

Untwisting Scriptures: Unconditional Love by Ben Nelson

In 1st John 4 the Bible states twice that God is Love. This is great news. This is wonderful information. But this is a fact that has been taken out of the context of everything else we know about God, and preached to mean something completely different from that which was intended by the Holy Spirit.

First let's consider what is taught about God based on these verses. We are taught that God loves all human beings with an unconditional love. We are taught that it does not matter what we do or believe, that God loves us. We are taught that His love for us extends to the heavens, and that nothing can separate us from God's love.

Here is a little known fact. The word unconditional does not appear in the Bible. Not in the NIV, KJV or NASB. Nowhere. Not once. So let's be clear, any talk of unconditional love is inferred rather than stated. So where do we get the idea that God's love is unconditional.

There is an aspect of God's love that is unconditional. The Bible clearly states in Romans 5:8 "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" So we see that it is true. God unconditionally loves every man, woman and child ever born, to the extent that He sent Jesus, His only begotten Son, to die for us, while we were in our sin, and His enemies. Search the Bible for any reference to the "unconditional love of God" and you will find it is referring to the Cross. For example: John 3:16 "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

And again in 1st John 4:9-10; "*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*"

But is there a side of the love of God that is conditional? Look at John 14. Think about this. John is the one that talks so much about love in 1st John, but check out what Jesus tells us about love in John's Gospel. John 14: 21 states: "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me [a condition] shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*" Do you hear what Jesus said. He said that **IF** you keep his commandments **THEN** He and the Father would love you! This thought continues in vs. 23 "*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, [another condition] he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*" There - He said it again.

Let's turn our attention to Chapter 15 now. I know that we sing of Jesus as the friend of sinners, but did you know that Jesus said in vs. 14 "*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you?*" Even friendship with Jesus is based on a condition.

And what is that condition? It is the same condition as we see for the love of the Father. Keep my commandments. That's right. God said if you keep my commandments I will love you.

The truth is, you will have a hard time believing that the love of God is conditional because you have heard it preached as unconditional for so long from so many sources. God is love. God is love. Jesus loves you... If you are not careful, you will not even be able to hear what God himself has to say on the issue.

God's love and Jesus' friendship are not the only things that are conditional. If we jump back to chapter 14 of John, again you will be shocked by what we find. In vs. 15 and 16 Jesus says "*If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another*

Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;" Did you catch that. This is Jesus, the one you are counting on for unconditional love and He just said that **if** you obey Him, **then** he would send the Holy Spirit to indwell you. You may say that you understood that the Holy Spirit took up residence in you the day you prayed a prayer at the front of a church somewhere. That may be so, if that is when you began to obey Jesus. But beloved, if you are still not obeying the commands of Jesus, then the Holy Spirit does not abide in you! That's right. If you do not obey Jesus and keep His commandments, don't even think that you are a Christian.

Look at Matthew 7: 21 "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*" Your salvation is contingent on your doing the will of the Father.

So am I saying that you can work your way into the kingdom? Am I fighting for a works-based religion? GOD FORBID. What I am saying is that if you think you are Christian, and your hearts desire is not to obey Jesus, but rather to do the minimum required for salvation, you need to think again. You are deceived. **You have created a theology that suits you, but it will not save you!** Only a man or woman given to God, heart, soul, mind and strength, can hope for a place in God.

The end of the matter is that God loves you while you are in your sins, but until you obey the gospel, that love has no impact on you. But if you will submit yourself totally to do the will of God, and keep his commandments, then God will love you and Jesus will love you, and the Holy Spirit will indwell you.



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