

General Topics :: Fear Of God Has Been Lost In The Church (Compilation)

Fear Of God Has Been Lost In The Church (Compilation) - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2011/10/22 10:13

Saints,

This powerful compilation will God willing be played at the "Fear of God" conference tonight that sermonIndex.net is running. We pray this will be a great blessing to many.

Fear Of God Has Been Lost In The Church (Compilation)
<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/myvideo/photo.php?lid=2667>

Re: Fear Of God Has Been Lost In The Church (Compilation) - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2011/10/23 11:24

This was a very powerful message and brought great conviction in the venue when we played it. I trust it will have a similar blessing watching from your home and computer screen.

Re: - posted by ManofGod0000, on: 2011/10/23 15:35

I must agree strongly that there is no fear of the Lord, at least not a healthy fear, but I am more inclined to lean toward what Brother Washer stated, How can we truly fear God unless we have a proper knowledge of HIM?

Without Knowing God through Christ, what He has done for us through the Cross, the resurrection, and through the holy Spirit's work, then we have nothing.

We literally don't have the God of scriptures, just the thought of our ideology and what we have conjured up to appear Godly. IT all falls down when we come to nothing and we have to realize that we have much of nothing until we meet Him in some crisis or experience where He tears down our ideologies and habits.

All Praise be To God

Re: - posted by brothagary, on: 2011/10/24 5:42

thanks greg,,,,,convicting, yet encouraging

Re: Fear of God - posted by Questor, on: 2011/10/28 22:34

Having watched the compilation, I still remain what I always am...wondering what you mean by the fear of YHWH.

I am completely aware of His awesome power, and the jealousy with which He regards us...wanting our bridal eye to never wander from Him, and the overwhelming knowledge of His justice, but I hear the preachers preaching fear, and wonder what emotion we are supposed to walk in when we are wholly saved from YHWH's rage by the death and resurrection of Yeshua.

How can I walk in the peace that Yeshua offers, if I am afraid of YHWH?

YHWH Sabaoth knows me through and through. There is nothing that I do not think and feel that He does not know, and I know that in our conversations I am too familiar with Him, irreverent, even contentious, but I respect Him without measure, and He must know that.

He also does not thunder in my ear, nor am I to be in His unbearable presence until I am resurrected to another place and time, at which time I will be overwhelmed by the unutterable power He holds over me, and all things. I too will fall to my face...how could I not?

But Adonai has made me, and led me, and has given me into the hands of His Son, Yeshua, to be healed and made whole

ole by Him, and to be raised up in Yeshua's righteousness...not my own. I have none of myself, anymore than I have the power to make myself over into what YHVH wants of me...my only task is to submit to His direction through the Holy Spirit, and to allow YHVH to do what He wants of me, and be what He wants me to be in His power and direction.

I love YHVH, and Yeshua, and the Ruach haKodesh, but I do not fear them for me. I am in terror over what others will face, who choose not to be washed and redeemed by Christ, but I do not fear in the sense that everyone seems to be getting at.

And yet I understand fear, and terror, and have felt them about the future days to come, and been reassured by YHVH that I am not to fear, but to rest in Him. Does not every meeting in the Scriptures with angels, or with the great I Am in any form begin with the words, 'do not be afraid'?

And it isn't that I love YHVH or Yeshua as I should...I know I don't, but all the years of my studying have told me that I must learn to trust, and lean on Adonai.

How can I trust Him if I am to fear Him at the same time? Admire, and delight in the sheer grandeur of His power? Do I not shrink from the extent of the building rage in Him at the continuous sin and evil in the world? Of course. Yes, He can kill me if He likes, and even consign me to Hell, for I certainly deserve it, but we are supposed to be trusting in YHVH's mercy through the death and resurrection of Yeshua, for our ultimate end, and for every day we walk in this life, through the New Covenant that was cut in Yeshua's blood.

Please, please tell me what I am to fear, what I have missed, what I do not understand, lest I not know, and err all the more.

But if I, a Believer, am to fear YHVH, and not love and trust Him the more every day to keep the promises He made to all of us through Yeshua, what am I supposed to do?

Q

Re: - posted by jimp, on: 2011/10/28 22:47

hi, i no longer fear my father but love him. He is love and love has power and fear has torment. do you fear your earthly father or do you love him? He has over 50 years proven to me that He loves me and i have labored to enter into His rest for it is the beginning of wisdom but love is wisdom itself. jimp it is the goodness of God that leads to repentance.

Re: Fear of God - posted by Questor, on: 2011/10/28 23:14

Thank you, jimp.

Q

Re: Fear of God - posted by Questor, on: 2011/10/28 23:18

Obviously, many that are teaching us do believe that fear of YHVH is to be commended.

Why is this so if we are to trust Him?

Q

Re: - posted by sarahsdream, on: 2011/10/28 23:24

The fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost go hand in hand. They are not mutually exclusive.

Act 9:31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the FEAR OF THE LORD, and in the COMFORT OF THE HOLY GHOST, were multiplied.

Where one is, you will find the other. They are always together.

Sarah

Re: - posted by SolaVeritas, on: 2011/10/29 0:00

Please do a key word search on "fear" and "God" as well as "fear" and "Lord" (on a site such as biblegateway.com) and you will see that it runs like a red thread through the Bible from Genesis to Revelations. Too many references to post them here. And so it is the Word of God itself which teaches that the fear of God is to be commended, not just men.

I believe the struggle you have with this teaching has to do with the idea that the "fear of the Lord" always equals "being scared of the Lord." This is not so. There are two meanings to this original word:
<http://www.searchgodsword.org/lex/heb/view.cgi?number=03372>

I also highly recommend Al Whittinghill's sermon from the Simulcast conference. It has surprised me that no one mentioned it here, I thought it was very good. You can find a download on this page:
<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/viewcat.php?cid=1306>

Hope you will find this helpful.

Edited to add this article which you might like:
<http://judaism.about.com/od/beliefsandlaw1/f/feargod.htm>

Re: - posted by gators52 (), on: 2011/10/29 15:07

Read Job 38-42... Fear is not a bad thing. It's not bondage. It's a healthy fear.

Re: - posted by njhoover, on: 2011/10/29 16:26

My grandfather told me the "fear of the Lord" just means you "respect him."

I gave him the example of the Israelites hearing God speak from the mountain and how TERRIFIED they were.

He didn't budge...

Re: - posted by Christinyou (), on: 2011/10/29 17:06

The fear of an all powerful God and Judge is different from the fear of all powerful Father and One who disciplines His own children, with a good spanking and a great hug afterwards, with explanation of the discipline and chastening.

Thank you Father: In Christ: Phillip

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2011/10/29 19:08

According to "Strong's" this Fear of the LORD is defined as thus:

φόβος

phobos

fob'-os

From a primary φέβομαι phebomai (to be put in fear); alarm or fright: - be afraid, + exceedingly, fear, terror.

The way this works in my own life is that fear motivates me to walk close with the LORD lest I fall into error or sin. There are times when the love of God is a warm fuzzy feeling but then emotions are not stable, a poor guide for reality. It is a h

healthy respect coupled with fear knowing full well what can happen when one persists in disobedience.

I remember well when Christians reinterpreted 'fear of the LORD' as meaning love because you cannot love something you fear, or so they said. (Hey! this sounds so much nicer...) This opened the door to the greatest apostasy in recent history. God was no longer a deity, but a warm fuzzy Santa Claus in the sky who loves you so very much and will give you whatever you want if you learn how to manipulate him. You do this by praising the LORD for whatever happens, just say "Praise the LORD!" Oh, and he would not send me to hell - I think I am a good person (yes, unrepentant fornicators have told me so)!

Does this make sense?

Re: , on: 2011/10/29 21:09

The New Covenant literally promises this:

God will write his law in our minds
God will write his law in our hearts
We are His people and He is our God
All (who are in Christ) will know Him (intimately)
And all of that is true because of this: He will remember our sins and iniquities no more.

Because God has put away sin once and for all, in the body of Jesus Christ, there is now no basis upon which he counts any of our sins against us. None...its done...over. In the Old Covenant, which was never meant to last, all motivation for obedience was external, i.e. carrots or sticks....

The New Covenant promises that God's desires will become our desires. It is no longer an external law telling us what we must do in order to please God. But in Christ, we KNOW the Father is absolutely pleased with us and He promises to make us just like His Son.

It is all about the love of God, but God's love is not just some fuzzy feeling or emotion. The Father demonstrated His love towards us by giving us His Son. God gave us His very Life. And now He lives in us by His Spirit. We are one with the Father, in Christ. We have been included in the Godhead.

So what is the fear of God then....the fear of God is:

Do I actually believe this? Do I believe the Good News of the Gospel and everything that God has done entirely on His own? Or do I believe some religious system that tells me what I must do to please God.

Do I believe that Jesus Christ dealt with sin once and for all?

Do I believe that the Father loves me as much as He loves the Son?

Do I believe that the Holy Spirit now lives within me and will teach me Christ and live the Eternal life of Christ, in and through me?

Do I believe that the Father has promised to share His very nature with us?

Do I believe that all has been done by God, in Christ, already? It is finished?

Do I believe any of this? If not, then I do have reason to fear because I am living and believing a lie.

Re: Fear of God - posted by Questor, on: 2011/10/29 21:17

Yes, Ginny Rose, it does.

After I wrote my first and second responses, I went to YHVH, since it was late, and few of wisdom at hand to respond to me.

Adonai led me to a website that showed me not only the need for more respect towards YHVH and Yeshua, but actually gave me a reminder that too lax a walk, and Yeshua, who redeems us if we trust in Him, will indeed turn his back on those who cry after Him, but have never given sufficient obedience, in respect for His wishes.

I see that we must indeed fear in a way that is unlike the thundered hell-and-damnation that is meant to touch the heart of the unredeemed and the backslidden. And we must also be careful to fear hurting Yeshua by reckless disobedience to what He wants from his Bride.

Yeshua also showed me on prayer and study today how much we must recall that He bought us free from the curse of death by His suffering, and gives us life through His resurrection. He also showed me how cold and final would be that 'I never knew you' if we presumed too much on His leniency.

Trusting in the Promise should never be lackadaisical, but carefully, and soberly done, leaning for forgiveness on that Trustfulness readily, but taking care not to presume too greatly.

And yes, to be careful to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, walking very closely indeed.

Thank you for helping me to find the explanations I needed.

Q

Re: Fear of God - posted by Questor, on: 2011/10/29 21:19

Thanks also to Sarah, Sola, and Gator and others my mind refuses to remember for the links and encouragement.

Q

Re: Fear of God - posted by Questor, on: 2011/10/29 21:43

Mahoney, it was not a lack of belief in Adonai, or trust being lacking in me, but not always paying attention to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in the least little things. I recall feeling as if I had gotten sloppy, not being in disbelief.

I had had a long time of fear of my thoughts as sin already committed, and when YHVH released from that over-doing of fear of being in sin, I rested in such peace, and felt such relief of what I am to do.

I had had the feeling before of the temptation being the sin already committed, not sin being what I actually was doing, and that the doing of the law written in my heart was the earnest doing of love toward Yeshua.

Fortunately, Adonai allowed me the feeling of finally being safe in my trust in Him. The Holy spirit, on the other hand, was watching carefully, and prompting me to pray for the revealing of my sinfulness to me, that I might correct my behavior.

I still do not fear, exactly, but I indeed have a hearty respect for YHVH, Yeshua, and the Ruach haKodesh, and indeed a better knowledge of how I am to relate to Christ.

I need to seek to obey as He asks as a love token, and consider all dutiful tasks I am set to be done only to gain a single smile from Him I need to know so much better.

I have never known how to relate to Yeshua as I should, and I am glad that after seeking to know Him more personally, He has granted me the proper instruction.

I still see only a dim glimmer of what I am to do, and be in relationship with Yeshua, but that is due to lack of prior knowl

edge as much as my own wilfulness.

Thank you for your stern questions, and I am pleased to be able to assure you that I do indeed believe all that I should, and that where I have acted improperly, ignorance has been a good deal of the problem.

Q

Re: Fear of God - posted by Questor, on: 2011/10/29 21:48

Phillip, thank for your kind words, always so softly and sweetly spoken encouragement.

Q

Re: , on: 2011/10/29 21:53

Questor, FYI..my post was not directed toward you or anyone in particular. If I respond directly to someone I use there name.

thanks,

Mahoney

Re: Fear of God - posted by Questor, on: 2011/10/29 22:03

Mahoney, thanks for the info!

Q

Re: - posted by NUBIANQUEEN, on: 2011/11/1 23:43

A very good point made phillip. He is our father and he does discipline and chasten us. I have a reverential fear of the Lord and not fear like a wild bear or something. He is our father and he loves me so therefore whatever he does is for my good and I have no need to fear. ")

Re: - posted by jimp, on: 2011/11/2 0:40

hi, as a father to 8 children and now 2 great grands, I see that a child who fears me is guilty and knows it and a child that runs in and jumps in my arms and puts all his weight and trust on me is forgiven and knows it and loved and knows it. jimp

Re: Sola Veritas' answer - posted by leemcb, on: 2011/11/14 16:03

I love that you post such links so that folks can see differing aspects of this complex subject. Studious approach is worthy of respect (render honor to them that labor in the word and doctrine). May I add the following for studious consideration?

Why no fear of God? One of the speakers in the video quotes others saying God's love is unconditional--and AGREES that this is true. This is unbiblical. God's love is NOT unconditional. We are received only if we REPENT. The very verse most used to 'prove' God's unconditional love proves exactly the opposite. "Father forgive them..." now if Christ had stopped here, we could truthfully call God's love and forgiveness unconditional. But He did NOT stop here. He continued, "FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO." This is the CONDITION upon which He makes His request for their forgiveness.

We are not even told we must forgive our brother unless he repents: "And if he trespass against you seven times in a day and seven times in a day turn to you and SAY, I REPENT; thou shalt forgive him." Luke 17:4 Also see Luke 17:3; Mat 18:15. All these passages specify that our brother must make known to us his repentance before we forgive him. Even in the parable of the servant who was forgiven but would not forgive his brother a lesser debt, we see that repentance was offered, and mercy was asked for, not taken for granted as a basic right (and therefore cheapened in value).

The words 'unconditional love' are not found in scripture. Nor is the teaching itself. God's wonderful love need not have license to sin added to it-whether for us or for others. And the idea that one can sin willfully against God or another and it'll

I 'all be forgiven' with no real repentance--and repentance means change, even if the person asking for forgiveness has to ask our patience while God does the changing as in the parable--the idea of unconditional love leads to license in behavior because, hey, God's just gonna forgive us all, ain't He? And one can sin flagrantly against others, because when they hold us to account (as the verses listed above specify), all we have to do is accuse them of unforgiveness and walk off cackling at them until we return to do them an even worse turn. Can anyone seriously believe God is in a doctrine which encourages such disrespect of Him and our fellow man?

Impossible. "Make no provision for the flesh." Unconditional love and forgiveness is making provision for the flesh, because if you sin, God and others HAVE TO forgive you. And that puts them in bondage to you and your decision to sin, doesn't it? They are OBLIGATED to forgive you, whether you repent or not. God says we must repent first, and we might allow for that, but we turn right around and claim God puts on us a burden He will not bear Himself. God isn't obligated to forgive unless we repent, but mere MAN is obligated to forgive regardless, or be accused of 'having unforgiveness in his heart'. (Always spoken as if it were the unforgiveable sin in very self-righteous tones.)

In this doctrine, as in so many out there--and I mean out there--today, we would do well to emulate those who showed themselves to be more noble, 'searching the scriptures to see whether these things were so'. Particularly in regard to things that 'everybody KNOWS is right/true/God's will'. It's amazing how often such doctrines actually presume upon God's will with mere lip service paid to it.

Adding to the discussion on the fear of God, scripture tells us 'the fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of wisdom': but is it wisdom's end? No. "Perfect love casts out fear." Of course, walking in perfect love for a Person, one's biggest fear will be to offend or hurt or displease Him--won't it? And we will fear that even more than being hurt ourselves, if we love perfectly. I think when we get to that point, there's generally an end to the problem. ;-) ;-)

Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2011/11/14 19:16

You may find something useful here: "Developing the Fear of the Lord":

<http://www.quiteexcellent.com/thewayback.net/articles/FEARINGGOD/title.htm>

A new understanding regarding Wisdom - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2011/11/14 19:39

<http://www.jesusplusnothing.com/studies/online/wisdomandfolly.htm>

For a long time I have been praying for Wisdom because we are instructed to do so. I never understood exactly what to expect. I was pretty certain I would not become a brainy thinker. After reading the study in this link It makes perfect sense to me.

Praise the Lord, He has answered my prayer. Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Now I see that the new drive I have to get closer to Jesus is the answer to my prayer for Wisdom.

How marvelous is our Lord,
white stone

Re: A new understanding regarding Wisdom - posted by jimp, on: 2011/11/15 0:49

hi, love is so much more powerful than fear. fear hath torment and perfect love does cast it out. if a married man who travels fears being caught in sin, he becomes very sneaky about it. but if this same man loves his wife he doesn't even think about doing anything that would harm his relationship. i feared my father as a small child and it was wise to do so for he was a strong disciplinarian but as i grew older i learned to love him and have fellowship with him and it changed my life. God IS love and He never changes. this promotes that love in me that keeps me from being sneaky and keeping the relationship close as apposed to making me think i can dishonor His love by sinning. this idea that security promotes sin is the dumbest idea i hear. jimp

Re: - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2011/11/15 11:17

Hello jimp,

Your reply to my post indicates a misunderstanding of:

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

In my opinion to fear God begins with having a reverential awe of Him, to be aware of your own impotence next to His almighty power. Not a worldly fear of being caught in sin. (There is nothing hidden from God.)

Fear of the Lord represents the utmost respect and submission. To say God IS love, in my opinion tries to put Him in a box and limit His being and power. It might make a person feel more comfortable to acknowledge only that one quality but as mere mortals we can not begin to know all the qualities of our Almighty God. We know He loves us, he made us for Himself, He redeemed us with the blood of His Son but for those who turn their backs on Him, the ultimate price will not be love.

The fear of God is also to fear losing His love. Of being aware of the consequences of that happening and to be forever grateful for His free gift of salvation paid for by the body and blood of His only son and our saviour, Jesus.

"this idea that security promotes sin is the dumbest idea i hear." You didn't hear that from me, did you? Perhaps it was a previous poster?

Kind regards,
white stone

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2011/11/15 11:45

Quote:

Why no fear of God? One of the speakers in the video quotes others saying God's love is unconditional--and AGREES this is true. This is unbiblical.

I agree with your post about importance of repentance. But I thought you need to put your understanding in a better way. For example, God's love is unconditional and it is not unbiblical. Why?

Mathew 5:45 -

He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Jesus himself had food with Sinners. He did not hate sinners. God hates sin but not sinners. He loves them and has given his Son and Holy Spirit to save us from Sin.

God loves us unconditionally. But that does not mean that he is pleased with us. There are conditions to please God. I need to do his will in every step of my life, which is possible only if I listen to Holy Spirit.

God loved the Jews when they were in Egypt and promised them to take them out of Egypt and to give them a promise land. But on their way out he was not pleased with many of them and they faced his wrath and died in desert.

1 Corinthians 10-5:-

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2011/11/15 12:09

Quote:

The fear of God is also to fear losing His love. Of being aware of the consequences of that happening and to be forever grateful for His free gift of salvation paid for by the body and blood of His only son and our saviour, Jesus.

Amen brother, this how I see the fear of God. It does not threaten me like fleshly fear. It only encourages me.

A man being true to his wife with the fear of getting caught for adultery is not the fear of God. It is fear of getting caught by men. It is fear of Men. It is sad that many believers do not understand the difference between fear of Men and fear of God.

The fear I have is fear of hurting my Heavenly father, who has gifted me a lovely wife, by lusting for other women.

Brother Zac once said, 'even if I entertain the thought that my wife does not cook as good as another women, I have lusted and dishonored God'.

If by human love if I can be true to my wife then any unbeliever should be able to be true to his wife. Where is the role of Jesus here?

Human love has limitations, example -

Son :- Father will you get angry with me.

Father :- No Son I will never get angry with you.

Son :- Father are you sure you won't get angry.

Father :- Yes Son I am sure.

Son :- Are you 100% sure you will never get angry,

Father :- How many times should I say the same thing? Won't you understand? I will not get angry. Now Stop disturbing me.

This is the human love, it has limitations, but divine love is 7 times or 70 times, he is always ready to forgive me.

So a man can be true to his wife only by divine love that comes from God, it will come to him from God only if he has the fear of God in him. As stated by you in your previous post.

Re: - posted by ThyKingCome (), on: 2011/11/15 14:57

I would highly recommend to everyone posting in this thread to listen to Al Whittinghill's message on the Fear of the Lord from the conference. If you have already listened to it then please do consider listening again. I sense quite a bit of confusion still regarding the fear of the Lord in this thread.

I find it interesting that even the New Covenant was mentioned in such a way as to tie the Fear of the Lord to the Old Covenant and how the New Covenant has eradicated the Fear of the Lord. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

Perhaps one of the most descriptive passages on the New Covenant is found in Jeremiah 31 & 32. This is the foundation of His New Covenant with Israel, which the Church is a partaker of through Israel's rejection and being temporarily taken out as a branch.

Jeremiah 32-

38 They shall be My people, and I will be their God; 39 then I will give them one heart and one way, THAT THEY MAY FEAR ME FOREVER, for the good of them and their children after them. 40 And I will make an EVERLASTING COVENANT with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I WILL PUT MY FEAR IN THEIR HEARTS so that they will not depart from Me.

Do you see how part of the sealing effect of His Covenant is His Fear? Can we not conclude from this passage of Scripture that God Himself will put His Fear into the hearts of those who have entered into this covenant with Him?

No wonder the devil wants to confuse people about the Fear of the Lord...it is and always will be a bitter thing when the people of God do not fear the Lord. If we are willing to cast off the true Biblical Fear of the Lord then we must deny Jesus' admonition to fear God.

Isaiah 11:3 tells us that Jesus' delight was in the Fear of the Lord...and He is the Son of God! Was Jesus wrong? We are told in Hebrews chapter 5 that Jesus's prayers were heard...because of His godly fear!

I hope this truly helps make some make a paradigm shift in their thinking from what they currently believe about the Fear of God to truly embrace what God in Christ teaches about His Fear.

Devoted to Fearing His Name...

Re: Sree's response - posted by leemcb, on: 2011/11/19 5:38

I thought about your response, as it was well-worded and you had obviously done some thinking before you posted. However, I have to disagree with you: God's love is NOT unconditional. Yes, God makes the rain to fall on the just and unjust--but not forever. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Your take on this also leaves out that God caused the rain NOT to fall on some folks when Elijah prayed. If God's love was unconditional, why would He do that?

The word unconditional means 'without condition'. Suppose you and I entered into a contract and I agreed to send you 50 dollars a day. Now, if I set a condition--"But if you behave badly and don't show respect for others I will cease sending the money to you." Then that contract between us is conditional. I would be agreeing to send you money on the CONDITION you behaved well. However, if I just chose to give you the money, with no requirements on your part, you would be free to go out and act any way you pleased toward others, and you would still keep getting the money UNCONDITIONALLY.

This is what you are saying God does, but you turn right around and contradict that position by saying that some faced God's wrath and died in the desert. The problem in this position is one that addresses another common misunderstanding: what love truly is. Most assume that, in order to be love, it has to go along with anything a person does. But we don't apply that kind of illogic to our own earthly parents--so why to God?

The word for God's love in the New Testament is 'agape' and it literally means 'a sense of social and moral RESPONSIBILITY'. It is NOT feeling based. Feeling based 'love' as described in the New Testament is the word 'phileo', and it is man's love. Unredeemed human nature is such that it desires to sin with impunity (no fear of any consequence). However, God has set up the universe in such a way that sin, like mitzvah (good deeds), is its own reward (although the rewards are very different).

So God's love is agape--based on getting us to the best moral and socially responsible place possible. Which is why His love CANNOT be unconditional. He deals with us on a BEHAVIORAL BASIS for OUR MORAL AND SOCIAL BETTERMENT. That is conditional, the very definition of it. And He gives us the same right: "Love your neighbor AS yourself" (not more than: not less than). This means we are not obligated to do more for a neighbor than we would expect done for us. So, if we do, it is through our MERCY, or GRACE--unmerited favor.

Which is what God does when the rain falls on sinners (although in some cases it may just be God sparing the righteous suffering, not the sinful. Recall that Sodom was spared until Lot left the town for LOT'S sake, not the Sodomites' sake). However, scripture tells us not to presume on God's grace (keep me back from the sin of presumption). Why? Because if an evil heart of unbelief is found in us, Paul says we can expect to perish as those you mention above.

So grace is given to us freely, but not unconditionally. Just as in the example above, if I gave you money and expected no repayment, but made the condition that you had to do well in business, then you got the money FREELY, but NOT UNCONDITIONALLY. And since God requires of us certain things after giving us the free gift of salvation, then He cannot be said to be giving us grace UNCONDITIONALLY.

Freely, yes: it is totally without cost to us, since Christ paid the price on the cross. Unconditionally no: we are told "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven".

The problem lies in so many using the two words-'unconditional' and 'free'-as if they were interchangeable, but they're not. That and a basic lack of knowledge of what the Bible says God's love is. We have this passed on to us by teachers and preachers, who really ought to be studying this stuff out for a true understanding of it before trying to teach the wrong thing.

Like scripture (which mirrors life itself), this issue is much more complex than we've been falsely led to believe.

It's just so much easier to trot out a one-size-fits-all sound byte for folks than to 1) Do the work yourself so that you know the biblical teaching on such things and 2) Invest the time and effort it takes to answer people correctly so that their faith will be sound--and by taking the time to do this, we are fulfilling the Bible's definition of agape by showing a sense of moral and social responsibility toward our neighbor.

Hope this helps clear things up a bit for you. :-)