

Christ Crucified: God's Love Manifested

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9-10).

While many people who call themselves Reformed are inventing theories about God's love, let us who are sober-minded hold to *Sola Scriptura*. The Biblical man will approach the issue of the love of God in this way: What does the Scripture say about the love of God, and what does the Scripture say about the manifestation of Divine love? Away with the man-made philosophies that are so prevalent in today's "Reformed" circles! Give me the Word of God!

Any student of the Scripture would see that there is no instance in the entire Bible in which God loves the reprobate. In fact, there are so many proofs of the opposite that one would have to twist these undoubtedly perspicuous passages beyond recognition and mix in some worldly philosophy to concoct a theory of universal love. But this is a subject for another time. We will focus here on the manifestation of God's love, for it so powerfully puts to rest the vain speculations of man.

What better way to find out the extent of God's love than to search the Scriptures for His manifestation of His love? This manifestation of His love gives us a clear understanding as to the extent of His love. Is it universal, or is it particular?

As we will see, the Bible states over and over that God's love is manifested in the giving of His Son to die for those He loves. The passage above in 1 John is one such passage. How did God show His love? By sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins so we might live through Him. Is this talking about the reprobate? If anyone thinks so, then he is no better than the God-hating Arminian who believes that the propitiation was for everyone.

Jesus said in John 3:16 that God's manifestation of love to the *kosmos* was that He sent His Son so that a certain number of people would be saved. Again, the atonement — Christ crucified — is the manifestation of God's love. He said in John 15:13, "*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*" The laying down of His life is a direct reference to the atonement.

Romans 5:5-8 again gives us a view of God's love and the objects of His love: "*Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

How did God demonstrate His love toward us? He sent Christ to *die* for us!! Christ died for all those God loves!

See how love continues to be tied to the work of Christ: "*But God, who is rich in mercy, because*

of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised [us] up together, and made [us] sit together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in [His] kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-7). God makes those He loves alive in Christ!

Again: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:25-26). Christ gave Himself up for those He loves.*

The latter part of Romans 8 is overflowing with the love of God. Those He foreknew — foreloved — He predestined, called, and justified (vv. 29-30), and no one and nothing can separate us from the love of God or bring a charge against God’s elect, because Christ Jesus died for us (vv. 31-35)! And look at verse 39: the love of God is in whom? Christ Jesus, our Lord!

Titus 3:4-7, sometimes used by advocates of universal love, actually says just the opposite of what they say it says. Again, as you read this passage, ask yourself, “What is the demonstration — the manifestation — of God’s love?” *“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* When His love for man appeared, what did He do? He saved us! Whom did He save? He saved those He loved.

Finally, the clincher (as if the other verses did not clearly set it forth): Ask any of the so-called “Reformed” advocates of universal love how we know God’s love. Then take them to 1 John 3:16: **“BY THIS WE KNOW LOVE, BECAUSE HE LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US”!!** Advocates of universal love *must ultimately* advocate universal atonement. Oh, yes, they might sound so bold on particular redemption, but they already have the seeds of universal atonement planted in their hearts.

This ties right in with the lie of the well-meant offer, because the advocates of universal love say that the way God manifests His love toward all men without exception is that He sincerely desires their salvation and offers salvation out of love for them. If you read any of the Marrow Men such as Thomas Boston or the Erskines, you will see that universal love and the well-meant offer lead directly to universal atonement. These men (and many after them) espoused the idea that “Christ was dead for all men” and that Christ was the “official savior of all men.”

The lie of universal love also leads to Universalism. If God loves all and, out of that love, atoned for the sins of all, then all will be in heaven. In fact, Universalists are much more consistent in their theology than Arminians or “Reformed” advocates of universal love! They at least acknowledge that Christ died for those God loved and that Christ’s atonement was efficacious!

The lie of universal love also leads to Annihilationism. John R.W. Stott is the most famous of the professedly Reformed to have come to this position. This heresy stems from the view that since God loves the reprobate, He would not have them suffer an eternity in Hell but just puts them into nonexistence after they die.

If an advocate of universal love does not take an Annihilationist stance, then he must take the stance that God is not immutable. Does God still love those who are screaming in the torments of hell? If He does not, then He must have changed His mind about them once they died. He loved them when they were alive, and He hates them after they die. A common statement you may have heard from some of the old-time advocates of universal love is that God sends people to hell for scorning His love for them.

Finally, advocates of universal love are allied with Arminianism. For they, with the Arminians, say that some whom God loves go to hell. The "Reformed" people are more sophisticated than the Arminians when they talk of two different kinds of love (saving and general). They say, "God loves everybody, but He loves the elect in a special way." Does this not profane Ephesians 5:25? How wicked it would be for a husband to say to his wife, "I love all the other women in the world and desire that they be married to me, but I have a special love for you"!

Oh, how the man of God rejoices in sovereign, particular love! Oh, how he is overcome with love for the One who suffered, bled, died the death of a criminal, and endured God's wrath for those He loves! He did not do this for everyone! He did not die for everyone! He does not love everyone! But He loves even me, a vile, hell-deserving sinner.

Oh, how the man of God is repulsed by the lie of universal love! For he realizes that a love for all means no love at all. He realizes that a love for all means that God, out of love for all, manifested this love by sending Jesus to shed His precious blood for those who are being punished in everlasting fire. He cannot stand the "well, there's a different kind of love for the reprobate" line. For this cheapens His precious love for His bride.

Particular love resulted in particular redemption. There is no other love than that in which God loves Christ and all those who are in Christ.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ... I am the good shepherd; and I know My [sheep], and am known by My own. As the father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10: 11,14-15).

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