Tuesday *September 22*

The God of Love

In the ancient pagan world, people did not believe that the gods loved humans. Instead, the gods were malevolent (wishing to do evil to others) and furious, and were supposed to be appeased. The idea of a God of love, as we see in the Bible, was a novelty. As surprising as this statement was in his time, Paul characterizes our God as "the God of love and peace" *(2 Cor. 13:11).*

PAGAN GODS OF THE UNDERWORLD OF THUNDER OF VENGEANCE OF THE UNDERWORLD

Read 2 Corinthians 13:11. How can you draw hope from what is said here? How can you better experience what this verse teaches?

- MATCHLESS LOVE (SEE ROMANS 5:6-8).
- BOUNDLESS LOVE (SEE EPHESIANS 3:19).
- INFINITE LOVE (SEE LUKE 23:34). CHRIST ON THE CROSS
- UNMERITED LOVE (SEE LUKE 15:20). PRODIGAL
- EVERLASTING LOVE (SEE JEREMIAH 31:3).

"THE LORD HAS APPEARED OF OLD TO ME, SAYING: "YES, I HAVE LOVED YOU WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE; THEREFORE WITH LOVINGKINDNESS I HAVE DRAWN YOU." (JEREMIAH 31:3 NKJV)

- CHANGELESS (SEE MALACHI 3:6).

WE COULD CALL THIS LOVE *THE DIVINE INITIATIVE*

THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT, THROUGH THE GOSPEL, MANKIND HAS BEEN:
RANSOMED (SEE 1 TIMOTHY 2:6).
REDEEMED (SEE GALATIANS 3:13).
BOUGHT (SEE 1 CORINTHIANS 6:20).
SET FREE (SEE JOHN 8:32, 36).
RELEASED (SEE ISAIAH 42:7).

THE WORD OF GOD IS TRUE, WHETHER WE BELIEVE IT OR NOT. WE ARE THE LORD'S PURCHASED POSSESSION, BOUGHT WITH A PRICE. AND HAVING BOUGHT US, HE HAS BROKEN EVERY BOND AND PAID EVERY DEBT THAT WOULD KEEP US IN BONDAGE TO SIN. "FOR THE GRACE OF GOD HAS APPEARED, BRINGING SALVATION TO ALL MEN, INSTRUCTING US TO DENY UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY DESIRES AND TO LIVE SENSIBLY, RIGHTEOUSLY AND GODLY IN THE PRESENT AGE" (TITUS 2:11, 12, NASB).

The phrase "the God of love and peace" can be interpreted in two different ways. On the one hand, God is seen as the source of love and peace. On the other hand, God is characterized by

love and peace. It is not necessary, however, to decide between the two. Because love and peace are intrinsic characteristics of God, He gives us love and peace.

Elsewhere, Paul refers to God as "the God of endurance and encouragement" *(Rom. 15:5, ESV)*; "of hope" *(Rom. 15:13, ESV)*; "of peace" *(Rom. 15:33, Rom. 16:20, 1 Cor. 14:33, Phil. 4:9, 1 Thess. 5:23)*, "the Father of mercies" *(2 Cor. 1:3)*, and "the God of all comfort" *(2 Cor. 1:3)*. God is the source of all these blessings. He gives us them all out of His unfailing love.

Also, although the phrase "God of peace" is somewhat common in the Bible, the phrase "God of love" occurs only here *(2 Cor. 13:11)*, and, hence, it deserves our most profound reflection.

As many interpreters have noticed, Paul's reference to the God of love a few verses before the trinitarian benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14 suggests that he thinks of God as three Persons. "Though he uses the word 'God' here as one of the three, his understanding of Jesus and the Spirit elsewhere in his letters . . . forces us to see the whole phrase as describing the one God whom the earliest church came to see in threefold form. It would be over a century before theologians . . . began to use words like 'trinity' as a shorthand way of expressing what Paul is already articulating."—Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), p. 148.

We believe in one God, the unity of three Persons who live eternally in a relationship of love. This triune God loves us and summons us to love one another in a way that reflects the love among Them.