

# The Love of God Part 2 (Tharptown Baptist Church)

by Paul Washer

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*God's love is not just a feeling, but a decision he makes to act in our best interest, and it is demonstrated through his justice and mercy.*

**Duration:** 58:59

**Scripture:** Exodus 34:6-7, Exodus 34:17, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "Sin Salvation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the love of God and its significance in understanding sin and salvation. He uses the analogy of stars becoming visible in a dark sky to illustrate how the intensity of God's glory is revealed as the darkness of sin is recognized. The preacher warns against speaking about sin with a critical or mean spirit, but rather encourages a deeper appreciation for God's love and salvation. He highlights that even the worst sinners can experience a special zeal for God when they understand the depth of their own sin and the magnitude of God's love. The sermon also references Romans chapter 5 to emphasize the greatness of God's love and the need to fight for and argue for it.

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## Transcript

Well, thank you very much for that song and thank you for the presentation from Peru and thank all of you for being here this evening. It's always a tremendous, tremendous privilege. This morning we were teaching on the love of God and teaching on the love of God is quite a difficult, enduring and painful task for the preacher and that he knows that no matter what he says.

No matter how high his language, no matter how deep his thought, he can't even begin to scrape the surface on the love of God toward men. And I say toward men specifically for this reason. God does have a special love for his people.

But that special love by no means diminishes his love for all men. He is a God who does not delight that the wicked perish, but a God who reigns upon the evil and the good so that even the man who is condemned to hell will have to raise his hand and swear by all that is right, that God throughout all his lifetime has shown him mercy, compassion and love. God is a loving God.

It is not without it is not without reason that when we go into the the New Testament, specifically first, John, that we're confronted with the statement that God is love. And it's a tremendous statement because it's telling us that that love is not something that God must will to do. It is something that he is, it is part of his very character, his very nature.

He does not have to strengthen himself or energize himself or even make a decision to love. You see, that's that's the way you and I function. We choose love, we decide to love.

It's an act of the will. God is love. You see the difference? It's ontological.

It has to do with the very being, the very core of what God is. God is love. Now, this morning I took us to an unusual statement will briefly pass by there in the book of Psalms, chapter seven.

After announcing to you that I was going to teach on the love of God, I then told you that I would read from verse 11. God is a righteous judge and a God who has indignation every day. If a man does not repent, he will sharpen his sword.

He has bent his bow and made it ready, and he has also prepared for himself deadly weapons and makes his arrows fiery shafts. When I read this text, many of you were surprised. You've probably never heard a text like this in a sermon about the love of God.

But the reason why I gave you this text was to emphasize and give clarity to the love of God. The illustration I used was simply about the stars this this morning. You could not see them.

Why? There was so much light. But as the sky grows darker and darker, you are able to see more clearly the brilliance of the stars that have always been there in the same way. Now, listen to me.

You're looking for a pastor, you're looking for someone to preach to you. You want a man who talks about sin. You want a man who talks about your own sin.

Why the deeper and darker the picture is painted with regard to our moral failings, the greater, the more intensity is the glory of God revealed. Do you see that this is very, very important now people can speak about sin with a very critical spirit, a very mean spirit. There are people out there that are just angry.

I've been accused of being an angry person. And sometimes that accusation was not wrong. We're all men of flesh and we can fail in many ways.

But I want to tell you something. The greatest service I can do for you is to point out what is true. And that truth is you have been a sinner.

You deserve God's condemnation. And when I paint a picture like that and then God steps in with his love and his salvation, then you can begin to truly appreciate such a love and such a salvation. As I said this morning, it's one of the reasons why people who lived such horrible immoral lives, when they are converted, they seem to have a special zeal for God.

It's because I believe they have at least some sense of what they were. Our problem is, though, we don't realize this is going to be somewhat offensive. But we don't realize that with regard to sin, it is not an unusual or wrong statement to say that the mass murderer serving 25 life sentences.

In prison. Has more in common with the 13 year old girl who's always been in this church with pink ribbons in her hair than he does have differences with her. Do you see that? See, there's our problem.

When we think about sin and the grotesque nature of sin, we think about Hitler or Mussolini or a mass murderer. We don't think about ourselves. And because we don't think about ourselves and we don't put ourselves in that context, we're not so surprised at the love of God.

We almost believe it's something he ought to do. But when we begin to see ourselves rightly, then we can begin to appreciate the love of God. Another thing that I want to iterate that's very, very important, and it's this knowing my depravity, my moral weakness, the fact that I could contribute nothing to my salvation and that there was nothing in me that could make God love me brings me joy and security.

You say, why, if he loved me, not based on anything that I was or did. If he loved me like that, then I do not have to keep up a performance to maintain his love. If his love has always been him, it always will be him.

If it was part me, then I would have to be on pins and needles every day of my life wondering if I've kept his love, if I've performed soundly and correctly enough for him to love me, that would be terrifying, especially in light of all my moral weakness, which is pointed out in Scripture. So that's the reason why we went to this passage, then we went over to the book of Exodus and I want us to go there. One of the most beautiful texts in the Old Testament and the whole Bible, Exodus 34.

When Moses asked to see the glory of God, and of course, God told him that was impossible, but was gracious to Moses and allowed Moses to see something of his glory. And in verse six of chapter thirty four, then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed the Lord, Lord, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness and truth, who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, and yet will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. Now, let's just go back really quick and summarize what we learned this morning.

And first of all, he says, the Lord, Lord God, and what he's saying is this is me. This is this is really me, this is not some imitation, this is not just some shadow, this is not an angel simply trying to play itself off as God. This is this is the Lord, the Lord God.

And I would submit to you, if we can take what John says and in John chapter 12 about Isaiah six, I would submit to you that the one who is passing before Moses here now get ready is the second person of the Trinity. It's the son of God. You see, God not only created the world through his son.

But he sustains the world through his son and he reveals himself to the world through his son, that's why you see that magnificent portrayal of God, it's it's the most it's the clearest, the clearest manifestation or vision of God we have in the entire Old Testament. And it's in Isaiah six. You know, in the year the king is I died, I saw also the Lord high and lifted up in his train, filled the temple.

When we get to John 12, he tells us that was the son. That was the son that Isaiah was looking at, I think probably the same thing can be said here, I'm certain of it now, he says he describes himself as compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding and loving kindness and truth. And I mentioned how we take so many things for granted, like the the woman who has a good husband sometimes takes for granted that he's not a drunk.

Takes for granted and doesn't thank God that her husband's not a wife beater, sometimes when we have good people in our lives, people that are very endeared to us, people who treat us well, we take them for

granted, we don't realize what they could be. As a matter of fact, we're always majoring on their weaknesses and not realizing they could be far worse. We take for granted the goodness in them.

Now, many times we take for granted the goodness of God, my dear friend, what would it be like to have an omnipotent Lord who wasn't gracious? An omnipotent, all powerful being who wasn't compassionate or wasn't loving, it would be a nightmare, it would be better to have never been created, you need to get on your knees as well as I do and thank God that he is who he is and not something else. A few years ago, I think more in the pop charts, there was a song that became very popular where this girl is singing and almost wanting God to be more like us. That's the most terrifying thing I could think of for God to be more like us.

Would you really want a God like you? I don't think so now, he says something here, I just want to two different things, it says in verse six, he's abounding in loving kindness. That means that that God is not there just meagerly giving out a little bit of love. OK, he's not parceling it out like a miser.

It also means that he hasn't just selected one tiny little group of people and he's pouring his love only out on them. Now we do see in the Bible God exercising his sovereignty with regard to love. But you need to understand this.

God's loving kindness has been demonstrated to every man, woman and child on the face of this earth. And it will until the day they die so that no one might have an excuse. There's no excuse.

God has been good to you. He has now. But there's something very important.

He's not only abounding in loving kindness, but he keeps loving kindness. And that is he's faithful in his loving kindness. You see, here is a great problem, a tremendous problem.

If I love my wife based upon my wife's performance. Then what's going to happen, my love is going to be conditional, she does well, I love her well, so on and so forth, you see that. And that is why to be like Christ, my love toward my wife must not be based on her performance, but upon the command I've received from God, and that is to love my wife, whether she deserves it or not.

Now, the same thing can be said if we switch the players around. Here's the thing that I want you to see. He not only abounds in loving kindness, he's constant in that he's not fickle.

He doesn't retract it or withdraw it. He is faithful in his love. The Chinese have a problem, not a problem.

They have, I guess, a maxim and a proverb, and this is this is what they say. He is not a great lover who can love a thousand women. He is a great lover who can love one woman a thousand years.

Now, that's a faithful love, and that's what I love about this, God's loving kindness, he keeps it. You know, if I could point out just one great difference between Paul Washer and God, it'd be this. My love oftentimes is so fickle, not only my love towards others, but my love towards God.

As a matter of fact, when when we sing those songs, oh, how I love Jesus. I find it very hard to sing along. Now, it's a biblical song.

It's biblical to say, God, I love you. But to be honest with you, when I look in the mirror of God's word, I find little worth singing about in regard to my love toward God. I'd rather sing, oh, how God loves Paul Washer or oh, how Jesus loves Paul Washer.

Now there I find something worth singing about now. Then we we ended up this morning with I left you with a challenge to come back tonight to find the answer to the mystery, and that is this great problem that we find here in Exodus thirty four about the love of God, because it says in verse seven that he forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. Remember now I told you he wasn't trying to just be specific about what kinds of sins he's not saying this so that we should study each Hebrew word exactly to determine what he's talking about when he uses three different words to describe sin, iniquity, transgression and sin.

What he's saying is he forgives all kinds of sins, every kind of sin. This is amazing. He forgives every kind of sin.

But now herein lies the problem as we keep reading. Yet he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. Now, this is what we call an apparent contradiction.

He says that he forgives all manner of sin. And what happens when you forgive the sinner? You act toward the sinner as though they had never committed a sin. So he forgives them their sins, their iniquities, their transgressions, he passes over them, he lets them go.

Yet at the same time, following that, it says he's not going to leave the guilty unpunished. Now, that presents a problem. On one hand, he forgives.

Everyone's sin who calls upon him, on the other hand, everyone who's guilty is going to get punished. So how do we resolve this? Well, let's look at another great problem. Just look at this again where he says he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.

Now let's go to Romans four, verse seven. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.

Now, again, I hope you're following me. Do you see the problem? On one hand, we have David saying, blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, whose sins have been covered, covered by whom? By God. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account will act as though it didn't even exist.

How can we say that? And yet at the same time, it says the Lord will not allow the guilty to go unpunished. So there is some way in the love of God. That he passes over your sin, he forgives your sin, he does not take your sin into account, but it's only because he's punished it already.

Where did he do that? He did that in the greatest manifestation of his love on the cross of Calvary. Now, few people and I'm going to say this to you now, either they don't understand it or they're not preaching what they understand. But you see, the primary thing, what you have to see about the cross above everything else is on that cross.

Someone took your place. Jesus Christ took your place, took what place from you? He took, as the old Baptist writers used to call it, especially John Gill, your law place, your place of sentencing. You see, you have committed every manner of crime.

You have broken every law of God. Therefore, you must stand in the law place. God must punish you.

Why? It's because he's just. He cannot simply turn his back on sin. He's not like a corrupt politician.

He's not like a corrupt judge accepting bribes. He cannot simply turn away from evil and just say it didn't happen. It must be punished.

But if it's punished in you. Then the punishment is your eternal condemnation in hell. But God became a man and on the cross, here's what I want you to see, it's so very important on the cross.

He stood in your law place, the son of God, and he bore your guilt. Now, that's not just figuratively, he really did. Now, does that mean that Christ, when he was on the cross, became corrupt or became sinful? No, it means simply that all the guilt.

Of all the sins you have committed as his people, it was placed upon him and he felt it. Now, imagine this, you and I, as Jesus said, if you being evil, you and I still being having a fallen part of us still being susceptible to sin, not completely or totally holy or righteous. We commit a sinful act even now as Christians and it hurts us.

We feel the guilt of it even before we were believers. Sometimes when we would commit an evil deed, we would feel the guilt of it and it would almost break us into. Now, imagine the thrice holy God, holy, holy, holy on that tree, never once experiencing evil or knowing evil or blame or culpability, nothing of that.

And in a fraction of a second, all the guilt of all the sins of his people is cast upon him. The wretchedness of that moment. But not only that now, brace yourself, it was God, the father.

Who poured forth his punishment, the punishment that should have fallen upon you, the wrath of God that should have fallen on you fell upon the son of God, the father crushed his only begotten son. With the crushing that should have been yours. He crushed his son.

In all the sanctity, in all the growing in Christ, in all the conformity over these years, the little that I have experienced, I am not sure that I could even think about crushing my own son on the behalf of some. Felon or murderer or pedophile, the worst of humanity, no. I want you to think about this now, see, there is a terrible thing that I fight against all the time.

As a matter of fact, if there was only one thing I could do in the Christian ministry, it would be to expose this lie. Many people, because of really superficial preaching, have never thought through the cross. They somehow think that by the Romans and Jews beating up Jesus and nailing him to a cross, that that that suffering that they inflicted upon him is what paid for our sins.

I'm sure many of you thought that now. I don't want to take away anything from the physical sufferings of Christ. That was all part of it.

It was a bloody death. It had to be a bloody death. But here's what I want you to see.

It was you. That had to be crushed. Under the fierce, terrifying justice of God.

In order for. Your guilt to be punished, Christ had to be crushed in your place. By his father, God.

You see, the sinner in hell, I want you to think about this. First of all, realize this hell is not torture. Now, let me explain myself.

Hell is not torture. Many of you possibly have read Dante's Inferno, where where men are cast into hell and demons are gleefully torturing them. None of that's true because demons themselves suffer in hell.

Satan is not king of hell. Satan suffers in hell like anyone. Matter of fact, worse than anyone.

So he's not the king of hell causing men to suffer. Now, what's going on in hell? You hear a lot of people say, well, heaven's heaven because God is there and hell is hell because God's not there. That's not true.

It's not remember what it says, the smoke of their torment ascends up in the presence of whom? The lamb. Hell is hell because God is there. The fierceness of his perfect justice.

The eternal burnings of his perfect justice, and why do I say it's not torture, it's not God gleefully torturing men or paying men back far more than the crime they committed deserves. No, it is the sinner experiencing absolute perfect justice. Not one penny more and not one penny less absolute perfect justice for eternity.

Now, let's just look at what we call the terrifying justice of God for a moment. If you're walking down the street. Just walking down the street, you're not committing a crime, you've done nothing wrong.

You have no reason to be afraid of the policeman who's standing there. If he's an honorable policeman, you have no reason to be terrified of his presence. The reason that we usually are is because we feel guilty.

You're driving down the road, you see a policeman, you get a sinking feeling, you automatically, you know, you pull your foot back off the throttle. Even if you're going under the speed limit, you do it. There's this sense of feeling guilty.

But what I want you to see is a righteous person has no reason to fear a policeman. So if I walk by a policeman having committed no crime, I feel nothing. I mean, hello.

Nothing terrifying about his presence. But if I've committed a terrible felony and someone says the police are at the door, it's terrifying. It's the same way.

It's not that God is this terrifying God or this mean spirited God, we've already discovered that he's full of loving kindness, that he's compassionate and all these things. The problem is, though, he's a just God. God.

And a just God is terrifying to wicked men, you see the problem. Now. So how has God manifested his love, he's manifested his love in sending his own son.

Now, this is very important for God so loved the world that he did what gave his only begotten son. Now, when it gets to that gave part, I want you to do a lot more explaining when you're witnessing to people, I just don't want you to he gave his only son or his son died. I want you to begin to explain this.

He died because you had to. And you had to die because God is just and God will not simply pass over sin, he will not throw open the doors to heaven and say, everyone come in, I'm just going to ignore your sin. No, God is just he is not corrupt.

Therefore, in order for God to forgive you, in order for God to demonstrate his love toward you, he first had to deal with a terrible problem, your sin that must be punished. And he punished that sin in his son. And here's something very important.

A lot of times I've heard evangelists use this illustration of, you know, Jesus dying on the cross was like this woman laying there on her deathbed and her husband's over here and her son's over here and both of them just hate each other. But on her deathbed, she reaches out and grabs the hand of the father, her husband, and reaches out and grabs the hand of the son and puts both those hands together and she dies and they're reconciled forever. That's not true.

Why do I say it's not true? Because the father is not this angry, mean father who wants you to die and hate you. But Jesus came down and saved you from him. Do you see that? And how can I prove that? Because it says, and God, the father, so loved the world that he did what gave his only begotten son.

Do you see that? So it is the love of a father, the love of a son, the love of the spirit, the love of God working in conjunction within the persons of the Trinity, doing everything, orchestrating everything to save you and to save you through the greatest price that was ever paid or ever could be paid. Do you see that? Now, I want us to go back for a moment just to Romans and I want us to look in Romans chapter five and I want you to see something. The love of God is so great, it is so big now, listen to me, you have to argue for it.

You have to fight for it. OK, the love of God is so big, you've got to fight for it, you've got to argue for it. Now, what do I mean? It's so big, so pure, so all encompassing, so wonderful that it makes it unbelievable.

The devil will argue against you about it. He'll say, no, it can't be that way. Your own heart will argue against it.

No, it can't be that way. God can't love that much. I mean, no, hold it.

You've passed the line now. The world will tell you, no, God can't be that way. So you've got to fight for this love not to have it, but to believe it, you've got to talk to yourself, you've got to preach to yourself, you see that you do, because as I said this morning, the most difficult thing you're ever going to have to do as a Christian is to look into the mirror of God's word and see your moral failure as it is and then believe that God loves you as much as he says he does.

That is your most difficult task. That's a great task, isn't it? But now look at the logic that Paul puts forth in Romans chapter five, verse six, while we were still helpless at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. Now, don't misunderstand this verse.

While we were still helpless, you know what that makes you sound like? A victim. A victim, I wanted to come to God, but I couldn't, I was helpless. No, that's not what it means at all.

What it means is it's talking about moral inability. OK, that's a phrase we use in theology when we want to impress people. What does it mean? You were unable to not only not do anything to save yourself, you were totally unable to even come to God.

Moral inability. Now you say, well, if a man can't come to God, then it's not his fault. Well, if that were true, that would be true, but that's not what it means.

Have you ever maybe been counseling someone, say a bitter, older, bitter person who hasn't forgiven their spouse in 20 years and you show them the scriptures and you say you must forgive your husband. OK, and the lady says, I just can't. You ever heard about something like that? You ever heard some heard about somebody like that? I'm sure you have.

I can't. Now, just let's just back up for a moment. Woman, you speak English and so does your husband.

You have a mouth. He's here. You're here.

What do you mean you can't forgive your husband? I can't forgive my husband because I just there's just so much bitterness in my heart. She can't forgive her husband because she is controlled by the bitterness in her heart. Do you see that? So now she's not a victim, is she? She can't forgive because she's so full of bitterness.

All right, Joseph's brothers. It says this about him. They could not speak a gentle or peaceable word to him.

Now, they all spoke, I suppose, Aramaic or something. They were of the same father. They lived together in the same house.

Why could they not speak a kind word to him? It says they could not speak a peaceful word to him because they hated him. They could not because they were enslaved to the hatred in their heart against him. OK, Jesus said, listen to this, you will not come to the light.

Why won't they come to the light? Because their deeds were evil and they did not want their evil deeds to be exposed. So you see what we're saying here, when he says you're helpless, what he's saying is you are enslaved to your own evil heart. You wouldn't come to him because you were enslaved to your own evil heart.

So you weren't a victim, were you? You were the culprit. You were the culprit. And if it wasn't for this wonderful, beautiful work of the Holy Spirit waking you up and wooing you and drawing you, you wouldn't be sitting here today or you would be sitting here, but you'd be lost.

You see now, the folks, it's a great mystery, I don't understand it all, but I can tell you this. I can tell you this. We were helpless.

And if you're sitting here today, my friend, I mean, just think about it. I don't know. Maybe some of you are different than me.

But I think right now, back on some of my friends that right now are probably in some bar right now. Drinking and just miserable, and I ask myself, why am I here? If it hadn't been for the Holy Spirit wooing me. Changing my heart, I wouldn't be here, I wouldn't be believing in Jesus, and so I just I just think that's wonderful and I think we ought to keep it there about as far as we need to go.

We just know this. The only reason I'm loving God is because God loved me. The only reason I came to him is because, man, he drew me.

You say, brother, Paul, do people get drawn sometimes and resist? Yeah, they resist. They resist, they resist, they resist. People resist.

You say, well, I didn't resist. But let me tell you this, if you didn't resist, it's because he kept you from resisting. You see what I'm saying, folks, just listen to this one thing.

If you can understand this, you've understood it all. If you're saved here today, it's 100 percent a work of God and I'm content to keep it that way. Repent and believe, and if you repent and believe, well, it's the

grace of God that helped you repent and believe nothing, nothing, nothing do we claim for ourselves that God has saved us.

So it says when we were helpless, what happened at the right time? Christ died for the ungodly. Now, if you don't like being called ungodly, just look at that. If you don't like being called ungodly, then you can't be saved.

I'm sorry, because Christ didn't die for good men or good women. He died for the ungodly, and if that term makes you uncomfortable, you can't be saved. At my mother's funeral last year, she had given me instructions on what she wanted.

She had been a Christian for 64 years, very strong witness. As a matter of fact, sometimes I had to pull her back on the reins because she was a little too bold. So I get up in the pulpit, my mother's there, casket right in front of the pulpit.

All these hundreds and hundreds of people came and I did exactly what she told me to do. I walked to the side of the pulpit like this. I pointed down to the casket and I said, this woman was not a good woman.

And she is not in heaven because she was a good woman or a good mother or a good wife. She is in heaven because Jesus Christ shed his blood for sinners. You should have seen the mouths drop open when I said that about my mom.

You know, she said to me, she said, those now again, you got to understand my mom's from the north, OK? She said, those fools, she goes, they're going to come to my funeral and say just stupid things. I said, really, mom, what are they going to say? They're going to walk up to you right in front of me. And if I could come back to life, I'd strangle them.

This is what they're going to do. They're going to walk in that funeral home and they're going to say, oh, if anybody's in heaven, she is. Oh, if anybody's in, if she would, you know, after your father died, she raised all your children, put you all through college and everything.

She said, don't don't you let them get away with that. She said, I'm in heaven because Jesus Christ died for sinners. And if you don't like that kind of language used about you, then you're better off to just go to some go to the festival tonight or something, leave church because it's not doing you any good.

Now, I don't take any pride in being ungodly. But I'll tell you this, I'm saved because Jesus Christ died for the ungodly. And in a sense, I love that, because as John the Baptist said, I must decrease, he must increase.

Now, the proud hear this type of language and they get mad, but the humble hear it and they're glad, David says. Now, he says this. For one will hardly die for a righteous man, just man, I mean, a righteous man, a man who perfectly keeps the law of God who would die, give their own life for a man like that.

But but somebody might it be a very hard thing to do, but somebody might. And then he goes on, perhaps for the good man, someone would dare even to die. Now, someone not really righteous.

But when you count up everything, he's just a pretty good old boy. Well, I think someone might die for him. Then he says, but God demonstrated his own love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Now, if I if my little boy. Was in a predicament where the only way he could be saved would be for me to lay down my life, if I did that and laid down my life and it came out in the newspaper the next day, all of you would just say that I did what I should have done, wouldn't you? I mean, if I hadn't laid down my life for my child, you would have thought I was a monster. But for me to lay down my life for a man who's killed 25 people and is serving 10 life sentences in prison, you would have thought, why did you do that? That's utterly amazing.

Well, that's what Jesus did when he died for you. Now, this is what he says, verse nine, much more than having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

If when we were vile enemies of God, cursing his name, breaking his law, everything else, if at that moment God sent his son to die for us, how much more does he love us now that we believe in his son and desire to serve his son? And to be conformed to his image now. Now, Paul is using using reason here to speak to you about something that God loves his children. Now, I want us to finish up by just going quickly to the book of Jude.

It's the last book right before the book of Revelation. Now, in verse 17, he has just finished talking about all of these false prophets, these evil sinners. In verse 15, he says the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds, which they have done in an ungodly way and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

These are grumblers finding fault, following their own lusts. And he goes on and on. So he's talking to a group of believers that are living in the midst of people who are not only not Christian, they are antagonistic toward the Christian faith.

They hate Christianity, they consider anyone to be anyone who is a Christian to be nothing more than a lunatic and not just a harmless lunatic, but a vile, dangerous lunatic. Now, he comes in the midst of all this. In verse 18, he says, in the last time there will be mockers following after their own ungodly lust.

These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly minded, devoid of the spirit. But now he's going to turn around. He's to the believer living in the midst of all this.

He says, but you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God, keep yourselves in the love of God now. Now, I don't know much about plants, but let's say you call me one day and said, brother, Paul, I've got a plant and it's wilting and it's dying and I don't know what to do.

Could you come over and look at it? Well, I say, well, I'm not much of a horticulturist, but I'll come over. So I come over to your house and I say, where's the plant? And you go to the inner room of your house and then from there into a dark, dark, recessed closet and you open up the door and say, there's the plant. There it is.

And I go, well, yeah, I'm no rocket surgeon, but. I think that if you'll take that plant out of that closet. And take it outside and keep it in the sunshine.

That it'll go ahead and blossom, what Jude is telling us is that we must keep ourselves in the love of God. That doesn't mean that you must keep performing so that God will love you. He's saying, keep in this

reality, keep yourself in the reality that God loves you as much as he says he does.

And that will cause you to be strong and to grow. Now, I have to say something here, and I've said this several times this morning, folks. It's.

You'd have to have half a brain and and I don't know what else very foolish not to believe that every church in America has three different types of people in it. Christians who are truly saved on the membership role, Christians who are truly saved, sinners who know they're sinners and know they're going to hell, and then a great majority of people who believe they're saved, but they bear no fruit whatsoever. Now, folks, it's just a well-known fact.

Theologians, Southern Baptist theologians talk about it all the time. It's just a well-known fact because we've so lowered the gospel. So when I tell you about the love of God.

There are going to be different reactions. The lost church member, that's the guy who considers himself Christian, but he's really lost, bears no fruit. He's going to hear that and it's going to be like a comfort for him in his sin.

He's going to go, well, man, it's a good deal. I mean, go to heaven. God loves me no matter what I do, and it makes him very nonchalant about sin.

He doesn't really care whether he commits sin. Living in sin, it's no big deal to him at all. That's because he's lost.

That's like a man who would say, I've married a good woman, she's going to be faithful no matter what I do, so I'm going to treat her like a dog. I'm going to do whatever I want, live, live the most wicked ways, violate everything in our marriage oath because she's a good woman and she's going to continue loving me. That man no more loves that woman than a man on the moon.

In the same way, the person who hears the church member who hears about the unconditional, enduring love of God. And then is nonchalant about it and says, you know, well, great, man, let's party. They don't know God.

And more importantly, God doesn't know them, but the true Christian. Now, I'm not talking about the perfect person. Christian is not perfect.

One of the evidences of the true Christian faith is that you realize you struggle with sin and you hate it. But the true Christian, when they hear about the unconditional, unmerited favor of God, that it is forever, forever, forever, that it does not change, it does not change. It cannot diminish because it would be less than perfect.

It cannot increase because it's already perfect. When they hear that, they go, if this is the way true Christianity is, then I want to be more holy. I want to be more conformed to the image of Christ.

I want to serve him. There's an old story, and I'm sure it's an urban legend about Abraham Lincoln going by a slave trader block. There was a young black woman up on the block being sold and he purchases her.

And after he buys her, he takes her out of town, writes her certificate of freedom and takes the manacles and everything off of her wrists and the bindings off of her neck and looses her from her chains and says

to her, you're free. And she says, you mean. I can do anything I want to do, he said, yes, you mean I can go anywhere I want to go.

No. Yes. And she says, then I choose to go with you because I've never met a man so kind.

That's the same way. There is a sense that as a Christian, I could go and do these things, worldly things, terrible things. There's another sense in which I cannot because the love of Christ constrains me.

There's a sense in which we're free. There's another sense in which we are so enslaved, we are enslaved to the love of God. I suppose it would be much easier to cheat on a wicked man than it would on a righteous man in the same way.

God is so good, he is so kind that his kindness and the awakening he's done in the heart of his children make it very difficult for us to trespass against him and to run away from him. It's his love. It's his love.

One of the things that so helped my life. Happened years and years ago, I was raised sort in a way where if you scored ninety five on a test, why didn't you score one hundred and then get the extra five bonus points? You scored twenty points in a ballgame. Well, there were eight shots you could have taken.

Just performance, performance, and the idea of always struggling to be in the inner circle, the inner circle, the inner circle to be appreciated, to be loved. Now, a big part of that is just selfishness and self-centeredness. But when I became a Christian, I was determined not to be outside of God's inner circle.

I was going to work harder than anybody else has ever worked. I was going to try to suffer more if they were martyring people out on the streets. I was going to run out in the streets and get martyred.

I mean, I wanted to be in God's inner circle until finally, after years of about 18 hours a day on the third floor of an old building in Peru, I literally broke and fell down on the stairwell, weeping and crying out, totally exhausted. And this is actually what I said to God. I mean, this has really happened.

I said, God, I don't want to go to hell because I'm afraid to go to hell. But I don't want to go to heaven because I'm ashamed my performance is so bad, I'm not Spurgeon, I'm not Jonathan Edwards, I'm not all these great men of God, I'm just me and all I seem to do is fail. And so I don't want to go to hell because I'm afraid to go to hell.

But I don't want to go to heaven because I'm just ashamed of everything I have done and have not done. And it was at that moment that God really began to work. It's like it's almost like God said, you know, OK, is at the end of his rope, bring in the construction crew.

And God began to show me something that it just stays with me. It's just something that doesn't leave. I am loved, don't have to move a quarter of an inch to the left or a quarter of an inch to the right, I am loved, I'm loved on my good day, I'm loved on my bad day, I'm loved when I perform and don't perform.

And when you keep yourself in that. Wow, when it's no longer your performance, but his performance on the cross, everything changes, everything. And when you realize it has been God from the very beginning and it will be God to the very end.

How many have ever seen that that that prayer footprint or that little story Footprints in the Sand, you know, the guys walking along and as he's walking, he sees these visions, you know, and and during the

good times of his life, there were two sets of footprints in the sand, him and Jesus walking side by side. And during the bad times in his life, there was one set of footprints in the sand. And he was like, God, why did you leave me at those terrible times in my life and and everything? And and God says, you know, well, it was in those bad times you saw one set of footprints, not because I left you, but because I was carrying you.

And we all go, oh, that's so beautiful. That is absolutely ridiculous. And I'll tell you why he's always been carrying you.

He's carrying you through the bad times. He's carrying you through the good times. And if he wasn't carrying you, you wouldn't be going anywhere.

It's all of grace. It's all him. Now, look back at it.

I know I'm taking a little bit of your time, but look, you just go home, watch something you shouldn't watch on television. So just listen to me for a moment. Just think.

Just think for a moment, how in the world did you get here? Some of you, I don't know, but in church like this and being in Alabama, I'm sure there's some serious rascals in here. I've seen some guys who've really done some things and maybe you were about the worst of the pack that you ran with. How how on earth or in heaven did you get here? I mean, you've got friends who weren't as wild as you and they still don't care anything about God.

You're sitting here going, first of all, don't try to explain it. It's a mystery. But I'll tell you this.

You're here because of him, because of him. You said, brother Paul, I. I repented. Yes, you did, but he gave you the grace to do it.

I believed. Yes, you believed. I'm sticking with him just because he's sticking with you.

I love God because he loved you first. You see that. So you you stay in that love, you stay in that love and don't let anybody lie to you.

The Bible says that the devil is a liar and a murderer. They just put the two things together. He lies or he murders by lying.

That's why he murdered our parents, Adam and Eve, by lying to them. That's the way he murders you. And the one area he's really going to attack.

If he can't attack you on heresy, like denying the Trinity or getting you to join a cult, this is where he's going to attack you. God doesn't love you and he's going to do it by pointing out how unworthy you are. The problem is, for the most part, he's right.

Don't you realize that? Don't fight that. Don't wrestle with him about. Yes, I am.

I'm more worthy than you think. You ought to look at him and tell him, look, you don't know the half of it. You think I'm bad.

You're not omniscient. You don't know everything. I'm worse than even, you know.

But then again, it's not about me, is it? It's about the one who died for me. It's about my elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. It's all about him.

So so so to conclude, let's look at this. Does God love his children? Yes. Does God love all men? Yes.

If you're saved here today, are you saved because God did a great work in your life? Yes. Is God calling all men to repent and believe? Absolutely. Is he showering his love and compassion on all men? Absolutely.

Are some men going to hell because God doesn't want them? No, they're going to hell on their own terms. That's why they're going to hell. But you're going to heaven because of the grace of God.

What I want you to see, folks, is this world is a messy place and it's going to fight against you as a believer. And you've got to keep believing that God loves you as much as he says he does. Secondly, we've got to get out there and evangelize and share the real gospel with people.

We must. I mean, look at it. The noose is tightening around our necks.

It is not going to be many years that it's going to be against the law to be a fundamentalist Bible believing Christian. We need to witness. We need to change the way we look at things.

This is a fight for survival. And we need to go out there not as hypocrites proclaiming one thing and living another, but we need to go out there proclaiming the grace of God and not pointing at ourselves. We are not super saints who wrangled salvation from the hand of God by our own merit and virtue.

We are beggars who found bread in Jesus Christ, and we're simply wanting to tell everyone else share the gospel. Share the gospel, share the gospel, pray that God will save men, pray that God will send a man here and raise up other men around him. To lead this church, to preach a true gospel, to evangelize the lost.

And to bring glory to his name. Now, let's go the Lord in prayer, I'm just going to conclude we've gone on a little bit long. If you're here and your soul is troubled, you come up and talk to me or one of the other leaders.

Be glad to stay here and just talk all all that we have to. Now, you young guys who just want to sit around, talk theology, don't talk to me. I got to go to Denny's.

So if there's nobody here with a troubled soul, I don't want to talk to a bunch of people about theology. I just want to talk to people who really maybe need the Lord. Let's pray.

Father, thank you so much. Use your word in the hearts of men. Lord, if there's someone here tonight who doesn't know you.

Oh, Lord, save them and Lord, there are countless people throughout, Lord, this city of Russellville and and all the way in this this whole state, Lord, and country that need the gospel Lord work in their hearts. Send preachers to them, how how can they call upon him, how can they believe what they have not heard and how can they hear unless there is a preacher? Oh, God, raise up preachers in this country to preach the true gospel, inviting all men to repent and believe. Father, help us in Jesus name.

Amen.

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