water).
- "I've been cleansed of my sins" (washing by water).
- "I am a new creation in Christ" (rising from the water).
- "I intend to follow Him with my life" (identifying with Christ).
- Acts 2:38–39,41. Matt. 28:19–20. Matt. 3:16–17

Baptism is something we do physically that symbolizes what God has done in us spiritually.

- Baptism is how we, as disciples of Jesus, profess the change that has occurred in us through active faith in Jesus Christ.
- Baptism symbolizes the washing and cleansing of sin we experience in salvation (Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16).
- Baptism shows that we've been forgiven, covered, and given a new life and purpose.

Baptism symbolizes the union we share with Christ as we find in Him salvation and embrace His call to discipleship (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12).

- Baptism shows that we've been changed and given a new identity (2 Cor. 5:17)!
- Baptism is a symbol of beginning the Christian life, so it's given only to those who have already begun the Christian life (Acts 2:41)—it shows outwardly what's already happened inwardly.

"WHAT ARE WE SAYING WHEN WE'RE BAPTIZED?"

1. I'm a sinner unable to make myself right before God.
2. Jesus died for me the death I deserved because of my sin, and He rose again.
3. I've repented of my sin.
4. I'm trusting in Christ to be made right before God.
5. I now want all the world to know it.

THERE IS A GOD WHO DESIRES A COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU.

- We deserve eternal death and banishment from God's presence because of our sins.
- But God Himself took on flesh, came and dwelt among us, and died the death we deserved on the cross.
- Why? Because God desired to restore us to relationship with Himself!

THE RELATIONSHIP GOD WANTS WITH YOU.

- God doesn't just want a transactional relationship with you.
- God doesn't just want a distant, impersonal, and detached relationship with you.
- God wants to forgive, redeem, heal, and satisfy you with good things (Ps. 103:3-5).
- God wants you in His family as a son or a daughter (Psalm 103:13)!

THE LOVE OF GOD IS GENEROUS, PATIENT, EXTRAVAGANT, PERSONAL, AND ETERNAL.

- You've not out-sinned the grace and love of God—His faithful love towards those who fear Him is as high as the heavens (Ps. 103:11).
- The sins of your past can be completely and forever removed (Ps. 103:12).
- God can renew your wasted years and give you a completely new life (Ps. 103:5).

HAVE YOU RESPONDED TO HIS GREAT LOVE?

- Do you believe that God loves you?
- Not a future version of you, not just the best parts of you, and not the religious version of you: He loves YOU in all of your mess.
- Have you received God's forgiveness, salvation, and all of "His benefits" through repentance and faith in Jesus? Are you too ashamed to love Him back publicly?

WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM ME?

- Matthew 22:37-38