

The Love of God

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[0:00] 1 John chapter 4, beginning in verse 7, and we'll read through verse 21. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

! Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us.

He sent his one and only Son into the world, that we might live through him. This is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. But if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us.

We know that we live in him, and he in us, because he has given us his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

[1:12] If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him, and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us, so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, I love God, yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

And he has given us this command, whoever loves God, must also love his brother. I'm going to ask you to put your finger in your Bible there at 1 John 4, and turn back for a moment with me to Psalm 48.

[2:29] Imagine with me for a moment that you woke up this morning to a world without warmth, without sunshine.

Hard to imagine on a beautiful day like this. But imagine that you woke up and the sun was not there. There was no warmth. There was no color. There was no taste.

There was no texture. There had been no rain to water the ground. No pleasure from relationships. No hope. No confidence.

No joy. No Jesus in your life. No kind, listening ear from God to hear your prayers. No compassion from Him.

No forgiveness of sins from Him. No deliverance from trouble. No mercy. No slowness to anger. No confident expectation of glory.

[3:30] There's no place being prepared for you. There's no salvation from sin. There's no heaven to look forward to. It's a world of fear and dread and worry.

The one thing that's missing if you were to wake up to a world like that is the love of God. It is because God loves us that we have all of those things that we just said.

And many more that we haven't listed this morning. I fear that every day in a multitude of ways we take for granted God's love. God's love for all men and God's love for His people in particular.

And God's love is not some abstract concept, some warm, fuzzy, ushy-gushy sort of feeling that we get, that we sense. God's love is His love for us.

He said on all His creatures generally and on His people especially demonstrated in acts of kindness and goodness and mercy towards them.

[4:39] And His love for us should produce particular responses from us. And so very simply this morning, we want to meditate together on the love of God.

Notice with me Psalm 48 and verse 9. We want to heed the words of the psalmist. He begins the psalm, Great is the Lord. He's worthy of praise.

It's a psalm of praise and worship. And he comes to verse 9 and he says, Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love. Now this isn't a temple, but this is the place where God meets with His people, where we've gathered to meet with and to worship Him.

And so in your house, O God, we come today to meditate, to think about, to ponder, to see how it affects us, to think on your love. Your love for us.

And to be encouraged by doing so. We're in God's house. Let's think about His love today. We can turn back to 1 John 4. We'll be really all over the Bible today, but you can stay in 1 John 4 and there'll be a number of times that we make reference to it.

[5:49] As we describe God's love, and then we'll show how it's demonstrated, how it works itself out, and then what our response should be to it. So first of all, a description of God's love.

1 John 4 tells us twice in verse 8 and 16 that God is love. It is who He is. It is in His nature to love. He loves Himself perfectly within the Trinity.

Father, Son, and Spirit. And He loves His creatures. That which He has made. We should note at the beginning that God is not only love.

There are many other aspects of God, attributes of His that we could consider. 1 John also tells us that God is light. In 1 John 1 and verse 5, and light exposes the darkness, and the God of light can't tolerate the wickedness and evil that's hidden in the darkness.

And so don't think for a moment that because God is love, that He is not also justice and holiness and truth. But lest we kill God's love with a thousand qualifications, God is love.

[6:55] And that's good for us. And that love, as we seek to describe it, seek to put some words to it, to help us understand just a little bit of it, that love, first of all, is everlasting.

It's faithful. It's unfailing. The psalmist we saw meditated on the unfailing love of God. Psalm 136 and verse 2, give thanks to the God of gods. And then a phrase that we hear again and again in the psalms, His love endures forever.

Say it together with me. His love endures forever. However, God's love is everlasting. In a world where transience, where temporariness is the norm, where most pastors only stay in a church for five years, where a successful marriage might be 15 or 20 years, in the United States where of marriages that end in divorce, first marriages that end in divorce, the average length of those marriages is eight years.

Well, that's some kind of love, isn't it? It lasted eight whole years. It's not like God's love. His love, and we can't wrap our minds around forever, but His love lasts forever.

It endures. It's a breath of fresh air to consider that in this fickle, temporary world. He's not like us. His love isn't like ours. He's not going to love us one minute and forget the next.

[8:24] Our behavior won't change His mind. Our lack of love for Him won't diminish His for us. He won't grow old and tired, and with it His love fades and weakens.

No, it endures forever. It's not going anywhere. It is eternal. But it's also plentiful. It's extensive. It's limitless. It's boundless. You can't put a limit on God's love.

Psalm 36 and verse 5, Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens. And you can go out, and you can try to reach for the heavens, but you won't quite get there.

But God's love reaches to the heavens. And I love Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in Ephesians 3. And I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

And to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. God's love is wide, it's long, it's high, and it's deep.

[9:33] Those are terms we can wrap our minds around. We like to think concretely. Well, think about this building for a minute. It's got width and length and height and depth. Can you imagine for a moment?

God's love filled this room. Well, imagine with me for a moment, let's think about money for a second. Let's imagine that this room was filled floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall, with \$100 bills.

It can fit \$100,000 in a briefcase. Now imagine this room, floor-to-ceiling, filled with \$100 bills, wall-to-wall. That's a lot of money. It'd be enough money to take care of every person in here for the rest of your life, very comfortably, and all your children and grandchildren too.

That's a lot of money. But when we think about the height and depth and width and breadth of the love of God, to limit it to something like this building, that would be a lot of love.

But we're talking about God. And so we could think about those limits of God's love or the limitlessness with respect to the earth. And we could fill up the whole earth with God's love. And we could fill the whole universe with God's love, and you still wouldn't have tapped the depth and the abundance and the bounty of God's love.

[10 : 45] It's so vast that Paul prays that they would have power to know love that is unknowable. God's love, it's beyond our knowledge. We can't comprehend it, so we need help to understand it.

That's how much love there is. And he says in Romans 5, in verse 5, and hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us. God doesn't have a little medicine dropper of love. He just gives us a little drop. A little drop here when He thinks we might need it. And a little drop there. God pours out His love.

It's like a tsunami, an ocean wave, overwhelming us with His love. There's no limits, no bounds to God's love. It's abundant. And if you've been God's child for any length of time, you know it to be true.

So different from our love that can run out because we become too tired or too angry or too fed up with the object of our love. You ever felt as though you didn't have enough love for all of your kids?

[11 : 45] You didn't have enough love to love them like they deserved. And especially when they weren't being so lovable. You don't have enough love for all of your children. You know what? God has never felt that way.

Because His love is boundless. And He has way more children than you. And He still finds love to love each one. His love is powerful.

Romans 8, 38 and 39, for I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Now don't despise the familiarity of those words. You've heard them again and again. But see the power of God's love. Nothing can separate you from it. No wonder the Song of Solomon says love is as strong as death.

Once you're dead, you're dead. And you can't come back. And once God's love, once He sets His love, His affection on you, it can't be taken away. You can't be separated from God's love.

[12 : 54] It's an inseparable bond. It's like super glue, only more super. In God's hand, nothing can snatch you away from His love. His love is unmerited.

We don't deserve it. God made this clear to His Old Testament people, Israel. It's true for us as well. The New Covenant. But listen to Deuteronomy 7, verses 7-9.

The Lord did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples. For you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the Lord is your God. The Lord your God is God. He is the faithful God keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands.

He doesn't love us because of us. Because there's something lovable about us. He didn't look at the people of Israel and go, there's a really good nation. I'm going to choose them to be My people. They were His people because He set His love on them when they were unlovely, when they were few, when they were unimportant.

[14 : 07] So opposite from our love. We love because someone or something because there's something lovely, lovable about them. Our children are so cute and adorable, it's easy to love them until they do something that's ugly.

And then our love doesn't shrink, but it's a little harder to express it sometimes, isn't it? When the lovable thing is not so lovely, it's a good thing that that's not the way God's love is.

That when we do something that's not lovable or ugly, that He withdraws His love from us. Because then we'd be without hope. We wouldn't have His love if it came because we deserve it.

I'm glad that God's love doesn't come because we deserve it because we never get it in the first place. And if we did, we couldn't keep it because we could never earn it. We actually deserve the opposite.

One author says, unless we understand that we are fully deserving of God's wrath, which He will certainly inflict on those who do evil, we shall never even begin to understand the depth of love which has rescued us from our misery and from our just deserts, from what we deserve.

[15:17] We deserve to be punished, but God loves us instead. He does then expect love in return from us, but our love for Him is never the cause for His love for us.

It's the other way around. We love because He first loved us. It's undeserved. And all of this just goes to show that that love is precious. It's priceless.

It's valuable. It's worth more. Even if we did have this room filled floor to ceiling, wall to wall with money, His love is worth more than that. We should take God's love over that.

If all that money could be yours, or God's love. I hope God's love wins hands down. No contest. Psalm 36 and verse 7, how priceless is your unfailing love.

Love of God is far more valuable than anything that we possess, anything that we can imagine even. What do you do with something that's valuable to you? Something that's precious, that's priceless?

[16:13] Well, you protect it. You take care of it. You make sure you don't lose it. You make sure it's not broken or stolen. Maybe you wear it so that other people can see it.

So they can see how beautiful and priceless and precious it is to you. Perhaps you talk about it to other people. You get something and you tell them about it because it's valuable and you love it and you want them to know about it.

Do you do any of those things with God's love? When you hear the people at work speaking evil of your God and how He couldn't be a God of love to allow all of this suffering in the world, do you defend and protect the love of God?

Do you speak up for it? Do you talk about it to others? Do you say, I have this really valuable thing that I want to tell you about. And it's the love of God. It's priceless.

Do you show it off to others? Not in an arrogant sort of way, but in an undeserving sort of way.

Look, obviously I don't deserve it, but I've been the recipient of God's love. Let me tell you about it.

[17:17] So God's love is everlasting. It's boundless. It's powerful. It's unmerited. It's priceless. But let's talk about some demonstrations of God's love.

How does that love work itself out? How is it shown to us? Remember, it's not just a feeling that makes us feel good. It shows itself in actual actions and deeds that God does.

Let's talk first about His general goodness. God's goodness and love closely linked together. And I can tell you without batting an eye with absolute truth that God loves every one of you here today. God loves every one of you today. Regardless of your background, your age, your gender, your marital status, your education, God loves you.

Converted and unconverted, God loves you today. We see it in creation. God could have made a dull, bland world.

[18:28] One with no color. I think the beautiful creation is an expression of God's love, His goodness. He could have made a world with no color. Everything in gray scale.

Shades of black and white and gray. And so no brilliant orange and red and yellow leaves in the fall. And who would have thought to have the leaves change color in the first place anyway?

Only a good and loving God. And without God's love, no green grass and blue sky and puffy white clouds and purple mountains off in the distance.

I know, I know. We live in northern Indiana. And there's no purple mountains that you can see in the distance. But I grew up in South Carolina. And if there's anybody here from Colorado, you're going, South Carolina.

But I grew up in South Carolina. And we live near the foothills within an hour's drive or so of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Appalachian Mountains.

[19:33] And on a clear day, you could see a blue, purple line of mountains off in the distance, on the horizon. And if God wasn't a God of love, never would have seen that beauty, that color, or even that landscape.

You know, God could have made the whole world like northern Indiana. I've got nothing against northern Indiana. When I ride my bike, I'm glad that it's flat here. I think it's amazing.

I was amazed when we moved here that the town had built a sledding hill. Because there aren't... Anyway. You know, the whole world could be like that.

Flat. But if you ever get the chance to fly across the country from coast to coast, or even partway across the country, just within the United States alone, leave alone the rest of the world, just within the United States, there's this remarkable, unfathomable variation in the landscape and terrain in the world that God has made.

There's flat. And crops growing. That's a beautiful sight from the sky. And there are rugged mountains. Way more rugged than what we had in South Carolina. You go to Colorado, you want to see some mountains. Man, it's beautiful to drive through those mountains.

[20 : 53] Or to fly over them. And to see the Grand Canyon. And just as high as something can rise into the sky, something can go that deep into the earth. And to see lush green forests from the airplane window and also barren, dry, stark desert that's beautiful in its own way.

If God wasn't a God of love, He wouldn't have made the world like that for us to enjoy. And then think about food for a minute. Imagine food with no variation, no taste, no texture.

No crisp apples in the fall. No sugar to make that sweet dessert that just sort of dissolves in your mouth that you love so much. Maybe too much. Just a sort of nutrient-rich, tasteless slop.

That's all we've got. God could have done that. And it would have sustained us. Would have kept us healthy. Would have kept us strong. But a God of love has given us things that we delight in and enjoy to eat.

We see it in creation. We see it in His faithful provision. Matthew 5, verses 43 and following. You have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

[22 : 10] But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. That you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His Son to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. We're to be like God in everything that we do. And one of the ways we are to be like God is by loving our enemies.

So I can say God loves every person here today. Even if you're a rebel against Him, He loves you. You enjoyed the same sunshine and warmth that everyone else did this morning when you walked out of your house.

You enjoy the fruit of water that falls from the sky to bring produce. You enjoy food and provision. That all comes from the hand of God. One of the gracious ways God shows His love to all men is by providing for their needs.

Whether they acknowledge it or not. These expressions of God's love are not only for His children. And so if you are without Christ today, you are not trusting in Him. He is not your hope for salvation today.

[23 : 25] You are experiencing His love anyway. And you experience it every day. You can't say that God doesn't love you because He does. And maybe you grow tired of hearing a say around you that God hates sin and sinners and that you will be punished.

And that forever. Those things are true. And unless you run to Christ, it will be true for you. But it is also true that God loves you.

He loves you so much He's given you the things we've talked about, but He also loves you so much that He's willing to be patient with you. He wants you to come to repentance.

He wants you to trust in His Son. The Bible tells us that that's what He wants. That's how much He... The fact that you are sitting here today with breath in your lungs is a sign that God loves you. The fact that you have another opportunity to receive the truth of His Word. Further evidence that He loves you. And the more love that you receive and yet reject the lover, the one who gives that love, the greater your danger in the last day.

[24 : 40] Don't make the mistake of mistaking God's love for indulgence or the absence of wrath against your sin. The absence of justice and holiness. And don't misunderstand.

His patience will end one day. And you'll experience His love no more. But as of today, God loves you. And I'm going to tell you now how He shows that love to His children.

If you're a believer today, you can just revel in this and soak it up. Delight in it. But if you're not, let it fill you with jealousy. You haven't experienced this kind of love yet, but you can.

Because beyond this general love that we've described for all of His creatures is a special, particular love that God has for His children. And its clearest demonstration is in salvation.

And do you know that it began before the world was even made? His love for His children.

Ephesians 1, 4 and 5. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and

blameless in His sight.

[25 : 54] In love, He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with His pleasure and will. He set His love on you before you were even created.

Child of God. And if you have children, maybe you can comprehend just a small measure of what this is. Before you're even pregnant, you love the idea of having children.

And you pray for them that God would give you children. And you love them in that way. But then you get pregnant. You find out that you're expecting a child.

And if you've experienced this, you know it. If you haven't, you'll understand one day if you do.

You're expecting a child and you've never seen them. You've never held them. You've never kissed them.

They've never looked at you, but you love them. That child that's growing within your wife. Or if you're the wife within you. And before you ever meet that little blob of joy and spit up and dirty diapers and cuteness, you love them.

[27 : 04] And I say him because every time I've loved a child I've never seen, it's been a boy. Him or her. Before you've ever seen them, you love them.

And you can't understand the love you develop for someone you've never seen until you've experienced. Well, God, knowing everything about us before we were created, loved us anyway and chose us to be His.

That choice could only come from that deep well of abundant love that we've seen that He has. But His love didn't stop there. He didn't choose us to be saved. And then when the time came, He said, you know what?

I don't really love them that much. And the cost to save them is so great. And I think I'm not going to save them.

God's love didn't stop in eternity. It continued right into history. Because 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.

[28 : 12] In what way did God love the world? Well, He loved it like this. By sending His Son. That we might have life. And if you have children, how great a love would it take for you to give up your child to die for somebody else?

Especially somebody that didn't deserve it. How great a love. God demonstrates His own love for us in this while we were still sinners.

Unlovable. Christ died for us. Romans 5.8 Ephesians 2 But because of His great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

1 John 4.9 This is how God showed His love among us. He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. You see how often Scripture directly connects God's love and His saving work for sinners like us.

And we haven't looked at all of the passages where the connection is made. Just some of them this morning. If we're going to imagine a world devoid of God's love, it's a hopeless world because it's one without salvation.

[29 : 38] One where there is no deliverance from your sin. If God doesn't love, then He doesn't save. He saves us in His love and then He gives us an inheritance.

As sons, 1 John 3 in verse 1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are.

The natural extension of God's love is that He would make us His children. And He does. Giving us the rights and privileges of heirs. We have an inheritance in heaven.

He doesn't just... God doesn't just set His love on us and save us and then say, you know what? I'm not actually going to let you come into the house. You can be my servants. You can be out in the yard.

But you can't actually dwell with me because I'm God and that's reserved for my Son and the Spirit. No, He makes us a son. A daughter. A child of His.

[30 : 35] He loves us so much. Arthur Pink says, Christ died not in order to make God love us, but because He did love His people.

Calvary is the supreme demonstration of divine love. Whenever you are tempted to doubt the love of God, Christian reader, go back to Calvary. How do you know that God is love?

He shows us at the cross. And then for those that He saved, there's more manifestations of His love. It doesn't stop with Him saving us. And then He leaves us for the rest of this Christian life to go our way on our own and to feel our way in the dark.

No, He loves us too much to do that. He's going to walk every step of the way with us. We're joined to Christ as we talked about in Sunday school. We have every power that we need. So, here's some other things that because of God's love, He does for His children.

He hears us. He listens to us when we pray. He doesn't just save us and say, deal with it. He gives us open access into the courts of heaven that we can come to Him and make our requests and our needs and our wants known to Him.

[31:44] So the psalmist says in Psalm 69.13, But I pray to You, O Lord, in the time of Your favor, in Your great love, O God, answer me with Your sure salvation. It's because of love that God answers us when we pray.

And then in the trouble and trials of life, and you go through trouble and trial, and you're going through it right now, many of you. I love this verse. Zephaniah 3.17, The Lord your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with His love. He will rejoice over you with singing. What a promise.

What a promise. He comes and He quiets us with His love. You're in trouble. You're in turmoil. There's no way you know in your own strength that you can deal with it.

And as you face trial beyond anything that has faced you before, it doesn't mean that God has forgotten His love to you. It is actually a sign of His love to you. And in the midst of that trial, He is not going to abandon you.

[32:55] He's not going to forsake you. He loves you too much. He is going to support you in the midst of it. And He will come with His love and He will quiet you.

Now, I don't feel very quiet when struggling. Where you go and read Zephaniah 3.17 and you say, God, I don't feel quiet. And maybe you're even questioning His love because of the trial you're in. Say, God, forgive me for doubting your boundless, limitless, faithful love. Reveal more of it to me. Humble me. Give me grace to believe the promise of your word.

Do trials send you running into God's loving arms or do they make you question His love for you? God comes and quiets you with His love. There's ongoing forgiveness and mercy because of God's love.

Psalm 51.1. Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love. According to Your great compassion, blot out my transgression.

[33:58] Our salvation is because He loves us. But so is the ongoing forgiveness we find as we struggle with sin day after day. You know what? I have sinned today. And I'm glad that God loves me today.

And that I can say with David, because of Your great love, show me mercy. Blot out my sin. And so can you. Can you imagine if God's love wasn't enduring? If it wasn't faithful?

If it was changing? And He loved us one day, so He saves us. But then He decides He doesn't love us so much the next day and He stops forgiving our sins. Well, praise God. Such a thought is foreign to who God is because God is love.

And that love cannot change. Because of His love, He delivers us. Psalm 109.21. But You, O Sovereign Lord, deal well with me for Your name's sake.

Out of the goodness of Your love, deliver me. In the midst of trials, it's because of love that He delivers us. Because of His love, He shows us mercy.

[35:05] Slowness to anger. Psalm 86.15. But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God. Slow to anger. Abounding in love and faithfulness. I'm glad that God is patient.

That He's slow to anger. Because I'm a slow learner. And I have tried His patience. I never would have been saved if God wasn't slow to anger.

And if I had been, I would have been wiped out since then. What about you? Has God had any patience with you?

Has He been slow to anger with you? That's an expression of His love. I'm glad God is not like me. I'm ashamed that my children don't have a better example than this earthly father of what it means to be patient and slow to anger. And abounding in love and compassion.

[36:13] What kind of example dads are your kids getting? Are they getting a good picture of what a heavenly father is like by watching you or me? Are we loving as our Father is loving?

Do you take that love of God for granted? Do I? Let us not take it for granted. That's why I want to meditate on God's love today. Soak in God's love.

It's the source of every blessing. And so let's not be ho-hum and thinking it ordinary that God loves it. You know, we walk through this world that we've talked about today and we experience God's deliverance and He comes and quiets us in His love and He forgives us our sins.

And I think all too often we just sort of take it in stride. Almost like we're entitled to it. Like we deserve this beautiful world. Like we deserve to have a really warm day in November. And instead of causing those things to drive us back to God and gratitude and humility and thanksgiving to Him, don't take it for granted.

Without Him, we're nothing. We have nothing. Another expression of God's love is the painful love that He shows to us as His children.

[37 : 31] Again, don't mistake God's love for indifference towards sin. He hates it. And He hates it in His children. And so one of the kindest expressions of His love is discipline.

And kids know what it is to be loved by your parents. They express it in all sorts of ways. Their words. With an embrace. With the things that they do for you.

And the way they provide for you. But maybe the last thing you think of when you think about your parents' love for you is discipline. Because that doesn't feel very loving. Spankings hurt.

It hurts. Man. And having privileges removed is not pleasant. And feeling... You might never admit this, but feeling your parents' displeasure and disappointment hurts.

That stings. And maybe that's not what you think of when you think of their love for you. But you should. Their discipline is an expression of love.

[38 : 31] If they let you go your way, you would be a mess. But they show their love in discipline. And so it is with God. He says in Hebrews 12.6, because the Lord disciplines those He loves.

And He punishes everyone He accepts as a son. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Discipline hurts, but it's one of the ways God shows that He loves us. He loves us too much to let us go on in our sin without showing it to us and stopping us in our tracks and bringing us back.

It's what Jesus did with Peter. Peter had denied his Lord three times. Denied Him. Peter said, I'll never leave you.

I'll never forsake you. He forsook Him. And then He denied Him. Three times. And Jesus' loving discipline started right after the third denial.

[39 : 34] And we've talked about this before. Jesus caught Peter's eyes across the courtyard. And He looked at him. And we don't know exactly what that look was, but we can imagine that it was a look of love.

Of sadness. Of disappointment. Of pity. Because as soon as Peter saw Him, He broke down. Ran out.

Weeping. Knowing that He had sinned against God. That He had failed Him. That He had let Him down. And that look was painful. But Jesus wasn't done with a look.

With Peter. He still had to restore Him. So Peter, who denied Jesus three times, is asked by Jesus three times, Peter, do you love me?

You know what? That would hurt. To have your Lord and Master say, do you love me? Because Peter had called into question his love for the Savior by denying Him.

[40 : 39] And so Simon, the third time He said to him, this is John 21.17, the third time He said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me?

He said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep. Peter was being disciplined. He's being restored. But it hurt.

And discipline hurts sometimes. And we need to feel the sting. And so be moved to greater obedience and faithfulness. It's for our good.

It's an expression of God's love. Maybe your suffering or trial isn't for some particular sin. Maybe God's teaching you more generally about growing in grace, teaching you patience, revealing some idol in your heart.

These things are a sign of His love for you. Not a sign that He doesn't love you. And so the demonstration of God's love isn't all joy and happiness for us, but it is for our good.

[41:41] So we've seen these expressions of God's love generally and specifically for His people. How should we respond? What's the proper response? We think about God's love for us.

What should we do? Well, the most obvious, I suppose, is to love Him. He loves us and we are to return that love to Him. Arthur Pink, again, laments how little real love there is for God.

One chief reason for this is because our hearts are so little occupied with His wonderful love for His people. The better we are acquainted with His love, its character, fullness, blessedness, the more will our hearts be drawn out in love to Him.

It's one of the reasons we're thinking together today about the love of God so that our hearts will be drawn out in love to Him. Take this weak effort this morning at showing you God's love and let it move you to greater love for Him as He commands us in His Word.

We're told that we must love God. Deuteronomy 6.5 and then repeated in the Gospels the greatest commandment. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

[42:55] Psalm 31.23, Love the Lord, all His saints. We're commanded to love God, but it should flow out of a heart of gratitude or glad to love Him.

And if you love Him, you'll tell Him about it. Express that. Don't just say that I love God. Express it to Him. Psalm 18.1, I love You, Lord, my strength. Tell Him.

When you pray, don't just ask. Tell Him that you love Him. And if you love Him, you'll tell others about it. Psalm 116.1, I love the Lord. He's talking to other people.

I love the Lord. For He heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy. God has shown us this great love. How could we not tell others about it?

How could we not be glad to share that love with them? So God has loved us. Let's love Him then.

Let's trust Him. As a proper response, Psalm 52.8, I trust in God's unfailing love forever and ever.

[44:02] God in His love gives us every reason to trust Him. His love has never yet failed you. It has yet to let you down.

And it never will. Not in the death of a loved one. Not in unemployment. Not in the worst day at work possible. Not even then has His love forsaken you.

Not in the middle of your day when there's six screaming children. There might only be three, but it seems like there's six. And they're all... There's one that's got a dirty diaper.

He's screaming. There's one that's hungry. And he's screaming. There's one that's severely injured.

And he's screaming. Severely. And with all the noise, you really do begin to wonder if you've had another child and you didn't realize it because there's so many of them.

Even then, God loves you. His love hasn't failed you. Do you trust Him? Do you believe that? And our response in trusting Him is to...

[45:08] Our response should be trusting Him to give us that expression of His love that we need at that moment. And He will. He's not going to leave you in the middle of any of those situations.

I trust in God's unfailing love. You say that. Do you live like you believe it? Or do some of those moments in the day make you think, man, if God loved me, I wouldn't be enduring this. God's love doesn't fail.

We just don't always recognize the expressions of it. So we trust Him. We should be thankful to Him. A heart of gratitude. I hope this is obvious to us.

Psalm 136 and verse 2. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. What do you do for the God whose love endures forever? You give thanks to Him. When you pray, do you not only express your love to God, but thank Him for His love to you and everything it means?

Does the sight of a beautiful sunset draw a spontaneous thank you, Lord? When you sit down to your table and we all say a blessing, we thank God for the food.

[46:17] Are you thanking God? Are you aware that that spread on your table is an expression of God's love for you? Another sign that He hasn't forsaken you in His love. Let's say thank you for the food.

Amen. Amen. Think about it. And thank Him for His love. Lord willing, we're going to see four people baptized tonight and six added to the church.

Another sign of God's love. I hope you've been thanking God this week for it. And we'll be today and we'll continue to praise God for this inexpressible demonstration of His love.

Our response should be one of faithfulness to Him. Instead of continuing to betray Him and forsake Him like Peter did and like we have done, let us like Peter affirm our love.

You know that I love you. And then go and live a life that shows it. Like Peter did. What a difference. Peter in the Gospels and Peter in Acts. That's a man that's been humbled and disciplined and is having his love drawn out for God and is serving Him faithfully.

[47:21] God's love should inspire loyalty, faithfulness from us. It should inspire repentance in us. Jesus says to the lukewarm Laodiceans, Revelation 3.19, Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline.

So be earnest and repent. You experience that discipline and it hurts and it's painful. Don't let it drive you further away from God. Let it bring you back. Repent of whatever sin that He's shown you and let His love draw you back.

Turn away from that sin. We should respond by loving one another. 1 John 3.16, This is how we know what love is.

Jesus Christ laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. See that expression of love again? Jesus laying His life down for us? Well, we should do that same thing for our brothers as an expression of love.

Or 1 John 4.11, Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. J.I. Packer writes that John wrote that God is love in order to make an ethical point.

[48:25] If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. Could an observer... You ask yourself this question. Could an observer of your life learn from the quality and degree of love that I show to others?

My wife, my husband, my family, my neighbors, people at church, people at work, could they learn from your love anything at all about the greatness of God's love to me?

Could they learn that from watching you? God's love for us should inspire love for the brethren. I see love for the brethren here.

And I thank God that it's a sign of His love for you, for me. This one's a little harder. Because God loves us, we should love our enemies.

Remember how God loves the wicked, sends rain and sun on them just like He does the righteous. It's the basis of Jesus' exhortation for us to love our enemies. We're to be like God is.

[49:29] I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. You ever think about love for your enemy as an outworking of God's love for you?

You should. But they don't deserve my love. They've hurt me. They've sinned against me and they haven't repented. And I would forgive them if they asked, but they haven't.

And so, they don't deserve my love. That's right. Just like you don't deserve God's love. And yet, He shows it anyway.

We should love our enemies. And then, finally, we should pray for it to continue. Psalm 36 speaks of the great height, value, the pricelessness of God's love.

And then, in Psalm 36 in verse 10, we read, continue your love to those who know you. Your righteousness to the upright in heart. Continue your love. Don't presume upon it.

[50:31] Don't, again, think that you're just deserving of it. So, it's going to come to you. Ask God for it. Give me greater measures of your love. Show me more love and kindness. Continue that to me.

Let's be praying and asking God to do what He's promised to do. To show us love and to make us worthy recipients of that love. Well, a world full of God's love is far better than the alternative we considered at the beginning.

A world devoid of His love. But that is not our lot. The vast, unmeasured, limitless love of God has been poured out in our hearts. Are you tired and suffering?

God loves you and He will deliver you. Are you in need? God loves you and He will answer your prayer. Are you in turmoil? God comes to quiet you with your love.

Are you caught in sin? God is going to discipline you and is long-suffering enough to bring you back and stands ready to forgive you in His mercy and compassion.

[51:33] Are you discouraged? God loves you and wants you to remember who you are and what you have because of Christ. Are you unconverted today? Are you without Christ? God loves you and He wants you to come to Him in repentance and faith and if you come, He will receive you.

We're the most blessed, unworthy recipients of love and yet we receive it. So let us thank God today and praise Him for the great love that He shows to us. Go on your way today delighting in

God's love and loving Him all the more.

Our Father, we thank You for Your unspeakably great love for us. Forgive us for our weak and shallow and feeble love for You.

We pray that You would draw our hearts out today and not just today but every day in love and praise and in gratitude for the love that You haven't just expressed in words but love that You have shown us in concrete things like sending Your Son to die for our sins, hearing and answering our prayers and showing us long-suffering and patience.

We thank You for Your love. We ask that it would continue. Continue Your love to us though we are undeserving. Continue to shower it down upon us. Pour it out in our hearts that we might be those who then would love You more, that would love our neighbors, that would love our enemies, that would trust You, that would hope in You.

[53 : 02] Thank You for Your love. Let it stir us to greater love and obedience to You, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.