

Unconditional Love?

Introduction:

- A. It is not uncommon to hear various thoughts about God's love. A casual scan of the internet shows “unconditional love” is a common expression. The Humanist movement especially enjoys the expression. Rick Miesel wrote, “Among the stellar emotional needs of humanistic psychology are unconditional acceptance, unconditional self-regard, unconditional self-acceptance, and unconditional love. The usual meaning of the word unconditional is ‘without conditions or reservations; absolute.’ The practical extension of the theories of unconditional love is a permissive attitude and a morally nonrestrictive atmosphere. That means no conditions or restrictions in child rearing, counseling, and other human relationships. It must be an absolute love, unrestricted by human feelings or failings, since the very meaning of the word is ‘absolute.’”
(jbeard.users.rapidnet.com/bdm/Introduction/uncondit.htm)
- B. We must be careful in our use of this idea, because it adds validity to the misconceptions people are promoting. There are different kinds of love: 1) I love you IF; 2) I love you BECAUSE...; 3) I love you SO THAT.... God can fit into each of these categories. Be careful of those who would limit the word “love” and teach that God is NEVER conditional in His love.

I. False Concepts of God's Love

A. God ONLY Loves Us IF We Perfectly Obey Him - Rom 5:8

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

1. God does love the obedient in a way He does NOT love the disobedient - Psa 5:4-6; Prov 15:8-9

Psalms 5:4-6 - For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.

Proverbs 15:8-9 - The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves one who pursues righteousness.

2. Yet, there is a way in which God loves the sinner even while He hates what the sinner has become
3. This love is in God's character, and character longs for the turn-around in the sinner

B. God Only Loves Us Because We Deserve His Love

1. God does not love us because we deserve it by nature
2. God does not love us because our performance is deserving - Rom. 1:18f; 3:23

Romans 1:18 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

C. God's Love Is Totally Unconditional

1. This depends
 - a. The possession of His own character is not dependent on us
 - b. He will be "love", no matter what we choose to be in character
 - c. The extension of His benefits toward us are marks of His own goodness and love

1) Here, even the evil benefit from His goodness - Matt. 5:44-48

Matthew 5:44-48 - "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

2) Who He chooses relationship with is conditional upon us - Matt. 10:32—33

Matthew 10:32-33 - "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

2. God's love would desire a relationship with us all

a. But, having a relationship with us is conditional

b. This comes through "FAITH" on our part

c. Obedient, loyal, trusting faith - Eph. 2:8; Acts 2:38-41; Heb. 5:9

Ephesians 2:8 - For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Acts 2:38-41 - Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

Hebrews 5:9 - And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

3. Thus, there are levels of love

a. On some levels, there are no conditions. The sinner is loved by a God who would like to have a relationship

b. On another level, the Lord loves those who have met the conditions of relationship

II. *Things God's Love Will Not Do*

A. Automatically accept you "as you are"

1. Sin has always been the divider - Isa.59:2

Isaiah 59:2 - But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

a. God did not accept those in the garden "as they were"

b. Nor the people before the flood or the people of Sodom and Gomorrah "as they were"

c. Neither will he accept us in our own comfort zones that refuse to yield to His will - Rom. 1:18

Romans 1:18 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

2. Sin does not stop His love, i.e., His longing for you and

His desire for reconciliation

a. But, sin does stop His fellowship, partnership, and familial relationship - 2 Cor. 6:14

2 Corinthians 6:14 - Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

3. Reconciliation is **CONDITIONAL** - Acts 2:36-41; Lk. 13:3; Acts 8; 1 Jno. 1:7-9; Rom. 2:7, 10; Col. 1:23

Acts 2:36-41 - "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

Luke 13:3 - "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

1 John 1:7-9 - but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 2:7 - to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;

Romans 2:10 - but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Colossians 1:23 - if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

B. Automatically forgive you

1. Forgiveness is conditional upon being **IN** Christ - Eph. 1:3, 7; Gal. 3:26-27

Ephesians 1:3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

Ephesians 1:7 - In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Galatians 3:26-27 - For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

a. Those in Acts 2:37 wanted to know what to "do"

Acts 2:37 - Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

b. They were not told that forgiveness was "unconditional" - Acts 2:38

Acts 2:38 - Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. God is loving, but He is also concerned with JUSTICE
 - a. He could not truly love us unless He was just in how He dealt with all sinners
 - b. Love and justice brought the availability of forgiveness at the cross

C. Force your love and service to Him

1. Love releases and allows freedom of choice, and love hurts when someone does not choose to love us in return. But real love will not force another to love in return.
2. God's love desires our service but desires a service of love. The WILL to love God is up to each of us - Josh. 24:15

Joshua 24:15 - "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

D. Prevent you from going to torment

1. God has done all but FORCE your will
2. If you want to tread Jesus and the message of the cross under foot, you will force the justice of God to measure the crime against Jesus/God and measure the just penalty - Heb. 10:26-30

Hebrews 10:26-30 - For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

III. *Things God's Love Will Do*

A. Provide A Conditional Way For You To Be Saved

1. The conditions are understandable and attainable - Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-41

Mark 16:15-16 - And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

Acts 2:37-41 - Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

2. The conditions for remaining in Christ are attainable - 2 Pet. 1:5-10; 1 Jno. 1:7-9

2 Peter 1:5-10 - Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your

godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

1 John 1:7-9 - but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

B. Try To Attract Your Better Possibilities and Potential

1. There is potential to be redeemed and remade - Heb. 3:7-12

Hebrews 3:7-12 - Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. THEREFORE, I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS'; AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'" Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

2. Great and precious promises and the goodness of God can be "despised" - Rom.2:4

Romans 2:4 - Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

C. Provide The Greatest Incentives

1. Fellowship with God, the Creator - 2 Cor. 5:17f

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 - Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

2. A taking care of the past sins

3. The provisions for a great present life - Eph. 1:3, 7

Ephesians 1:3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

Ephesians 1:7 - In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

4. The promises of the greatest future - 1 Pet. 1:3

1 Peter 1:3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

D. Do What Is Painful To Himself In Order To Be Just

1. The love of God will do what is painful because love and justice sometimes collide over the same person

2. Love will reward the good and punish the evil

- a. Love will do this because love is right and just
- b. Love will hold out a long time in hope of a change in the object of loves' concern - 2 Pet. 3:9

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- 3. But, pure love cannot be unjust. Love will have to reject the unbelieving and disobedient.

Conclusion:

- A. Is God's love "unconditional?" Not in the context of thinking that God will accept and reward us on our own terms. However, in the context of considering His nature, He loved us even while we were yet sinners.
- B. However, that love could not "accept us as we were." Because love could not accept us as we were, love provided a way for us to be made acceptable, and that regarding justice and mercy. Love and fellowship were two different things. Love was deep enough to say, "I want you" and "here is a way we can be together", but relationship love is not "unconditional." Love is God's nature reaching out to you. Relationship is established only on God's terms and conditions. Have you been born again? (Jno.3:1-6).

John 3:1-6 - Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus *said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.