

SCRIPTURE REMINDERS OF GOD'S LOVE

God's love in Christ isn't about what I say or what anyone else says. It's about what the Bible has always clearly said:

Genesis: In the very beginning, God presents himself as our One Great Love, creating Adam and Eve “by the fire of love”[i] and then walking intimately, daily[ii] with them in the garden (Genesis 3:8).

Deuteronomy: God's love is central when he tells Israel he chose her simply because he loves her (Deuteronomy 4:37, 7:7-8) and then calls his people first and foremost to “love the Lord [their] God with all [their] heart[s]” in return (Deuteronomy 6:5-6).

Psalms: God's love is the heart of David's cry, “Give thanks to the Lord, for ... His faithful love endures forever” (Psalm 107:1, nlt).

Song of Songs: We hear echoes of God's love for us and our love for him in the passionate utterances of a young Shulamite bride: “I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine”; “his banner over me is love” (Song of Solomon 6:3, 2:4).

Isaiah: God's love permeates his promise to Zion: “I will not forget you ... I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands” (Isaiah 49:15-16).

Hosea: God calls the prophet to love an unfaithful, struggling prostitute to prove to Israel that even when she forgets him, “I will betroth you to me forever ... in steadfast love” (Hosea 2:19-20, esv).

Romans: Paul proclaims love as the heart of our identity in Christ, declaring that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

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Galatians: Love is crucial to what some describe as Paul's life verse: "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

1 Peter: God's love informs Peter's core understanding of our life with Jesus—"whom having not seen [we] love" (1 Peter 1:8).

1 John: The beloved disciple declares that love is God's very essence: "God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16, esv).

Jude: God's love is central to Jude's instruction for spiritual battle: "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 1:21).

Revelation: John's mystical vision is dedicated "to Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

John: And nowhere in the biblical narrative is the love of God more central than in the story of the Cross: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16, esv, emphasis added). Bishop Kalistos Ware says it powerfully: "It is finished" ... is to be understood, not as a cry of resignation or despair, but as a cry of victory: It is completed, it is accomplished, it is fulfilled. What has been fulfilled? The work of suffering love, the victory of love over hatred. Christ our God has loved his own to the uttermost.[iii]

[i] Catherine of Siena, from her poem entitled "My Nature Is Fire."

[ii] See, for example, Randy Alcorn, "Is Genesis 3:8 Sufficient to Establish that God Was in the Habit of Visiting with Adam and Eve in the Garden?" Eternal Perspective Ministries, March 29, 2010, <https://www.epm.org/resources/2010/Mar/29/gen-38-sufficient-establish-god-was-habit-visiting/>.

[iii] Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, rev. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 81.