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Exhortation

"The God of my life"

11. "The God of love"

Jim Wood

THE SCRIPTURAL sayings,
"God is love"
"the God of love"
"the love of God"

portray love as a fundamental of what God is, of how God thinks and of what God does.

"God is love" (1 Jno. 4:8,16). Everything that love is, God is. Love "suffereth long . . . is kind . . . envieth not . . . vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things . . . never faileth" (1 Cor. 13:4-8). Such is God.

"The God of love" (2 Cor. 13:11). The love that is an essential element of God's being is manifest as one of His characteristics, and in its display He is supreme. It is an attribute always evident as He thinks about, interacts with, responds to and cares for His creation.

"The love of God" (1 Jno. 3:16). What the love of God is is seen in what God does, to whom and when. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jno. 4:9,10).

The scriptures containing the statements,
"when we love God"
"this is the love of God"
"if any man love God"

indicate the duty to love God, how to love God, and the consequences of that love (1 Jno. 5:2; 1 Jno. 5:3; 1 Cor. 8:3).

The duty to love God. God's chosen people received, from God through Moses, the commandment, "thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in

thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:5-7). This was a charge so fundamental and so important it was repeated many times (for example, 10:12; 11:22; 13:3; 19:9).

The same duty with the same priority was presented by Jesus to his hearers: "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mk. 12:30).

How to love God. Our love for God is shown in a willing and positive response to His commandments: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 Jno. 5:3).

The consequences of love. The consequences for His people were spelled out by God at length in Deuteronomy, starting with this: "He will love thee" (Deut. 7:13).

Daniel expressed his appreciation of the consequences of his love in his prayer by drawing on the same scriptures: "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him . . ." (9:4).

Paul describes the consequences for him of not demonstrating love in his First Epistle to Corinth. He would become "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal". He would be "nothing" and profit "nothing" (13:1-3), and he goes on to promote love as the greatest attribute for the disciple (v. 13).

In Ephesians his exhortation is, "walk in love"; and the characteristics of that walk, its energy and its purpose are added by contemplating the perfect example of love. We are to love "as Christ also loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (5:2).

When the God of our life is the God of love we will be one step closer to Him.