

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: GOD IS LOVE

Scripture: I John 4:16-21

God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brotheralso.

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He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

The English language as a rule is unusually rich not only in a basic vocabulary, but in synonyms -- words with almost the same, but slightly different meanings -- so that it is comparatively easy to express exact shades of meaning with unmistakable accuracy. Occasionally, however, we find that the English language is impoverished -- that it lacks just the right words to express exact shades of meaning. A good example of this is our word "love," which is used almost indiscriminately in all kinds of situations to express all shades and varieties and degrees of liking or feeling. I may say that I love lemon pie. I may also say that I love my dog, that I love my wife, that I love my children, that I love my country, that I love my friends. I use the same word to say that God loves me, or that I love God. Obviously these several kinds of love are not the same either in kind or in degree.

The Greeks had three words for it. One word, "eros," was used to express the love that exists between the sexes -- between sweethearts, or between husband and wife. It started out to be a perfectly respectable word, but it was used so often and so loosely to indicate a low kind of sensual or sexual love that it acquired a somewhat bad reputation that caused it to be omitted entirely by the New Testament writers who wrote in Greek.

The Greeks had another word for love -- the verb "phileo" which was used to designate the love between friends, fra-

ternal love, a kindly affection. It was also sometimes used to indicate love of parents for children or children for parents, and for the love of a citizen for his country.

There was still a third Greek word, -- "agape" -- which was used to indicate a higher, loftier concept of love -- a love that completely dominates one's life and nature, a love that is unselfish, all-absorbing, and holy. It was this third word which the New Testament writers used to indicate God's love for his children or the love which those who have been born of God have for him and for each other.

It is this kind of love which Paul describes in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. It is a love which is absolutely unselfish and self-sacrificing. It is a love that suffers long and is kind, that envies not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave unseemly, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, hopes all things, and endures all things. This kind of love is the "charity" which is the pure love of God.

"He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." God has many attributes. We say that he is light, truth, wisdom, spirit, justice, mercy. But the dominating or governing attribute which overshadows and conditions all the other attributes of Deity, is love. Love is inherent in all God does; it is his very

nature. All of God's acts are loving acts. All of God's thoughts are loving thoughts. Even the trials he permits us to pass through, even his wrath, his anger, his justice, his judgments, are all expressions of and manifestations of his love, difficult as that may sometimes be for men who love him imperfectly to understand.

God's love is active, not passive. It includes all men. It is not diminished or destroyed by man's lack of response, or his rebellion, or his unworthiness. Jesus taught this principle in two parables -- the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the prodigal son. The sheep probably got lost through its own foolishness, disobedience, and defiance of the shepherd's love and concern, but the shepherd's undiminished love led him to sacrifice his own comfort and risk his own life in order to save the one sheep that was lost.

The prodigal son was scarcely a lovable character as he wallowed in the pig sty eating husks with the swine, but his father's love for him never faltered. Because of his love, the father identified himself with his wayward son. He felt his suffering, shared his shame, experienced his fears, his disillusionments, his pangs of remorse. He was willing to sacrifice anything he had if that sacrifice would help restore his son to fellowship. It was in this way that "God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son."

Nothing can separate us from that kind of love. "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

All love is of God. But not all love is like God's love. Men with no very high moral standards may love their country with an intense and patriotic fervor. Criminals may have a friendship and loyalty for each other which may be called love, in one sense of the term. Even a very wicked man may have a deep and real natural affection for his wife and children, or for his mother, which is still another form of love. But only the regenerate man can see another man as God sees him, and love him as God loves him. No one can love as God loves unless the

nature and the life of God dwell in him. No one can love in the sense of our third Greek word "agape" unless he has been born again, regenerated under God's holy Spirit, transformed by divine grace -- unless he has felt the power of God's redeeming love, and has loved God in return. Bernard of Clairvaux expressed this truth in two lines of a hymn: "The love of Jesus what it is, None but who love him know." Only those who have surrendered themselves completely and unconditionally to God can begin to sense or to understand what manner of love it is that God has for us.

The possession and manifestation of this highest form of God-like love is the only sure proof of regeneration and new birth. "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "Love is of God: and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." "He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God in him."

For many centuries before Christ, Israel had known the commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus was quite familiar with this old commandment, yet he also said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Wherein did its newness consist? It was new in that it commanded a higher form of love -- a form that was above the law, that superceded the law. The law required a love -- let us say -- on the level of our second Greek word, "phileo." Jesus' new commandment required a love on the highest, or "agape" level -- the same kind of love that God manifested in the gift of his Son." Love one another as I have loved you" was the new commandment.

This requires that we love all men as God loves them, with a perfect, selfless, all-consuming, sacrificial love. It means that we love them whether they love us or hate us, whether they are worthy of our love or not, whether they are bound to us by ties of friendship, kinship, race, nationality, or religion, or not. Have you that kind of love? Faith is vain, religion is vain, if it does not result in that kind of love. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."