

# Week of Meetings 01 the Love of God

by Benard Fell

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*The sermon emphasizes the transcending theme of God's love, demonstrated through the person and work of Jesus Christ, and its measure, manner, and manifestation.*

**Duration:** 40:08

**Scripture:** Psalm 22:16, Matthew 6:33, John 1:18, John 13:23, Romans 5:8, Hebrews 13:14, Revelation 22:4

**Topics:** "Love"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of focusing on the person of Jesus Christ and His love, rather than being consumed by the negative conditions of the world. The preacher describes the love of God in three aspects: its manifestation, measure, and manner. The love of God is wide, embracing the whole world, and deep, demonstrated through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The ultimate expression of God's love is seen in the promise of eternal life and being with Christ in heaven. The preacher encourages the audience to meditate on the dimensions of God's love and to find comfort and hope in it.

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## Transcript

And the third chapter, and we'll read the first three verses together. 1 John, chapter 3. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons or the children of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man, or every one, that hath this hope in him, or set on him, purifies himself even as he is pure.

The Apostle John has been called the Apostle of Love, no doubt because love seems to be his transcending theme, whether it be in his gospel or in his epistles. I think, on the continent somewhere, the gospel of John has been called the bosom of Christ. A very lovely expression, indeed, and you remember that the Apostle John was one who leaned upon the bosom of Jesus.

That too is very significant, for it was the disciple who seemed to be nearer to the heart of Christ, leaning on his bosom continually, but the Apostle that was chosen by God to express the wonders, the glorious wonders, of the bosom expressed in the person and work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I think we need to be more occupied with this theme, especially because of the days in which we live. If we look around, we get quite depressed and discouraged because of conditions.

Not only in this country, but in the whole country, and everywhere you look, we see things deteriorating. Moral standards are falling, there is lawlessness increasing, the love of many is waxing cold even in the things of the Lord, there are strikes and strikes, and as we have just been reminded, even murders. So, we have this very sad contrast in the world today, the hatred of man expressed because of his wicked heart.

But how wonderful it is that when we can rise above such conditions and be occupied with this transcending theme, the person of our Lord Jesus, the very expression of God's heart of love. So, the more we get occupied with world conditions, the more we will find them to be so withering. Mark you, I believe that we should be exercised about world conditions in order that we might be able to pray them more intelligently.

But we need to be occupied with this wonderful theme even more and more, and we will find occupation with it will be, indeed, a soul uplifting. Now, I like to think of the love of God in a threefold way. First of all, its manifestation, secondly its measure, and thirdly its manner.

First of all, in regard to its manifestation, we might ask this question, when was the love of God manifested as far as this world was concerned? Well, we look around, and we see in creation the manifestation and the demonstration of his wisdom and power. Even in a lovely place like the Park of the Palms, we see his handiwork and his beauty expressing his wisdom and omnipotence. And even the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shall record his handiwork.

But, there's one thing that creation could never do. It could never reveal the heart of God. Shall I say, we see particularly in creation the hand of God, but not his heart.

Well, then, how was God to reveal to us the wonders of his wisdom? How was he to reveal to us the love of his heart? How was that marvelous, great, and infinite love to be manifested? Thank God we know the answer, and into this world, maybe 2,000 years ago, there came a person. We've been reminded of this glorious fact already this morning. The person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to be resident in a body that was prepared for him by his God.

One who was absolutely stopless and stainless, undefiled and undefilable. The one who was the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. And in that true tabernacle there was the Shekinah glory, for he never laid his glorious side when he came into this world.

And, very often, those linen curtains were drawn aside on the Mount of Transfiguration, for instance, and the Shekinah glory shone forth. So the Apostle John himself said, the only begotten Son who is in the bottom of the tower, he hath declared him, or he hath fully told him else. And so, into this world there came the glorious, fearless, fragrant person of our Lord Jesus Christ, to reveal to men and women, and boys and girls, the wonderful love of God's heart.

Oh, let us lay a hold of the truth and never let it go, friends, that perfect manhood and deity were inseparably united. You cannot divide them. This is a truth that we must hold very, very dearly in this hour of day, friends, because there are those, I'm sorry to say, who have taught that the Lord Jesus could sin.

They would admit that he didn't sin. Oh yes, they will say that in him was no sin, he knew no sin, he did no sin, he had no sin. But, ah, comes that unworthy thought that there was a possibility that he could sin.

Oh, why was the temptation allowed? Well, I'll tell you, friends, if a temptation was allowed, it ought to prove that he could not sin. And, as we see the gold tested in the fires of that temptation, we see the glory of his sinlessness shining forth all the more, and Satan's darts falling harmlessly to the ground. Oh, we want to guard these precious truths in connection with our precious Lord.

He did no sin, he had no sin, he knew no sin, and he could not sin. He was the fine flour mingled with oil, and there was not one coarse grain in his life. All his virtues and excellences were balanced and blended.

He never had to retrace a single step, nor recall a single word. He was perfection, and in everything he did, in all his words, in all his acts, they bore the stamp of absolute perfection. I say this, friends, because this is the one in whom love of God was told forth in all its splendor and in all its fullness.

Oh, the glory of the grace shining in the Savior's face, telling sinners from above, God is love, and God is the love. And so, the same writer of this equipment assures us, in this was the love of God manifested, in that he sent forth his only begotten Son into the world, that we should live through him. And, as we trace his perfect pathway, we see him laying his hands so gently upon the heads of little children, and blessing them, telling the world that God loves the little children so dearly and intensely.

As we see him putting his hand upon the ostracized leper, he was declaring to the world that God loves the sinner in all his loathsomeness, but he hates the sin. And so, it could go on everywhere, in all his ways, he demonstrated the fact that God is love. But, when you think of its measure, where do we see the measure of God's love? Well, at one place, and one place only, at the place called Calvary.

And as we gaze upon that holy scene, as we have already this morning, in the breaking of the bread, our hearts are overpowered with the sense of our own unworthiness to wonders we confess, the wonder of his glorious love, and our own worthlessness. I'm so glad that our brother, receiving this message, gave out that hymn which was very fitting. Seeing from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and the love flow mingled down.

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown? That sight of sights is enough to break and melt every heart. And thank God for those in this company who can say, yes, I remember the time and the sight of that holy supper where I broke down my heart, and since then I have had the consciousness of being the Lord's. I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved's mine.

And so, at that place, we see as nowhere else the marvelous, infinite, unbounded, unmeasured, unfathomed, unparalleled, unmerited love of God in Christ. I well remember when my wife and I crossed the Atlantic. Of course, we didn't see land for days on end between the Azores and Bermuda.

All that we saw was one mighty vast expanse of blue, one great circle of blue. But, it didn't matter what time we went on board the deck in the daytime, and we looked around, it seemed as if we were exactly in the very center of that circle, and so we were. And, I used to think how the children in the slate of family Birmingham used to sing in the Sunday school, Wide, wide as the ocean, high as the heaven above, deep as the deepest sea, is my Saviour's love.

I, though so unworthy, still am a child of His care, for His word teaches me that His love reaches me everywhere. And, it was a great thought to my own soul, then, that we were ever in the circle of God's love, even before this world was. Even before the divine pot of soot, the clay, and all that it formed, Adam proved to be such a foe.

God, our foreseeing God, hath prepared a way whereby man could be welcomed back into His presence again. If all thy hands had made the sun to rule the day, or earth's foundations laid all fashion, and Adam's clay, what thoughts of love and mercy flowed in thy great heart of love, O God? The things that we were in God's thought before the world was formed, and before His hand clung into the heavens' myriads of stars and formed the worlds, we unworthy creatures were in His blessed loving thoughts. What a God we have, and that we were included in that purpose which was in the bottom of the harbour even before the world began.

So, dear friends, as we turn our eyes again to Calvary, we see that one upon that central cross, died in all His agony, and shame, and blood. We see the mighty love of God like an ocean which cannot be paddled, which cannot be measured. Somebody has well expressed the thought that John 3.16 is a drop of language, and yet it contains the oceans of God's love.

That is perfectly true. It's John that records that wonderful message, and I think that in that verse we do see the four dimensions of God's love. When I went to school, I was told that a solid could only have three dimensions, length, breadth, and thickness.

But when the Apostle Paul is describing this wonderful love, he brings in the fourth dimension because it needs it. The breadth, the length, the depth, and the height. Having referred to the wisdom of God that cannot be measured, he refers also to the love of God, the love of Christ, which also cannot be measured.

For God so loved the world. There we see the breadth of it, dear friends. It's so wide that it embraces the world, all nations, kindreds, and tribes.

Marvelous when we can think of that embrace of love in such a way as to be able to declare with the Apostle himself, He loved me, gave himself for me. Think of the breadth of his love in the contrast of our own human love, which is so narrow in its limits. Our love only extends, usually, to friends and loved ones.

Rightly so, of course, but does our love extend to our enemies? His love was so broad and magnificent when he loved and when he died. He died for his enemies as well as for his friends. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

For God so loved the world, then, is the breadth, that he gave his only begotten Son. Here we find the length. Because, after all, love is always proved by the length to which it will go.

And how far does the love of God go? It reached right from the highest heaven down to earth. And, thank God, it reached you and it reached me, that he gave his only begotten Son. Oh, the love of God is willingness.

No wonder we read this morning that the Lord could come forth, the Eternal Son, with this expression upon his lips, lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O my God. And that blessed omniscient one knew what the doing of that will would involve. The sorrows of the tree and the anguish of soul and the forsaking of his God.

But he was willing to come. And the Father was willing to give. Nearly two thousand years ago, God gave his best.

He gave the darling of his heart. It seemed almost, I say almost, as if heaven itself was empty when the wholeness of the God was seen manifest in flesh here below. He gave his only begotten Son.

That already shows, for I say, the length to which God's love will go. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish. Here we find the depth of it.

That dark word perish would imply that all those who reject the Savior of sinners and do death's part of the Spirit of God will perish. We have to say this lovingly and tenderly. For the benefit of those who may be staying and hiding behind this fact that God is love.

You see, the offense if God is going to act, he cannot act upon one attribute alone. He must act with all his attributes working harmoniously together. And the epistle before us which tells us that God is love, first of all, declares that God is light.

And for those who reject his overtures of mercy and love will have to face one day a God of light who is justice and judgment. Ah, that's a very solemn thought, isn't it? And we have to be very faithful in our ministry and declare the doctrine of eternal punishment. For this only enhances the work of Christ and magnifies the love of God.

But whosoever believeth in him should not perish. How simple, how glorious, how divine. And the reason why our Savior built up the depth of God's love is this.

That in order that this might be, this blessed, glorious person went right down into the deep mire of Calvary. He allowed those warm waters of God's judgment to overflow with him. He went down into the depths in order that we might be taken from the depths and one day transported to the heights.

I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am coming to deep waters where the floods overflow. The approach hath broken my heart, I am full of heaviness.

I looked for some to take pity on me, and I found no man. Neither found I any to comfort me. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I'll tell you, friends, in order that we may never perish.

Then we come to the fourth dimension. What is it? The height of God's love. I've expressed in this wonderful climax that one day we're going to be with Christ and like him.

In heaven there's going to be a people for his Christ, a people like his Christ, and a people with his Christ. And that carries us up right to the very, shall I say, climax of God's love in Christ. There we have the measure of it, friends.

And it's going to take us all eternity to find out what is the measure. And it will be, shall I say, an experience that will be never-ending. Now, thirdly, we come to the manner of God's love.

And it seems to me that this is what the apostle is stressing in this wonderful verse before us. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. I say children because it seems to me that the apostle has before him more the relationship than the thought of sonship.

But the thought, as we know, often referred to as sonship, which reveals to us our responsibility as well as our dignity as sons of God. But that is not the thought behind the apostle's mind here. I think it's the fact of our relationship, the glory of it, so that we might enter into it more fully and appropriate all the wonderful truth connected with it.

Beloved, now are we the children of God. We have a present salvation to enjoy, and to enjoy to the full. And we who are saved by God grace are certainly enjoying it today, aren't we, in the courts of the Lord as children of God.

So it seems that the apostle is saying, in effect, now, I want you to consider the manner of God's love, that he has taken us poor, worthless, self-deserving sinners. He has cleansed us with the blood of his Son. Not only so, but he has been pleased to put us into his family and call us his own children.

Wonder of wonders that I can look into the face of a Christ holy God without a single fear. For the ark is unreserved of a little child, and Christ ever hath. The Spirit himself witnessed that with our spirit that we are the children of God, and as children then heirs, heirs of God and joined heirs with Christ.

Because I'm related to the Lord Jesus in a tie, a bond that can never sever, all that belongs to him belongs to me. Because I'm a co-heir with God. And this relationship, friends, will never, never be broken by the course of time, nor by anything in time.

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor effect, nor death, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. I don't know whether you can find anything that isn't included in that list. Some people seem to think they can, because they can't enjoy a present salvation in Christ.

That statement alone is sufficient. Things present, all things to come. Nothing will be able to separate us from that love of God expressed in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the manner of God's love. It's a wonderful thing, you know, to be able to go into God's presence and to feel that we go into the presence of a Father who is intensely interested in our welfare, and that we can pour out our souls before him whatever our need, we know that he's going to supply it according to his will. This is the manner of God's love that he has expressed in and through our Lord Jesus.

Lord, we've already been praying to the Lord in Psalm 103 this morning. We've been thinking of his mighty deliverance and his pardoning grace. I couldn't help but think of those two contrasts brought before us.

As high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. What a wonderful contrast. How high is the heaven above the earth? No one can tell.

We think of the moon a quarter of a million miles away. We think of the sun 93 million miles away. We go into the heavens, very near neighbors indeed.

When we think of stars, and there are many of them among the billions in the heavens, there are thousands and thousands of light-years away from this earth. We're going into space, and we're baffled by the fantastic distance. A light-year, of course, is the space that time, that life will travel, traveling at 186,000 miles a second.

The distance that life can travel is 186,000 miles a second per year. You'll work that out, and you'll have a column of figures that wide. And yet, as we look into the baffling space, we think of something and someone beyond the proudest star of God.

The one who sits upon yonder throne in all his glory, in the splendors of his excellence. And God says in this great contrast, as far as the heaven is above the earth, as high as the heaven is above the earth, so

great is his mercy toward them that fear him. It can never, never be measured.

And then I thought of the other contrast that our brother read, as far as the east is from the west. So how has he removed our transgressions from us? Well, again, we'll say, how far is the east from the west? Well, now, I'm very glad the psalmist didn't say as far as the north is from the south. Oh, no, there's a reason for that, because, after all, there is a measurable distance from the north to the south.

From the north pole to the south pole, and, as we know, the equator runs between. It can be measured. But who can measure the east from the west? No one.

I get into a boat today, and I say to myself, well, I'm going to set my course to the west. And so, I'll set the compass eastward. Can you tell me when I would arrive at the west? If I went on sailing for the last day of my death, I would still be sailing east.

Unless I change my course. Because the world is round. And so, I love this figure that God uses in connection with our sin.

As far as the east is from the west, can you measure it? So far has He removed our transgressions from us. He has put them right into the depths of the sea. He has cast them behind His back.

He has blotted them out of His remembrance. Their sins and their iniquities will I remember. No more.

In this sense, it isn't when God forgives, He forgets. Well, of course, we forget very often, do we not? And it seems to me the older we get, the more we forget. But there's no failing with our God.

Oh, no. It is a sovereign act on the part of our sovereign God. And He puts away our sins.

And He says their sins and their iniquities. Will I remember. No more.

Now, it's because of these marvelous truths, the grace of our God, the mercy of our God, that we realize the wonderful truth of the fathom of our God. And that we have been gained, shall I say, have gained an entrance into His own family. And God is pleased to look upon us and call us His children.

We actually belong to the royal family of heaven, do we not? This reminds me, when the Duke of Edinburgh came to Nassau on a visit, he'd been visiting the Princess Margaret Hospital, named after Princess Margaret because she opened it some years ago. He came down Victoria Avenue, and I and the brother were standing on the corner when he came round in his car and he gave us a very cheerful smile and a very happy wave of a hand. Not always true with the Duke, of course.

And the brother standing near to me said, well, he said, I suppose that's as near to royalty as I'll ever be. I said, just a moment, friend. Do you not remember that we are in God's family? That we are related to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords? I will admit it to be a great privilege and a dignity to be associated with the royal family of Great Britain.

But we are not merely associated with the royal family of heaven, we are part of it. We're going to be in the presence of royalty in our state of reverence and worship this morning, and that's throughout eternity. And with all these glorious thoughts before us, we can enter into this truth.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. That we, we can underscore those two words, that we, of all people, should be called the children of God. Why should I be an object of such

redeeming love and grace? We feel something like Lefebvre.

He was overcome by David's love and kindness, remember? When he entered into his house of wine, that he explained, What is thy servant? That thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am. That meant something for a Jew to say that he was a dog. How much more to say that he was a dead dog.

But why do I mention this? For one reason, friends, that when the love of our God expressed in Christ is fully appreciated and appropriated, it's going to lay us low before him, and keep us in that humble place. We sang, Where the whole realm of nature ours, or mine, That were an offering far too small, Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my heart, my life, my all. But how did we start with him? When I surveyed the wondrous cross amidst the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And poor contempt on all my gain.

That should ever be the practical effect of gazing upon the cross, the principles of the cross applied in our own experience. We pour contempt upon our pride. We take upholding solely with a deep protection from the surpassing excellences of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we do indeed say, Let us praise the Lord with our whole being. Bless the Lord, O my soul. And all that is within, Bless his holy name.

Now, the apostle goes on to say then, Having brought before us the wonders of the love of God in Christ, Therefore the world knoweth us not, Because it knew him not for this reason. And the longer we live in this world, the more we realize how opposed it is to God and his things. And the more we live in this world, the more we'll realize how hostile the world is to the Christian.

When our Lord Jesus Christ came into this scene, he was misunderstood. His mission of peace was rejected. And the reaction of the world to his coming was simply this, Away with him! Away with him! We will not have this man for reign over us.

And not only so, but they led that fearless, fragrant person to a tree and nailed him to suffer and bleed and die. That's the world, friends. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because we are identified with him.

Not only in his death and in his burial, but also in his wonderful resurrection. And because we are identified with him, then the world knoweth us not either. And don't be surprised if we are misunderstood by the world.

The Lord would make this very clear to us this morning. If ye were of the world, the world would love it so. But ye are not of the world, because I have chosen you out of the world.

Therefore the world hateseth you. Now, we know this is perfectly true. If you go to the worldly and you discuss with him politics or the affairs of the nation, if you just discuss with him all temporal matters, he'll be all ears.

But you know as well as I do that very often when you bring home to the listener the truth of the gospel and the effects and the punishment of sin, very often he's in a great hurry to go away. The Lord, the world, will love it so. And so I think, in closing, that one of the practical effects of the love of Christ dripping in our hearts should be that we'll walk in wholly separatedness as far as this world is concerned with regard to its pleasures and its fellowships.

Then we will be in a better condition and position to go into the world to carry out the Lord's commission. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel. For I'm a firm believer of this truth, dear friends, that the power of our witness will be according to the measure of our separatedness unto the Lord and from the world.

If any man loved the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Whosoever shall be a friend of the world is constituted the enemy of God. Whilst we rejoice in these marvelous truths in connection with the love of God, friends, let us feel our responsibility to go forth and to show that love in a practical way to all around.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one toward another. And let us recognize as far as the world is concerned our place is just outside. Therefore let us go forth unto him without the camp.

Where is he? He's outside, friends. And we are called upon to go unto him who is outside bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city but we seek one to come.

That verse always impresses me It's Hebrews 13, isn't it? Very easy to remember. And it's the 13th verse. If I remember right it has 13 words in it.

And the very central one is H-I-M-P. May we go forth this morning rejoicing in the knowledge of the Lord. May his love warm our hearts continually.

May his glorious person fill the vision and our hearts then will be overflowing with joy and we'll anticipate the glad day when we will see him face to face. Let us pray. O God our Father we do indeed thank thee for thy precious word which unveils to us all these wonderful truths.

We thank thee for the light of thy truth. O send forth thy light and thy truth. Let them lead us O God even in this our day and generation.

And grant that our hearts might indeed be warmed increasingly with thine own love and with a sense of our own unworthiness and with a love for others for the more we get to know him so the more we find him true and the more we long that others might be led to know him too. We ask thy blessing on thy word in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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