

**Pacesetters Devotional**  
**1 John 4:8,10**

*1 John 4:8 . . . God is love . . . <sup>10</sup> This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

“Why does God love me?” Such a simple question, but one that we often answer wrongly.

Deep in our fallen hearts lies the belief that God’s love for us is His response to something valuable within us. After all, this is usually why we love other things and people. We say, “I love that ice cream because of its flavor.” We say, “You have such a lovable personality.” In some areas of life, this kind of love is natural and appropriate. For example, we are to love all people because all people are image-bearers of God. In other words, because they have God-instilled value, we should treat them well.

But when we assume that God’s love for us is based on our value, we make a mistake that is bound to injure us. When we do well and feel valuable to God, all seems to go well. But when we sin against God, or when we see our deficiencies before God – what then? We usually respond by denying or minimizing our deficiencies, or by saying to ourselves: “Yes, but there are these good things in me that God values.” Such thinking is profoundly mistaken, and it puts our relationship with God on a very shaky foundation.

John says: “This is real love – *not* that we loved Him but that He loved us . . .” God does not love us in response to our love for Him. God loves us because it is His own essential nature to love. From all eternity the Father and the Son and the Spirit have loved one another.



And out of Their love They created all things, including you and me. God’s love for us is always prior to our love for Him. Paul says that “while we were yet helpless . . . ungodly . . . sinners . . . enemies,” God loved us and sent His Son Jesus to die for us so that we might be reconciled to Him (Romans 5:6-10). This is why C. S. Lewis said: “God did not die for (us) because of some value He perceived in (us) . . . He loved us not because we were lovable, but because He is love.”<sup>1</sup> Any love that we have for God is a response to this prior and foundational love that God has for us.

Some Christians stress faith in God because they believe that our faith is what inclines God to love us and bless us. But this is untrue. God already loved us and wanted to bless us even before we ever knew Him. Our faith in God is important, *not* because it inclines God to bless us, but because it enables us to receive the love and blessing that God is already inclined to give us – for reasons we will never fully fathom. It’s like the old song says:

I don’t why Jesus loved me;  
I don’t know why He cared.  
I don’t know why He sacrificed His life,  
Oh, but I’m glad, so glad He did.

Such a love both humbles me and makes me confident. It humbles me to know that it is God’s nature rather than my awesomeness that is the reason He loves me. It humbles me to know that God loves me in spite of my many sins against Him, and despite my daily aversion toward Him. But knowing that God loves me because it is His nature to love gives me great confidence before Him. I don’t have to shrink from Him when my sins break out. I can come to Him boldly and with confidence because He is loving, and because He has sent His Son to pay for all of my many sins.

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (HarperCollins, 2001), p. 170.



Writing on this same topic, William R. Newell put it this way: “To consent to be loved by God, and to expect to be blessed by God, while realizing all the more our unworthiness – that is the great secret.”<sup>2</sup> This glorious truth is a “great secret” – not because God hides it from us, but because it is so counter-intuitive to our way of thinking. Ask God to teach you to think about His love the way He reveals it, and His instruction will transform your life!

*Lord Jesus, thank You for pursuing me with Your unconditional and steadfast love. It is my pride that wants to deserve Your love. It is my pride that wants You to love me because of how much I do for You, because of how much I love You, because of how strong my faith in You is. Thank You for revealing that You love me because of who You are, not because of who I am or what I do. May my many failures teach me child-like dependence on Your love, instead of dependence on my inherent or attained value.*

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<sup>2</sup> “A Few Words about Grace” – from William R. Newell, *Romans, Verse by Verse*.

