



divine love: “conditional” or “unconditional,” that seems to be the question

Introduction

There has been a good bit of discussion lately about God’s “conditional” and/or “unconditional love.” Suddenly, with the many mountainous problems facing the globe—from climate change to war to failing democracies to racism and bigotry of all varieties to, oh, you name it—this obscure theological question seems to have grabbed the imagination of church leaders as among the top half-dozen or so most pressing human problems.

Though it is foolishness to discuss it in the present era, and though there is, according to Paul, a certain “foolishness” to preaching,¹ I am not above making a fool of myself, and so thought I might add my two cents worth through a brief homily. The thoughts shared here are not comprehensive and do not represent any kind of a systematic theology on love. Rather, the thoughts I share here are rather like a single snapshot. They have helped me navigate this rather trivial theological question that arises from time to time. Maybe the thoughts shared below will help you too. Or, maybe they won’t. No doubt you have much more important and pressing matters on your plate.

Having said that, I’ll take the bait and make myself foolish by speaking on the subject of the “conditionality” of love. My conclusions will likely be surprising to both those who argue in favor of a Divine love that is “conditional” and those who argue for a Divine love that is “unconditional.”

¹ 1 Cor. 1.²¹

In speaking of the “condition” of God’s love visa via mortal beings, we state the obvious: there are only two parties whose condition need be considered. One party, the greater, is God. The second party, the lesser, is the mortal. Put differently, in discussing whether God’s love is “conditional” or “not conditional” we need only consider the “condition” of God and the “condition” of mortal beings.

Now, fortunate for us, it so happens that scripture is abundantly clear about the “condition” of both parties: God and mortals. As to God, His condition is unchanging. “He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”² This is a trait that makes and keeps him God. “He changeth not; if so [if he changes] he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God.”³ The fact that “he changes not, neither is there variableness with him; but that he is the same from everlasting to everlasting, being the same yesterday today and forever; and that his course is one eternal round, without variation”⁴ is one of the pillars upon which faith in God rests. Indeed, “without the idea of unchangeableness in the character of the Deity, doubt would take the place of faith. But with the idea that he changes not, faith lays hold upon the excellencies in his character with unshaken confidence, believing he is the same yesterday, today and forever, and that his course is one eternal round.”⁵

If he is truly God and is truly reliable sufficient for human faith, God is not like a clock that changes by the hour, the minute, or the second. He is not like a pair of socks that we change daily. God is not blown about on the winds of change, “acted upon” and changed by outside forces. Because he changeth not, we can go further and say that His condition visa via mortals does not change.

Scripture is equally clear about the mortal condition. “All are hardened; yea, all are fallen

² 1 Ne. 10.¹⁸

³ Mormon 9.¹⁹

⁴ Lectures on Faith, Lecture 3.¹⁵

⁵ Lecture 3.²¹

and are lost.”⁶ “We know,” confessed the brother of Jared, “that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually.”⁷ Indeed, “such is the weakness of man, and such his frailties, that he is liable to sin continually.”⁸

These pronouncements make Paul’s, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” seem positively tame by comparison, though Paul too can engage in a similar form of wildness,

“There is none righteous, no, not one:
There is none that understandeth,
there is none that seeketh after God.
They are all gone out of the way,
they are together become unprofitable;
there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”⁹

Paul doesn’t end there, but that’s far enough, especially for those skeptical of Paul and his theology. But, for those skeptical of Paul and his theology, we should point out that the last quotation comes from previous scriptural testimony concerning mortal beings’ condition—specifically, that of the Psalmist.

And since Paul mentions the matter of “profitability,” we should mention King Benjamin’s estimation of the unchanging mortal condition.

“I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable

⁶ Alma 34.⁹

⁷ Ether 3.²

⁸ Lectures on Faith, Lecture 3, Question 18

⁹ Romans 3.¹⁰⁻¹²

servants.”¹⁰

Even at our best, when we are serving God “with all [our] whole soul”—and who can do and be better than that?!— nothing, including our condition, changes. At our best, we continue to be “unprofitable,” a losing investment. In fact, in investing in us, God suffered loss, death, and hell. Yes, we are unprofitable at our worst and we are unprofitable at our best.

This, in fact, seems to be one of the problems with a “conditional” Divine love. It must assume a change of condition, both in God and mortals. It must assume, for example that mortals can, through some personal virtue, change their condition from bad to good, from unrighteous to righteous, from unprofitable to profitable. And it assumes that God changes when we do the impossible and move from the “unprofitable” column to the “profitable” column.

None of this should be seen or used as an endorsement of either the “conditionality” or “unconditionality” of God’s love as it is traditionally understood. Rather, our point is twofold. First, though unscriptural, to whatever extent one can speak of a “conditional” or “unconditional” Divine love, such love is based on these two facts: neither God’s “condition” nor the “condition” of mortals ever changes. God remains perfectly unchanging. Mortals remain unchanging in their imperfection, unworthiness, and unprofitability. Second, those who claim that they can, by some method of personal “character” development, change their “condition” from “unworthy of God’s love” to “worthy of God’s love” are in error. This by no means is meant as a rejection of the desirability and necessity of acquiring a divine character. The accumulation of divine character is necessary to an enduring society in mortality and a continuing existence in the cosmos, however many eons such development and advancement take.

¹⁰ Mosiah 2.²¹

In turning our attention directly upon “love,” with God as subject and mortals as objects, we should note this: in the many thousands of years and the thousands of LDS scripture pages in which scripture authors have thought and wrote about God, His feelings for and interactions with mortal man, none ever used the phrases “conditional love” or “unconditional love.” This, in itself, should serve as a flashing warning sign that those who speak for or against either “conditional” or “unconditional” love might have already gone off the rails and into unsafe terrain. Call me old fashioned, call me conservative, call me whatever you want, but I believe that if those who pondered on and wrote about God’s relationship to mortal beings over thousands of years felt that such terms brought nothing to the table, then, well, maybe we should take the hint, follow suite, and take such terms off the table—on whichever side of the divide we may find ourselves. Rather, when disagreements arise about the “condition” of the relationship between God and mortals, it is preferable and safer to stick to the language of scripture. Indeed, it’s just safer to stick with scripture language, whether disagreements arise or not.

Having said this, we should take a moment to explore the word “love”—without the “conditional” or “unconditional” labels—as used in scripture. Consistent with the purpose of this homily, we will ignore the word when God is the object of mortals’ love, and consider the word only when God is the possessor or subject of love and that love is directed at mortal beings—individually or as part of a collective. The reader might be surprised at how little scripture speaks of God’s “love” toward mortals. In the nearly 1200-page Old Testament (KJV), the Hebrew word translated into English as “love,” *’ah^aḇâ*, is used with God as the subject and mortals as the object less than two dozen times!¹¹ It is very telling that *’ah^aḇâ* is used with God as subject and mortals as the object only four times in the Psalter—a book with an extraordinarily strong theological emphasis and interest in recounting and lauding God for his positive feelings for and interactions in the life of worshipers!

When we turn our attention to the New Testament, our surprise increases. Here, we find the

¹¹ The Hebrew word, *ḥāšaq*, is once translated “love” with God as the subject.

familiar Greek word *agápē*. Of the three Greek words that mean “love,”¹² the New Testament utilizes only it with God as the subject and mortals as objects. But God is the subject of *agápē* with mortals as objects slightly less often than in the Old Testament—about 18 times.

If such statistics leave us perplexed, we might anticipate that the Book of Mormon—the “most correct” of all books—will step forward to save the day and allow us to hang on to the belief that God “loves” us. But this, our hope, is vain. For, in the Book of Mormon, the English word “love” (and “loveth”) with mortals as the object appears a measly dozen times. The Doctrine and Covenants weighs in at about the same. The Pearl of Great Price draws a blank.

Now, obviously, I believe that God is loving and that He directs His love at mortal beings. Some of our favorite passages so declare. “God is love,” declares John succinctly.¹³ In what might be the most famous scripture of all—its reference is often seen on banners at TV cameras pan sports stadiums and arenas—this same John reported Jesus as bearing witness that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”¹⁴ Nephi, who finds himself stumped by the deep and layered meanings of his father’s dream even with the angel’s assistance, could nevertheless confess, “I know that he loveth his children.”¹⁵

These and a few other passages call so powerfully to our desire for God’s love that we just come to think of scripture as being ubiquitous with the testimony of God’s “love.” Yet, as we have seen, the word, “love,” itself, is seldom used in describing God’s feelings for mortals. If God “loves” us—and He does—other words are far more commonly employed to express it. So, not only do we get offtrack when we begin to discuss “conditional love” and “unconditional love,” we get off track when we fail to expand our repertoire of vocabulary items.

¹² The others being, *philía* (v. *philéō*), and *érōs* (v. *eráō*).

¹³ 1 John 4.⁸

¹⁴ John 3.¹⁶

¹⁵ 1 Nephi 11.¹⁷

beginning where we must, with Jesus

The surprising paucity of scripture passages that speak of God's "love" for mortal beings is, it seems to me, easily justified. First, the word, "love" is bandied about far too casually. Probably always has been. "I love ice cream" does not exist on the same planet as "God is love." Then too we can claim to "love everyone," when we have a relationship or involvement with the teeny, tiniest portion of "everyone." I, for one, am unimpressed and unmoved by someone's claim of love when they remain distant and uninvolved in my life. Whatever sentiment is expressed by, "I love everyone," it is doubtful that it ought to be called love. It is certainly not to be associated with God's feelings for or interactions with mortal beings, which are always engaged and engaging.

God is not cavalier in his feelings for us. His feelings are serious and intimate. Involved, engaged, and participatory. His feelings for us cost Him everything.

In considering God's feelings for mortal beings, His involvement in their lives, and the condition in which His feelings for and involvement in mortals' lives exists, one must necessarily begin with the brightest and most perfect revelation of God. This perfect revelation is found in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, who is, by the Book of Mormon's witness, "God Himself."¹⁶ During his earthly ministry he came into contact with and responded to the needs of many mortal beings. Whether one calls his interactions with so many, "love"—"conditional" or "unconditional"—or something else, the "condition" of those to whom Jesus ministered is a primary focus of God's "biographers," Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (Jesus' condition need not be the focus since, as God, His condition never changes). We could examine many examples of interactions between Jesus and mortals during his earthly ministry. Here are but a few. The few will be sufficient to make the point.

We think first of the man whose "condition" is described as "full of leprosy."¹⁷ Leprosy, viewed as a sign of sin by the culture of the day, denied those so conditioned entrance into

¹⁶ See, as but one example, Mosiah 13.³⁴

¹⁷ See Matthew 8.²⁻⁴; Mark 1.⁴⁰⁻⁴⁵; Luke 5.¹²⁻¹⁵

the holy community, synagogue, and temple, thus excommunicating them from God.¹⁸ It does little good to ask if this perception was “true.” Psychologically and spiritually, the leper was made to truly feel that he is little better than a pile of human excrement in the eyes of God. He was defiled himself and defiled God. Perhaps those tortured by their unchanging sinfulness can relate to the mental turmoil of the leper.

It is into this condition of sin and psychological turmoil that Jesus strode, neither uncomfortable, nor offended, nor distant. With a touch, nay, an embrace, Jesus signified his willing engagement and participation in the sinner’s life and began the cleansing process.

So, yes, it seems that we can safely conclude that in this case, Jesus’ interaction—shall we call it “love”? —with this man full of sin was, in one sense, “conditional.” Jesus’ willing participation in the man’s life was realized while the man’s “condition” was that of sin, as he confessed his flawed “condition” and need for help, and as he requested that help. It was the man’s flawed “condition” that drew him to Jesus and drew Jesus to him.

Now, consider under what “conditions” Jesus entered the life of the man who called himself, “Legion.”¹⁹ The man was socially unaware, as signified by his nakedness. He was a threat to both himself—indeed, suicidal—and others. He was personally uncontrolled and could not be uncontrolled by anyone who knew or met him. Now, the fact that he could not be controlled by other mortals, is not to say he was not controlled, for he most certainly *was* controlled. He was controlled by evil; much of it. Little wonder, then, that in his mind, God was a tormentor with whom he wanted nothing to do.

Into this chaos, Jesus entered without reservation—shall we call this entrance, “love”? — and cast the evil aside, returning the man to his right mind and a dose of self-control and self-respect. But this self-control and self-respect was the consequence of Jesus’ willing engagement in his life, not a prerequisite.

¹⁸ See, for example, Leviticus 13.²⁻³; Leviticus 13.⁴⁵⁻⁴⁶; Numbers 5.²⁻³; Numbers 12.²⁻¹²; and, yes, Deuteronomy 23.¹³⁻¹⁴ (can you see why we include this one?).

¹⁹ See Matthew 8.²⁸⁻³⁴; Mark 5.¹⁻²⁰; Luke 8.²⁶⁻³⁹

If we call Jesus' willing engagement with this man, "love," we conclude once more that it was "conditional," the "condition" being the man's evil, and his desperate need because of that evil.

"Maybe," thought the woman with an "issue of blood"—a "condition" left unimproved even after the efforts of the best minds of her day—"maybe if I can but touch his garment, I can be healed and accepted back into polite society" (for, like the leper, her condition was viewed as indicative of sin and brought her disenfranchisement with synagogue, temple, and God... and, no doubt, much personal heartache).²⁰ She did indeed touch Jesus. She was indeed healed. She was once more, after so long a time, clean before God. Though she would have had her healing be a personal moment without notice, Jesus would not let the woman's faith go unnoticed. He drew attention to it as an example for all. The woman's defiled condition was just the sort of condition for which Jesus, God Himself, was made and into which he entered without reservation and to maximum effect.

Here again, if we are to call what Jesus did and how he engaged with the woman, "love," then he loved her as she suffered under conditions of defiling uncleanness.

Out of a desire for gender equality, perhaps we should mention another woman, and under what conditions she experienced God's "love." We think, now, of the woman who intimately served Jesus by washing, drying, and anointing his legs and feet as he sat dining in Simon's house.²¹ Simon knew the "condition" of woman. She was "a sinner."²² Everyone in town was well aware of her condition. She was "a sinner."²³ And, least there be any doubt as to the woman's condition, Jesus himself unambiguously identified what type of woman it was who fondled him so intimately: "Her sins...are many."²⁴ She and the man full of leprosy are two sides of the same coin (You see, gender doesn't matter when it comes to the mortal

²⁰ Matthew 9.²⁰⁻²², Mark 5.²⁵⁻³⁴, Luke 8.⁴³⁻⁴⁸

²¹ Luke 7.³⁶⁻⁵⁰

²² Luke 7.³⁹

²³ Luke 7.³⁷

²⁴ Luke 7.⁴⁷

“condition.” Both male and female are equally fallen. So, no patronizing of women, please.).

But the woman’s brand of sin, whatever it was, did not stop Jesus from becoming an intimate part of her life any more than it stopped him engaging in the leper’s unclean life. Just as he cast the leper’s leprosy aside, he sent the woman’s sins off— “Thy sins are forgiven”²⁵— into the most nether regions of the universe.

“As far as the east is from the west,
so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”²⁶

Do we call what Jesus did in this woman’s life, “love”? And if so, do we call it “conditional” or “unconditional”? It was “love” “conditioned” on the woman’s sinful “condition.” We can, then, if we so choose, call it, “conditional love.”

Before leaving Jesus’ ministry, it seems like a good idea to consider one last group: Jesus’ closest disciples, the ones who became apostles. We can say, surely, that Jesus “loved” them. Under what “conditions” did he love them? You already know, but let’s have just a brief look anyway.

Ever argumentative with each other, Jesus’ disciples did not hesitate to crawl over each other in hopes of being #1.²⁷ Like the 2022 Russian army that has invaded Ukraine, Jesus’ disciples thought nothing of burning a village to the ground, leaving only the charred corpses of men, women, and children as testament to their power.²⁸ Thankfully, Jesus was there to put an abrupt end to that nonsense. Unhappy with Jesus’ commitment to sacrifice himself in demonstration of the nature of true greatness and power—his own and that of disciples—his disciples hurled a hearty satanic rebuke at him and his ridiculous idea of greatness and power.²⁹ Considered friends by Jesus, they, every single one of them, unfriended him in his

²⁵ Luke 7.⁴⁷

²⁶ Psalm 103.¹²

²⁷ See Matthew 20.²⁰⁻²⁴; Mark 10.³⁵⁻⁴¹; Mark 9.³³⁻³⁴; Luke 9.⁴⁶

²⁸ Luke 9.⁵¹⁻⁵⁶

²⁹ Matthew 16.²¹⁻²³; Mark 8.³¹⁻³³

greatest hour of need—the most prominent among them swearing a blue streak that he had never had anything to do with the innocent man undergoing the ordeal of a Kafkaesque trial.³⁰

Yes, Jesus’ “love” for his disciples was most certainly “conditional.” It was offered while they lived, as we all do, under the “condition” of ignorance and pride and selfishness and self-serving abandonment of others.

We could go on and on and on. We could, should, have, and will yet write many homilies on the greatest act of Divine commitment to mortals ever witnessed: the suffering and death of God on a cross. Should we call this “love”? Jesus says we can.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”³¹

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”³²

And under what conditions was this love extended? Here’s Paul’s answer to the question.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”³³

I don’t know about you, but I believe I see a pattern here. The “conditions” in which God’s love operated in the lives of mortals during Jesus’ earthly ministry are consistent.

Consistently bad. Then, as always, God’s love operated in the only mortal conditions that exist. Flawed. More flawed. And most flawed. In conditions of perpetual unprofitableness.

But this, the condition in which God’s love is expressed and felt undermines the reasoning of

³⁰ See Mark 14.^{46, 50}; Matthew 26.⁶⁹⁻⁷⁴; Mark 14.⁶⁶⁻⁷¹; Luke 22.⁵⁶⁻⁶⁰; John 18.¹⁷⁻²⁷

³¹ John 3.¹⁶

³² John 15.¹³

³³ Romans 5.⁶⁻⁸

both those who argue for traditional views of “conditional love” and those who argue for the traditional views of “unconditional love.”

Conclusion

As we indicated in our introduction, our discussion of God’s love in this homily is like a single snapshot. That said, we have chosen the best snapshot of the many we have at our disposal: Jesus of Nazareth, and the revelation of God and his love that he and his earthly ministry represented. Though inferior, we will have to look at other snapshots in future homilies: that of the Old Testament with its nearly two thousand years of history, the New Testament epistles, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, etc.

Then too, we still will need to look closely at the copious vocabulary that scripture devotes to its exploration of God’s feelings toward mortal beings and his interactions with them: words such as “mercy/ merciful,” “grace” (acceptance), “righteousness” (rightness); “faithfulness” (fidelity), “judgement” (justness, “compassion,” “kindness,” and many more. And, of course, we must not forget the granddaddy of them all: “atonement” (unity, connectedness, participation), a word that encompasses all the other words within it and represents, in my view, the best word ever invented by mortals to describe God’s feelings for and interactions with mortal beings. The word speaks better than any other to God unchanging sense and feeling of connectedness with the human race.

Still, this brief snapshot has, it seems to me, accomplished a goal or two we had for this homily.

First, scripture uses the word, “love,” to describe feelings God has for mortal beings far less often than we might have anticipated. It is far from dominating. There are many other words used more often to describe God’s feelings and interactions with mortals. Most often, however, as if understanding that a picture is worth a thousand words, scripture shows God’s “love” for mortals through narrative, history, and story, rather than through vocabulary.

Second, the terms “conditional love” and “unconditional love” are not used in scripture at all. Given that the terms do not exist in scripture, no discussion of God’s “love” that involves the terms can call itself truly scripturally based. If one isn’t interested in being scripturally based in their discussions of God and the things of God, that’s their prerogative. Let them have at it. But, leave me out of it, please.

Third, we are justified in questioning the assertions of both camps: those who advocate for a traditional “conditional love” and those who advocate for a traditional “unconditional love.”

Those who have traditionally advocated for God’s love being “conditional” have assumed, whether they explicitly state it or not, that “conditions”—either that of God or mortals—change. Since, I assume, they do not believe that God changes, they must assume a change in the condition of mortals. They assume, it seems, that God loves those who are standing (are “righteous,” or whatever you want to call it), but does not love those who have fallen (are “unrighteous,” whatever that means). Or, perhaps more accurately and fairly, they assume that one who is standing can recognize and enjoy God’s love and its many benefits while those who have fallen cannot.

But, as we have seen, during Jesus’ earthly ministry—the clearest revelation of God and his feelings for mortals—only those who were fallen in some fashion experienced the joys of his active presence and interaction and the benefits of it—and we are justified, it seems, in calling this active presence and interaction, “love”—in their lives. Why do “God’s Gospel biographers” not record His loving activity in the lives of those who are standing? The answer is almost too easy. Because there were none standing. All were fallen.

That is not to say that there were not those who imagined themselves to be standing. But these imaginers were delusional. And it was those and only those who imagined themselves to be standing that Jesus rebuked. Such rebukes were both direct and indirect. One indirect rebuke of those who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous”³⁴ is found in the parable

³⁴ Like 18.⁹

of the Pharisee and the Publican.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, ‘I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.’

“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”³⁵

The word Jesus most often used for those who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous” was, “hypocrite.”

I let you decide whether those who advocate for “conditional love” are hypocrites or not.

But, it is truly no more accurate to call God’s “love,” “unconditional.” There are always “conditions.” It seems to me that those who argue for a love that is “unconditional,” accept their opposition’s conclusion that mortals exist in one of two conditions: standing or fallen. They accept the opposition’s presumption that the standing, or righteous, have and experience God’s love and the benefits that flow from that love. At the same time, they, often in the spirit of comfort, wish to assure the fallen, the sinner, the broken, that they, too, can have and experience God’s love and the benefits that flow therefrom. But it is precisely in that “too” that they go astray and yield too much ground to the “conditional” crowd. There is no “too.” Fallen and wounded is the only mortal condition. They may be picked up, dusted off, and bandaged up. But it is only a matter of time—usually measured in minutes—before they find themselves fallen and bloodied once more. And never, remember, “profitable.”

If one *must* choose between calling God’s love “conditional” or “unconditional,” I suppose

³⁵ Luke 18.¹⁰⁻¹⁴

one must settle for “conditional,” though for very different reasons than those of the traditional view. There is always a condition into which God’s love intrudes. That condition is, again, fallenness. But we needn’t make this choice. Scripture does not choose between the two. It does not even mention the two. Neither should we.

Scripture is clear about the mortal condition. Mortals cannot change their mortal condition any more than they could create themselves in the first place. Like physical creation, spiritual creation—a change in the human condition—requires the unchanging labors of God over a lifetime... and probably beyond.

“All things were [and are] made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”³⁶

For by him were all things created, that are in heavens, and that are in earth, visible and invisible...”³⁷

But, in addition to the witness of scripture, I have another witness to the principles outlined in this homily. I have my own experience.

Happily, I have moments of lucidity. There are moments when I stand. Shakey, always. But standing. I might even take a halting step or two on occasion. But these moments do not last long. They are measured in minutes, usually. They are by no means permanent. This is my condition.

And more than “happifying” is the reality of God’s willing presence in my life. How often He steps into and abides in my conditioned life! He frequently gladdens me with his presence and willing participation in my life. This graciousness, this generosity, never grows old. It amazes me every single time. Every moment is filled with awe. It is so far beyond what I have put into it. It is beyond my station and beyond my condition. My own experience with

³⁶ John 1.³

³⁷ Colossians 1.¹⁶

God tells me this testimony of the Psalmist is true. Though it does not use the word, “love,” it is as true as it gets.

“The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
He will not always chide:
neither will he keep his anger for ever.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”³⁸

Yes,

“Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works
which thou hast done,
and thy thoughts which are to us-ward:
they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
if I would declare and speak of them,
they are more than can be numbered.”³⁹

And yes, it seems that we can call this unceasing thinking of us, “love.”

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

³⁸ Psalm 130.⁸⁻¹⁰

³⁹ Psalm 40.⁵