



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

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Subject: Love / God's love

WHAT IS LOVE?

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Revelation 2:4

"How could God really love me if He let this happen to me?" If you have never said it, chances are you have thought it—at least for a fleeting moment, and perhaps that thought took root in your mind and the logic has become a real problem. In coping with the problem of circumstances which run counter to your belief in a good God who loves you, you may well have to disengage yourself from the broken relationship which stands as a barrier between you and God's love.

You've been disappointed or hurt. It may have been your father, or your husband, the girl who told you she would love you forever, but after a couple of years, she changed her mind. Accepting the statements of God's unconditional and unchanging love that we find in the Bible is tough. "How do I know He's any different from others?" you ask.

Part of our problem is that you may have misunderstood real love, confusing it with the behavior of people who left you hurting and bleeding emotionally. Long ago, Moses wrote that God is not a man whose emotions waver and who disappoints us. So let's begin with a definition of the real thing—not the media concept that has molded our thinking.

How would you finish the statement, "Love is..." Love is what? A feeling, an emotion, a commitment, an attitude? Answering the question without simply describing your emotions is not easy. You cannot go into a laboratory and distill love's essence over a Bunsen burner. You cannot write a program for it on a computer. You cannot chart it on a line graph or weigh its specific density. The definition which seems best to define love is this: "Love is an unconditional commitment to an imperfect individual to meet the needs of that person in such a way that will require personal sacrifice." Now, think of that definition in relationship to God, or more specifically, His relationship to you.

Long ago, God made an unconditional commitment to you which forever said "I love you and I want to have fellowship with you" when He sent His Son, Jesus Christ to earth. Remember how John summarized the commitment: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)? An unconditional commitment to an imperfect individual—that is you—to meet your needs in a way that required personal sacrifice (and a big one) on God's behalf.

Perhaps you have viewed your relationship with God as a little child often does his relationship with his own father. You look at things from a very limited perspective and say, "I do not like the way you have handled things," when God in His sovereign wisdom and love is only saving you from yourself.

In my office is a piece of quilting put together by Cambodian refugees when they were in a resettlement camp in Thailand. About a foot square, the quilting has a beautiful pattern on one side, but the other side? It is a hodge-podge of ragged edges and knotted pieces of thread. Remember, if you can, that God looks at the finished side while the underneath side is the one you now see. Look beyond, assured that our Heavenly Father sees the plan and pattern you must take by faith.

A final thought. God's example taught us that love is not so much something we receive as that which we give away. As someone once put it: "A bell is no bell till you ring it. A song is no song till you sing it. The love in your heart was not put there to stay. Love is not love till you give it away." Indeed.

Resource reading: 1 Corinthians 13