

A Reformed View Of God's Love (with Proof texts)

Without Proof texts

John Knox wrote: "You make the love of God common to all men, and that we constantly do deny." Why did he write that? He wrote it because he knew that...

Love is one of God's attributes, along with holiness and righteousness.

Love is an attribute of God (1 John 4:8,16; Romans 5:8).

1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Holiness and righteousness are equally attributes of God (Joshua 24:19; Psalm 99:5; Revelation 4:8; Psalm 145:7; Acts 17:31).

Joshua 24:19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

Psalm 99:5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

Revelation 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Psalm 145:7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

God can not love sinners without justice being fully satisfied (Exodus 34:7). God does love some sinners because Divine justice and mercy meet in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on their behalf (Psalm 85:10; Romans 5:8).

Exodus 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Psalm 85:10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God does not need to love any sinner.

There is nothing about us sinners that moves God to love any one of us (Psalm 14:1-3; 144:3; Genesis 6:5; Romans 3:10-19).

Psalm 14:1-3 1The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. 2The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Psalm 144:3 LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

Genesis 6:5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Romans 3:10-19 10As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15Their feet are swift to shed blood:

16Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17And the way of peace have they not known: 18There is no fear of God before their eyes. 19Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

God's own good pleasure is what moves Him to have mercy and show love to any particular sinner (Ephesians 1:5,9,11; Romans 9: 15,16; Exodus 33:19; Deuteronomy 7:7-9).

Ephesians 1:5,9,11 5Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 9Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 11In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Romans 9:15,16 15For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Exodus 33:19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.
Deuteronomy 7:7-9 7The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: 8But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;
Election is the fountain of God's love for sinners.

Before the foundation of the world, God has set His love upon some sinners in unconditional election (Jeremiah 31:3; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:4). Electing love gives the elect to Christ, and Christ to the elect, as the gift of love to save the elect (John 17:6, 11; Ephesians 1:4).

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Ephesians 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

John 17:6, 11 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 11And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

At the same time God, to show the glory of His justice, leaves others in their sins as objects of His righteous hatred (Matthew 11:25-26; Romans 9:13, 15, 18, 21-23).

Matthew 11:25-26 25At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Romans 9:13, 15, 18, 21-23 13As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. 15For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 18Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. 21Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, God's love always saves

Because the elect world is loved in Christ (Ephesians 1:3ff).

Because Christ was given to die on the cross to save the world of elect sinners (John 10:11, 26-29; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 2 Timothy 1:9, Galatians 2:20).

John 10:11, 26-29 11I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 26But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Because God's love, flowing from election, produces effectual call-ing, justification and glorification (Romans 8:28-31; Jeremiah 31:3; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Romans 8:28-31 28And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

1 Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, God loves the elect - God hates the reprobate.

God loves the elect eternally, unchangeably, and savingly (Jeremiah 31:3, Malachi 3:6). God justly hates the reprobate (Romans 9:13,18, 22; 2 Peter 2:8).

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Romans 9:13, 18, 22 13As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. 18Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. 22What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

2 Peter 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

The hatred of God is sovereign and righteous. Sovereign in that God passes by for no other reason than his own good pleasure. Righteous because God hates them as guilty sinners and purposes that, in the way of their own sins, they should be condemned and damned.

It is NOT true that God loves all sinners, but hates their sin.

Sin can not be separated from the sinner, because it is the nature of man that is sinful (Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 12:34-35; Luke 6: 44-45).

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Matthew 12:34-35 34O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 35A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

Luke 6:44-45 44For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. 45A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

The Bible speaks of God being angry with, and hating the wicked, that is people who do wickedness (Psalm 5:4-6; 11:5-6; Proverbs 16:4).

Psalm 5:4-6 4For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. 5The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. 6Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

Psalm 11:5-6 5The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. 6Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

Proverbs 16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

The proposition is true only of God's elect for God loves them in Christ (Romans 5:8-10; Ephesians 2:1-10). God loves them because He pre-destinated them unto the adoption of children in Jesus Christ, and He has satisfied His justice against them and their sin when Jesus died in their stead on the cross of Calvary. And, God loves them in such a way that they ALL are all united to His Son for justification, sanctification and glorification - being brought to live unto God, confessing always: "The life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Ephesians 1:4-5, Galatians 2:20).

Romans 5:8-10 8But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Ephesians 2:1-10 1And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ

Jesus: 7That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 1:4-5 4According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

God is not actively loving non-elect men when he gives them good things in this life, like money, health etc, or even when He sends them the gospel to hear.

Prosperity is no sign that God's loves this or that particular sinner (Psalm 73:18-19; Luke 12:20, 21).

Psalm 73:18-19 18Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

Luke 12:20-21 20But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Hearing the gospel preached is no sure sign that God loves this or that particular sinner (Matthew 13:10-15, 22:14; 1 Peter 2:8; 2 Corinthians 2:14ff).

Matthew 13:10-15 10And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. 12For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. 13Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. 14And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Matthew 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

1 Peter 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

2 Corinthians 2:14-17 14Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. 15For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? 17For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ

A sinner may be assured that God loves him/her only when there is evidence of that love having produced saving faith in their life. In other words, God's electing, redeeming love, is manifest in their lives through true faith and repentance (1John 4: 19).

1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

Conclusion:

The Biblical and Reformed faith teaches that God's love flows to His elect, and His elect alone, in and through Jesus Christ.

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