

“THE FULNESS OF GOD'S LOVE”

Introduction. The New Testament word for “fullness” is used many times in scripture. The Greek word for “full” or “fulness” is *pleroma*, and refers to Jesus being “full” of grace and truth (John 1:14); the “fulness” of the Gentiles enjoying the gospel (Rom. 11:12), etc.. Paul speaks of the “fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). Earlier in Eph. 3:19, he wrote of “the love of Christ”, that we might be “filled with the fulness of God.” Knowing the love of Christ enables us to enjoy the “fulness of God.” One of the qualities of God is His “love.” Every aspect of God's love is known by Christians. If we have the fulness of God, we will have the fulness of His love.

The word and number “ten” (10) is often symbolic of “fulness” or completeness of something. With this in mind, we would like to point out ten aspects of God's love, with each one beginning with the letter “E”.

I. 1st, Expense. The cost was high. Jesus came to give His “life” as a ransom price (Matt. 20:28); to shed His “blood” for remission of sins (Matt. 26:28). God did not send an angel or pay a material price of redemption, but with something more precious even than gold or silver (1 Pet. 1:18-19). God's “love” for the sinful world was so great that it was necessary for deity to take on the form of human flesh, and die that the redeemed could live. He “gave” His only begotten Son that we might not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). Few would give a son even for a righteous person, but God gave His Son, when we were enemies. This is the way He commended His “love” for mankind (Rom. 5:7-8).

II. 2nd, Expanse. God loved the “world”, which motivated the sending of Jesus to pay the high price (John 3:16). In this, “the love of God is shed abroad” (Rom. 5:5). God's love has been expanded throughout the world when the gospel is proclaimed. By 63 A.D., the gospel had been proclaimed throughout the world (Col. 1:23). The apostles were to go into all the world and preach to every nation (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20). We used to sing a song entitled “The Kingdom is Spreading”, as the gospel went to the heathen nations to make the dark shadows fly. We need to keep expanding the gospel of the kingdom, no matter the culture or the color of skin.

III. 3rd, Exclusive. It is politically and social unacceptable to even suggest something that sounds like we are to be exclusive of anyone. However, the love of God's blessings are exclusive. His love is for all, but but benefits only those who respond to it in obedience (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). It is for those who “believe in Him” (John 3:16). The wicked and disobedient who do not respond to God's love are excluded from the promise and hope of eternal life. Those in false religions are excluded (Matt. 15:9). Those who reject Christ and His word are excluded (Matt. 7:21-23; John 12:48). Those who fall away from the faith and cease to abide in Christ

will be excluded (Heb. 3:12; Gal. 5:4; John 15:6; 2 John 9). Those who believe in the person of Jesus, but deny His doctrines will be excluded (Matt. 7:24; Luke 6:46; 2 John 9). Those in idolatrous religions or terrorist religions will be excluded. Only those who obey Christ will be eternally blessed (Heb. 5:8-9).

IV. 4th, Encroachment. God's love does not seek to compromise with false religions or enemies of the cross, but it encroaches or "intrudes" into any sinful society of lost people. God's love encroached into the wicked life of Saul of Tarsus, and brought him to repentance. His love encroaches the lives of the atheists and evolutionists. It encroaches the lives of members of the body of Christ who prefer to follow the world instead of the scripture. It encroaches the lives of those who love sin rather than God (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Tim. 3:4). It encroaches the lives of those who love money or relatives more than God (1 Tim. 6:9-10). It encroaches those who love the praise of men more than the praise of God, and those who had rather follow the religion of their ancestors rather than the religion of Christ (John 12:42-43; Acts 26:5, 9).

V. 5th, Excellence. God's love is perfect, without flaw. It is without respect of persons in its offering of salvation to man. God loved all in the world equally. He sent His Son to die for the decent **and** the "wicked" (Rom. 5:5-10). God's love is excellent or perfect, for He **is** love (1 John 4:8). He is the author of love, and He showed it by the sending of His Son to die for all. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). We learn to love because God showed us the way. Christ died for all men (Heb. 2:9). We sing about the "Perfect Love" of God for man.

VI. 6th, Expectation. God desires that none perish, but that all men come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). He is the Savior of all men, especially of those who come to know the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Out of His love, he has promised eternal life (Tit.1:2). He expects some to obey, but He knows most will not obey. Only a "few" will be saved as they travel with Christ on the narrow road to heaven (Matt. 6:13-14; John 14:6). He did not conclude that all men are so wicked that there is no need in offering His love. In Noah's day, only a "few" were saved. Though God was grieved at the general wickedness of the day, He still wanted some to live, and they did. It is the same today.

VII. 7th, Effectual. God's love is effective. Many are touched with the love of God and will obey the truth. It cannot be obeyed where it is not known. God's love is not a system or force, but a trait or quality of character that motivates a response, and He tells us how we can respond. We must be obedient to His instructions. We cannot claim salvation just because God loves us, but we must respond in faith, repentance and baptism into Christ (Rom. 6:3-5). In 2 Cor. 5:14, Paul said "the love of Christ constraineth us." It holds us together. Love from God, for God and love for

the brethren is a binding tie of fellowship in His love.

VIII. 8th, Enduring. It will always be there—it is everlasting or eternal. He is “faithful” in His promises and love, and cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:12-13; 1 Cor. 10:13). His love will never leave us, and we will be blessed as long as we abide “in” that love. Paul said that “love abideth” (1 Cor. 13:7). God is love, and if we dwell in Him, we dwell in that love that always endures (1 John 4:12-16).

IX. 9th, Expressive. God has expressed His love in various ways. He does so in giving His Son (John 3:16). He does so in the giving of the Holy Scriptures that make us wise unto salvation. He does so in the many blessings that He provides for us daily (Matt. 5:45; 6:11; Jas. 1:17). All the spiritual blessings in Christ are because of God's love (Eph. 1:3). Even His love as revealed in the scripture is an expression **of** His love.

X. 10th, Enriches. God's love enables us to enjoy true riches—the kind that endure even into eternity. Paul said he preached “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8). The scripture speaks of the riches of “glory” (Rom. 9:27); the riches of “grace” (Eph. 1:7); the riches of “Christ” (Eph. 3:8); the riches of “wisdom” (Col. 3:16), and our being rich in “good works” (1 Tim. 3:16). Paul wrote, “God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 3:17).

“The treasures of earth are not mine. I hold not its silver or gold; But a treasure far greater is mine, I have riches of value untold. The treasures of earth must all fail, Its riches and honor decay, But the riches of love that are mine, Even death cannot take them away. Compared with the riches of love, The wealth of the world is but dross, I will seek but Christ Jesus to win. And for I count all things but loss. Come, take of the riches of Christ, Exhaustless and free is the store, Of its wonderful fulness receive, Till you hunger and thirst nevermore. Oh the depth of the riches of love, The riches of love in Christ Jesus! Far better than gold or wealth untold, Are the riches of love in Christ Jesus.” (H. B. Hartzler, “Riches of Love” in Sacred Selections for the Church, page 447).

Conclusion. Liberal thinkers have tried to identify the New Testament as a “love story” instead of a book of rules, regulations and commands to be obeyed. True, the scripture is a love story to man in that it describes the fulness of God's love for man, but it is also a book of instructions for man to keep in order to benefit by this love. James calls the royal “law” that which calls for “love.” After quoting various “commands” from God, Paul then stated, “therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom.13:10). Those of us who believe in adhering to the law of the Lord to be made free from sin (Rom. 8:1-3) are mocked and called “legalists.” Jesus said that if truly love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). Won't you keep them?

Don Tarbet, 215 W. Sears, Denison, Tex. 75020
<donwtarbet@cableone.net>