

The greatest medicine for all maladies experienced in this sad, lonely, fallen world is the love of God, “poured out into the hearts” (Rom. 5:5) of saved sinners. Sadly, one tragic loss of the Fall is the ability to believe in and rely upon God’s unchanging love. Satan always aims to call into question, downplay, and eventually to outright deny God’s amazing love. Our enemy’s goal is to cause us to lose our connection with and affection for God. As we will see this week, Satan hates this reality about God; it foils all he designs to do. Because of God’s love, Satan can never win over the people of God to himself – *he completely lacks anything that can compete with God’s love and saving grace.*

**Monday: Read Ps. 103:1-11; 1 John 4:7-10 & Rom.5:1-8**

**The Eternal Spring**

God’s love stands in contrast to all else the world calls love.

God’s love is a love of bounty. It is likened to a fountain that springs up; clouds heavy with spring rains that revive the grass and bring life to the desert. It is a love (as Owen says) that naturally, “... descends, as a love that carries God out to do good things to us, great things for us.”

He loves us, and sends His Son to die for us; - He loves us, and blesses us with all spiritual blessings ... He loves us and chastises us.

It is a love like that of heavens to the earth, when, being full of rain, pour forth showers to make it fruitful; as the sea communicates its waters to the rivers by the way of bounty, out of its own fulness, - they return unto it only what they receive from it ... It infuses into, and creates goodness in, the persons beloved.

John Owen, *Works, Volume 2*, “Of Communion with God the Father,” pp. 28-31.

What a contrast with our love, which is like our fallen, weak natures – unequal, waxing and waning, growing and then declining. This is why scholars tell us that while we can be described as having love; having patience or having kindness one day, and the next as unloving, impatient and unkind – *precisely because love is not the center of who we are* - God is never described as having the attribute of love, as a quality that can grow or diminish. He is love itself.

**Meditate and Pray:** In Vermont, it is common to see by the roadside a spring that gushes pure water without stop. It is the overabundance of water in the hillside that means water *must gush out*. Give thanks that God the Father’s love is like Himself. It is constant:

Those whom He loves, He loves unto the end, and He loves them always alike. It is immutable; it does not grow to eternity, it is not diminished at any time. It is an eternal love, that had no beginning, that shall have no ending; that cannot be heightened by any good work we do, that cannot be lessened by anything in us.

**Tuesday: Read Luke 3:21-22; John 10:17 & Luke 4:1-7****A Thief Provoked**

It is highly unusual in Scripture, one Puritan points out, to have God speak essentially the same words from heaven more than once. But three times He tears the heavens open and declares, “This is my Beloved Son” (Luke 3:21-22, Luke 9:35-36, and John 12:28). God the Father expresses His delight in His Son’s willingly taking our nature and obediently accomplishing our salvation in that nature. This love has always existed, but it comes to full expression in the Father’s delight in His Son’s obedience, “becoming obedient, even unto the death of the Cross” (Philippians 2:8).

Such a love arouses all the hatred of the Evil One. Here is a key reason the devil rises to tempt Christ in the desert – he cannot let the Son’s loving devotion to His Father, the Father’s open claim of His Son, go untested.

**Meditate and Pray:** Give thanks for the Father and the Son in their loving communion from eternity. Give thanks that God as love has no beginning. This is the essence of loving communion which the Father and Son shared when they made the world, “delighting in the created world of men” (Proverbs 8:22-31). Most awesome of all, since God is the first Cause and is unchangeably eternal with no cause or creator that made Him, love is an eternal reality in God’s world. How wonderful! As the hymn writer in our *Trinity Hymnal* says (# 35),

1 My God, how wonderful thou art,  
thy majesty how bright!  
How beautiful thy mercy seat,  
in depths of burning light!

2 Wondrous are thine eternal years,  
O everlasting Lord,  
by holy angels day and night  
unceasingly adored!

3 O how I fear thee, living God,  
with deepest, tend'rest fears,  
and worship thee with trembling hope,  
and penitential tears.

4 Yet I may love thee too, O Lord,  
almighty as thou art;  
for thou hast stooped to ask of me  
the love of my poor heart.

5 No earthly father loves like thee,  
no mother half so mild  
bears and forbears, as thou hast done  
with me, thy sinful child.

6 How wonderful, how beautiful,  
the sight of thee will be,  
thine endless wisdom, boundless pow'r,  
and awesome purity!

**Weds/Thurs: Read Luke 4:1-13****Final Proof**

In one way or another, each of the temptations recorded in Luke and Matthew are specifically a satanic attack on God the Father's faithful, loving commitment to His Son. You can hear the deceitful voice of the serpent speaking in each of these temptations:

Will your Father let you die out here in the desert? Doesn't He know you are starving after forty days? Doesn't He care? Turn those stones into bread!

Your Father has your ruin as His hidden plan. He knows that sending you to the Cross will only mean suffering for you, and that in vain. Much better if you devote yourself worshipfully to me. I can give you the kingdoms of this world instantly, without any Cross, if you will bow down and worship me.

But most poignantly of all, listen to S.G. De Graaf's description of the third temptation in Luke's Gospel (Luke 4:9-13):

On the pinnacle of the temple Satan said to Him: "You are the Son of the Father and share in His love. Hence You must also long for proof of His love. That proof is easy to come by. Throw yourself down from this pinnacle, for then He will surely see that You are protected by angels, in accordance with His promise. This proof of His love will do you good." There Satan touched the most tender chord of all. If the Lord thirsted for anything, it was for His Father's love and for proof of that love. But would He willfully conjure that proof, and compel the Father to give it to Him? Wouldn't that be a sign that He did not trust the Father's love? That was exactly what Israel kept doing in their unbelief in the desert.

*Promise and Deliverance*, S.G. De Graaf, p 43

**Meditate and Pray:** Let us pray this prayer of confession, since we so often agree with Satan that God has not given us sufficient proof of His love for us:

Loving Father, forgive us for so quickly doubting your loving purposes in our lives. Forgive us for constantly being dissatisfied with the abundant proofs that you have given us of your love. Especially forgive us that we become so hardened to your grand demonstration of love for us in the giving of your Son on the Cross. How terrible that we magnify our daily irritations and even life-long disappointments – *as if they had any real proportion or size to compare with your love for us on the Cross*. Please magnify in our lives the power of your Cross by especially causing us to see the breath-taking scale of your love revealed there. Amen *Trinity Hymnal* # 258

1 Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,  
which before the cross I spend,  
life and health and peace possessing  
from the sinner's dying Friend.

2 Here I rest, in wonder viewing  
all my sins on Jesus laid,  
here I see redemption flowing  
from the sacrifice he made.

3 Here I find the dawn of heaven,  
while upon the cross I gaze,  
see my trespasses forgiven,  
and my songs of triumph raise.

4 O that near the cross abiding,  
I may to the Savior cleave,  
naught with him my heart dividing,  
all for him content to leave.

**Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Romans 8:1-2****Sin, Condemned**

We began this week by emphasizing the Father's love expressed towards sinners in Romans 5 – justifying us by faith so that we have peace with God (Romans 5:1) and pouring out His Holy Spirit into our hearts (Romans 5:5) - so that we know and experience the love of God. We also looked at Satan's efforts to undermine God the Son's trust in His Father's love during the Temptation in Luke's Gospel, as the Evil One sought to seduce Jesus into a cross-less power grab of the kingdoms of this world.

As we sum-up Romans 8, we with Jesus must insist on focusing on the Cross as at the heart of our faith. We must state that it is because of the Cross alone that Paul can conclude: "nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:34-35)."

In this life of groaning and affliction, we, along with all believers in all periods of church history, *are considered as sheep to be slaughtered* (Rom 8:36). Our only comfort is found in focusing on Romans 8:1. This verse refers to the *free justification* which the blood of Christ brings to everyone who by faith trust in Christ's righteousness and not his own.

This is God's first answer to the cry for deliverance uttered in Romans 7. As John Owen says,

Although sin may grieve them, trouble and perplex them, and, by its deceit and violence, cause them to contract much guilt .... Yet (believers) need not despond or be utterly cast down; there is a stable ground of consolation provided for them, in that "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

So, Paul begins and continues right through Romans 8:9 to describe, as J.I. Packer puts it, "the adequacy of the grace of God to deal with a whole series of predicaments (the first being) the guilt and power of sin."

**Meditate and Pray:** Give thanks that our Lord Jesus took upon Himself our sin and dies for it and with it. He dies not for His own sin – nowhere in Scripture is such a claim made. But He dies *with our* sin, taking its guilt to the Cross and putting it to death in its condemning power. As James Philip says in his commentary on Romans: "It is God's condemnation of sin in the person of His Son, and above all, in His death 'for sin' which is in view. 'Condemned' is an executive word and means that sin in the flesh has been sentenced to death (Rom 6:6) and its power taken away."

Hallelujah!