

WHY LOVE GOD (PART 2 OF 2)

Rating:

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Mercy

It is said that another word for love is mercy. One of God's names is The-Merciful; the Arabic word used is *Ar-Rahmaan*. This English translation does not fully represent the depth and intensity that the meaning this word carries. The name *Ar-Rahmaan* has three major connotations: the first is that God's mercy is an intense mercy; the second is that His mercy is an immediate mercy; and the third is a mercy so powerful that nothing can stop it. God's mercy encompasses all things and He prefers guidance for people. In God's book, the Qur'an, He says,



"... but My mercy encompasses all things...." (Quran 7:156)

"It is the Lord of Mercy who taught the Qur'an." (Quran 55:1-2)

In the above verse, God says He is The-Merciful, which can be understood as the "Lord of Mercy", and that He taught the Qur'an. This is a linguistic indication to highlight that the Qur'an was revealed as a manifestation of God's mercy. In other words, the Qur'an is like one big love-letter to humanity. Just like with true love, the one who loves wants good for the beloved, and warns them of pitfalls and obstacles, and shows them the way to happiness. The Qur'an is not different: it calls out to humanity, and it also warns and expresses glad tidings.

Special Mercy

Connected to *Ar-Rahmaan*, is *Ar-Raheem*. This name shares the same root as the previous, which comes from the Arabic word for womb. The difference in meaning however is significant. *Ar-Raheem* refers to a special mercy for those who want to embrace it. Whoever chooses to accept God's guidance has essentially accepted His special mercy. This special mercy is for the believers and it is manifested in paradise;

unending blissful peace with God.

Special Love

According to the Qur'an, God is The-Loving. The Arabic name is *Al-Wadood*. This refers to a special love that is apparent. It comes from the word *wud*, which means expressing love through the act of giving: "And He is the Forgiving, the Loving." (Quran 85:14)

God's love transcends all of the different types of love. His love is greater than all worldly forms of love. For example, a mother's love, although selfless, is based on her internal need to love her child. It completes her, and through her sacrifices she feels whole and fulfilled. God is an independent Being who is self-sufficient and perfect; He does not require anything. God's love is not based on a need or want; it is therefore the purest form of love, because He gains absolutely nothing from loving us.

In this light, how can we not love the One who is more loving than anything we can imagine? The Prophet Muhammad (may God's peace and blessings be upon him) said, "God is more affectionate to His servants than a mother to her children."^[1]

If God is the most loving, and His love is greater than the greatest worldly love we have experienced, this should instil in us a deeper love for God. Significantly, this should make us want to love Him by being one of His servants. Al-Ghazali aptly said, "For those endowed with insight there is in reality no object of love but God, nor does anyone but He deserve love."^[2]

From a spiritual perspective, God's love is the greatest blessing anyone can ever achieve, as it is a source of internal tranquillity, serenity, and eternal bliss in the hereafter. Not loving God is not only a form of ingratitude, but the greatest form of hate. Not loving the One who is the source of love is a rejection of that which enables love to occur and fill our hearts.

God does not force His special love on us. Although, by His mercy, He lovingly gives us every moment of our lives, to fully embrace God's love and be recipients of His special love, one must enter into a relationship with Him. It is as if God's love is waiting for us to embrace it. However, we have closed the door and put up the shutters. We have kept the door shut by denying, ignoring and rejecting God. If God were to force His special love on us, love would lose all meaning. We have the choice: to follow the right path and thereby gain God's special love and mercy, or reject His guidance and face the spiritual consequences.

The most loving Being loves you, but in order for you to fully embrace that special love, and for it to be meaningful, you have to choose to love Him and follow the path that leads to His love. This path is the Prophetic path of the Prophet Muhammad (may God's peace and blessings be upon him):

"Say, [O Muhammad]: 'If you love God, then follow me, [so] God will love you and forgive your sins. And God is Forgiving and Merciful'." (Quran 3:31)

An important question that follows from this is: *I know why I must love God, but how do I love Him?* I hope to address this in another piece. However, to conclude, I leave you with the words of the 14th century theologian, Ibn Al-Qayyim:

"There is no doubt that perfect servitude to God is part of perfect love, and perfect love is connected to the perfection of the Beloved in and of Himself, for God, may He be glorified, is completely and absolutely perfect in all aspects, and could not possibly have any imperfections whatsoever. For one who is like this, nothing can be dearer to people's hearts than Him; so long as their basic nature and reason are sound, it is inevitable that He will be the dearest of all things to their hearts. Undoubtedly love of Him leads to submission and obedience to Him, seeking His pleasure, doing one's utmost in worship of Him and turning to Him. This is the best and strongest motive to do acts of worship."^[3]

Last updated 5 April 2017. Taken and adapted from my book "The Divine Reality: God, Islam & The Mirage of Atheism". You can purchase the book [here](#).

Footnotes:

[1] Abu Dawud

[2] Al-Ghazali. (2011) Al-Ghazali on Love, Longing, Intimacy & Contentment, p. 23.

[3] Miftaah Daar al-Sa'adah, 2/88-90.

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