

God's Love

by Corrie Ten Boom

God's love is the greatest reality, available for all, and can be experienced through faith, prayer, and the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 41:19

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1

Topics: "Gods Love", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the profound nature of God's love as described in 1 Corinthians 13, highlighting the importance of realizing and experiencing God's love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It shares personal stories of experiencing God's love in the midst of hardships, forgiveness, and repentance. The message encourages listeners to repent, seek God's love, and live a life filled with God's love, reflecting it to others in everyday life and evangelism.

Transcript

I'd like to speak today about God's love. Shall we have first a word of prayer together? Thank you, Lord, that your love is the greatest reality. Will you use me, Lord, to show a little bit of it, what it means? Thank you for the blessing that you have in store for us.

Amen. I'd like to read for you 1 Corinthians 13. I read it from the translation of Phillips.

I hope you don't mind. You know, that's an English that even a Dutch can understand. It is the beautiful poem of love.

And when you ask me, I think it is not human love. It is described here. It is God's love, not far away from us in the heart of God in heaven, but the love that is in our hearts, what we read in Romans 5, 5, the love of God is brought into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

And it's very important that you and I realize that that love is available for, in Matthew 14, 12, I read, because iniquity shall abound, the love of many will wax cold, though the man who holds out to the end will be saved. And exactly because the love has a danger to get cold, it is good that we think much, meditate and listen to the Lord, what we can know and read the Bible about the love of God. If I speak with the eloquence of men and angels, but have no love, I become no more than blaring brass or crashing cymbal.

If I have the gift of foretelling the future and hold in my mind, not only all human knowledge, but the very secret of God. And if I also have that absolute faith that can move mountains, but have no love, I amount to nothing at all. That's not much.

If I dispose of all that I possess, yes, even if I give my own body to be burned, but have no love, I achieve precisely nothing. This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience. It looks of a way of being constructive, it is not possessive.

It is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy.

It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope.

It can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands. It is also when all else has fallen, and in my life, all else had fallen, and God's love stood.

That's what I have experienced. I remember when I was in the concentration camp, we had to stand on roll call, and there was one morning that I could hardly bear to see and to hear what had happened in front of me. A guard was using that time to demonstrate his cruelties.

Suddenly a skylark came, and he started to sing in the sky, and we all looked up and listened to the bird's song. And when I looked at the bird, I looked at the sky, and suddenly I thought of Psalm 103, where verse 11 was written, For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy and love towards them that fear him. And it was as if I woke up to a reality.

Oh, love of God, how deep and great, far deeper than man's deepest hate. God sent that skylark during three weeks, daily, exactly during the time of roll call, to turn away our eyes from the cruelty of man and to the ocean of God's love. How can we understand God's love best? At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burden of my sins rolled away, that was there, by faith I received my sight.

I have read that George Fox once had a vision, and he saw an ocean of darkness and sin, and suddenly he saw that over that ocean came another ocean of light and love. And that was the moment when Jesus said at the cross, It is finished. Sometimes when I tell about that moment in the concentration camp, that in the midst of all these cruelties, I saw God's love a moment through looking at the sky and thinking of Psalm 103, then I feel a little bit afraid when I see that there are Jewish people in my audience, they have suffered so much.

How can I show them that this is not just a fantasy but a reality? I was so glad that some time ago I read a book of Viktor Frankl, Man's Struggle for Meaning. That man has suffered far more than I in many different concentration camps, and that book is written not in hatred, but it was as if he saw the things more or less from God's point of view. And the end of the book is very interesting.

He writes, Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know man is that being that has infested the gas chambers of Auschwitz. However, he is also that being who has entered those gas chambers with the Lord's prayer or the Shema Yisrael on their lips. He saw the two sides.

And it is good that we listen to the Lord and that we let him tell about that love. It is this book that shows us God's side of the picture. You know, I like to sometimes quote a poem that I learned in America, My life is like a weaving between my God and me.

I do not choose the colors. He works steadily. Of times he weaves sorrow and I in foolish pride forget.

He sees the upper and I the underside. Not till the loom is silent and the shuttle cease to fly will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why. The dark threads are as needful in the skilful weaver's hands than the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned.

God has no problems, only plans. There is never a panic in heaven. And when I tell that, I tell it about experience, that I was surrounded by people who had had training in cruelties.

And there God's love stood. I remember that Betsy and I went sometimes early to roll call. The head of our barrack sent us away a whole hour too early, at 3.30 in the morning, these icy cold hours.

Betsy and I knew we have to stand there only after an hour. And then we made a walk around the whole camp. Everything was still dark.

Everything was black in the camp. The floor, the ground was made black with coal. The barracks were painted black.

It was only the light of the stars. And when Betsy and I walked there hand in hand, we walked with the Lord and we talked with the Lord. Then Betsy said something, then I said something, then the Lord said something.

How, I don't know. But both Betsy and I understood what he said. That was a little bit of heaven in the midst of hell.

God's love stood in that time that all else had fallen. And we need to have that love of God. Because we have to be ready for Jesus coming, and then we have to be at peace with God and men.

And we are not at peace with men when we cannot forgive. I needed that love. I could not forgive the man who has betrayed our family.

It was a man who had come to us in the time that we did underground work to save Jewish people. And he told me, my wife is in great danger. They have arrested her.

She is in a police station. I fear that when she will be brought to prison that they will kill her. I have found a policeman who will run the risk to set her free when we pay him about 600 guilders.

But I have no money. I said, man, what does money mean in this time? Let's see what I have. I found out that I had only 200 guilders.

And I said to him, come back after an hour. And in that hour, I asked all my friends that I met, say, have you money? Give it. This money will be used to save a good woman who has saved Jewish people.

When that man came back after an hour, I gave him 600 guilders. And I was so happy. But that man was a quisling, a betrayer.

His wife was not at all in prison. The Gestapo had told him, find out if it is true that Corrie ten Boom saves Jewish people. And he thought, no, I can do that and make some money in the same time.

And he made some money. He went home with 600 guilders in his pocket. But a moment later, all the people of the Gestapo surrounded our house and we were all arrested.

And my father was 84 years old. He died after 10 days in prison. Betsy died after 10 months.

And my brother came out alive, but a sick man. And he died after a year. And his son died in prison.

When I was in Vught, a concentration camp in Holland, a German concentration camp, but still in Holland, in the Netherlands, there came a woman from my hometown. And she said, Corrie, do you know who has betrayed you? I said, no. And she told us it was that man.

And there came hatred in my heart. The man I had given my last penny. But I knew that when you hate, you have no forgiveness yourself.

And I brought it to the Lord. And I claimed God's love. Romans 5, 5. The love of God is brought into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to me, to us.

And I said, thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have brought into my heart God's love through the Holy Spirit. And thank you, Father, that your love in me is stronger than my hatred. And that same moment, the hatred was gone.

After the war, that man was sentenced to death. I wrote him a letter. I wrote him, what you have done has meant the death of four of my family.

I have suffered much in three prisons, but I have forgiven you. And that is because God's love is in my heart through Jesus Christ. And that is a very little illustration of what can happen in your heart when you ask Jesus to fill your heart.

And when you bring him your sins, then he will make you a child of God, and he'll fill your life with his peace. And you will be killed very soon. But then you have nothing to fear for when you belong to the Lord Jesus, you may depend on his promise.

In the house of the Father are many mansions. I go to prepare one for all who belong to me. That man wrote me an answer, and he wrote that you could forgive me.

It's such a miracle that I said, Jesus, when you give such a forgiveness and love in the heart of your followers, there is hope for me. And I have received Jesus as my savior. And that man was killed a week later, but he was reconciled with God.

And who had God used for that? Me. Me, who had hated him with a strong hatred. Do you see the miracle? God could use me because I brought that hatred to the Lord, and he took it away and gave his love instead of that hatred.

Say, have you difficulty with forgiving? Can you forgive that woman? That has stolen the love of your husband. Can you forgive that man that has stolen the love of your wife? You can't. But he can.

And claim Romans 5, 5. And let the Holy Spirit fill your heart with God's love. And you will experience that when there is forgiveness and love in your heart, then you are free and happy, and you have peace. Oh, it is liberating for you.

It is so victorious to love your enemies. And that is possible because that ocean of God's love is available for us. But there is one thing Jude says, stay always within the boundaries where God's love can reach you.

How can we stay in the boundaries where God's love can reach us? By prayer. By reading the Bible. By listening to the Lord.

By learning by heart the text about God's love. Learn it by heart. God's love still stands also when all else has fallen.

Now, perhaps there is not a terrific thing to forgive for you. But, you know, the Bible is such a practical book. There's written, whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You need God's love today. Yes, also for the trivial things of your everyday life. And the great miracle is that at highest potential of God's love is available for the trivial things of everyday life.

You and I have to be evangelists, the light of the world. Like the Father has sent me, Jesus said, so I send you. Why did God send Jesus? To seek and to save that what was lost.

And that's also your and my work. I read somewhere, when we are filled with the love of God, the first place love ought to be manifested is to those nearest to us, those in our home. The greatest work for evangelism, the greatest place in the world for evangelism is in our own family.

But until the family sees what we are talking about, they will never hear our words. Do you see that? We have to act God's love. Otherwise, we cannot talk with blessings.

Blessings. I remember a time that I had traveled many years, I believe about 25 years as a tramp for the Lord. Oh, and there was a time that I was ill.

And a doctor said to me, now listen, when you go on like this, you will perhaps live another few months and then you will die. When you take a sabbatical year, it can be that you will have many more years to work. I talked with my boss and I said, Father, is it true? Must I take a sabbatical year? And my heavenly father said, yes.

And I took it. I took a whole year of rest. I went to Africa and Uganda.

My friends and I had arranged a house for missionaries who needed a time of rest. A beautiful house. It was called Ruesa.

We had a beautiful view of the Lake Victoria. Oh, there were such nice flowers there and the climate was so good. I enjoyed it.

But after a year, when it was November, I remember that we took all the invitations and we took a map of the world and we asked God His plans. When you make plans, it is good not first to tell what you think to do and then ask God's signature. No, you must listen to God's plan and write your signature.

It had been a time of great joy there. I didn't do nothing. No, but I never did more than three meetings in a week.

And I slept every night in the same bed. And that was a joy. I had perhaps slept in more than a thousand beds.

But now we made a beautiful plan. The guidance of the Lord, four months in Africa, four months in East Europe, behind the Iron Curtain, four months in America. Yes, it was a nice plan, but I was not happy.

When I was alone later, I said, Lord, I am now on an age that I can take it a little bit easier. Do you mind, Lord, when I stay put here? When I stay in this house, I will work for you. Oh, yes, Lord, but there are here in Kampala and in Tabern, many prisons and universities and churches and clubs.

Oh, I can work every day in your kingdom, Lord. But I like to sleep every night in the same bed. That was a good plan.

I was happy. And I was just thinking about how quiet and blessed my life could be now. And that moment they called me because there was an African pastor who wanted to see me.

He came in and he said, Oh, Mr. Bohm, I'm so happy that you come to Rwanda. Five years ago, you were with us and you told us what it meant to be in a very difficult place in prison. But knowing that Jesus is with you, we like to listen.

We enjoyed it. But the message was a little bit far away from us for not one of us had ever been in prison. But then there came civil war.

I have been two years in prison. Many of my church people have been in prison. And every word you have told us five years ago has helped us.

And that's why we are so happy that you come again. I didn't like it. That was not exactly what I did not want to do.

So I said, no, I tried to bring the conversation on a different subject. When you don't like a conversation, it's always clever just to start to talk about something else. I said, tell me about your people, your church.

What kind of message do they need? Without hesitating one moment, he opened his Bible and said, this is the message that my people need. And he read Revelations 2. Write this to the angel of the church in Ephesus. These words are spoken by the one who holds the seven stars safe in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

I know what you have done. I know how hard you have worked and what you have endured. I know that you will not tolerate wicked men that you have put to the test self-styled apostles who are nothing of the sort and have found them to be liars.

I know your power of endurance, how you have suffered for the sake of my name and have not grown weary. But I hold this against you, that you have lost your first love. Remember then how far you have fallen.

Repent and live as you lived at first. Otherwise, if your heart remains unchanged, I shall come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. When that man read that for me, I knew that is not only the

message for Ephesus, not for the people in Rwanda, but it's the message for Corrie ten Boom.

Twenty-five years before, I came from a concentration camp sick, weak, but I was interested in bringing the gospel. I was interested to tell as many people as I could, God's love still stands also when all else has fallen. Jesus said to us, come unto me all, and that's why we have a message for all.

Come to Jesus, he will give you forgiveness of your sins, and he will give you eternal life. And I went, I went to Germany. That was very, very broken down after the war.

I was interested to bring the gospel. And now, I was interested in my bed. I knew I've lost my first love.

But then there came a moment that I saw the answer, except you repent. I knew that was the answer. The door of repentance is wide open.

And I knew I have lost my first love, but I can repent of my sin, and the Lord will forgive and cleanse me with his blood. And I did. And I went.

I left Louisa, and I went over the world again. This is ten years ago. Did the Lord give me back my first love? No, far more.

The Lord gave me his love through the Holy Spirit, and my world was more blessed than before. Say, have you perhaps lost your first love? I have a joyful message for you. The door of repentance is wide open.

Come to the Lord and repent, and he will restore your faith and power, and he will give you more than your lost love. He will fill your heart with his love through the Holy Spirit. What a joy that that is possible, and that is real.

Live your life in love. Paul says in Ephesians 5, to the same sort of love which Christ gives us, and which he perfectly expressed when he gave himself as a sacrifice to the Lord. Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan.

Oh, the grace that brought it down to man. Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span on Calvary. Look at Jesus.

And then you will see God's love better than ever before. I remember that there was in Haarlem a little mentally retarded boy who went every Sunday to the church. He was very faithful, and he was always sitting in the front pew.

The minister told his wife often, oh, don't you, that boy is so faithful. He sits every Sunday in my church, but I doubt if he ever understands one of my sermons. Once the minister spoke about God's ocean of love in Jesus Christ.

When he was speaking about it, that he saw in Toontje's eyes a great joy. Toontje understood something of God's love. The mentally retarded people understand often God's love.

I had a Bible class years ago for them, and they were like children. They like to hear stories, but you can never speak too much and too long about God's love. It just clicks with them.

And that minister experienced that the same, and he forgot the rest of his audience and only spoke to Toontje, and he saw that the joy on the face of Toontje increased. The next day, he said to his wife, I go to visit Toontje. I must hear if at last he has understood one of my good sermons, if he still knows about God's love.

And when the minister came in Toontje's house, the mother told him, this night, Toontje died in his sleep. And the minister looked and saw that on the dead face of that boy was an expression of celestial joy. And he told me and said, I believe that Toontje's heart has broken because he would contain too much of God's love.

And I believe that when you and I should be able to get that ocean of love in our hearts, that our heart could break by joy. But the Holy Spirit gives us a fast heart. And we can, when we are filled with the Spirit understand and enjoy more and more of that great love.

But it is also true that we can only see a little of the ocean when we stand at the rocky shore. But out there beyond the ice horizon, there's more, there's more. We can only see a little of God's loving, some rich samples of his mighty store.

But out there beyond the ice horizon, there's more, there's more. The best is yet to be. Let us look unto Jesus.

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast safe in the death of Christ. My Lord, all the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did ever such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown? Were a whole realm of nature mine that were a present far too small? Oh, love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all. Let's pray.

And will you pray with me? Will you repeat every sentence? I will give some time to it. Pray it with your heart. Thank you, Lord, that your love is available for me now and here, tomorrow and my whole life, and that your love is victorious.

Over my problems and sorrows, I'm willing to obey you. Like you, Lord Jesus, obeyed your Father and did his will. You kept God's commandments and remained in his love.

Thank you that your love is available in the trivial things of everyday life, my life today. Thank you, Lord, that you make it possible to open my life for your love. Hallelujah.

Amen. And may dying Saviour's love and a risen Saviour's power and an ascended Saviour's prayer and a returning Saviour's glory be the comfort and joy of your heart. Amen.

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