



God Is Love

By Randall F. Matheny

No Christian will argue the biblical fact that God is love (1 Jn. 4:8), or that "... he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 Jn. 4:16). There is much disagreement, however, about what the preceding two verses imply. Popular theology holds to the view that a God of love does not condemn personal sin, nor will He allow the unrepentant sinner to be condemned. Those who hold this false doctrine have twisted the scripture to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16), and have developed a view of the Bible that makes it meaningless. Robert Williams, a homosexual and ordained Episcopalian priest, in justification of homosexuality, states, "...if it brings life to people, if it brings people into an encounter with the living Christ, then its Scripture. If it brings death to people, it is used in a way to label people, to harm people, if its used as a club to beat people over the head, which most of the passages about homosexuality are, then we can't in good conscience call it the word of God. We can't read it in a worship service and afterward say, 'This is the word of the

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"...speaking the truth in love" Ephesians 4:15

Lord.' If it's a harmful and negative passage, it's not the word of the Lord of love." ("The Williams-Asher Debate on Homosexuality." 1997, Jeff Asher.)

God defines His love and expresses it accordingly. Love provides a means of salvation from sin for "whosoever will" (Mk. 8:34; Rev. 22:17): "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,

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teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age..." (Tit. 2:11-12, also Jn. 3:16; 12:47-50). Love chastises wickedness and rebukes sin: "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons" (Heb. 12:6-8) and "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19). Love protects the individual and the

church through discipline: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:4-7). Love rejects the self-destructive arrogance of willful sin: "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins..." (Heb. 10:26). Love accepts the one who turns from the paths of sin in obedience to Christ: "...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him..." (Heb. 5:8-9, also Acts 2:38; 3:19; 1 Jn. 1:5-10). The Bible also reveals the expression of love that God will accept in return from mankind: obedience to His commands: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 Jn. 5:3a); "If

you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14:15); "He who does not love Me does not keep My words..." (Jn. 14:24a); "...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Mat. 28:20a). He does not give liberty to choose the commands that we will accept or reject. "God is love," but the definition, terms and conditions are His and not according to the whims and fancies of fallible man.



When Worship is Boring

By Wayne Sharpe

It would not be hard to get the idea that sometimes the worst thing that could ever happen to you is to be bored! And, to be honest with ourselves, we really don't like being bored, do we? But what makes us bored? Why are some things boring and others are not?

It all depends on our interests. If we are doing something that interests us, it is not boring. It may be to someone else, but not to us. Some people find worship boring. Others never even think about it being boring but look forward to every opportunity to worship God. Could it be a lack of interest that makes worship boring to some? Could it be that rather than looking at worship as an opportunity to pour out from my heart praise and adoration to a great, loving and gracious God, I am merely looking for what pleases me?

People in Malachi's time had a problem with worship. Their worship was merely an external thing and it had become a burden to them. Through Malachi, God

said that the people were not honoring God's name. Malachi wrote, "But you profane it by saying of the Lord's table, 'It is defiled,' and of the food, 'It is contemptible.' And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously, says the Lord Almighty. 'When you bring injured, crippled or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?' says the Lord" (Mal. 1:12-13).

Worship was a burdensome, boring thing to them and the blemished sacrifices they offered dishonored God. He told them it would be better if they shut the gates to the temple rather than worship in such a way. Why had worship become boring to them? It was a lack of interest in God and in honoring God for all He is and all He had done for them. He said to them, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the Lord God Almighty. It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name" (Mal. 1:6).

If we view worship as boring, perhaps we are focusing on the wrong things. Perhaps we are more concerned about pleasing ourselves than we are about honoring God. Maybe part of the problem is that we don't take enough time through the week thinking about God--how great He is, how wonderful all of God's deeds are, how gracious He is to us, how He blesses us beyond measure, what great promises and hope we have because of what He has done for us through Jesus His

Son--and praising God for all this with other Christians on the Lord's day.

If all that bores us, perhaps we have not developed enough interest in things above!

(Edited)

--Via Bulletin Digest



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