

God's Love

by Richard Owen Roberts

God's love for us is everlasting, sacrificial, and demonstrated through the creation of the human body and the arrangement of our lives.

Duration: 42:56

Scripture: Jeremiah 2:2, Jeremiah 31:3, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Love Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the loving kindness of God towards humanity. He highlights the intricate design of the human body and the various blessings it provides, such as the ability to see, hear, speak, and move. The preacher also acknowledges the goodness of God in the ordering of the universe, including the gift of day and night, the changing seasons, and the beauty of nature. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about getting a truck stuck in a ditch and the help received from neighbors, illustrating the importance of community and the kindness of others.

Transcript

Now then, let us read from 1 John, at chapter 4, starting in verse 7. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son unto the world, that we might live through him, here in his love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit, and we have seen and do testify that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we know and believe the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment.

He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

We love him, because he first loved us. Many men say, I love God, and hateth his brother. He is a liar.

For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also. Now, that just by way of introduction to our theme this morning of the goodness of God. Now then, one other passage where we are going to focus our attention, which enlarges in its own way upon the truths already read from 1 John.

And this is a very brief, but a perfectly marvelous statement in the book of Jeremiah at chapter 31. Jeremiah 31. Only one part of one verse, that if we can lay this to heart this morning, we will have gotten enough to feed our souls upon for the next seven lifetimes.

Jeremiah 31, verse 3, The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee. The subject of God's benevolence or goodness is so great that it will be necessary for us to give two sessions to its consideration.

And this morning, let us reflect upon the truths as conveyed in Jeremiah 31, 3. Yea, I have loved with an everlasting love. Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Now, I don't think it would be possible to find anywhere in the Bible a more profoundly affecting truth than that found in these few brief words.

Nor is there any truth in all the Bible more essential for us than the truth of God's everlasting love. It is the knowledge of God's everlasting love that reclaims the backslider from the error of his way, and it is the certainty of the drawing power of God's loving kindness that brings revival to the life of individuals, to the life of the church, and to the whole of a nation. I have loved thee, says the Lord, with an everlasting love.

Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Now, let's just take this piece by piece and see what benefit and blessing can come to us from the serious consideration of this excellent truth. The first declaration, then, to begin with, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

Now, that is a truth God wants us to have deeply implanted in our hearts. I, says God, have loved thee with an everlasting love. Now, we have spent some time together recently contemplating the fact that God himself is everlasting.

From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Now, there is no way, then, that any part of God or any of God's attributes or any of God's ways could be other than he himself is. If God is everlasting, his love is everlasting, his goodness is everlasting.

It cannot be otherwise. But that is a staggering thing to think about. I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

Let us never think for a moment that God's love for us began when we were born. If we think that, we are in grave error. God's love for us began way, way, way, way back, and beyond that still.

And, obviously, everlasting has not only to do with its early origin, but the love of God for us remains. It goes right on. And, even when we have passed from this earthly sphere, the love of God for us will be unsaved.

But, isn't that a beautiful truth to consider? That God's love for us really has no beginning, and it has no ending whatsoever. Now, we are told plainly, also, in regard to the love of God, that while we were yet

sinners, God's love was so great that he determined to manifest it by allowing Christ to die for us. So, there we have the love of God toward us, individually, so far back that no one has any awareness whatsoever when it existed first, and stretching on into eternity so far that none of us has the capacity to even visualize that far into the distance.

But now, think of this. Compare our love for one another, our love for our children, our love for anyone or everyone, our love for God. You know we can always pinpoint its beginning.

If you are married, and your spouse is still alive, you can remember when you first met and first loved. And, if you have children, you can remember when they were born, and when you began to love them. And, no doubt, many a mother would say, but I did not begin to love my child when he or she was born.

It was earlier than that. Well, of course. But still, we can remember when our love for others began.

We love one another in this class, but we have not always loved one another. Honestly, I have not always loved you. I used to live in California.

I didn't even know you were here. But, there was never a time when God didn't know I was here, and there was never a time when he did not love me with an everlasting love. And, it's wonderful to contemplate that this love of God is not a blind love.

It isn't merely that God loves us until such a time as he sees what we're like, and then he says, well, I'm sorry, I made a mistake. I really don't. No, indeed, God loves us in our worst condition.

God loves us when our behavior is so deplorable that no one else wants anything to do with it. The love of God is in no way, in fact, conditioned upon what we are. Before we were anything, God loved us.

Before our behavior was either good or bad, God loved us. The love of God toward us, I repeat, has always been precisely the same. And, if we are in great rebellion against God, and yet he has chosen to love us, he loves us despite our rebellion.

If we have fallen into the deepest of sin, and he loves us, he loves us despite that sin. If you are here this morning as a terrible backslider, and God loves you, he loves you despite your backsliding. And, there is nothing that anyone whom God loves is going to do that will alter God's love.

It is an everlasting love. It is unaffected completely by our response or our behavior. And, it isn't fluctuating love.

When we examine our love toward others, we realize that it runs hot and cold. Is there anyone here who could say their love for their spouse was always exactly the same? I have to admit candidly, there has probably been at least a day or two when my wife was exasperated with me, and when she must have said to herself, well, why did I ever fall in love with that guy? Of all the ones I might have married, why him? We know that kind of love. We understand that kind of love.

We appreciate the fact that we rub one another the wrong way on occasion, that we do try each other's patience, and that if there is some fluctuating of love, it's no surprise. But, will you try to conceive this morning that the love of God does not fluctuate? It is never stronger or weaker. It is everlasting.

That is so phenomenal that it is almost impossible to conceive of. And yet, it is biblical truth. I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

You see, there are individuals here this morning who have punished themselves from time to time. You became a Christian perhaps some years ago, and for a little while things went well, and then you fell into a backslidden condition, and you learned to despise yourself, and yet you didn't learn repentance straight away. And in learning to despise yourself, somehow you came under the opinion that God also learned to despise you, so that you became ashamed to appear before him.

There are many people right now who attend church, and yet who are actually ashamed to come before the Lord. They carry with them a great load of guilt, and they are sorry in a sense for what they are, and what they've become, and yet they remain as they are. And one reason they remain as they are is because they think to themselves, I don't think God could still love me.

I don't. After what I've done, after the way I've disappointed him, after the way I've let him down, after all these failures, I mean, look at this one sin, will you? Once, twice, a hundred times, a thousand times, ten thousand times, and still I fall. I can't see why God would still love me, but he does.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love. The love of God for each of us is unchanging. It is not cool, because we have failed him often.

He is not now at that point where he is wondering, should I just chuck him overboard, or should I give them one more chance? No, God is incapable of thinking that way. There is no danger in the world that having loved you, he will cease to love you. You may have disappointed him times beyond measure, but his love remains the same.

It is everlasting. Will you let that truth grip you this morning? Will you notice also that this love of God is a sacrificial love? This isn't a love of convenience. This isn't a love based upon return.

In no way does God say, if you give me what I want, I will give you my love. No! God's love is so deep, and so rich, and so powerful, and so permanent, that he sent his Son to die that wretched death of agony on the cross. He sacrificed that which was closest to his heart, and having sacrificed his Son for you, he is not going to let that sacrifice be in vain.

And what Christ did on your behalf, the Father is going to insist, will work. It will succeed. It will accomplish its purpose.

And if you live in rebellion for 40 years, and if you disappoint him for 65 years, his love remains the same, and the sacrifice of Christ for you is unchanging and still all availing. Let that grip your soul. And the beautiful thing about the love of God is that when it is felt, it transforms.

There is power in the love of God. And I say to you that if you have slipped, if you have fallen, if you are here this morning with a sense of shame and sorrow because you have been a disappointment to God, the reason you have been able to retain that sense of sorrow and shame is because you have not yet felt the power of his love. And this morning if you will open your heart and allow the love of God to sweep in and overwhelm you, you will cease to be ashamed, and you will then find in that love strength and power to serve him.

After all, the scripture still stands, we loved him because he first loved us. And it is the felt sense of that love, the realization of that love, the knowledge that it is an eternal love that brings us to that point where we are yielded vessels and empowered to serve him well. And I want to say by way of encouragement to anyone here who has felt grief and sorrow for wasted years, let the love of God flow in afresh.

Feel its great everlasting nature in your life this morning, and you will find in the realization of his love all the strength and the power required for full repentance and restoration to service and to joy. I have loved you with an everlasting love. You'll notice also, please, the second of these declarations.

Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee. For with great goodness have I drawn thee. Sometimes the word loving kindness is translated goodness.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness have I drawn thee. When you think about this, does it affect your own life? Have you ever stopped to think of how much loving kindness God manifested in lavishing his love upon created beings? Will you just for a moment now think about your own body? Think about the way your body is made. Let us start by thinking about the eye.

Have you thought what evidence there is presented of the loving kindness of God in the construction of your eye? Now, God could have said to himself in the creation, well, I want those that I make to be able to see, but I want to make it hard for them to see, and I want the pleasure of seeing to be always accompanied with pain and sorrow. No, God didn't make our eyes that way. God gave us a pupil, and we are able, by a marvelous adjustment within the eye itself, to see without pain in a very light place, or in a very dark place.

You know, there is a wonderful mechanism that constructs it, or that alters itself in order to accommodate the amount of light that's involved. God very kindly gave us each an eyelid, and when we see a dust cloud coming toward us, we are able to shut our eyes. God, in a very gracious and kind and loving way, gave us tears, so that we can wash our eyes clean.

Every part of our bodies was fashioned by a God of loving kindness. Think about the matter of sex, if you will. We're not too delicate to face it.

God could have said, I'm going to arrange things so that people reproduce themselves by this sexual means, but I am going to make it a method of torture. I will make sex the most disagreeable and disgusting and painful and abhorrent thing that man knows, so that they won't produce too many of their own kind. But no, a loving God decides to enable man to reproduce himself through sexual means, and He arranges the human body so that its greatest delight and enjoyment and comfort can be found within that means.

There is great evidence of the loving kindness of God in making us sexual beings, as He has done. To give us five fingers, to give us knees, to give us ears that function, to give us eyes that He has already noted, to give us tongues and voice boxes, and all the blessings of the human body, they must all be interpreted as evidence of the fact that God is full of loving kindness toward us. When you think about the inbuilt curative power of your own body, is it not astonishing that you could go home this afternoon, and in the preparation of your meal, give your finger a very severe cut, and in a few days it would be restored again? You can break a bone, and amazingly enough, those bones can knit together.

Or think about the reflexes that God has given us. I reach out, and I cut, by mistake, something off, and immediately I draw back. Or I'm approaching a situation in my life of great danger, and suddenly I hear, and I draw back.

I become cautious, because God has put within me a sense of fear. My nerves function in such a way as to give me direction and help. You see, if you will think about your body, you will see that in the creation of a human body, God lavished loving kindness.

He could have made it all differently. God could have said, well, I'll see to it now that humankind maintains its existence by eating, but I want this to be a terrible chore. I will make every food taste so awful that they will scarcely be able to consume it.

I will make flowers so ugly that they won't want to look at them. I will make every smell so terrible that it will repel. But no, no, no.

In the creation of God, everything we look at declares his loving kindness. I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Now, you would suppose that an average person with a capacity to see and to think would examine their own body and say, oh, I am seriously and wonderfully made, and now I must discover who made me and fall down and worship that creator.

But no, no. What man has sought to do is to turn the beautiful parts of the creation into filth and corruption, and he bows down and worships that which he has made with his own hands rather than the one that made him. But God doesn't grow angry and say I've had it with humankind, and I'm wiping the whole mess off the face of the earth.

No, he says, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness I have drawn thee. And think, if you will, too, about the arrangement of our lives. Think about the beauty of family and of friends.

Is it not a marvelous thing to have those that know us well, and understand us, and love us, and appreciate us, and encourage us, and bear us up, and share our anguish and sorrows, and encourage us in the great moments of disappointment? Is it not a marvelous thing that a loving God gave us families, and gave us friends, and are not families and friends part of his loving kindness which he intended us to see as part of his means of drawing us to himself? Think of the opportunities that God has given us, challenging opportunities, work, service, opportunities to use our minds, to invent, to create. Or think, if you will, about the blessings of nature, especially living in a climate like this. Just think of the goodness of God in giving us trees to burn, and coal to burn, and natural gases to burn, and petroleum to burn.

And think of the goodness of God in providing us all kinds of things for apparel, so that we can be clothed and not freeze to death. And think of his goodness in providing in nature an abundance of material for the creation of homes, and for the creation of beautiful windows, and lovely rooms like this, and strong buildings capable of taking thousands of people at once and bringing them together in the worship and service of the Almighty. With loving kindness, says God, I have drawn this.

Well, think of the goodness of God in just giving words. Is that not a great blessing? Words, language, the ability to write, the discovery of printing, or the privilege of movement. Would it not be an awful thing to be a lump? But we are free to move.

I could trance a little here this morning. Why not? God made us with ability to move, to enjoy ourselves, to function, to do things, to run, to walk, to dance, to leap, to shout. Do you not recognize that the goodness of God draws thee, draws thee? And think about the ordering of the universe.

What a blessed thing it is that God has given both day and night. I don't know anything I am more thankful for than the privilege of falling into bed at the end of a full and glorious day, and having the light door. What a blessed thing the darkness.

I don't know how many thousands of times I've said, when the darkness has come, thank God for the darkness. And then what a glorious thing it is to rise early in the morning, four o'clock this morning. I had

the privilege of being up, and the thrill, and the joy of being out, and around, and getting ready for service, and honoring the God who made me.

What blessing God gives in the night when we're weary, and the day when we're ready, and vigorous, and prepared to serve and honor him. Let us never forget, the dark and the day are both alike evidences of the loving kindness of God. And think about the season as we came along down President Street this morning.

Suddenly we were struck with a whole corner full of glorious color, magnificent. And Margaret said, look, yes look, is loving kindness. Says God, have I drawn this season, summer, and winter, springtime, and harvest.

All evidences of the loving kindness of our God. Sun, rain, winds, and snow, sunshine, flowers, mountain scenes, fruits, vegetables, all of these things declaring, with loving kindness have I drawn thee. And prophets too, hear me, prophets too, prophets like Jeremiah, to rebuke us for our sin, to point out the right way, and to declare to us in language that can grip our souls and hold us for eternity, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee. And beloved apostles too, like John, to call us liars and liars. When we say we have no sin, when we pretend we need no savior, and a blessed Holy Spirit to woo us, and to win us, to be here among us this morning, and to say you have walked in a dark cloud too long, now it is time to enter the sunshine of my love.

But it isn't all just that which on the surface is good, that is demonstrative of the loving kindness of God. But have you stopped to think that unemployment is an evidence of his loving kindness? Have you? That broken house is an evidence of his loving kindness? Do you realize that when a close friend is suddenly called home, that too is a testimony of God's loving kindness? God could let us run from birth to death without giving us any awareness of the fact that our days are numbered. But no, he loves us too much to let us run that course.

So from time to time, with kindness, with gentleness, with great love, he shakes us and says, stop, stop, stop, look, look, listen. Unemployment can be one of those moments when God brings to us a fresh awareness that we aren't here merely to make our way on our own, doing our thing. There is more to life than work, and more to life than money, and more to life than health, and more to life than family.

Let us realize that broken health and disappointed love, wayward children and personal problems, national economic depressions and political unrest, earthquakes and flood and fire and pestilence and earthquakes, all, all are evidences of the loving kindness of God. He loves us too much to let us plunge into eternity unaware. Now, the goodness of God is normally what he utilizes to draw.

Paul speaks so firmly of this in Romans 2, when he says, do you not know that the goodness of God is calculated to lead you to repentance? I mean, we have been blessed with goodness. If you were to go home this afternoon with the determination of taking pen and paper and writing every blessing down that you have ever received in all your life, it would be impossible. You couldn't do it.

You could lift literally thousands of things if you let your mind go, but you could not exhaust it. But you see, some of us here this morning are depressed and full of sorrow and not enjoying the vigor of God's love, even though he has blessed us with a multitude of loving kindnesses. And so, occasionally, God says,

now I have given you all these rich blessings and you have not yet heeded.

I'll try a little different task. And he lets sorrow and sickness and death occur among us with the expectation that at least some will say, oh Lord, was there something you were trying to say? Have you gotten the message? And God even sends special messengers like Sunday school teachers who say, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. And he gives us pastors after his own heart to encourage and instruct and help nourish, and he gives opportunity after opportunity for us to respond.

I wonder how many of us really appreciate this kind of giving. Now, our appreciation of any blessing is largely determined by how we perceive it. Had we the time this morning, we could go back in the book of Jeremiah and trace something of the situation that existed at the time that Jeremiah wrote.

I do want to take a moment to read out of the second chapter just two verses that will give some hint of what things were like in earlier days as far as these people are concerned. In the second chapter at verse two, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah and said, go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem and save us, sayeth the Lord. I remember this.

I remember the kindness of thy youth. I remember the love of thine espousal when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase.

All that devour him shall offend, the evil shall come upon them, sayeth the Lord. Jeremiah goes on to portray what happened after that, but let's just note those words. I remember, I remember, says God, your first love.

I remember what it was like when we were engaged, so to speak, how you reacted toward me. But now I know what's happened, and as Jeremiah enumerates a dozen or more areas in which they give evidence of backsliding, I repeat what I said a moment ago. Our appreciation of any great truth is largely determined by our realization of where we are.

You try to illustrate. Some of you will remember when it snowed last this year. Can you remember that? We had suddenly a tremendous amount of snow dumped on us, I think seven or eight inches, when it looked as if winter was past.

I remember coming out of my warehouse that night and seeing the awful mess and spending time getting it off the truck sufficiently so I could get underway and coming on home, and it was slippery. Oh, it was, I think, the slipperiest night of the year. And I came on home, and when I came on down my street, I saw a glad sight.

There my two children were out shoveling the driveway. Oh, I was so delighted and so grateful. And I started on up the driveway, and they stood right there with their shovels leaning on them and smiling, as if to say, well, Dad, finally we've done just the right thing getting out here and shoveling.

But I had to stop because I couldn't run into them, and there they were right in the way. Couldn't get in the driveway. I told you this, I think, once before, but I want you to see it in a fresh light.

I stopped, and then they got out of the way, and then I tried to stop, but I couldn't. It was too slippery. They had shovels, but I couldn't get that little distance, so I backed up to make a fresh start, and I backed right

into the ditch, and I got out, and I was laughing, and I said to these dear kids, didn't you see me backing into the ditch? Yeah.

Why didn't you stop me? And they said, Dad, you know the ditch was there. Well, I did. Well, we had a time, I'll tell you.

The three of us working away, trying to get that heavy truck out of the ditch, and we got some old strips of fence, and worked it under the wheels to try and get a little traction, and we labored away, and after quite a while, Margaret came out, and she surveyed the scene, and she said, I think if you went as far forward as you could, and then raced backwards, you'd go right up on the road. I said, I don't think so. Yeah, she said, I really think you could.

Oh, maybe you're right. Now, mind you, we weren't in a bit of trouble. We were in our own driveway in the ditch.

We could have left the truck there, wouldn't made a particle of anything. Well, the four of us worked away, trying to get that vehicle back up on the road, and we didn't have a bit of success, and finally the neighbors next door came out, and they helped, and with all of us pushing, and tugging, and doing everything in our power, suddenly it went back up on the road, and all was well. Well, I was grateful for the neighbors.

It was lovely of them to come out and help, and we thanked them. You know, I haven't gone back 30 times to say thank you. We were in a little trouble, and they kindly came and helped, and it was sufficient to say thank you, but will you take that knife now in your own mind, and move the scene.

Will you see me coming through a mountainous area that night, with the snow flying, and the road so slippery, and will you see me coming on a sharp curb, where there's a very steep embankment, and then see me suddenly plunge off the road, and go crashing down that steep hill, and smashing down through the ice into a creek, and then see me there, in my left arm and leg, caught so I can't move it, and my right arm and my right leg broken, and glass having cut a great gash across my forehead, and blood pouring out, and the icy cold water of the creek seeping in, and filling the vehicle. Now then, suppose someone comes along on the highway, and sees my plight, and comes down into that cold water, and rescues me. Do you think it would be sufficient if I said thank you, and then forgot it? No, my circumstances make the meaning, the value, of the significance of their help altogether different.

May I say to you, what we think of God's everlasting love, and the drawing power of his loving kindness, is vastly affected by our awareness of our situation. If we're just in a little bit, and God comes along and gives us a little boot, it may be enough to say thanks, but none of us were in a little bit. All of us have been in the deepest trouble, trouble so grave and so serious, that we could not help ourselves, and no fellow man would be adequate to come to our aid.

And God himself, in the person of his son, has come, and at great extent, with tremendous personal agony, has rescued us. And our reaction cannot be, it must not be, mere thanks. And if you've done no more than to say thank you, God, for what he's done, you have not yet felt his everlasting love, or known the drawing power of his loving kindness.

You say, what then is appropriate by way of response? The full realization of the love that's involved, that's appropriate, and the return of that kind of love. He gave everything. He paid the supreme price.

What we need is to respond with the supreme price of our awe. Father, there are some here this morning who have been awfully careless, and others who have lived in defeat and discouragement. Wilt thou break through by the power of your everlasting love, and with loving kindness, draw each of us into victory and joy.

In the blessed name of Jesus, Amen.

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