



In the Hands of the Refiner

Does God Love Everyone?

Yes. And no. The question is deceptively difficult. The Bible speaks of God's love in several different ways. D.A. Carson, in his excellent book *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, mentions five (p. 16-19): 1) The peculiar love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father; 2) God's providential love over all that He has made; 3) God's salvific stance toward His fallen world; 4) God's particular, effective, selecting love toward His elect; and 5) God's love toward His own people in a provisional way, conditioned upon obedience.

After giving a brief biblical explanation for each way, Carson explains the danger of emphasizing one aspect of the love of God over the others. If God's love is defined exclusively by His intra-Trinitarian love, which is perfect and unblemished by sin, we will not grasp the glory of God in loving rebels like us. If God's love is nothing but His providential care over all things, we will struggle to see how the Gospel is any good news at all because, after all, doesn't He love everyone already? If God's love is seen solely as His desire to save the world, we will end up with an emotionally charged God who does not display the same sense of sovereignty we see in the pages of Scripture. If God's love is only understood as His electing love, we will too easily say God hates all sorts of people, when that truth requires a good deal more nuance.

Moreover, if God's love is bound up entirely in warnings like "keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21), we will fall into legalism and lots of unwarranted self-doubt.

Talking about God's love sounds like a simple theological task, but it is actually one of the trickiest. I have heard of churches debating whether their kids should be taught "Jesus Loves Me" (some of the children might be reprobate, you never know). I know many more churches which so emphasize God's all-encompassing love for everyone everywhere, that it's hard to figure out why anyone should bother to become a Christian.

The fact is that God loves everyone, and He does not. He hates the world and He loves the world. He cannot possibly love His adopted children any more than He does, and He is profoundly grieved by our sin. The challenge of good theology is to explain how the Bible provides warrant for all those statements and how they all fit together.

Any one truth about the love of God pressed to the exclusion of the others will make for a distorted deity and deadly discipleship. "In short," Carson counsels, "we need all of what Scripture says on this subject, or the doctrinal and pastoral ramifications will prove disastrous" (23).

Is God's love unconditional?

There is such a thing as unconditional love in God, but it is not what most people mean by it.

It is not a saving love that He has for everybody. Else, everybody would be saved, since they would not have to meet any conditions, not even faith. However, Jesus said not everybody is saved (Matthew 25:46). It is not the love that justifies sinners since the Bible says we are justified by faith, and faith is a condition (Romans 5:1). It is not the love of working all things together for our good because Paul says that happens "to those who love God" (Romans 8:28). It is not the love of the most intimate fellowship with the Father because Jesus said, "He who loves me will be loved by my Father" (John 14:21). In addition, James said, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). It is not the love that will admit us into heaven when we die because John says, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Faithfulness is a condition.

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President: Ouitdee Carson
V.P.: Carolyn Lofald
Treasurer: Sandy Carlson

Every Month:

Every Wed. at 6:30 PM
Bible Study

Mary Circle
First Thursday of each month
at 9:30 AM (Postponed until
further notice)

Esther Circle
First Thursday of each month
at 6:30 PM (Postponed until
further notice)

Dorcas Circle
Second Tuesday of each
month at 1:00 PM (Postponed
until further notice)

Lutherans for Life
Second Sunday of each month
at 6:30 PM (Postponed until
further notice)

Council Meeting
Second Thursday of each
month at 6:30 PM

How then does God love unconditionally?

Two ways (at least): He loves us with electing love unconditionally. “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world . . . for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:4-5). He does not base this election on foreseeing our faith. On the contrary, our faith is the result of being chosen and appointed to believe, as Acts 13:48 says, “As many as were appointed to eternal life believed.”

He loves us with regenerating love before we meet any condition. The new birth is not God’s response to our meeting the condition of faith. On the contrary, the new birth enables us to believe.

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been [already!] born of God,” (1 John 5:1). “[We] were born, not . . . of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).

Let us pray that thousands of people who speak of the unconditional love of God would discover the biblical meaning of what they say. If that happened, many would find their feet on solid ground.

In the December 15, 2003 issue of the Orlando Sentinel. “CAPTURED,” read the front-page headline, “feared dictator found alone in rat-infested hole.” With sincere wonder, I remember gazing into the eyes of the worn and unkempt former Iraqi leader, asking myself: “Does God love this man — does He actually love Saddam Hussein?” In responding to this question, some might retort, “No way, not a chance — how dare you ask such a question!” However, others might say, “Of course God loves Him, God loves everyone — how dare you ask such a question!”

The real question, though, concerns not only Saddam Hussein but also everyone throughout the entire world. The real question is, “Whom does God love?” Such a question is not just for theologians, it is a question for all — a question for the church and, indeed, a question for the world. Does God love everyone in the same manner? Does He love Saddam Hussein more or less than Osama bin Laden? Does He love them more than Adolf Hitler? Does He love them any less than the local abortionist? Perhaps He loves them less than the next-door neighbor who hates the church, hates God, and hates everyone who professes Jesus Christ.

The love of God is foundational to our faith, yet it is one of the more misunderstood doctrines in the church today. We parade God’s love on key-chains, tee shirts, bumper stickers, and large banners at football games. We pronounce the unconditional love of God upon everyone, and we throw it about so whimsically that we have made it virtually worthless. Because of the church’s mishandling this most precious doctrine, the love of God has become but a whispering wind.

For us, the question remains: Whom does God love? Is His love the same for everyone? Is it equally bestowed upon every person on earth? The answers to these questions are at the very heart of who we are as Christians. These questions, though difficult to ask, are necessary and must be answered. Nevertheless, our answers to these questions cannot come by way of our own feelings and attitudes however strong they may be. Rather, our answers to such questions must come directly from God’s sacred Word. For it is His Word that reveals His character, and it is His character that conforms our worship of Him. As Thomas Aquinas wrote: *Theologia Deum docet, ab Deo docetur, et ad Deum ducit* (theology teaches God, is taught by God, and leads to God). The apostle Paul identifies the Word of God as the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17). He calls us to arm ourselves with it and to handle it rightly (2 Tim. 2:15). Thus, in our wielding of the Word, we must be diligent in keeping to the task to which we have been called. We must not forget that our Enemy, like a roaring lion, prowls around seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

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By the Enemy's craft, the world has carefully schemed; it has selected its own passages of sacred Scripture and uses these passages for its own ends. In its clever deception, the world uses passages concerning tolerance, unity, and love — all of which are used by the world to promote its own religion;

though it shall be proven a religion of death, destruction, and eternal misery. Foremost in the minds of the men of the world are passages they have chosen to justify pluralism: "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). They use such passages to justify homosexual unity: "There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:28). Moreover, in attempting to justify themselves before a loving God, they use such passages to pronounce the unconditional, eternal love of God upon themselves: "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

What the world does not understand, however, is that in seeking justification for its own religion it is securing its own condemnation. The passages of Scripture the world promotes are contained within a unit — they do not stand-alone. In not "judging," we are told that God is Judge (2 Tim. 4:1). In our union with Christ, we are told that He is Lord over men and women (1 Cor. 11:3). In addition, concerning God's love, we are told that it is special (Eph. 2:4). His is a unique love that is bound by His own immutable character (1 John 4:9). It should not be thrown around carelessly. Rather, it is to be cherished and praised (Song 2:4; Eph. 1:4).

Throughout Scripture, God affirms His love for His people. In the Old Testament, God demonstrates His love in calling a people unto Himself (Ex. 33:16). From out of the world He drew a holy people, a set-apart nation upon which He pronounced His covenant love (Gen. 15–17; Ex. 4:22). In the Ten Commandments, the Lord gives credence to His commandment concerning idols. He declares, "For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:5–6; see also 34:7; Num. 14:18; Deut 5:10; 2 Chron. 5:13).

In reminding His people of His covenant of peace, God declares through the prophet Isaiah, "'My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,' says the Lord who has compassion on you" (Isa. 54:10). Still, the Lord extended His covenant love to those foreigners who would enter His covenant, who would "love the name of the Lord" and be "his servants" (Isa. 56:6). However, His covenant love was not without condition; for it is manifested in God's oath to fulfill His promise of salvation (Gen. 3:15).

In the New Testament, the love of God is likewise covenantal in nature. Nevertheless, in the New Testament, God makes it clearer that His covenant love reaches not only to the nation of Israel but also to all peoples. When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night inquiring of Jesus' true identity and mission, this is made clear. After explaining to this ruler of the Jews how one is born-again, Jesus answered Nicodemus telling him very plainly that He came not to condemn the world but to save the world (John 3:16–17). It is clear that Jesus defined His salvation of the world in terms of all those who believe. No longer was the covenant love of God pronounced solely upon the nation of Israel. In the new covenant, God pronounced His love upon all nations throughout the entire world (Acts 10; Rom. 1:16–17; 10:12).

In the new covenant, the Gospel is preached to all people, and our prayers of supplication are offered on behalf of all people (1 Tim. 2:4). We are commanded to love our enemies and pray for them (Matt. 5:44). Yet, in praying for them, we pray that God would convert their souls. Moreover, we pray not only for our unbelieving relatives whom we love, but we pray for our neighbors who hate us; we pray for our local abortionists, and we pray for the terrorists of the world. In this way, God's love is expressed to all. For indeed His love of benevolence is pronounced generally to all peoples throughout the entire world (Luke 2:8; John 3:16).

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*Drive-thru communion
services at Christ Lutheran
Church will be held on the
1st and 3rd Sundays of the month.*

Still, even though God displays general love to all people in giving sunlight and rain, His special love is demonstrated toward His people in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). This sweet love of God, (His “complacent” love in the traditional sense of the word), is set upon His people from the foundations of the earth (Eph. 1:4). His love has been poured out into our hearts (Rom. 5:5). He has secured us forever in His steadfast love (Deut. 5:10), and He has established us in the love of Christ from which we shall never be separated (Rom. 8:31–39). But not all are loved in this way; for He says, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (Mal. 1:2; Rom. 9:13). Esau was an enemy of God (Heb. 12:16), but Jacob was blessed by God (Gen. 32:29).

We, the people of God, are led to repentance because of God’s kindness to us (Rom. 2:4), but those who do not fulfill the conditions of God’s love in Christ shall suffer His righteous judgment (Rom. 2:5). In addition, even though many say that God hates the sin but loves the sinner, it is not the sin that God condemns to hell. Rather, because of His special love for us, He saves us from His wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:9–10), and He disciplines us precisely because He loves us (Heb. 12:6). He enables us to love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), and, in keeping His Word, His love is made complete in us (John 17:8; 1 John 2:5).

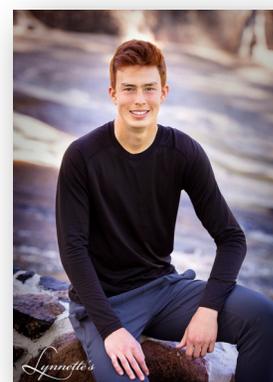
The love of God is a most precious love that God has set upon His people. Indeed, His love is bestowed upon all people without distinction of race, ethnicity, or class (Rom. 3:29). Yet, it is not a love that is bestowed upon all people without exception (John 17:9), even though the Gospel is proclaimed to all people without exception (Rom. 10:13–15). We see this truth displayed in the high-priestly prayer of Jesus upon the hour of His death; in praying for His followers, He said, “I am praying for them, I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me ... I do not ask for these only, but for those who will believe in me through their word ... that they may be perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (John 17:9–23).

For we are His covenant people whom He has redeemed by His own sacrifice. He is our Father whom we adore and worship. He is our King — we are sons and daughters of His kingdom and have been brought in to feast at His royal table. Indeed, the special, saving love of God has not been manifested to everyone everywhere. However, by His grace, He has set His love upon us and has made His face to shine upon us (Num. 6:24). For God, “being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” — by grace we have been saved (Eph. 2:4–5).

~ by Kevin DeYoung, John Piper, and Burk Parsons. Edited by Rev. Gary DeSha



**You're invited to join a celebration honoring Zach Carson's
graduation from Hermantown High School!
Saturday, August 15th from 2pm to 5pm
Beverages, light food, and desserts.**



Sunday services are still livestreamed on our Facebook page:
Christ Lutheran Church Duluth at 9:30 AM



Christ Lutheran Church Duluth



Christ Lutheran Church Duluth

Maintenance Report for August 2020

A few of our recent maintenance projects:

We continue to thank Jim Carlson for his mowing and trimming for us. Also the Esther Circle for keeping the gardens growing so beautifully. Everything looks so nice when we come for Sunday Services!

Other than just a small sentence in the previous messenger, we will share our plans for the parsonage now that our daycare is closed. Pastor and Sue have offered to move in to help with our budget. Their lease is up the end of August. We have been working on freshening up the interior. We have started removing the wall paper in the kitchen, thanks to our custodian Gary. He is also willing to help with the painting. So thankful for that! We will be painting all the upstairs rooms including the ceilings. Some of these rooms have not been painted since Pastor Myke moved in in 2000. We will be removing the carpeting and installing laminate in the living and dining rooms. The bedroom floors actually have hardwood which is a bonus. There are a couple of lighting fixes that will be done and we also will be installing a new toilet in the upstairs bathroom. We had a small leak in the copper line that ran along the ceiling in the downstairs bathroom and that has now been fixed. We will have to patch the hole. God willing, it will be ready for them as of September 1!

Due to the age of the toilet in the upstairs bathroom at the church and numerous small fixes through out the years, the decision was made to install a new high-rise toilet! Now we don't have to listen to make sure it is no longer running and it completely flushes the first time!!!

We will be installing framework around the new breaker box in the refrigerator area to clean that up as that did not get finished when it was replaced. Judi offered to paint that area too when time allows. Bless her heart!

The back exterior entrance has been stained. The corners that were damaged were replaced and stained also. The back door has also been repainted. Big improvement! The grass is finally coming in at that entrance also. When the weather cools off we will do a little landscaping there, too!

Perrault is looking into the siding that needs to be repaired in the back.

We have been blessed beyond measure to have the funds and the volunteers to care for our church, our parsonage and its grounds. To God be the Glory! Please contact the church office if you would like to help with a project!

Due to the upcoming time restraint with preparing the parsonage for the move, we are requesting help with applying the sealer to our playset. This is certainly a social distancing job and it is outside. Please contact the office if you are able to provide assistance with this task.

Thank you

Carolyn Lofald, Vice President



Dear Ones,

Thank you so much for the cards, emails, texts, and phone calls during my recovery from my fall and surgery for my broken wrist.

I'm healing well but I still have a long way to go before I have complete range of motion and use of my right arm. I'm grateful for your friendship and continued prayers most of all.

Philippians 1:3: "I thank my God every time I remember you".

In Christ,

Wendy Pickar

Dear CLC Family,

COMMUNITY FOOD SHARE

We completed our first Community Food Share on Friday, July 24th! Thanks to all who helped pack grocery bags on Thursday evening. We did 100 bags with enough food for a dinner and two lunches for a family of four (spaghetti with meat sauce, macaroni and cheese, a loaf of bread with peanut butter and jam, a can of green beans another of pork and beans). We included fresh fruit and passed out extra bags for larger families. Super One was a great blessing to us and provided everything at a low price so our bags averaged out to \$10 each. Sandy Carlson made awesome fabric masks to share, and the people who came were so grateful. We collected contact information so we can reach out to them with future dates.

We started by inviting needy families from Piedmont Elementary that come to school in the summer for lunch. We served 60 people and have over half of the packed bags left. We donated the leftover bread and fruit to Union Gospel Mission which was received with great thanksgiving because they were running short. Our plan is to cast the invitation net wider going forward by reaching out to other schools in the district.

Thank you to Don and Priscilla Olson who challenged us to begin this new ministry, to Pastor for coordinating the event, and we appreciate those who donated time, money, and prayer to get us started.

Another Community Food Share is in the works for August, and will continue each month as the Lord provides. Keep your eyes peeled for information coming soon, and I promise to take photos at our next Food Share so you can join in from a distance.

CAMPING WITH THE GRANDKIDS AND WE'RE MOVING!

Some of you may know that Pastor and I were able to purchase our first camper this summer, a dream come true for both of us. Grandkids from Arizona, Alexis and Tyler, joined us for two weeks in Minnesota; and Henry, Harlan, and baby Gunner joined us for a great time at Stony Point Campground in Cass Lake this week. Wow, we had a great time!

Thank you for taking such good care of Pastor and I as we paint, clean and pack this month to move into the parsonage. We appreciate you and love you dearly!

Sue

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Financial Update

June Income: \$14,959.67	June Expenses: \$15,365.02	June Income \$405.35 under expenses
YTD Income: \$86,886.86	YTD Expenses: \$102,196.48	YTD income \$15,309.62 under expenses
Adjusted income with PPL: YTD income \$10,667.15 over expenses.		

June Mission of the Month: KDNW Radio - \$210.00

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21

PLEASE PRAY FOR....

*Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
James 5:14*

Our Pastor & the Leadership of the Church
CLC Lighthouse & CLC Clubhouse- kids & leaders
All of our students from pre-school to college
Mission of the Month: Lutheran Bible Translators
Our Country, Military & Police

The teachers and students at all schools
Persecuted Christians throughout the world
Piedmont Elementary
The steadfastness of our faith

THOSE WITH HEALTH NEEDS:

Vi Boder	Jane McLean	Ruth Peterson
Bob Johnson	Jean Sundstrom	Ruth Dahl
Mary Jenny	Katie Lund	Carol Schramm
Lorna McLean	Susan Johnson	Florence Kubiak
Marlene Stauber	Judy Stocke	Evelyn Johnson
Laura Melander	Carol Johnson	Bryan Goepfinger
Dennis Peterson	Carol Blair	Donna Swanson & Family
Mark Malander	Barb Hanson	Darlene Saaf
Diane Malander	Brian McDonald	Del Sandberg
Kathy Stevens		

If there are any people who have been accidently overlooked, please contact the church office. We apologize for any oversights.

August Mission of the Month: *Lutheran Bible Translators*

Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) has been bringing the Scriptures to people without the Bible for 50 years. An independent Lutheran mission organization, their missionary efforts are funded completely by the generous donations of churches and individuals.

Starting in Liberia and Sierra Leone, they have grown to 78 missionaries serving in 17 countries on 5 continents. LBT missionaries, working with local churches and partners, have helped translate over 30 New Testaments, making God’s Word available to more than 7 million people. But there are still more than 4,000 languages in the world have no portion of the Scriptures translated into their language. This represents over 350 million people.

As people use, study, and share Scripture, their lives are transformed through God’s grace and the Holy Spirit. LBT believe all people should have the opportunity to understand God’s Good News as presented in the Scriptures. No language or cultural barrier should prevent people from having access to God’s Word.

Please prayerfully consider a donation to this month’s chosen mission. You may make checks payable to Christ Lutheran Church. Thank you for your continued support in our mission “*To know Christ and to make Him known.*”



Jean Sundstrom
August 20

Jeff Yeager
August 26

Lorna McLean
August 29