

God is Love

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Summary

It is true. God's love is central and core to His Person - we cannot read His Word and conclude otherwise.

We've all been schooled on the problems of 'romantic love', the idea that love centers around often blind, warm feelings. Is this a true basis of love? Perhaps not, if we look to the essential issue behind love - a willful commitment, per God's law, to another who we have no expectation to repay us. Consider Jesus' discourse in **Lk 6.32-36**. It ends with the commandment to "be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."

The last time we met, John walked us through the problem of assuming that Father's love is as performance-based as the fallen-Human love around us, expressed in the way our world teaches us to expect to be treated.

In this (RE)Cap, let's look at an aspect of our Father's willful commitment and mercy towards us. Let's look at how a devoted love is expressed to a people who can't but fail to show Him a worthy response, and who by our very nature, often begin our trek to the Cross kicking and screaming against Him. We go to the Cross for the first time, even as His enemy. Against all of this, He demonstrates how His devoted and merciful love overcomes the worst we have to offer.

Spoiler alert: God's Offer, in love, has conditions.

Key points

Conditional love is usually cruel - but why?

Life, and our peers, both teach us about the often conditional use of what is called love and acceptance. This is no secret. But, let's also recall Paul's words - he knew of God better than most anyone - that we see through a glass dimly (**1 Cor 13.12, Job 36.26**). Let's recognize that starting even now, the remainder of our existence in Christ will be spent pondering our God and shedding our misconceptions about Him.

We grow to see His worth.

We could likely agree that conditions for acceptance can be distasteful to us. But why? It's likely due to fickle or unfair terms, or perhaps a person's disingenuous motives that result in our being rejected. But, are conditions and their use the problem, or could it be that the one in charge of the conditions misuses them?

We approve of conditions with those we call friends, those we invite into our home, or share personal information with, or give help, money, care, love. God Himself prescribed conditions for guests to join His people Israel in worship and even nationhood.

While God's Offer is conditional, His resultant relationship-Love is unconditional. This flawless, God-branded love is possible through Christ's fulfilling those conditions and sharing (imparting) Father's satisfaction of those conditions, to us who accept the Offer.

The conditions of Father's Offer cannot be cruel, because He's not cruel.

We might recognize the conditional nature of the relationships around us, and see inconsistency and inequity.

The chain of relationship between us and Father is also conditional, but

with an important difference – the conditions required for our relationship with God have been borne by Jesus. The conditions were God’s intent even before Creation, before we existed. As God unilaterally carries His Covenant with Abraham (**Gen 15.9-11, 17-18a**), Jesus also is the sole Author of our Salvation once we have answered His irresistible Call. We who will accept the Offer were already intended to be included without a chance of failure. Father ensured we could not escape, that His Goal would be met, by His assuming responsibility for His Conditions. Father’s demand for sin’s payment, and the sinless Man-Vessel Who would satisfy Him, are non-negotiable to us. To answer that Condition, He specifically gave Jesus to accomplish the job of Sacrifice. Father’s terms being ‘finished’, Jesus revealed the New Covenant allowing us forgiveness, and so satisfaction of God’s Wrath against us who accept. Father intended the overall plan before anything began. Jesus alone would perfectly satisfy Father’s Wrath and impart the benefitting result to us. Jesus, as our High Priest, will protect and keep us safe us in that Covenant. It is God’s to Offer – but He will never, never take it away from His children, once received and cemented in His holy Salvation.

So, yes, conditions exist in all relationships. The difference between the relationships we know with our peers and the one we know with God are that God is perfectly wise, righteous, loving, and without sin. Our peers, fellow sinners like us, are not. Therefore, we cannot rightly project our peer-relationship expectations upon God. We must shed what we think we understand of relationship, embrace the truth of His Conditions, and believe Him – even when we fail Him, even when the Enemy tempts with “Did God actually say..?”.

Conditions from God can't be confused with conditions between peers. We are not God's peers.

Does Father have Conditions over our eternal life with Him? Yes: We would choose Jesus, else we will suffer Judgment and endless torment in Hell.

Are a Fireman's conditions of "Climb down the ladder from the burning building - only the ladder, there's no other choice available" - cruel?

Does Father have Conditions over His children adopted under the Blood of Jesus? Yes: He fully accepts us into His family and loves us no matter what. Bound tight under His love and life's Sovereign circumstances, is escape from the call to trust and obey possible? We are, as glad bondservants of Christ (**Eph 6.6b**), conscripted into learning obedience to His ways as His Law is written on our new heart.

There are no conditions excluding us from God, once we've met The Condition of confessing Christ.

Will He swivel from us and turn away? He cannot, because He adheres to the Conditions met by the Son He gave, into Whom we can be grafted. Does He tend to us, watch us, correct us? Does He sit with us as we mend from the hurt of life, either anonymously at the hands of a fallen world or from self-inflicted pains as we went the way He didn't hope for us? Yes: He is our Father, He loves us, He won't quit us. (**2 Sam 7.14-15, Heb 12.5-11**)

Disappointed with His children? Apparently, not possible.

Devoted to His reputation and to seeing His designs through? Absolutely.

Is God ever disappointed with us?

Perhaps a strong argument could be made that the answer is no. Consider Webster's definition of '**disappointment**': *The feeling of dissatisfaction that follows the failure of expectations or hopes to manifest.*

Disappointment happens when the expected, doesn't.

Note: Disappointment is different than yearning or longing. Consider Jesus' appeal in **Matt 23.37** - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' " Jesus demonstrates His knowing the future in saying 'you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'. He also states His desire to see this sure end brought forth in 'How often I wanted to'. This is not disappointment, but His urging the people forward in a knowing, patient concern.

Is disappointment possible for a God of Omniscience - *all* knowing, including of future events - Who knows the end from the beginning? If God cannot be surprised, that would mean His hopes cannot be dashed when something doesn't happen. He already knew that would be the case. And, no, this doesn't give us license to do nothing - we're here under His sanctified training for our benefit, not God's. He needs nothing from us, but intends to use life and opportunities to teach us obedience and peace.

If He cannot be surprised, then God is not disappointed when His child fails, due both to Christ's Blood and His seeing it prior. Our sin elicits His dissatisfaction, and moves Him to correct us. But, the Gift of Christ's Atonement has freed us from Father's Wrath, and in exchange, we have been bought into a relentless, loving path of Sanctification. Our job is to

pursue Him, repent and cooperate with Him, learn to know and to trust Him, to live in the Spirit and not the flesh - "I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." **Rom 7.25-8.3**

Never surprised, but knowingly patient and diligent in making us better Worshippers.

Jesus our High Priest has compassion for us and our failures. Father intimately knows who we are, and we never surprise Him. This 'program' of Salvation is not capable of nor is designed to put us under God's disappointment, (For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. **Jn 3.17**) but to allow boundless room for us to maneuver under God's instructive care (For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. **Eph 2.10**) and learn how to see Him, ourselves, and Creation as He does. We are granted time to learn what it means to be a child of the King, and to grow in our capacity to love and Worship Him for it. (But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. **1 Pet 2.9**)

Therefore, as we will certainly discover ourselves opposing God (sinning), let us believe Him and not the Enemy who lies and accuses. Instead, we

must search His Word for the truth, reform our thinking to His, confess our fault, and move ahead in already-assured love and forgiveness through our Brother and Friend Jesus.

A hard life, but not a hardened Father.

The Fallen world is a hard place to reside, but the difficulties suffered by a child under his Sovereign God cannot be attributed to His turning away. Instead, ask:

Do I belong to Him through faith alone in Christ?

If so, is this hardship the natural outcome of not following Him?

If so, He loves me and I must still repent, obeying His Word.

If not of my own consequence, shall the clay question the Potter? Shall we accept only the good and bemoan the bad? Instead, follow the Rabbi Who was blameless and remember “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” (**Heb 5.8**), learning of the Spirit’s Fruit, bearing instruction as He did, and asking Him for the necessary peace and strength He promises to complete the task. (And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” **2 Cor 12.9a**)

Either way, I will not call Him a liar and question His devotion to His child, and I will ask for and expect His sure help (**Joshua 1.9, Matt 6.25.33, Phil 4.11-13, Heb 5b-6, Rom 8.28**). All the while, I know my God loves and cares for me, working as the author and perfecter of my faith (**Heb 12.1-2**).

So, Christ follower - have you too skinned your knee (or broken your leg) on Life, even crashed and burned, even found yourself opposing the God Who loves you? Seek Him and His directions, know yourself, repent and ask forgiveness - and move ahead in the unconditional love of the Father Who delights in the contrite heart of His child, Who He intends to see succeed. Let's revel in His generous conditions, and His boundless love.

Final thoughts to consider.

The above might read like a Calvinist's TULIP tract. Whether it does or not, let's be faithful to the plain reading of His Word and let the labels fall where they will. In fact, Scripture threads together the Effectual Call to the predestined soul, yet of a person who has responsibilities as a free moral agent (who cannot escape God's Sovereign influence). Our 'heart' is the only thing in Creation that God allows to oppose Him. Perhaps, we have our choice of 'will', yet it is never outside of a God Who steers it sovereignly: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes." **Prov 21.1**. I suspect His joy is in capturing and winning the affection of that otherwise hopeless, hateful heart. In the end, God's love conquers all.

His willingness and sure ability to suffer our rejection, even under forgiveness in the Blood, is held in place by the Conditions He has offered, fulfilled, and abides by. Is that not the greatest love, worthy of Worship?

Finally, if how our Father deals with us is true, then how might this teach us to treat others - especially those who we are to love (everyone), yet who disappoint us (everyone, given enough time and opportunity)? The parable of the 'unforgiving servant' is one good illustration (**Matt 18.23-35**). I know I have (decreasingly?) been that

servant, and I praise God that He continues in loving patience to train, even discipline, me to be like Him instead.

Praise to Him whose love will never quit His children.