

Is God's Love Unconditional?

By John Piper

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

- It's 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. But Jesus said everybody is not saved (Matthew 25:46).
- It's not the love that justifies sinners since the Bible says we are justified by faith, and faith is a condition (Romans 5:1).
- It's 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's 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). And James said, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8).
- It's 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). And faithfulness is a condition.

How then *does* God love unconditionally? Two ways (at least):

1. *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."

2. 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.



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– Jeremiah 17:7-8*

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What Is Love?

1) In Romans 5:6–8 God loves the least deserving and therefore his love is greater. "While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one might dare even to die — but God [different from all that] shows his love [his love — this is what love is] in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us." So the first measure of the magnitude of God's love is, we don't deserve it and that is why it is great.

2) Consider the price he is willing to pay "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life" (John 15:13). This love is measured not just by the fact that I don't deserve it. It is measured by the price he is willing to pay; namely, his own Son's life.

3) The third measure is the good that I get through this love. In John 3:16 that is called "eternal life." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." And then he defines eternal life in chapter 17 by saying it is to know God and to know Christ (John 17:3). So the greatest possible love gives the greatest possible gift, which is God himself.

4) Did God show this love begrudgingly or does with all his heart? And Zephaniah 3:17 says, "The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing." And we read the same response in the parable of the prodigal son where the father sees his son coming home and he hugs him and he puts a ring on his hand and robes and shoes and throws a party (Luke 15:20–24). In other words, God is totally into saving us. Nobody is twisting God's arm.

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