

# Tender and Scrupulous Freedom

by Kay K. Arvin

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*Kay K. Arvin explores the complexities of love and freedom, emphasizing the need for tenderness and honesty in relationships through God's love.*

**Duration:** 26:01

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 13:4

**Topics:** "Freedom"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of free love and expresses suspicion towards anything that is offered for free. The speaker suggests that free things often come with strings attached or lack value altogether. The sermon also explores the different types of love that exist, such as love for the universe, mankind, and the underprivileged. The speaker emphasizes the importance of sharing God's love with people we may not naturally like. The sermon concludes with examples of love that starts strong but ends weak, highlighting the need for enduring love.

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## Transcript

I tangled with that for a considerable time. I finally played anagrams with it, and I changed it a bit, and it came out a tender and honest freedom, and I felt a little more comfortable with that. And I thought about what that might be, a tender and honest freedom.

And of course it had to be love. A tender and honest love. And that seemed appropriate to me.

Because this is the day of love, you know. Love is in. Now I really should have checked with Howard before I said that, because maybe it isn't in to say in anymore.

He gave us all that new language today, and I was just beginning to be comfortable with some of it and to understand, and now I understand it's already out. But at any rate, there's a lot of talk about love, and it all doesn't have to do with the Church either. We hear all kinds of discussions and actions because people say they love one another.

And it has to do with all kinds of love. And I thought we might think about some of those kinds of love tonight. There are all kinds, you know.

Like a couple of teenagers who were in love, and the girl said to the boy, do you love me? And he said, yes. Will you love me forever? Yes. Would you die for me? No.

Mine is an undying love. Well, some love starts big and ends small. It starts strong and it ends weak.

Some people who are married know about that kind of love. Like a young couple, and there was a little poem about them. Two lovers walking down the street.

She trips, he murmurs, careful, sweet. Now wed, they trod that same street. She trips, he growls, pick up your feet! The staying power isn't always there.

Well, you know of all these different kinds of love, there is one kind they call free. Free love. Well, I'm a little bit suspicious of anything that's free.

It's usually worthwhile to examine it a little bit because it's likely to be one of two things. Either it's a gimmick. If it's free, almost always there's a string attached to it and it's a kind of a come on for something else.

Or if it really doesn't have anything else with it and it's just altogether free, you can be pretty sure it really has no value at all. Or it wouldn't be just given away. Well, there's so much talk about love and yet, you know, it's all on a collective basis.

We love the universe. We love mankind. We love the poor.

We love the downtrodden. We love the underprivileged. How we love them all.

And yet, we think of individuals. The adjectives that we have to apply are not loving adjectives, but they're words like cynical, discouraged, depressed, morbid, psychotic. All kinds of unhappy words.

There's a new word that's used to describe the new student generation because they seem to feel so powerless to do what they want to do. The word is effectlessness. The feeling of frustration at not being able to do what needs to be done.

Effectlessness. And then we have to expand that a little bit and include the adult generation as well. When we think about rather than tenderness towards one another, the emotion that we're more likely to find is one of withdrawal, of staying apart from, standing back a step from, not to be involved, and not tender at all.

It's such a paradox, isn't it? I'm sure most of you know of Dr. Alspin Fell, the outstanding anthropologist at NYU. She's made some very interesting observations about maybe why we are so separate from one another. That maybe it begins almost at birth with the way we rear our children in the United States.

You know, in Europe and Asia and other parts of the world, families are larger and housing is smaller and children are raised in bunch and groups all together. But in the United States, we're very big on hygiene. And we think that children ought to be separated.

And we begin at birth. And we put the tiny baby in a separate crib. And then when he's big enough, we put him in a separate high chair at the table, all hedged off by himself.

And then in a separate playpen, barricaded away by himself. And of course in his big separate bed. And it's the hope of all parents that they will be economically able to provide their child with a whole separate room, all his own, so that he can be alone.

Is it then so surprising that when he becomes an adult, he finds it a little bit difficult to relate closely and warmly with others? That he would not be able to have an automatic, spontaneous feeling of closeness to other human beings? Well, at least it's interesting to think about. How tender are we, really, in our loving? There's a marvelous little old-fashioned word called care. And there's a wonderful Baptist song about it.

Do you really care? And it's a deep question that we need to ask when we talk so loosely and so freely about how much we love. Dr. Alspenfeld has some other interesting ideas about how it is that, you know, with all this equality kick, that women must have everything the same as men, that it's kind of gotten to be that we're thinking not so much to be equals as to be alike. And we see lots of indications of this.

There's lots of alike things now, you know, his and hers, all the way to bikinis, even, his and hers, and trousers and blouses and hairdos and everything alike. So that it's kind of hard sometimes to know the he's from the she's, and the masculine from the feminine. Well, there are some differences that are intrinsic and deep and inherent and important that have to do with way back in the dim past that we came from, when there's always been a big difference in masculine and feminine.

Let me give you, for instance, look at your fingernails. Go ahead, look at them. Not to see, you know, what you didn't do that you should have done, but just look at it.

Now, if you were a girl, you looked at him this way. If you're a fella now in a crowd, this size, we're bound to have somebody, you know, that's in trouble. Now you're going to say how important and how significant is that? I don't know.

It's just an indication. We are different. There's lots of other differences.

For example, if I were to have here a great big package, a big bundle, and I would ask one of you to come up and carry it for me. If I were to ask a young man, he would come, he would reach down, pick it up and walk off with it. If I were to ask a girl to come and carry it for me, she would come and she would gather it up and hold it up next to herself and take it away that way.

Now, we don't know exactly why this is. We know it is. I personally think it's because women carry everything the way they do babies, all up close to them.

We have always been different. We were intended to be different and we always will be different. And let's try and keep it that way.

The importance of being masculine is awfully important to women. Do you know one of the greatest complaints that we hear now, one of the biggest disappointments that women express about marriage is the lack of strength they find in their husbands. The admonition in the Bible is, you know who it is that's told to leave father and mother and go away? It's the husband.

The scripture says a man shall leave his father and his mother. And the reason he does that is because he's establishing a whole new family. It's so important that we think about ourselves as we relate tenderly to one another.

Well, being honest is in, too. You know, you're nothing if you're not honest. It's kind of hard to knock that.

I'm all for it, if we apply it to some of the hard questions, too. I suppose the hardest person to be honest with, really, is yourself. I think we all ought to have the marvelous honesty that a janitor had who was

sweeping out in a drugstore up in a little mountain town.

It was late, and the drugstore was closed, and he was up front sweeping out, and way in the back in the prescription shop, the telephone rang. Well, he didn't pay any attention, and it rang, and it rang, and finally he ambled all the way back, and he answered the phone. He said, hello.

And a lady's voice on the other end of the line said, do you have any sodium acetylsalicylate for high acidity in an aqueous solution? And he said, hello. She said, do you have any sodium acetylsalicylate for high acidity in an aqueous solution? And he said, lady, when I done said hello to you, I done told you all I know. Such marvelous honesty about one's limitations.

How important it is that we be honest about this emotion of love, that we don't kid ourselves about it. And it isn't always easy, to be honest. Somehow or other, um, we generally eventually come to know love, the true feeling of it, for that one special person.

But there is a notion going around that if you just make the right selection, if you really love the person you marry, everything else is going to be all right. You're just going to drift, you know, happily down that moonlit path, ad infinitum. But it doesn't always work quite that smoothly.

There was for an example, a couple that had been married for 35 years and they'd been out celebrating their anniversary. Father had taken mother out to eat and he was driving her home afterward and feeling very mellow and very satisfied about it all. He reached over and he patted her on the knee and he said, well, mother, I've guided you across the bumps these 35 years, haven't I? And she smiled so sweetly at him and she said, yes, you have.

And you haven't missed the one. I don't suppose there's anything any harder to really level about than how you really feel about another person. For one reason, it's hard because there are so many things going around that are labeled love that have very little to do with love.

Self-gratification, plain, pure, physical passion, the need of one person to compel and to possess and to own another, sympathy, pity, all kinds of things that get mixed up with love. But what we're talking about tonight is a different kind of love yet. It is the business of sharing the love of God with people that we would not ordinarily even like.

It's no trick at all to love the cute and darling ones, you know, that think and feel and act like we do. But how is it that we are to manage to love the mean ones, the rude ones, the cruel ones, the vulgar ones, the hateful ones? How do we love them? Well, I'm a very practical person. I have very little to do with hypothetical situations that I can't grasp, that I can't get a hold of, that I can't use.

I don't have much to do with that type of theology either. I want to make it very clear, and I hope you do all understand, that I'm not some kind of woman minister. I want that understood because I heard some comments that Reverend Hill made about women preachers.

And with all that freedom he's got, I don't want to be on the wrong side of him. Besides that, I agree with most of what he had to say about him. We all do have, though, to come to some sort of grips with some kind of theology for ourselves.

And this business of feeling the love of God for somebody else was hard for me. Now it was explained to me pretty simply, and that is, God loves me, and I love God. Now that's easy.

I really related to Ed the other day when he was talking about discovering the physical thrill and the tingle which he felt in his body when he thought of how he loved God, because that's the way I feel too. The love of God in my being is very real. I could understand that.

But then when I'm supposed to love X out here, it was explained, well I can't love X myself because he's not that lovable. So I love him with God's love, because God loves him. Well this necessarily means I've got to get hold of God's love for X somehow, and make it mine.

And I had trouble with that, and I thought about it a great deal, and I prayed about it, and somehow knowing that it was supposed to work didn't really make it work. Well I have a lot of respect for people who know more than I know about things, and I am always quick to go to them and try to learn. I have a lot of respect for the Apostle Paul, and so I went to Paul to try and learn what he had learned about love.

And Paul came through for me, and incidentally I learned some other things that I hadn't even expected to from becoming so well acquainted with Paul. I learned about how it is in the plan of God that he intends to use our bodies for his purposes as little storage units, little reservoirs for his power, that he puts it in us so that he can use it when he needs it, so that it's here. Well in order for Paul to help me, I turned to a letter that he had written to his friends, some Ephesian friends of his who were Christians.

Now Paul had reached a state that was far above what I could even imagine, so that he could pray a prayer for these friends of his who were Christian. And I borrowed that prayer that Paul prayed for his friends, and I made it my own. And in order to do that, I had to change the pronoun that he used, that collective you, that he prayed when he said, I pray for you, meaning his friends.

And I took that pronoun and I changed it to first person singular, because I was going to pray this prayer for myself. And I'm going to share some of the thoughts that I got from Paul in that prayer, because I want you to know how fully, how completely I have learned to love. It is the easiest thing that I have to do.

The prayer says, I bow my knees to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he might grant me according to the riches of his glory, that I might be strengthened with might in the inner man by his spirit, that I might be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, that I might be made strong, not weak and indecisive, but strong in the inside of me by his spirit, inside myself, that Christ might dwell, dwell where? In my heart by faith, that he might live there, that I, being rooted and grounded in love, I liked that when I came to that, that I being rooted and grounded, meaning solid and secure and safe, rooted and grounded in love, that being so rooted and grounded in love, that I might come to comprehend the length, the breadth, the depth, and the height, all four dimensions, meaning, of course, the completeness of the love of Christ, which passes all knowledge. That's kind of paradoxical, isn't it? But I prayed, like Paul did, that I might come to comprehend the uncomprehendable love of Christ. And can you get a hold of what that would mean? To come to know even the littlest bit of how Christ loved all those people, that I might comprehend the incomprehendable love of Christ.

And it goes on. That I might be filled, still in here, that I might be filled with the fullness of God. Boy, doesn't that make you just feel safe and, and warm and satisfied in your innermost parts? We all know that wonderful feeling of, of satisfaction after an excellent meal.

You know, you're just full and feel good about it. But we are created in such a way that there is a place that that physical fullness does not fill. There's a hunger and a thirst that it doesn't touch.

And so my prayer was that I might be filled with the fullness of God, completely filled with it, filled with the fullness of God. That he who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that I could ask or think. Now I realized that when Paul wrote that, there wasn't any United States of America, and I'm sure Paul had no idea of all the things that the citizens of the United States of America could think of to want and to ask for.

And I have to put Kay Arvin right in there. I can think of a lot of things. And yet Paul said that he who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that I could ask or think.

Now he said it in that day, but Psalms 33 11 says to me that the counsel of the Lord standeth forever. The thoughts of his heart to all generations, and that includes mine, the thoughts of God's heart to all generations, even mine. And I believe college students, even yours.

But he can do all these things according to the power that works in heaven, in the world, guess where? According to the power that worketh in me. According to the power that worketh in me. Why? That God would be glorified by Christ in the church throughout all ages forever and forever and forever.

Amen.

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