

Knowing the Unknowable

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala explores the profound mystery of God's love, emphasizing the necessity of the Holy Spirit for true understanding and acceptance.

Duration: 26:56

Scripture: Romans 8:38

Topics: "Love Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the depth and width of God's love for us. He highlights that only with the help of the Holy Spirit can we truly comprehend this love. The preacher also addresses the tactics of Satan, who tries to deceive us into thinking that God is angry and judgmental towards us. However, the preacher reassures the audience that God's love is unconditional and unchanging, even when we fail Him. The sermon concludes with a reminder to live in the peace and security of God's love, and to trust in His plans for the future.

Transcript

There's a lot of mysteries in the Bible, a lot of mysteries about God, a lot of questions that we all have, which will not be answered, a lot of them, until we're actually in our eternal state with the Lord. The Bible says, now we see through a glass darkly. What does that mean? Some things are vague, we can't make them out.

About the way God has dealt in our own lives, why did he permit that? Why did that happen? There's a whole lot of things that are very mysterious about God, man, history. There's theological questions, which no one's gonna get the answer to until we see the Lord. For example, what was God doing before he created the heavens and the earth? When the heavens and earth were created, that was the beginning of time.

What was God, since he's eternal, what was he doing before that? What are we gonna do in heaven? There's no end, we have eternal life, amen? So what are we gonna be doing? Like two billion years from now, but there'll be no years, it's gonna be the eternal state. What are we gonna do? Just harps and worshipping the Lord? Is God got some future plans that we're part of his redeemed people? These are mysteries. How did Lucifer become Satan? How did sin come in the world? If God is good and everything comes from God, how in the world does sin get in the world? How did Lucifer seemingly in heaven rebel against God when there was no one to tempt him? There was no one to tempt Lucifer and yet his pride,

his heart was lifted up, rebelled against God, just so many questions.

How many in your own life, just the way things have gone, there's some questions about what and why God is doing what he's doing. Wave your hand at me if you're like me. Oh yes, we're gonna understand those one day.

But the Bible says there's one mystery that's the deepest of all. There's one mystery, in fact, it's so deep, although God tells us he wants us to know it, you can't know it. It's trying to know the unknowable.

My verses in Ephesians, when I think of all of this, Paul says to the church there, I fall to my knees and I pray to the Father, the creator of everything in heaven on earth. I pray, now come on, focus on this prayer. I pray, that's the verb.

Paul's praying, he's not teaching, he's praying now. He's saying, I pray. Pastors can do certain things teaching, pastors can do certain things preaching, we can do certain things encouraging other, but there's some things God only does in answer to prayer.

Supernatural answer to prayer. I pray, he says, that from his glorious, unlimited resources, he will empower you with inner strength through his spirit. That the Holy Spirit in our inner person, innermost being, we would be strengthened by the power that only the Holy Spirit can give inside of us.

Vitamins, minerals, working out, healthy diet does not help the inner person. The inner person has to be strengthened by God. And now that he's praying, I want the Holy Spirit, even though you're already Christians, I want you to be strengthened.

I know, but I'm already a believer, I already have the Holy Spirit. The paradox of Christianity is we're always reaching for what we already have. We have Christ, but we want more of Christ.

We have the Holy Spirit in us, but how many want more of the Holy Spirit in you? You get it? Locationally, it doesn't make sense, but it's true spiritually. So he says, I want you to be strengthened with power by the Holy Spirit. Why? Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.

Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power, not the IQ, not the education, may you have the power from the Spirit to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully.

Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. So what Paul is saying is, I want you, and this is a rare thing for Christians to understand, that the deepest things of God, like understanding his love, he says, you can't understand that by someone teaching you. You can't read a book.

You can't even, as you read the Bible, do it with your own intellect. You can't hear a good message about it and accomplish it. Only the Holy Spirit working inside of you can give you the power to understand how wide, how, oh, oh, oh, oh, how deep and wide and high and long is God's love for you.

You can't understand it without the Holy Spirit helping you. And as you walk with the Lord, as you mature in the Lord, you understand that this is an all-important truth. How many of us are living every day in the sunshine and the comfort of knowing God loves me? Not just loves me.

I'm the apple of his eye. See, we say amen, but to know that is another thing. Because there's something in us, as I'm gonna read another verse here, that, and Satan, oh, how he maneuvers us, he does not want us to understand how much God loves us.

He wants us to think God will judge us. He wants us to think that God is angry with us. He wants us to think that God is so-so with us because of some of our antics.

But Paul is praying, oh, listen, for you to be filled with all the fullness of God, your roots gotta go down way deep into God's love. And as you go down deep, the Spirit is gonna give you a revelation, an opening of the eyes of your heart, so you can go, whoa, I thought I knew God's love, but now, oh my goodness, I thought it was this big, and now I'm realizing it's as big as this whole auditorium. But then later on, you go, oh, I thought it was as big as the auditorium.

It's as big as New York City, oh my goodness. There's no end to it. Paul says nobody knows how deep God's love is.

No one can understand it. It's the most mysterious thing of all. How deep, how unchanging, how strong, how fervent, how tender.

And why we need to know that and be reminded of it is found in many places, but here's one at the end of Joseph's story, end of Genesis. After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's burial. But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful.

Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him, they said. So they sent this message to Joseph, their own brother. Before your father died, he instructed us to say to you, please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you, for their sin in treating you so cruelly.

So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin. And when Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. And then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph.

Look, we are your slaves, they said. But Joseph replied, don't be afraid of me. Am I God that I can punish you? You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good.

He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children.

So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them. Some of you know that story. Joseph went down to Egypt because his brothers betrayed him and sold him.

Thought they would kill him, but now they sold him as a slave to make money out of their own brother who they were jealous of. Joseph goes down to Egypt and by the providence of God, he becomes next to Pharaoh and in charge of all the food stores of Israel. And after seven years of plenty, now there's seven years of famine throughout that part of the world.

And people are coming from everywhere to get food. And who are they getting it from? This Egyptian looking guy who really is a Hebrew. He's Joseph who was sold by his brother.

Now you won't believe this, who comes down in a little caravan, but the brothers themselves. And they walk into his big administrative room and they see him dressed as an Egyptian. They don't know he can understand Hebrew, the language they're speaking.

And they say, we're here for food. And he goes, no, you're here as spies. And he knows who they are, but they don't know who he is.

And finally, after a series of events, too long to describe now, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. And he says, it's Joseph. They can't believe it.

He's given them not only the food they needed, he gave them the money back, he gave them extras. And now he says to them, I am Joseph. And they all hug him and they kiss him and they can't believe it, but they're nervous because they remember how he got to Egypt because of their nefarious doings.

So they all kiss and make up. And then Joseph says, where's my father? Oh, your father, he's close to the end. He's up in the land of Canaan.

So he says, go get my father. So they go and they get, and the father can't even believe it when they say, Joseph's alive. How is he alive? I thought he was killed by animals.

You told me that. Well, that's another awkward moment. So they all come down to Egypt and then Joseph is reunited with his father and the brothers.

He puts the whole family in the land of Goshen, the most fertile part of Egypt. And he says, don't worry about anything. I got you covered.

Got your back 24 seven, three, six, five. I got you. I'm Joseph and I will provide for you.

So he's a type of Christ providing for his brethren, feeding us a symbol of Christ. Now Jacob is living there and he up and dies. And now he had asked, don't bury me in Egypt.

Bury me in the place where I purchased that tomb where my wife is buried. So they go big caravan and they buried Jacob. And now they come back to Egypt to live happily ever after, Joseph and his brothers.

Oh, but the brothers, they're just like us. They start thinking, we've been bad little boys. And now that the father's dead and Joseph's heart is no longer soft about good old dad, he's gonna remember everything we did to him.

And we are in the soup. We're in trouble now. So whether it's true or not, they make up this story.

Oh, by the way, before dad died, he said, remember Joseph, forgive your brothers for what they did all those years ago. Please forgive them. But he already forgave them.

He already reunited with them. He's already taking care of them. But you see, they can't believe he loves them like us.

It's hard to believe that love that's so high and so deep and so wide. Why? Two reasons. Number one, the enemy keeps bringing what we've done in the past where we rebelled against God, where we violated God's word, where we did what was wrong and we knew better.

And this whole room here is filled with people who have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And even though God assures us, and even though he sent his son to die for us, and even though the price has been paid and he suffered for us on the cross, the enemy keeps coming and saying to us, do you really think he'll forget what you did back then? Back yesterday, last week, last month, aggravated offenses over and over. And then you said you wouldn't, but you did.

And now you think God's gonna just forget this whole thing and love you? But his word says he loves me. He died on the cross for me, but do you really think you can just walk in and say, hi, Father, how are you, Jesus? Give me everything I need today. He's got a little black book in his back pocket, and he's writing down all the things, were you naughty or nice? And he remembers all the naughty things.

Is that not true for some of us? Instead of coming boldly, we don't come at all. Instead of asking him for all that he's promised, we're like the brothers. Uh-oh, he's gonna turn on me.

He knows what I am. You see, none of you know me, and I don't know you deep down, but we all know ourselves. And how many can agree without, apart from the grace of God, we're a mess? Can I get a hand up and an amen? And Satan is bringing up that mess.

Now, your mess might be different than my mess, but we've all messed up. And Satan is constantly bringing that. Why? He wants to compromise our acceptance of that love that is so deep, so high.

I know, but pass the symbol, I, shh. Look how high it is. Look how deep.

I know, but listen, five years ago, two years ago, I really messed up. That's like a little hair compared to this room. God's love swaddles that up because love covers a multitude of sins.

Can we say amen to that? Come on, let's say amen to that. God's love, even though the word says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It's one thing to read it.

It's another thing to accept it. Am I correct or not? Because you see, there's that fear. Perfect love casts out fear, but there's that fear.

He's mad at me. He's gonna get me. I know he's gonna get me.

So because of our past offenses, which Satan is always dragging up, I wanna help someone today before I close. One of the main strategies of Satan is to accuse us and he'll bring up all that we did wrong. And unless you're deeply rooted in the love of God, you can get very shaky.

You can be going back and forth because you're not really sure. You're like Jacob's brothers. Now he's gonna get us.

Oh, come on. You know how many people I've counseled over the years? They live constantly with now he's gonna get us. Now he's gonna get me for that.

The other reason it's so hard to accept that love is because it's unearned. You see, Joseph loved them. Why? Because he loved them.

What did they do to earn that love? Nothing. In fact, they had betrayed him. But he loved them because he loved them.

And we are in a world where you earn people's love. I do for you, you do for me. I love you, you love me back.

I fail you, forget that love. That love is gone. I can't, I have to earn that love.

So we're always trying to do stuff to earn God's love. Maybe if I read the word more every day, maybe if I get a new version or I volunteer more for Royal Family Kids Camp, then he'll love me. Brothers and sisters, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. When you were not looking for him, he was looking for you. And now that we're in his family, come on, is he gonna love us or is he gonna love us? Without an understanding of this love, if we're like Joseph's brothers, if we get nervous around him and we feel, oh, he's gonna get us now, or what do I have to do to earn your love? And Joseph is, stop it.

You don't have to do anything, I love you. I love you. I know, but we're not worthy.

I know, but I love you. But we were really bad to you. I know, but I love you.

I love you. That's what Paul is saying. The Holy Spirit has to open the eyes of our heart.

You can't even understand this intellectually. He says the love of God is so vast that no human being can figure it out. You think he loves you? You have no concept how he loves you.

I think, I know he loves me, but I'm just, I wanna get a wider understanding. Why? Let me close. This is what brings peace and joy in your life.

No matter what you're going through is, he loves me. I know, but some stuff fell through the cracks and you're facing a dilemma in the church or personally or your children and all that, but he loves me. He's gonna take care of me because he loves me.

He loves me. Oh, I can go and ask him. I know, but can you just go and ask him after you've messed up and not been what you should have been? Yeah, I can go and ask him because he loves me.

I'm gonna go in and talk to him right now because one thing I know, he loves me. See, God wants us to know how much he loves us. When you love someone, you always want them to know, even you keep repeating yourself.

I know you told me that already, but I just want you to know one more time, I love you. I love you. That's what God is saying to us today.

I love you. I got your back. But pastor, that's fine, but I'm not on your level.

Maybe, maybe not. You don't know me, I don't know you, but I know one thing, God loves us all. His love is deeper than the deepest ocean, higher than the highest mountain.

His love is incomprehensible. You can study it, try to figure it out, you'll never get it. His love is so deep and God wants us to rest in that love, abide in that love, walk every day with a consciousness.

God loves me. I'm the apple of his eye. What kind of apple is that? You're a rotten apple.

No, I'm an apple of God's eye. How many are the apple of God's eye? Lift up your hand. The apple of God's eye.

Not because of us, because of his love. So one day, I think it was one of my grandkids here, years ago when they were, they're a teenager, whatever the age they are now, but they were real young. And I come into my office and I walk in and I'm conscious someone's in my office, they shouldn't be there.

And it's one of my grandkids with about five of his crew or her crew. And they're going through my drawers, they know where the candy is, I have gummy bears, they're all taking it, and they're just taking over my whole office. So the minute I opened the door, the kids who I didn't know that well, not related to me, they got a little nervous.

Oh, pass, somebody just walked in his office and he busted us. We're going through all this stuff. And my grandchild, I think it was Luke, he just said, oh, hi, Papa.

These are my friends, Papa. Everything's cool, right, Papa? And I went, yeah, whatever, Luke. Why could Luke just walk in there and just have his friends go through all my stuff? Oh, no, you can do it, because Papa loves me.

No, come on in. Come on in, sit down, what do you want to eat? You know, whatever. Luke turned into a host in my office.

But the liberty that he had, the total freedom. Had he ever disobeyed? Yeah. Does he ever make mistakes? Yeah.

But I don't love him less when he struggles. I love him more. God doesn't love you less when you fail him.

He loves you, if it were possible, even more. And he wants your eyes to be open today. He loves you.

Stop living in insecurity. Stop living in fear. Stop living in condemnation.

God loves you. Christ loves you. Come on, let's say amen.

That's where you can have peace in the midst of the storm. Remember the disciples? They're going in a boat. Jesus said, let's go to the other side.

And he falls asleep, and now a storm comes. And now they're frightened, oh, we're gonna die. We're gonna die.

And they wake him up, and he's like, if I'm in the boat with you, and I love you, and I told you we're going to the other side, don't you know we're going to the other side? I don't care what the storm is. And oh, by the way, peace be still. And everything was quiet.

God loves us. God loves you. If you grew up, like I did, in a dysfunctional home, alcoholic father, and you didn't have a lot of love shown you I have, I counsel people, and I have friends who told me their mom and dad never told them once from zero to 18 years old, I love you.

Never told them once. Never held them once. Never said, I love you.

I really love you. Maybe you grew up in that kind of home. So your heart is already guarded, because you're not used to receiving love.

But oh, you got to receive God's love. And as I end here, you can't even do it without the help of the Holy Spirit. Oh no, I'm going to buy a book about it.

Buy the book, but you still need the Holy Spirit to show you. It's so incomprehensible. Christianity is hopeless without the Holy Spirit.

And most of us think, I need the Holy Spirit for strength to witness. I need, Karen needs the Holy Spirit to anoint her when she sings. Carol needs the Holy Spirit to direct and lead the choir.

Bradley is sitting down to do his work, let's say some orchestrations. He needs the Holy Spirit. You need the Holy Spirit to produce faith in you, amen? We need the Holy Spirit for everything.

But very rarely do we ever think about this. Oh God, fill me with your Spirit so I can know how much you love me. It's so deep, only the Holy Spirit can teach it to you.

And then when you think you know a little more, you realize you're just scratching the surface. His love is so deep. Paul says, oh, I pray, I bow my knees, and I pray that God might strengthen you in the inner person with power through the Holy Spirit so that you might know the height, the depth, the width.

Oh, the love of God, how much he loves you. And as you bask in that love and receive that love, you start to reflect that love to other people, and life is filled with peace and joy. And you're happy every day because you know he loves you.

He loves me, he's the creator of the universe, he has all power, but I know he loves me. How many believe he's gonna work out everything for good in our lives? He has the power to do it, but he has the love that makes him do it for us, drives him to do it, love compels him to do it. He loves us, he loves us.

Thank you for loving us, Lord. Thank you for loving us. Oh, God, your love is, when we think of who we are and how holy you are, the enemy tries to use that to make us afraid of you or cautious of you and not rest in your love and have confidence in your love.

God, open the eyes of our heart by your spirit so that we might know how high, how wide. That's the greatest mystery of all is your love. And we think we know.

We learn, Lord, when I was little, my mom made me sing, Yes, Jesus Loves Me, but I didn't know, I didn't know. I knew you loved me, but I didn't know how deep. And then we've lived through life and we've messed up and we see you don't throw us away, you keep picking us up and cleaning us off and then walking with us and making more beautiful promises, blessing us when we almost wanna say, away, away, I'm not worthy, away, and you still bless us because you love us.

There is no God like you. Well, every eye is closed. Is there anyone who just, I wanna say a final prayer over people who are struggling to accept and receive God's love, either by your own track record or just the way you were raised or the kind of churches you went to where God was portrayed as an angry judge rather than a loving father.

And you're not walking and abiding in his love. You're always walking, trying to get his love, earn his love, get rid of the transgressions that you think take away his love. If you're here today and we're just like me, I don't care if two of you need the prayer, just stand up where you are so I can say a final prayer of blessing over you that God, by the Holy Spirit, would open the eyes of your heart.

Just stand right where you are and just say, pastor, I need that. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Up there in the balcony, thank you.

Lord, we thank you that through the Holy Spirit you can open our eyes so that we can see and learn, but never fully understand. Always learning, but never fully comprehending the vastness of your love. We receive it today.

And as we receive your love, we bounce it back to someone else who's one of your family members like us, our brothers and sisters. We love them with the love of the Lord that we totally accept today. Bring peace and joy to any trembling heart today, any one that the devil is condemning.

Let those people resist Satan as we've heard, knowing that your love is from everlasting to everlasting. We pray this in Jesus' name. And everyone said, amen.

Would you all stand right now and give someone a hug and tell them, I love you with the love of the Lord. I love you.

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