

The Love of God - Part 1

Sermon delivered on July 19th, 2015

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Text: *Ephesians 3:14-19*

Introduction

This morning I want to speak with you about **the most loved but the most misunderstood and misrepresented attribute of God**, and that is, the love of God.

I - The Reality of God's Love

The Bible clearly declares God is love

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: **for love is of God**; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8: He that loveth not knoweth not God; **for God is love.**

What is the love of God?

There are words in the English language that are not easy to define and love is one of them. **It is easier to describe love than to define it.** It is easier to experience love than to explain it.

There are people who talk about God's love but have no clue what God's love is. Many times they represent God's love as mushy, gushy feeling toward sinners. They represent God's love as love without principle.

Three basic kinds of love

1. Eros – physical attraction, love between two opposite gender

This love is not necessarily wrong. A love between a man and woman, a husband and a wife is natural and never condemned in the Bible.

2. Phileo – brotherly love, love between fellow human beings; brothers, sisters, cousins, neighbors, friends

Philanthropist - love of humanity

Philadelphia – city of brotherly love

3. Agape – divine love, God's love

The love of God

1 John 4:16 **And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.**

It is not simply that God "loves," but that He is Love itself. Love is not merely what He feels and does toward sinners but it is His nature.

The **love of God** is the attribute of God by which He is inclined (tendency) to seek the highest good for His creatures and the communication (giving) of Himself to them regardless of the sacrifice involved.

Comprehending the Incomprehensible

In our text this morning we see the heart of the apostle Paul. Paul's prayer and desire for the Christians in Ephesus, is that they ...

18: May be able to **comprehend** with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19: **And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge**, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Paul's heart was full to overflowing. **He had a deep sense of the love of Christ, and he expressed a wish that they should understand it.**

Praying for an impossibility?

But it seems that Paul is praying an impossible thing. His desire was that they may have a fuller and deeper comprehension of the love of Christ.

He is praying that they might comprehend and know the love of Christ, which passeth the knowledge, that is, that they will know that which is incomprehensible. He is expressing a desire that they should know and understand that which cannot be known and understood.

Knowledge of Christ's love is far beyond the capability of human reason. No one can attain to a full view of it. **But it can be known and experienced**, and it is only known by those who are God's children, filled with all the fulness of God.

Does God Love You and Me?

It is good to know that God is love, but better still, to know that God loves you and me! **It is one thing to know that God is love, but it is another thing to know and feel and experience the love of God.** To know and feel and to have a lively sense of God's love, is **one of the highest privileges of the Christian.**

God loves each of us as if there were only one of us. **He loves me like I was His only child, He loves you like you were His only child.** The reason I can say that is this, because He truly loved us.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

1 John 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

It is true that the love of God surpasses knowledge; that it is beyond comprehension. But, **even though, it is too great to be fully understood, it can be known and experienced.**

The sermon today is an attempt to help us know and understand the love of God.

*Jesus loves me this I know
For the Bible tells me so.*

I love this song, but my prayer is that you will know that God loves you, not only because the Bible says so, but that you will also know it by experience.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; **because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost** which is given unto us.

May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to be fully comprehended.

What should we know and understand about the love of Christ? **Where do we begin?** A good place to start is to know and understand the greatness of God's love.

II - The Greatness of God's Love

18: **May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;** 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

The breadth, length, depth and height express **the greatness and completeness of the love of Christ.** Paul wants them to know how great the love of God is, for them.

1. Great in Breadth (width)

How wide is the love of God? **God's love is wide enough to include every person.**

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever (indiscriminate and universal) believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17: For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

His love is not limited to any race or nationality, not limited to ones place or regions, not limited to ones gender or group.

Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which

are the prayers of saints. 9: And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of **every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;**

John 4:42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, **the Saviour of the world.**

There is no sinner beyond the reach of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. God's love is wide enough to include every race, nationality, age, gender, education, economic status, etc.

*Deep and wide
Deep and wide
There's a fountain flowing deep and wide
Wide and deep
Wide and deep
There's a fountain flowing wide and deep.*

2. Great in Length

How enduring is the love of God? **God's love is long enough to endure through all eternity.**

A length that stretches from eternity past and reaches all the way to eternity future. There is no love that is any longer and stretches any greater length than the love of Christ at the cross. It expands the eternity. This is the love of Christ for us. It is rooted in eternity past and it shall continue throughout all of the ages to come.

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an **everlasting love**: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6: And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39: Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is no end for the love of Christ.

3. Great in Depth

How deep is the love of God? How deep is the love of Christ? How far has He reached down?

a. God's love is deep enough to reach down to the worst sinner

Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

All the way down into the grave, where sinners are. That is where He found us. We were dead. We were foul, rotten, corrupting, stinking dead corpses. We had no life. We didn't have a single heartbeat toward God.

*When the Savior reached down for me
When he reached way down for me
I was lost and undone without God or his Son
When he reached down his hand for me.*

No one is too deep down in sin but that the cross and the love of Christ is not able to reach. His love is so deep that it reaches all the way down to them and save them and deliver them.

b. God's love is deep enough that He stooped to where we are

In order to reached down for us, He stooped low. How low?

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Oh, how low has God come with that wondrous love of His! How He stooped to our low estate. From what depths has He sought to rescue His wayward, erring children.

The depth of the love of Jesus! Consider it as stooping to look upon such an insignificant creature as man! View the depth of that love in receiving such sinful creatures into His embrace! O sinner! you cannot have gone too deep for Christ's love to reach you. O backslider! you cannot have sinned too foully for forgiveness. - C. H. Spurgeon

4. Great in Height

How high is the love of God? **God's love is high enough to take us to highest place and honor.**

*Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6: **And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:** 7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

There is no higher place and honor than to be seated together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We will be exalted together with Christ.

The depth and height of God's love raises us from the lowest pit to the greatest height.

*The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.*

*Refrain:
Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure—
The saints' and angels' song.*

God's love is wide enough to include every person. God's love is long enough to last through all eternity. God's love is deep enough to reach the worst sinner. God's love is high enough to take us to highest place.

The love of Christ, how wonderful, how marvelous, how great, how incomprehensible! It is high I cannot attain unto it!

May the Holy Ghost shed abroad the love of Christ into our hearts.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

III - The Outcome of God's Love

18: May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, **that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.**

Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

"Among all the great sayings in this prayer, this is the greatest. To be FILLED with God is a great thing; to be filled with the FULLNESS of God is still greater; but to be filled with ALL the fullness of God utterly bewilders the sense and confounds the understanding." (Clarke)

IV - The Proper Response to God's Love

The bottom line is that, the love of Christ for us is without limit

It cannot be measured.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, **for his great love wherewith he loved us**, 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

John 3:16 For God so loved the world

1 John 5:1 Behold what manner of love ...

Ephesians 3:18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

It is so great it is beyond comprehension, it is beyond understanding, it is beyond explanation.

I can't understand it, but I know it is true, I have experienced it and I can never be separated from it.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36: As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37: Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38: For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39: Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But there's one more thing that we need to understand about God and His love

An atheist girl asked a Christian, I don't believe the Bible and I don't believe in God and Jesus Christ, am I going to Hell?

The most important message that we could ever hear is, God loves you and me. But we need to understand that love **does not force**. Love **does not manipulate**. Love **does not coerce**. God does not force His love upon us. God will not force anybody into Heaven against their will. God will not force anybody into His presence for all eternity. If a person does not bow to God as the Creator, God will not force him into His presence against his will. He respects him and his choice too much to force him into Heaven.

But we've got to go to Christ, to His love. He loves us so much that He wants to give us eternal life and to live with Him eternally. If we want to be received as Prodigals, we must come as the prodigal son.

So what is the proper respond to the great love where with He loved us?

Love Him back! .

Matthew 22:36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37: Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38: This is the first and great commandment. 39: And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

We are not saved by loving Him. We are saved by trusting and believing Him. But to them that believe, He is precious.

1 Peter 2:7 **Unto you therefore which believe he is precious:** but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

Oh, put your trust in Him, and His answer will be--"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Jude 22: But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, 21: Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Let us pray to know the love of God deeper

2 Thessalonians 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Our heart moves toward all kinds of directions and toward earthly things.

*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.*

May the Lord direct our hearts into the love of God. Let us pray that God would give us heart that comprehends the breath, length, depth and height of the love of God.

The only cure for a cold heart is to look at the heart of Jesus.

1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

Psalms 63:3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

There is nothing like the love of God! It is the most overwhelming thing I have ever encountered in my life. It is the greatest thing God ever did for any of us!

Amen!