

The Love of God

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the immeasurable greatness, stability, and equality of God's love as symbolized by the New Jerusalem.

Scripture: Revelation 21:15

Topics: "The Love of God", "Divine Love"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the immeasurable greatness, stability, and equality of God's love as symbolized by the New Jerusalem, a city described in Revelation. He explains that the city's dimensions represent the vastness of God's love, which surpasses human understanding and remains constant regardless of our circumstances. Sparks highlights that God's love is available to all, regardless of their background or status, and that it is unchanging and reliable, much like the mountains that stand firm over time. He encourages believers to recognize and accept this divine love, which will be the central theme of eternity. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper appreciation of God's love, which is foundational to the Christian faith.

Transcript

"And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth; and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal" (Revelation 21:15,16).

For the sake of friends who have not been with us before let me just give this word of explanation. We are considering in these days the meaning of this new Jerusalem, this holy city, which the Apostle, in a vision, saw coming down from God out of heaven. We have pointed out that this is not a literal city, but a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ and His Church as God is going to have it at the end.

So now we come to the greatness of the city. The Apostle says that in his vision he saw an angel, in whose hand was a golden reed with which he was measuring the city, and then the Apostle tells us that the measurement was given by the angel - twelve thousand furlongs high and twelve thousand furlongs on every side. And the city was made of transparent gold. That, of course, is something that you have never seen on this earth! The reed with which the city was measured, and the city itself were of the same material: the measurement of the city was by a reed of pure gold, and the city itself was of pure gold. In the Bible gold is always the symbol of the Divine nature, and the supreme thing in that nature is love. It is

this same John who says: "God IS love" (1 John 4:8), and everything that is of God is measured according to the standard of Divine love. When we approached this city earlier in the chapter John told us that he saw "the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God", and the supreme thing about the glory of God is the love of God.

THE GREATNESS OF HIS LOVE

Now look at the size of this city. The measurement is given as twelve thousand stadia. I don't know whether any of you have worked that out, but in English that is one thousand, three hundred and seventy-nine miles, and in metres it is two million, two hundred and twenty thousand. Do you recognize what that represents? That is many times higher than the Jungfrau, and, indeed, many times higher than the highest mountain in this world, Mount Everest. Do you understand now why I say this cannot be a literal city? It is as high as that, as long as that, as wide as that, and is as great as that on every side. This is impossible of literal interpretation, and must therefore represent spiritual principles.

Now understand that we are speaking about the love of God in Jesus Christ expressed in a redeemed people and manifested in its fullness in eternity. If this measurement is something beyond all natural conception, the love of God in Christ Jesus toward us is completely beyond our imagination, and this immense city is a symbol of the immensity of the love of God. The Apostle Paul mentions this in one place, when he prays that the Church may be "rooted and grounded in love", and that it "may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge..." (Ephesians 3:17,18). The love of God surpasses knowledge, just as this symbolic city is something altogether beyond knowledge. That is why we sang that hymn which is all about that Divine love:

"It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine...

Oh, fill me, Jesus, Saviour, with Thy love!"

It will require all eternity to understand that love.

Do you remember what the Apostle Paul says about this love? His description of how great this love is is that it is beyond the greatest things that are known in our human life. He says, in the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (verse 35), and here are some of the big things in human life: "Shall tribulation?" Perhaps you do not know very much about tribulation, but there are some of God's people in various parts of the world who do know the meaning of that word, and for them the second greatest thing in life is tribulation. "Or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" These are all very big things! If you know anything about them you know that they are bigger than anything else except the love of God. But the Apostle has not yet completed his list. He goes on like this: "I am persuaded, that neither death..." Is death a big thing? "...nor life" - and life is a big thing, for it can hold a great many big things - "nor angels..." Well, now, you will have to have a good Bible study with that word! Read all the great things that angels did. On one occasion the earthly Jerusalem was besieged by a great foreign nation, who came with their chariots and their horses, and their men in armour, and they spread themselves like locusts over all the land. The servant of God prayed, and God sent one angel. In the morning, when the men of Jerusalem awoke, that whole army consisted of dead corpses. Only one angel - and a vast and mighty army lay dead! Shall angels separate us from the love of God, whether they be good or bad angels? "Nor principalities..." They are the spiritual authorities that govern the nations of this world, and you must remember that they are SPIRITUAL forces. They are

evil forces, and today you are seeing what they are doing in the nations of this world. They are doing very terrible things: but the Apostle goes on: "Nor things present..." and there are plenty of things present today, enough to frighten anyone. It would not do for me to begin to speak of all these terrible things which are now present. We have read in our papers today of the assassination of the Prime Minister of South Africa, and that within the last few years twenty-six world rulers have been assassinated. These are only a few of the things which are now present. "Nor things to come..." - and the Bible tells us of terrible things that are going to come on this world. On he goes: "Nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation..." Think of anything that would be terrible and great, and the Apostle says: 'Put them all together and they will NOT be able to separate us from the love of God.' How great is the love of God!

This same John wrote in his Gospel: "God so LOVED the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). How great is His love!

It takes something that man cannot measure even to consider the love of God. These measurements of the city are only symbolic of the greatness of the love of God toward you and toward me in Jesus Christ, and when God has done His work in His people eternity will show how great His love was. We may not be able to grasp it or understand it now, but then we shall fully understand, and I think that the thing about which we shall all be talking for all eternity will be: 'Oh, how great was His love!'

Presently the Apostle will tell us who are outside of the city, for he says that there will be many outside. These are the people who never accepted God's love, and for all eternity they have lost this wonderful thing - the immense love of God. What a great thing, therefore, it is for us to accept God's love!

THE STABILITY OF HIS LOVE

If these measurements represent the greatness of God's love, this immense city must be a very, very stable thing. It would be a very big thing to be able to move the Jungfrau, but if you put a hundred Jungfraus on top of one another, no Samson would be able to lift that! Here we come, year after year, year after year, and the mountain is still just in the same place. When I was a little boy I lived where there are some mountains, and I go back there now - and I won't tell you how long it is since I was a little boy! - and see the mountains in exactly the same place. They have not moved nor changed one little bit. You see what I am coming to - how reliable is this love of God! "They that trust in the Lord", said the Psalmist, "Are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever" (Psalm 125:1). One of our New Testament texts says: "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22), and in spiritual language that just means: 'You are come to the love of God, which is unchanging and immovable.' Stability is a characteristic of Divine love.

The Lord Jesus has given us a picture of this in His well-known parable of the Prodigal Son. That son was a son of his father's love, but he despised it and packed up, and went right away from where that love was. He spent all his father's resources in sinful living and brought shame and dishonour upon his father's name. Then, at last he remembered his father's love and said to himself: 'I will arise'. He did not say: 'I will arise and go home', but: 'I will arise and go unto my father'. So he turned his footsteps toward his father again, and Jesus gives us the picture of the father on the top of the house looking to the horizon. I suppose that father had been praying every day: 'Lord, bring my son home.' So every day he went out to see if his prayer was being answered - and then this wonderful day arrived. He saw a black spot on the horizon and said: 'Someone is coming.' He watched, and then he said: 'It is my son!' He did not wait for the

son to arrive. Down the stairs he went and out on to the road. The boy began to make some excuses and give explanations, but the father smothered it all and he could not get it all out. It says: "He (the father) fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). He brought the son back into the house and said: "Let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Now Jesus was saying: 'That is the love of God for man, for sinful man, for man who has gone away from God. God's heart just longs to have that man back again.' The unchanging love of God! The father did not say: 'He is a bad boy. He has not appreciated my love. I wash my hands of him and will have nothing more to do with him!' Oh, no, God's love does not change when we go wrong. How strong is this city! How immovable is this city! How unchangeable is this city! And all that is true of the love of God.

THE EQUALITY OF HIS LOVE

One more thing: I did not expect to be preaching the Gospel in this way this evening, but I have the feeling that this is what the Lord wanted said, and I think He wants us all to have a new understanding of the greatness of His love.

It says that this city is equal on all its sides. It is all the same on the east, on the west, on the north and on the south. The love of God is not bigger for people who live on the east than it is for people who live on the west. It is not different for those who live on the north from what is for those who live on the south. There are the people who have everything that they need and want. We say that they were born with a silver spoon in their mouths. On the other side there are the people who have nothing, the poor, miserable people of this world. There are the people who live in the sun of the east and the people who live in the cold winds of the north. There are all kinds and conditions of people in this world, but the love of God is equal to them all. God has no favourites. There is no partiality about the love of God. It does not matter what we are, or where we are. On every side the love of God is the same. How equal is the love of God! Are you not glad that it is like that? There are those people who have all the advantages. They have godly parents and grandparents, were born into a Christian home and brought up in a Christian atmosphere. There are those people who never had any godly parents or grandparents. They were born into very sinful homes and families. You know, General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, said a very strong thing about those people, and used a word that we don't like using: 'My work is for the people who were damned into this world!' Well, it does not matter which side it is. God's love is no greater for the people who have all the advantages than it is for those who have none. God's love is a very righteous love. It just levels everyone out, and in eternity it will not matter what we were here - we shall have to say: 'It is the love of God that got me here.'

The greatness of His love; the stability of His love; the equality of His love - how wonderful is the love of God! And you and I are called by that love that we, through eternity, shall show it forth to the whole universe.

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