

# IS GOD'S LOVE UNCONDITIONAL?

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## I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Scripture teaches that God is love, His love is unfailing, unilateral (one-sided in initiation) and undeserved, but is it *unconditional*?
- B. Preachers (and I!) often speak of God's unconditional love, but we need to define our terms
  - 1. Unconditional = “not subject to/limited by any conditions”
  - 2. Conditional = “subject to one or more conditions or requirements being met; made or granted on certain terms”
- C. We will examine 3 aspects:
  - 1. Where did this idea come from?
  - 2. What do the Scriptures say?
  - 3. What should be our attitude/response?

## II. ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

- A. The term is never found in any of the writings of the early Church fathers – it is a modern idea!
- B. The term first became popular during the “free love” hippie/flower children drug culture of the 1960s
- C. The concept crept into the Church from the 1970s onward

## III. WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

- A. The term “unconditional love” is never found in the Scriptures!
- B. Does God love everyone?
  - 1. **Mal. 1:2-3** (quoted in Rom. 9:13): <sup>2</sup>“*I have loved you,*” says the LORD. “*But you ask, ‘How have You loved us?’ ‘Was not Esau Jacob's brother?’ the LORD says. ‘Yet I have loved Jacob, <sup>3</sup>but Esau I have hated...*”
  - 2. **Ps. 5:4-6**: <sup>4</sup>*You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with You the wicked cannot dwell. <sup>5</sup>The arrogant cannot stand in Your presence; **You hate all who do wrong.** <sup>6</sup>You destroy those who tell lies; **bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors.** [See Rev. 21:8]*

3. **Ps. 11:5-6:** *<sup>5</sup>The LORD examines the righteous, but **the wicked and those who love violence His soul hates.** <sup>6</sup>On the wicked He will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot.*
  4. **Hos. 9:15:** [To Israel]: *“Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, **I hated them** there. Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of My house. **I will no longer love them;** all their leaders are rebellious.”*
- C. God’s merciful love for the world
1. **John 3:16:** *For **God so loved the world** that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*
  2. God graciously and unilaterally offered His Son as the remedy for all of mankind’s ills; He doesn’t want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9), takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:32), and wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4)
  3. But there are conditions (e.g. note the words “whoever believes” in John 3:16)...
- D. What we actually find in Scripture are numerous CONDITIONS or REQUIREMENTS that man must meet in order to be **reconciled** to God: Reconciliation is a very important concept that few in the Church understand
1. Reconcile = “to restore friendly relations; to reestablish a close relationship; to settle, resolve, bring into agreement”
  2. Because of sin and rebellion (ever since the Fall), we were enemies toward God (**Col. 1:21-22**): *<sup>21</sup>Once you were **alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.** <sup>22</sup>But now He has **reconciled you** by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation.*
  3. But we were also God’s enemies (**Rom. 5:6-10**): *<sup>6</sup>When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But **God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** <sup>9</sup>Since we have now been*

This is the one case of God's love being unconditional – when He sent His Son to die for us!

*justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him! <sup>10</sup>For if, when WE WERE GOD'S ENEMIES, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!*

## E. FOUR CONDITIONS OF GOD'S LOVE

### 1. Repentance

"Perish" does not refer to mere death; it refers to hell & eternal damnation

- a) **2 Pet. 3:9:** *The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but EVERYONE TO COME TO REPENTANCE.***
- b) **Luke 13:1-5:** <sup>1</sup>*Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup>Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? <sup>3</sup>I tell you, no! **But unless you repent, you too will all perish.** <sup>4</sup>Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup>I tell you, no! **But unless you repent, you too will all perish.**"*
- c) **Rom. 2:4-12:** <sup>4</sup>*Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that **God's kindness leads you toward repentance?** <sup>5</sup>But because of your stubbornness and your **unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath**, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. <sup>6</sup>God "will give to each person according to what he has done." <sup>7</sup>To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, He will give eternal life. <sup>8</sup>**But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger...** <sup>12</sup>All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.*

God's love made a way of ESCAPE (thru the Cross), NOT a way of EXCUSE!

### 2. Faith

- a) **John 3:16-18, 36:** <sup>16</sup>*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that **whoever believes in Him shall not perish** but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn*

*the world, but to save the world through Him.*

<sup>18</sup>*Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but **whoever does not believe stands condemned** already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son... <sup>36</sup>Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but **whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.***

- b) **Rom. 10:9:** *That **IF** you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*
- c) **Col. 1:22-23:** <sup>22</sup>*But now **He has reconciled you** by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation—<sup>23</sup>**IF you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.***

### 3. Obedience

- a) **John 14:21, 23:** <sup>21</sup>*Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. **He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him...** <sup>23</sup>**“IF anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”***
- b) **John 8:31-32:** <sup>31</sup>*To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, **“IF you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. <sup>32</sup>Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”***
- c) NOTE: Jesus uses the **conditional word “if”** 58 times in the Gospel of John!

### 4. Forgiveness

- a) **Mat. 6:14-15:** <sup>14</sup>*For **IF you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup>But **IF you do not forgive men their sins, YOUR FATHER WILL NOT FORGIVE YOUR SINS.*****
- b) **1 John 4:20:** *IF anyone says, “I love God,” yet **hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.***
- c) NOTE: John, the apostle of love, uses the **conditional word “if”** 21 times in 1 John!

## F. Conclusions

1. **God's love is NOT UNCONDITIONAL!** This popular teaching ("sloppy-agape") is actually heresy and is the foundation for the "once saved, always saved" error!
2. The New Testament writers warned us of such errors:
  - a) **Eph. 5:1-6:** *<sup>1</sup>Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup>and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. <sup>3</sup>But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup>Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup>For of this **you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup>LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU** with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.*
  - b) **1 Cor. 6:9-11:** *<sup>9</sup>Do you not know that the **wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? DO NOT BE DECEIVED:** Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders <sup>10</sup>nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And **that is what some of you were.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*
  - c) **Gal. 6:7-8:** *<sup>7</sup>**DO NOT BE DECEIVED:** God cannot be mocked. **A man reaps what he sows.** <sup>8</sup>The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

## IV. OUR ATTITUDE/RESPONSE

### A. Fear God

1. **Prov. 1:7; 9:10:** *The **fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge**, but fools despise wisdom and discipline... **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom**, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

2. **Rev. 14:6-7:** *<sup>6</sup>Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the **ETERNAL GOSPEL** to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. <sup>7</sup>He said in a loud voice, “**Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come.** Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”*
  3. If God is going to love me regardless of my actions/behavior and I am eternally saved no matter what I do, why should I fear God?
  4. Rev. 2 & 3 – REPENT OR ELSE!
- B. Make every effort to live godly lives
1. **Phil. 2:12-16:** *<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to **WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING**, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. <sup>14</sup>Do everything without complaining or arguing, <sup>15</sup>so that you may become **blameless and pure, children of God without fault** in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe <sup>16</sup>as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.*
  2. **2 Pet. 3:9-14:** *<sup>9</sup>The Lord is... patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. <sup>11</sup>Since everything will be destroyed in this way, **WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE OUGHT YOU TO BE?** You ought to **live holy and godly lives** <sup>12</sup>as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup>But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. <sup>14</sup>So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, **make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him.***
- C. Repent, believe, obey & forgive!