

MEASURING GOD'S LOVE

1 John 3:1 Ephesians 3:17-19

Introduction: The story has been told about a young boy who would die unless he immediately had a blood transfusion and his older brother was the only one whose blood matched. When told the situation, the older brother volunteered to give his blood. As he lay beside his younger brother during the transfusion, he looked up at the doctor and asked "how long before I die?" He was willing to give his life so his younger brother would live. There is no greater love than for one person to give his/her life for another, however this is more the exception than the rule. Thankfully, our God is like the older brother. Someone once said that trying to measure God's love is like trying to measure an ocean with a coffee cup or using a yard stick to measure how tall God is or to use a tape measure to see how wide God's love reaches.

I. CONSIDER THE BREADTH (WIDTH) OF GOD'S LOVE (*John 3:16*)

1. God tried to reveal the width of His love prior to the Church age when He formed the nation of Israel, however Israel became more interested in the fact of being chosen than the fact of how much God loved all men.
2. The Book of Jonah reveals again the attitude of Israel. When God told Jonah to go preach to Nineveh, he ran away rather than preach to someone he hated. They didn't care for God, so why would God care about them? God finally got Jonah to go preach His message of love.
3. Jesus had difficulties in preaching to Israel for they considered themselves God's "chosen" people and kept the best seats for themselves, and favored themselves above all, loved only their own kind and hated everyone else. How could God love the Gentiles whom they called dogs? Or the Samaritans?
4. Jesus preached that God loved all people which infuriated the Jews. Jesus told them a parable about a shepherd who left 99 of his sheep in a safe place to go out and look for that one lost sheep.
5. Our walls of prejudice are very high and we try to fit our shaded glasses over God's eyes trying to get Him to see people as we do.
6. Those who deem themselves wiser than others are sure that God gave them wisdom in preference to others who are ignorant and unable to be as wise as they are.
7. If we look closely at a family that has a handicapped child, we would see that that handicapped child is favored a bit more than other family members in many ways. So it is with God's love. If human love is thus expressed, could God's all inclusive love be less?
8. We are reluctant to accept those who are different and not of our own "kind." Not so with God! He loves the "whosoever" from the greatest to the least among us.

II. CONSIDER THE DEPTH OF GOD'S LOVE

1. Every generation has had its "self-made" theologians, sentimental songwriters who write and speak of God as if He is a "benevolent grandfather," a good time guy who winks at sin or gives a slap on the wrist for one being naughty. They lightly refer to God as the "man upstairs" or "somebody way off up there..." These kind only show the shallowness of their thinking and minds.
2. There are those who defend sin by insisting that we are all sinners and God made us, therefore He is responsible for what we do. Anybody who is actually sorry for his/her sins is really a sick-o and neurotic. Their advice for those who feel remorse for their sins is to grow up, get rid of that guilt complex...
3. We need to be reminded that God does not "wink" at anything which will destroy His children and that is what sin does. God will not be content to pass over lightly the "naughtiness" of those who nailed His Son to the cross.
4. Hosea, an Old Testament preacher, married a faithless woman, Gomer. He wanted to see the world turn back to God while Gomer wanted to see the world. She ran away from him, became a prostitute, then sold at a slave market and Hosea bought, and did not give her up. He brought her back home and restored her. How that must have cost him. Thus it has been with God and us.
5. Parents who love their children never make light of their children's waywardness. Many parents have gone to early graves because of disobedient children who broke the hearts of their parents. LOVE IS LIKE THAT.
6. Our God is concerned about our sins and if He were not, then He would not be much of a God. To love is to care, and to love deeply is to care deeply.
7. Look at the crucifixion: God's love for the sinner is revealed as well as God's war against sin. Sin's horror is revealed and God's redemptive power is revealed in all its love.

III. CONSIDER THE LENGTH OF GOD'S LOVE

1. The character of God is love and that love is as everlasting and eternal as God is. People say they love God but turn from Him. Judas did. Human love is fickle, spasmodic, unreliable, undependable and untrustworthy. Human love often lets us down. No person, however, ever went so far down and away from God that the arms of God were not sufficient to lift him/her back up. God never gives up.
2. Remember what Francis Thompson wrote in "The Hound of Heaven:"
"I fled Him down the nights and own the days, I fled Him down the arches of the years,
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways of my mind, and in the midst of tears, I hid from
Him, and under running laughter..."

3. Remember how Peter denied even knowing the Lord Jesus three times? Remember how Jesus lovingly forgave Peter and gave him a tremendous responsibility in feeding Jesus' sheep?
4. During a worship service, late in the afternoon, with the sun flooding through the stained glass windows of the sanctuary, filling the room with wonderful colors, the priest went to the candleabra, got a lighted candle and walked over to the marble crucifix and without a word held the candle to the wound marks in the feet of Christ, then up to the hands, and over to the side and finally up to the thorn crown brow. Without saying a word, the priest had preached a sermon on the love of God.
5. *"For God so loved the world.....the whole world...."*

CONCLUSION:

1. What more can be added? The love of God is immeasurable, it is endless, it is timeless, it is bottomless.
2. Do you know our Lord, our God? Have you experienced this love God has for you?
3. Maybe Christian, you have been like the wife of Hosea. You have left the one who loves you so and gone back out into the world. Won't you return to Him? He still loves you and always will.