

Monster Love

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Cover: Giotto: The Crucifixion
Scrovegni Chapel in Padua

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DEDICATION

My Lord, Jesus Christ.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank-you, Michele.

Foreword

This book was a joy to write. While the spark of the idea came quite a while ago, and I struggled for quite some time searching for just the right ‘voice’ to convey this message.

I found it in the midst of my own struggles, while searching for more of Him. While it had been nearly a year since the idea had first come, once I began, the rest flowed relatively freely.

Having written several books, I was not laboring for length or for a volume of words, but instead, I merely desired to lift Him up, to exalt who He is, as much as I can see and express of Him.

It is, after all, only in beholding Him, that we can ever truly be together, be in agreement. There is never any ‘horizontal’ unity without first being in ‘vertical’ unity with Him first—in as much as the first commandment is first, and the second is second.

That said, I thank you for taking the time to read this book. I pray it will be an encouragement and a blessing. While it may address doctrinal issues, I hope that the primary outcome of this book is not doctrine, but revelation.

*And Jesus answered him,
Blessed are you, Simon Bar-
Jonah! For flesh and blood
has not revealed this to you,
but my Father who is in*

heaven.

Matthew 16:17 (ESV)

In His Name.

Benjamin Hoogterp

March 8th, 2020

Monster Love

No one ever says to God, "I love you more than you love me."

God is love, and everything He does is done in love, and through love, and for love. Love is the essence of who He is, and there is no part of His Character that is not wholly Love.

The entirety of His Nature is to love. All His acts throughout history, both known and unknown, were both fully just and also fully love. From

His greatest feat of deliverance, to the most minuscule act of creation, everything that He has ever done is love, through and through.

God is One

Whenever God does anything, He is expressing the whole substance of His being. God is One and all of His attributes are one. They are unified in who He is and they are fully expressed in all that He does. There is no diminishing in one aspect as He moves in another, no part of him becomes less as He exercises something else. As it is written, there is no shadow cast on one side whenever He turns another. In everything about Him, every part is always equally bright, equally present, and equally visible.

When He expresses His wisdom, His wrath is always present. When He is in His

omnipotence, there is never any less of His Justice. When He exercises His compassion, His righteousness is ever at the forefront. So too with all of His attributes. Whenever one is displayed, none are decreased from view. And so, no other attribute is missing at a time when He displays His love.

God is One. That is the essence of who He is. All that He is, He is all of the time, for that is who God is. He is that through and through, for that is His entire nature and being. Anything He does expresses and reveals every aspect in its absolute perfection all of the time, in every regard, regardless how it is viewed.

And, so every attribute thus can be said to be love, just as love can be said to be all of His attributes. In the perfection that is God, these are all called by the name 'Love'. Love is the

designation of all of these attributes. God is not called Mercy, although He is the only true source of it. He is not called righteousness, although it, along with justice, are the foundation of His Throne. He is not called wrath, although the Scripture speaks of it.

He is called Father. He is called judge. He is called Holy. But, John the apostle specifically calls Him Love.

God is Love

Love, it is said, is as strong as death. It fights for what it holds to, and does not let go. It doesn't give up, it doesn't give in. It always fights. It always endures. It always continues on. This is the nature of the kind of love we all instinctively know must exist inside. This is God's kind of love.

No one can say they love God more than this, for this is the definition of Love, and Love is the definition of God. Man, by definition, is finite. God is infinite—He is bigger, He is greater, He is Beyond man. Man, as it were, is the two-dimensional portrait of the metaphorically speaking “three-dimensional God”—man is made in His image. Man, by comparison, is the sculpted form of, bearing replica of, and created in the likeness of the One, while the Actual is more than shape and aspect. As a statue of a man is to the man Himself, so man is to God.

Man cannot love like God, simply because man cannot create the universe. Man was not created to hold the stars, count the galaxies, or to number the sand on the seashore. He was created as just a finite portion of Him that has no limit. He is not Him, but he is made *like* Him.

Man cannot love like God, but of course, man can love LIKE God. Man has a sense of what love is. He has an idea of what love feels like, looks like, and can receive and give it. Man understands what God is, because God created Him to. And, while he cannot love in the fullness of God, he can, in truth, love with the fullness of his own mortal being, as an image of what God does in the fullness of His own eternal being.

Man can love and can even live in perpetual love, permanent love, but he cannot in his human-ness ever match God in all of His perfection of Love. Just as a men execute judgment every day on earth in many different realms, man imitates God, but never matches Him. Human justice, while performed with every right and true principle, can always make mistakes. Human courts make mistakes, not on a fault of their own,

but simply because they do not, cannot, see and know everything.

So too, man does not perceive all of God. He is lacking in sight and understanding. Man can and does make mistakes, not just in its form or intent, but simply because he does not know, cannot know, everything that God knows. Just as with justice, man can only love in the dimension and capacity that he has seen, is aware of, and has been created to. In fact, in so much as man's knowledge is finite, He can only ever love to the limit of his revelation. This is why Paul prayed in that the Ephesian church might be given the power to know the height, length, depth, and length of that love that is in Jesus.

No one can love like God—only as each man was created and as he has learned.

We Love Because He Loved

Love, however, is what makes all the difference. The apostle John writes that we love because God loved us first. Man knows what love is because He was created to know. He knows because he was first loved by God, and God has revealed love to man. Man experiences love because he was designed to experience such a thing, and he loves because he is loved from above.

Love is what conquers darkness, overcomes injustice, and thwarts evil. Love lays hold of its object and does everything in its power to obtain, protect, preserve, and keep it. It is only for love that one loses everything, yet counts it as nothing, all for the sake of the object of its affection. Only love saves.

All of our movies, our heroes, and our songs,

they all are all about love in one way or another—they are about the objects of our affection, our passion and effort. They depict the trial and triumph, along with some failures and loss, of seeking the object of our desiring. Even some religious movements make great ends about the rightness or wrongness of our human desires, and go to great lengths to proscribe them. But while many may make claims, how many can actually say they've found what they're looking for?

While many may speak of what they call 'love', history itself shows us that these are ultimately only the distant shadows of what God's kind of love is, true love. "True love" may be talked about in romantic terms, but there is no greater love than giving up your own life for a friend. While a man can give all he has for love, give his ultimate devotion to

it, and lose his life for it, it is still not the totality of God's infinite love. While many things have been done in God's name that were not love, a weed in a cornfield does not make the grain any less than what it is—food. Love, real love, does exist, despite all fakes and ill intentions. The false can never disprove the true, just as counterfeit money does not make all dollars fake.

The love of God, it is said, is greater far than tongue or pen could ever tell. It goes beyond the farthest star, and reaches to the lowest hell. To write the love of God, were it ink, would drain the oceans dry.

This is the love of God. Paul commended this love towards us in this, "Now let me show you a more excellent way".

Love Is

Paul writes that love is patient, kind, not envious. It is neither boastful, nor proud, it isn't proud, self-seeking, keeps no record of wrong. It always lasts, always trust, always hopes. It never fails.

Like in all of our stories, it is the hero that perseveres through all odds and wins the day. He doesn't do it for himself, for his own glory. He is motivated by a greater good. We feel good when we watch the hero sacrifice himself, only to come through in the end. We all love it when, through all manner of hardship and trials, the main character overcomes to the good end.

It is because it resonates with something within ourselves, our potential, what we could be, what we SHOULD be, if we put our

mind to it. Not fettered by second thoughts, self-preservation, or holding anything back. A simple heart, motivated by the endurance of a thing they believe within their chest.

This is being human, to love. Anyone who doesn't know what love is, is not human. Yet, for all our clamoring for it, our affirmation that it is our desire, our greatest need, and our greatest virtue, we admit that we do not have what we claim to require. All our talk of it and idealization of it only reveal not that it is the very thing that we lack, and possess no extra to give away.

Too often, we, each and every one of us, choose what is not love, do not love, and violate love. In fact, were we to have the thing we speak, we would be in the process of giving it away, rather than speaking of our need.

Beloved, Let Us Love

In love, one either has it or not. Some love. Some do not. The apostle John in his epistle brings it closer to home, saying, "Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God, and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that doesn't love, doesn't know God, for God is love. Beloved, let us love one another."

See, it is only the soul that loves that really knows God. It is also the soul that doesn't know God that doesn't truly love. They may know it, and they may want it. They may even claim we all need to do it. But they themselves don't.

What may seem like love is often disguised, and merely, in the end, self-seeking. Haven't we all encountered someone who was

offering us something, help, a great deal, a leg up, who was really only out for themselves? How much more, though, the things of the heart.

How many of us truly reach out and touch another, not for any motivation of our own, but simply out of concern for another? God says, through the New Testament, that that is His kind of love. That, do good to those who actually don't like you, don't want to do anything nice, but are simply in need. That's what God says His love is like.

Probably the hardest time to love is in the face of pain. Hurt, loss, trauma, these are a part of our being human. Hurt comes to us all, and nothing lasts forever. Trauma comes when we encounter these things without our 'defenses'. We all live with a picture of how life is supposed to be in our hearts, and it

does not include living in fear of these things. Yet, when we encounter them despite what our mind says the world is like, that is the definition of trauma.

Jesus said that if we try to save our own life, we will lose it. This applies not only to physical death, but in every aspect of our lives. Only by facing our pain, our fear, and our loss do we release the trauma. And, only in this place are we able to love.

Without dodging, avoiding, or protecting ourselves in any way, the promise of God is that in that place we will truly find our lives. We face our pain, love through the pain, and in the midst of it, we find ourselves—the selves, the image, that God originally created. In the face of loss, we love, and God, our Father, provides for our needs.

God Demonstrates

Paul wrote that this is the demonstration of God's love, Jesus' death for us. The verb in the verse (Romans 5:8), however, is not a past tense word, it is present-on-going: God "demonstrates".

It is not a one-time occurrence, because God is outside of time. God's demonstration reaches us today. His work is ever present today. Not that Christ is ever dying for us, but that the eternality of the event is still demonstrating His Love today, such an awesome thing it is. God is eternal, infinite, omnipotent.

When He demonstrates His love it stretches even to today. It stretches to Eternity past and beyond today into Eternity future. It is proclaimed in the heavens, preached in hell,

and described in the Vision of Revelation as the one seated today upon the throne above is "One as a lamb slain". It speaks afresh today.

Love is "The Greatest Thing in the World". It is ever extending, ever expanding, and ever enduring. It describes the care of a mother. It is the oversight and strength of a father. It is the camaraderie of brotherhood, and it is the bond of sisterhood that lasts through time. When the greatest pains of life come, it is only love that sees you through. When loss and pain surround, the only motivation to arise and slough off the darkness is what you love. And, it is what you love that makes the difference. But, a man may love a thousand things, but it is the undivided heart that fears His Name.

But, when the eye is single, without the

folding complications and complexities of fear, of trauma, of doubt, and of self, the eye is illuminating to the entire being by manner of what it is affixed to, as Jesus explained, calling it the lamp.

Only God's love in us, in the portion which we were designed, is greater than the shame of the pursuit of the goal we desire. For the worth of the treasure, even a prideful man might endure being the laughingstock of those to whom he sold all he had to buy it.

If a man loves a woman to such a degree, such that he forgets his own surroundings, his decency, and any sort of human order, he will do all sorts of odd things, out of sorts things, because the one other thing has dominated his vision. If, however, things like common sense, a sharp appreciation of the gaze of the onlookers, or a simple grasp of his

surroundings impacts him, he could be subdued.

Of course, the former makes for great movies and comedy, the latter is the ground most of us walk in when it comes to human affections.

But, not so with God. Jesus said that if anyone loves something else more than Him, they are not worthy of Him. Further, in Luke's gospel, He is recorded as saying that whoever does not hate his father, mother, sister, etc, and even his own life, he cannot be His disciple.

Far from being fanatical, the state of every believer, in their inner-most man is this state. It is not, of course, one's own hatred with which one hates, for that is covered in the last portion of Christ's statement, the command to hate even their own life. It is the

new perspective, the abhorrence of evil, that comes from a new birth, a birth from above.

The Christian, in their spirit, in their heart of hearts, detests evil, even as they are receiving in themselves the working out what has already happened in their spirit throughout the entirety of their soul. What has happened as a seed within their very spirit is translated into the changing of their behavior, attitude, perspective, into their entire mind, their will, and emotions. The smallest of seeds may start out as imperceptible, yet, when fully grown, becomes the largest of garden plants.

This love that made itself known to the heart begins to manifest, through and through, just like a little of an invisible leavening agent eventually effects and changes an entire batch of dough when cooking. You can't see it, but it's there, it's alive, and it's doing its

thing. And, most importantly, when it's done doing the thing it does inside, you can taste it. That's why we leaven bread, because it tastes better.

The Substance of Love

What can we say of love then? Can we speak of it? Can we only describe it and its attributes like Paul did? Or, is the problem that the words do not necessarily translate into the reality all of the time?

Can it be said fairly that, sometimes, even well-meaning, good intentioned, born-again, blood-bought Christians can talk about a real spiritual thing, such as love, and yet be completely devoid of it in the scope of what they're saying? Can they be merely talking of a reality of which they wholly believe, and rightly so, and yet do not, at that moment,

actually demonstrate nor aptly communicate, through their words alone?

Jesus, when he was on the boat, simply spoke “Peace be still”, and the wind and waves ceased. Jesus understood Peace. He knew Peace, and He spoke that word Peace because He was Peace. Yet, we, while we speak of peace, do not generally see the same demonstration that Jesus did while in that storm at just the mere mention of it.

I think it can be surely said that it is fair to say that we often speak of love when we do not fully understand it. It can be said that each of us, given sufficient years, can point to any number of cases where the love that we so desperately and highly speak of is yet seemingly lofty, out of focus, and, frankly, too often out of reach. God has shed His love abroad in our hearts, but too often, we In

confession, the author, too often, has failed to feel the fullness of love, be emotionally convinced of the love, and to then live out of that love and give it away. It is there, it is real, it is even within us as believers, and yet, too often we fail in love.

Love Never Fails

But just as there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother, there is a love that never ends. It's mere mention is proof to the human heart of its existence, simply because one can feel that it must exist. It solves rejection, it cures all loss, truly, perfect love casts out all fear.

No matter the pain, the bitterness, or the cynicism that may encroach upon someones hearts, the prospect of the eternal, divine love permeates the being of mankind, of

society, so that either all of civilization is either built upon it, or in direct avoidance and conflagration of ever finding or acknowledging it. It is there, but we are often offered reasons not to see it.

This love, this all enduring love of which we are speak, is the kind that would keep going despite all opposition. Death is so strong, one could say, that all that enter its grasp are never released thereof. It's grip is absolute, and it has its hold on everyone, every thing, every being that has, or ever will have, life. It never loses grip, never loses hold, it never, ever gives up even a single one that it takes captive. And, to further mark the point, there is simply nothing anyone can ever do to stop it.

This, the Bible says, is the strength of the Love that God is. This, and this type of Love,

alone, is the kind of Love which Song of Solomon speaks of. This Love that moves within God is that kind of strong. It was Love, then, that broke the Father's heart when He sent His Son. If it was love that caused the father of the prodigal son to run after him, to place a ring on his finger, a new robe on him, and to kill an animal to feed him, him being but an earthly father, how much more then the true and perfect of God toward us when Christ became flesh and dwelt among us. When Christ's eye was single, and no blemish was found in Him, when the only desire of Jesus was the will of the Father, that kind of love, that kind of devotion and singularity of purpose raised Christ from the dead, on our behalf.

Christ was raised because of the great love of the Father, both towards Him, and also toward us. For, in the love of the Father,

death met its match. With the same jealousy wherein the grave keeps that which is its own, so the Father, in His supreme love, was that unyielding towards the Son in bringing Him back up out of captivity, out of the Earth, into glory, and into His Eternal name, forever.

This is the love that He shares with us, through His Gospel. This is the love that He awakens in us, through our opening toward it in His Son. This is the love wherein His followers, after having come to know, have gone into fires, into the mouths of beasts, into swords, and into peril, because they first tasted of that divine delight, that divine sweetness, of which it is written, Your mouth is sweetness itself.

In Christ, His Love carries us through, not just our own human love, but the love that is reflected to us through the inward knowledge

of God. It was so on the heart of Paul that he wrote to the Ephesians, telling them how he praying and asking that God would give them the power to know the width, height, length, and depth of the love of God that is in Christ. He told them that it so that they might be established in love, rooted and grounded in love, in this love. He prayed that they would be divinely empowered in receiving assistance in understanding. It wasn't something they could get from a book, or from listening to Him speak, but something Paul asked God to give them the ability to receive.

The nonspiritual, he event wrote, simply could not understand, being only carnal, for it had to be discerned spiritually. Only in knowing this all sufficient love could Paul himself could stand, after all, and so too, he knew it alone was the only way any of his

spiritual children could as well.

In this reflection of love, though persecuted, they were never abandoned. They were driven to the ground with blows, but they were not devastated by them, not completely undone. Through this love, they were continually reassured, revitalized, assisted, and re-energized. It was what kept them going.

Though outwardly they were wasting away, inwardly, beyond the visible outer appearance, they were in fact renewed every day, made fresh, encouraged, and given new strength. This because, on the inside, they knew they were loved, loved from above. Not in idea, not in concept, but they were empowered by the love of God they knew. God was demonstrating every day the love wherewith He loved them. Because it was

real to them, they lived out of the reality of that love, and the world was changed because of them.

A Wretch Like Me

We never deserve this love, never in the past nor in the future. God makes this clear in His Word. The Love found in Scripture, of course, is never deserved, but God's demonstration of His love, Christ's death for us, was while we were still sinners. It wasn't in a place where we were open, asking, or in any way seeking to this love—it was while we were sinning, while we were opposed to Him and all He was. We all, like sheep, had gone astray, wandering, lost, and wayward. We didn't even desire to do good, that is, in our heart of hearts.

The Bible makes it clear that none of us were

seeking God. None of us were going the right way. None of us even cared, no, not one.

But, Jesus said that it was not the twelve that chose Christ, but Christ Himself that chose the twelve, for, as He said, no one comes to the Father unless He draws them.

Men, for all their desire to love, don't do it. For all their petitions for it, their songs about it, their striving towards it, never truly elevate themselves above their own selfish ambition to have a kind thought about another.

Man is inherently evil, and, left to themselves, their every thought and intent of their heart turns only to evil continually. That is every inner movement of their true self, only evil, all the time. This was the condition in Noah's day, and God lamented that he had made man, so far had men fallen. Like food

left in the heat of the day, the introduction of such a little rot quickly spreads through the whole, destroying everything about it. It was good for nothing, unable to be made whole, unable to be corrected. Only by a recreation could the spoiled food be made fresh again.

Though man might do what appears good, to what motive does he really respond? Is it noble? But, is that nobility self-seeking in the end? Is it protective? Does he get something out of it in doing it, be it substance, prestige, or even emotional?

Man doesn't do good, for if he was busy doing good, we would not have the world in which we live in today. Our entertainment all too often shows the dark side of this too. We entertain ourselves with stories of theft, crime, and darkness simply because they populate our world. And, while we may

watch movies about love, or write books about how we all just need to 'love', darkness fills our world. But God stepped out where there there was no love, and loved anyway. He didn't just talk about it, he came down where it was needed, and did something.

Where 'love' has sometimes become merely an idea, or worse, become a byword merely implying compliance, God demonstrates His in deed, in doing an act so eternal it brings salvation to all generations. While God did not merely 'write' about His desire, His action has inspired millennia of men to write thereof. God's love alone. His is supreme.

Oh What A Savior

In his depravity, man was wretched. He could not save himself, and he could do no good to be saved. He needed a savior, Christ our Lord.

Man couldn't do this himself. He needed help, and as it happens, the hardest people to help are those who don't realize they have a problem.

Even the average person could tell you that you generally can't simply tell someone what wrong with them—if you try it, you will just get contempt. Generally, if someone can't discover it on their own, they will never see it, nor ever desire to fix it. And, moreover, they will hate you for pointing it out. Most would, anyway. Rebuke a righteous man, however, and he will love you for it.

Anyone can quote the verse, saying, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death”, but how would anyone know his way was incorrect?

Jesus' method of teaching was simply to point

out what would come out of a man if he was in trouble. Anger, name calling, divorce, anxiety, all of these things are touched on by the Sermon on the Mount. They point to a deeper problem in the heart of man, something going wrong inside. They point away from the kind of love that God is, and instead to inner bitterness and struggle.

The things Jesus mentioned are the conditions that point to the curse of toilsome laboring under the sun. Fatigue, unresolved pain, and the general unrest are all indicated in the Sermon on the Mount, yet Jesus points to what a man looks like when he has these things beneath the surface and isn't dealing with them. All men everywhere, of all time, all respond the same way they do not live out of love—they hurt others and destroy relationship.

These things, the things pointed to in the Sermon on the Mount, are the things Jesus spoke of, and said that if you pay attention to and consider important, you will grow correctly and be firmly established. He said that being honest about these outward things, you could tell if your heart was infected with fear, with anger, with hurt and with pain, unable to fully love, as fully as you were created to. He didn't even point to this as a full disqualification, He simply said that those who lived as such, and taught others to do as well, would be the least in His Kingdom.

For those who are in Him, He said some would give greater and lesser return on the seed entrusted to their heart. Some returning only some of a return, some more, and some yielding an exceedingly abundantly return on what God had given them. Such is the nature of love—it may begin in addition, but it

moves on to multiplication and then beyond.

But, the starting place, the heart of it all, was in the garden of your own life. No other place, no other soil but your own, and no other person can take you from love. Only you can take yourself from love, and allow other things to take over. What were the things Jesus said to put into practice? To learn to do this thing called love which doesn't get needlessly angry, doesn't call names, always forgives, and trusts God.

Safety With The Shepherd

Of course, Jesus was initially speaking only to the unsaved—it even took some of His disciples a while to fully believe. There is a quality in which a believer, before he has come to understand and work through the issues of his own heart, excepting those

things which perhaps the Lord delivers him of immediately, wherein the believer may exhibit anger, and struggles, even into his saved years.

But, here, we know that even the worst sinner, when he comes and is afraid to even look to heaven because of his sins, though he comes to the altar with them, leaves with them forgiven. Further, while Jesus said that those who both do and teach the things He spoke of would be the greatest in the Kingdom, He also said that those who broke and taught others to break them would be the least in the Kingdom.

Least in the Kingdom is, after a fact, still in the Kingdom after all. There is the greatest, and greater is better than lesser, but least is still saved. The believer in Jesus who has not mastered everything may not have as much

reward, but he is still included. Whereas, to the one given much, much is required.

Paul said that there are those who build only with wood, hay, and stubble, rather than with gold, silver, and precious stones. Though they lose everything when tested by fire, they still enter into the joy of the Lord. They may enter with only the shirt on their back, but they enter nevertheless.

All Have Died

When we are saved, we are changed, we are a new creation, and the old is gone, and new is come and coming. Just as that food cannot be made sound again once it is rotted, He doesn't just fix, He recreates. When they believe, men are born again into a living hope, given a new heart, and born into love. Before then, that man is dead. Thus, we

regard none according to the flesh, that is, they look alive, but they are dead, but after the Spirit. The flesh profits nothing, it is the Spirit that gives life. And, as the Word says, there is no fellowship between the living and the dead.

For we know that since Christ died for all men for their salvation, that therefore all have died in their transgressions and sins and thus stand in need of Him. Because we know that Christ is the savior of all, all stand in need of a savior.

When Jesus came to Lazarus' tomb, we record the shortest verse of the Bible, "Jesus wept." Behold how He loved him, they said. He was moved to tears. Some, certainly for those around Himself, but certainly, some for his friend, as well.

David wrote as a prophet in the Psalms, saying, "Precious in His sight is the death of His saints." If you try to save your life, you will lose it. In every way that we attempt to 'save' ourselves, we find that we generally lose a portion of ourselves to do so. Modern psychology may not be able to save a soul, but, by mere experience and study to learn, they can sometimes observe a few key points. As one famous such individual once noted, one of the main cause of many people's struggle is the attempt to avoid legitimate pain.

In a fallen world, pain is going to come. For the Christian, we know that will sometimes come in the form of persecution, yet it can also come in a myriad of hurts, vices, pains, choices, and distresses in a fallen and darkened world. Yet, Jesus says that when we try to save ourselves from these distresses,

even emotionally, we ultimately end up losing what we intended to gain.

Hiding, fighting, fleeing, or just pretending its not there doesn't solve it. Only facing your pain, the hurt, the loss, only that ever really solves it. And, while it often does feel like dying when you right down to it, if you let yourself face it, go through it, experience it, and what seems like 'die' from it, the promise for the Christian is this: *If you lose your life, you will find it.*

What better place for a true Father to come and help than when His child is broken with nothing left to do. What better place for a true King to extend ultimate benevolence, when His subject has absolutely nothing. What a time for a physician, when the patient agrees that the arm is broken and the doctor can mend it. What better place for the Judge

to extend mercy, but when it is needed most.

But, so long as you don't have a problem, continue in your own way in your own path, choose your own solutions, He will let you do it. God helps those who cannot be helped. So long as man employs his own devices, by and large, God withholds His.

The thing is, the Greatest thing, is right there. It always has been. Of course, we know that, we knew it before we acknowledged the hurt, but, unless we meet the conditions, the light our eye is beholding is not filling up and illuminating the entire body. We have our eye on our own resources.

That is, the eye is not 'single', 'without folds', as it implies in the original language. The folds, the layers, the complexity gets in our way, and we are choked out by the things of

this life, namely, avoiding unpleasantness, discomfort, the like.

God created man upright, but he has gone in search of many devices. Getting rid of those devices involves the removal of the reason why they were sought out in the first place. And, it is only in that place that we can truly receive, know, and participate in that great, great love.

Only the one who humbles himself like a little child can enter the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus said. What would that be like, to be back in your childhood? Back where you began? Would you live there, or would it simply be too scary? Too hard? Back before you learned how to be all grown up?

The Greatest Thing in the World

Jesus said that unless you humble yourself as a little child, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Both for entering, as well as excelling in the Kingdom, as He brought a little child in their midst and said that the greatest was one just like him.

Some might wonder, how could such a loving God send His Son, knowing how He would be brutally beaten, mocked, ridiculed, rejected, and ultimately killed, how could a loving God do such a thing? Perhaps simply by living without any defenses? Perhaps because a child doesn't know any better?

Some have even gone so far as to call an all knowing God who, with full foreknowledge of the events of Calvary, who would tell His Son

to do it anyway... They would call Him a divine abuser, and the work of the cross an act of divine child abuse. This they say would make such a divine being a 'monster God', not worthy of worship, but of contempt. Surely, they say, this cannot be the God of love?

But, let us look at the most famous Scripture of the Bible, and look at what it says about this great event, which Paul called the ever living demonstration of who God is:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

Some would argue against the idea of the

'monster man'. This is the totally depraved soul who neither loves God, nor seeks after Him. This is the one portrayed in Scripture in places like the flood of Noah who God was remorseful over having created. It is the one in the depiction of Jesus being a "Physician among patients", rather than a "friend of sinners" (Jesus is, of course, the ultimate friend to sinners, but the title was the insult the rulers of the Jews used to describe Him at the time, along with 'drunkard' and 'glutton', rather than how we understand the phrase today).

Some would object to the idea of this 'monster' that is man, a sinner incapable of doing good, and would interject that we cannot make a 'monster' out of God, one that we wouldn't want to be around. From this they argue that God didn't willingly crush Him for our sake.

But, the answer to the matter is found in this, "For God so loved the world...". That is, it wasn't just that He somewhat loved us. It wasn't a portion of His love. It wasn't a restrained measure of the infinitude of multiplicity of heavens with which He looked down upon our miserable condition and condescended to us, offering us a pardon.

No, God "so" loved us... God so loved us that He gave. He gave not only His best, He gave His only Son. Without restraint. Without self preservation. Without caution. Without any thought for himself, His own Son, or anything else in all the world. So great was the Father's love toward us.

The point is not just that He loved. Of course He loved us, that is who He is. But, it is the immensity of the demonstration of this love. The enormity of it. It is the vast extreme of

the already infinite, perfect, and limitless love, the verse calls forth its ultimate, its maximum, its length. It is the ultimate of infinity, which no man can know without His enabling, no man can understand without empowerment. It is a love from an infinite, everlasting, ever existing being who both is and created love of which we are mere echos, simple copies, that even in our greatest effort of only human understanding, no matter what we do, could even conceive.

Because this is God, and this is God's kind of love. And, as we who have neither stretched out the heavens ourselves, nor have ever filled the storehouses of snow with our bare hands, we who have only a measure of a love that, in God, is more all-encompassing and free and unrestrained than all we could ask or imagine, do not love more than Him.

The 'talking point', if you will, is never "monster God" or "monster man", as some might put it. The disagreement misses the point. No, the only thing on display, for all of Eternity, as the living and ever current demonstration of that which God says He is, is 'Monster love'.

Monster Love

For God loved us so much... Because, if you were God, if you were infinite, and if your love was as great as your power was wherewith you created the universe including the Earth and all who dwell therein... If you had all that love, and you went so far Beyond your normal measure of the thing to undo what had been done... If you "so" loved... If you loved like God could possibly have loved... Then, you would give all you ever could.

If there were more love for the world possible then the previous measure would not be God, for God is all. If there were something greater, than that would be more godly than God, and so one's original conception of God would have been wrong..

Charlie Peace was a criminal many years ago. At his trial, before his execution, he said regarding the Gospel. "Sir," he said, addressing a preacher, "if I believed what you and the church of God say that you believe, even if England were covered with broken glass from coast to coast, I would walk over it, if need be, on hands and knees and think it worthwhile living, just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that!"

Christ said that the sons of this world were more shrewd than the sons of the Kingdom. It appears, then too, that Charlie here captured

more of the love of the Kingdom than too many of its own subjects. He realized that his own suffering was of no consequence if it meant saving a soul from much worse. He knew that the extreme of that kind of message would require an equally extreme and impactful message.

Is it too much for God to love that much? If in the infinitude of this monstrous love, He cared, for us, that much to love that deeply, was moved so immensely, that He gave pay that costly a fee? Is it too much for this "Monster Love" to be the Eternal demonstration of the eternal greatness of the love wherewith He loves us?

For God "so" loved us, that He did this thing. A love that knows no self. That does not preserve its own being. A love, toward us, that is singular.

What greater thing, what greater love, what more intense and personal thing to do love could there be? If it were a mere human sentiment, perhaps it would be a thing to criticize, but if that great love wherein we are found is indeed as eternal, everlasting, and all encompassing as we make it out to be (and it is), isn't it worth considering that maybe, just maybe, His love wherein He gave His Son is just that?

As our minds can understand the idea of infinity, and yet are not infinite, so too our love has a quality of that kind of love, but to love infinitely, beyond time, beyond space, beyond anything is so far, well, Beyond us, that we must simply must come to accept His love for us in the same way we accept who He is as God.

It is so far incredibly beyond our ability to

grasp or understand, without His ability, of course, that all we can do is simply marvel? To adore? And, to be thankful?

As I cannot comprehend both the infinitude of space and time along with its minute and infinitesimal detail, all at the same time, so too, short of His Grace, I cannot comprehend His Love.

What heights of heaven and depths of hell it must entail. And for such, He rose to the place, and for which He received the highest name, both in this age and in the one to come.

What is God, but He is Love? Most of this world will pass away, but for faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love. What motivation would grant such a reward? Such a title and place, not only now, but forever?

Only the greatest thing itself, that greatest of all great, this great Love. Simple. Selfless. Faultless. Boundless. Unstoppable. Unhesitating. Unflinching. Love.

Not the love of a monster, but a monstrous eternal love.

Could we limit such a love? Could we restrict it? Could we ever even try to classify it?

Simply, no. For we need the Father Himself to let us understand even what we can.

But, that great love so motivated Him. God "so" loved us... Loved you, beyond normal human compassion, a love that will not quit. He scarified His own Son, for us, that we might live.

For What It's Worth

Proverbs 21:2 says that all of a man's ways seem right to him, but the Lord weighs the heart.

God knows everything, and He knows the reason why we do what we do. An action may seem motivated by love when it is not, and something seemingly wrong at first, when understood in context, is clearly justifiable. A speeding man on the freeway appears wrong only until his pregnant wife in the back seat is revealed. The law that was designed to protect life is not rightly applied if it does not make provision to protect life in this situation as well.

If the condition of God's heart were not love, perhaps one might argue caution over loss. But, who is the one who can tell God how big

His love is? Who can tell an infinite One that He can only love so far, and no further? What is the limit of the love of a true Father?

Had there been another way, had there been something cheaper, surely He would have paid that instead, for He is the only wise God.

But, there wasn't.

And, God so loved us that He paid the ultimate price, the highest cost imaginable. And, the true question is, could He be an infinite God of Love if He did not? I would dare say He could not. All else aside, if He as an infinite God claimed that He loved me, individually, could He have chosen not to save us. He certainly could have chosen to let us go. But, He loved us.

And, that speaks more volumes about who

He is than a thousand books, sermons, or opinions of man could ever say. It demonstrates the ultimate of who He is, beyond any and all dispute. God is love.

Within the boundaries of His own Kingdom, which He set forth, which are righteousness and justice, the foundation of His throne, the highest cost was the best thing He had. He had His only Son, and, in the infinite measure of His goodness, the very thing that is objected against, in that very love, He gave. Because He "so" loved us.

"Monster Love" says this:

For love is as strong as death; and its jealousy is as unyielding as the grave.

It burns like a blazing fire, like a

mighty flame.

*Many waters cannot quench love,
and great floods cannot sweep it
away.*

Song of Song 8:6-7

Forever Written

The end of the matter is this, that God so loved us, that we should love Him, and love one another.

He laid the pattern, created us in His image, described Himself through His Word, and He alone is the greatest at love.

Jesus described the Father, saying that He is kind even to those that resist and oppose Him. He is forgiving and merciful to those that

ask Him. He desires mercy, and not sacrifice.

Yet, not one iota of His love is out of sight when He exercises His judgment. He does not delight in the destruction of the wicked, but He does not hesitate because He is righteous in everything He does.

Every act of righteousness is in absolute congruence with every act of justice, and justice is never truly justice if it is not coupled with mercy. Mercy and justice are not truly such if they are not likewise coupled with appropriate wrath, and none of these in any fashion diminish in anyway His love.

Every aspect of His nature is perfectly in view in every act, decision, and activity of the Father. They are not man's mere shadows, but they are His Perfection. For God is One.

Conclusion

As Christ could speak out a single word from the true Peace of God and calm a storm, so too, when the Father acts, He acts universally, beyond our understanding, ability to observe or understand, or even fully realize.

His cry, through the prophets and Christ Himself, was that we would be like Him. He was the Word made flesh, He was what He taught.

The principles He spoke were the ones He lived, the ones that God responded to, and the ones God honored.

And, His one new command was to love. And, for roughly 2,000 years, in varying levels and abilities, we Christians have been doing just

that. It isn't always perfect. It interspersed with the insincere and un-redeemed. Sometimes it even might seem we miss it more than we get it, but it is there, and, as Jesus said, it is what makes us the salt, and the light of the world.

The same light that Jesus was, He says that we are now in this world. In the same way that He said He was one with the Father in John 10, He prayed that we would all be one with the Father in John 17. One even as He and the Father were one is not only a prayer for unity among among the believers, but that we would be one with God first. One with His love.

This kind of love drives me to my knees. Like the woman in Mark 14 who anointed the feet of the Lord, it drives me to adore Him... As extravagantly as He has exhausted Himself

for me, so I am driven to love Him.

Twelve out of twelve apostles of the Lamb were wrong that day. All of them rebuked her harshly it says.

But He saw. He understood. He knew why He had come, and only He could see what she was really doing. She couldn't love like Him, she could only love Him. He said she had only done what she could. Those who are forgiven much, love much, and all she could do was love with all that her frame was created to love. That was all.

Love begets love. And it was all she had.

Prayer

I pray these words would allow you to see His love more clearly, to experience even more that love as a reality, rather than simply 'doctrine', and to receive peace, lasting joy, and stability as you release to Him every 'fold' that has accumulated in your vision.

His.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Benjamin has lived in the Gospel all of his life and has a passion to see the “Words in Red” understood, taught, and, most of all, lived. It is his belief that the Apostles of the book of Acts were birthed out of what they were taught in the Gospels, and what is recorded there was the foundational teaching of the church that “turned the world upside down”. Many movements have come and gone, but it is only with faith in His Words and His Way that we enter into fullness.

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