

God Is a God of Love

by Zac Poonen

God's love is perfect and beyond human understanding, and surrendering to it is the key to true blessedness.

Duration: 24:41

Scripture: Matthew 7:11

Topics: "Gods Love", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the foundational principle of God's perfect love for humanity, surpassing any earthly understanding of love. It highlights God's love as compared to a mother's intense love for her newborn child, showcasing the sacrificial nature of God's love. The sermon delves into the misconception of God as a strict judge and the importance of understanding God's intense love as revealed through Jesus Christ. It also discusses the power of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to live according to God's standards and the significance of surrendering every area of life to God for His best.

Transcript

We have been looking at certain foundational principles in God's relationship with man. We must remember that the Bible teaches that God is perfect love. We cannot even understand on earth what that type of love means.

It's way beyond the highest expression of love that this world can think of. When God wants to compare his love for man with a human illustration, in Isaiah 49, 15, he compares it with the love of a mother for a newborn child. A lot of things that we call love on earth, the love between boy and a girl, is influenced a lot.

Our thinking is influenced by what we have read in romantic stories or by the cinema. But that is not the greatest expression of love on the face of the earth. A boy or a girl will not be willing to sacrifice for each other what a mother is willing to sacrifice for her newborn child.

And so when God speaks about his love, he speaks about his love as the love of a mother for a newborn child. Especially when it's first born, a mother's love for that baby is intense even though the mother knows that this baby is going to be very demanding in terms of time and she'll have to make a lot of sacrifices for the baby, she's still willing to do it. And that is only a small picture of the tremendous love that God has for man.

If we don't understand this, we will get a wrong concept of God and a wrong concept of the true Christian faith. Almost all religions in the world proclaim a God who is strict, a judge, and many people anyway, in their understanding of God, think of God as a severe judge or a policeman who is out to catch them for some wrong thing that they did. But the true revelation of God in the Bible, and particularly that which came through Jesus Christ when he came to this earth, is one of a God who loves us intensely.

Jesus constantly tried to explain to his disciples that God was a father, one who cared for his children much more than the best earthly father cared for his child. And Jesus used this expression in Matthew chapter 7, he said, if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give good gifts to those who ask him? So he said that the best earthly father was evil compared to God. That's the meaning of that statement in Matthew 7. You being evil, that means the best earthly father you can think of compared to God is evil.

It doesn't mean that that father is evil, but in comparison to God, it's something like the light of the star compared to the light of the sun is almost like darkness. That's why when the sun rises in the sky, the stars disappear. They don't disappear really, the lights are there, but the light of the sun is so bright, it blots out the light of the stars and it almost becomes like darkness.

And that's what Jesus meant when he said that the best earthly father's love would disappear, become darkness compared to the love of God. This is foundational to our coming into any relationship with God. And many Christians, because they don't have this clear understanding of God's love in their heart, end up with insecurity, fear, sense of guilt, a feeling that God is always telling them you're not good enough.

And this leads to relationship problems with others in families and with other Christians and just with other people in the world. The root cause of all these problems is a lack of understanding of what the New Testament reveals so clearly that God loves us intensely. So everything that God has planned for us and everything that God teaches in his word must be understood in the light of this love.

Otherwise, we'll get it all wrong. When he tells us to give up sin, it's because he loves us. It's just like a father would tell his children not to go to certain places that are dangerous, not to indulge in certain activities that are harmful, not to associate with certain people who would cause problems for them.

It's exactly like that. But if a child doesn't trust his father, which is very often the case with a lot of teenagers, they don't trust the advice of their parents, then they go and do those things that parents have forbidden them from doing and reap the consequences. They get into a lot of problems.

And that's what we see in the human race as well. Man all over the world disobeys God's word and God's commandments, thinking he knows better, and that's the cause of all the problems there are in the world. So when God tells us to turn in repentance, it is for our good.

When he tells us to trust him, that he will lead us in the path that is best for us, that's for our good. Faith means dependence upon God and a confidence in him. I'm saying to God, Lord, I trust you completely.

I can depend on you 100%. I have confidence in you. And faith is also a leaning upon God for strength and power to live this Christian life.

We could describe faith like this, the leaning of the human personality upon God in total confidence in his almighty power, his perfect wisdom, and his perfect love for us. That is what faith is. It is confidence in that and leaning upon him, just like Jesus said, a branch abides in a tree.

And as a result of that abiding, the sap of the tree flows into the branch and produces fruit. This is the only way in God, in which God expects us to do good or anything. There are a lot of things that God asks us to do, which we may not have the strength to do.

For example, the Bible says that we must forgive everybody. Now there may be someone who's done you such tremendous harm, beyond what I can think of, that you find it very, very difficult to forgive him. Well, what does God expect you to do then? You don't have to struggle and struggle and struggle and struggle to try and forgive him.

You need to go to God and say, God, just like the branch cannot produce fruit, except it abides in the tree, I'm going to forgive myself. I find myself unable to forgive this person, even though I want to. But if I abide in you, just like the sap flows into the branch, the power of your Holy Spirit can flow into me.

The same spirit that was in Jesus Christ, when he hung upon the cross and forgave people who did the worst possible thing that any man could do to another person. He said, Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing. And he said it from his heart.

He loved them. This same spirit, when it flows into my heart, is going to produce exactly the same attitude. So true Christianity is not trying to live up to a certain standard.

The Bible says that in the Old Testament period, when God was dealing with the nation of Israel, he gave them ten commandments and certain laws. That entire period of 1,500 years described in the Old Testament is called the period of the law. And during that period, this supply of power to obey God's commandments was not given.

Man was left to fend for himself. He had to do God's commandments with his own ability. And he could keep these external commandments like not worshipping idols or honoring father and mother and keeping the commandments, even without any supernatural power.

I mean, there are many people in the world who are atheists, who are very upright in all these matters of external morality. But when it came to the inner life, the last commandment was, you shall not lust. When it came to that commandment, Paul says in Romans chapter 7, he just couldn't keep it.

He could keep all the other nine, but he couldn't keep this one. The purpose with which God gave the law was to teach man over a period of 1,500 years, you can never, never, never keep my commandments up to my standards with your own ability. You'll be able to keep them externally and live a good moral life.

But I require truth in the inward parts. This is a lovely verse in Psalm 51, where David says, Lord, you require truth in the innermost being. God is not interested in merely having a moral life.

I mean, if you show love to a person on the outside and you hate him in your heart, that doesn't measure up to God's standards. God wants you to, wants your love to flow from within. And this was just not possible in the Old Testament, because man did not have the power.

One of the things that came as a result of Christ's death and resurrection was that when he went up to heaven after his resurrection, he sent the Holy Spirit to the earth to come and live within us, to give us this power so that we can live according to the standards of God. And that is why in this New Testament period, from Acts chapter 2, from the day of Pentecost onwards, Christians now have the power, if they will open themselves up to that power, to be able to keep all of God's commandments from within, which

was impossible even for the greatest men in Old Testament times. And that is why Jesus said in Matthew chapter 11 once, when he was talking about John the Baptist to his own disciples, he said in Matthew 11 and verse 11, he said the greatest man ever born of women thus far, that means from the time of Adam to Christ, the greatest human being ever born was John the Baptist, he said.

But he said, the least person in this new kingdom of the kingdom of heaven is going to be greater than even John the Baptist. In other words, now a new era is beginning in which man will be able to rise much higher than the greatest men in the Old Covenant, in that entire period from Adam to Christ. We need to recognize this, that we have the potential and the ability and the resources to rise higher than anyone who lived prior to Christ coming to earth.

This is unique, this is what the Bible calls a new covenant. Now a lot of Christians don't know about this because the devil has blinded their eyes and so a lot of Christians live just according to the standards of the Old Covenant. In fact, they sink even lower than the level of Old Covenant people.

Think of some of the godly men who lived in Old Testament times like Moses and Elijah and John the Baptist and all these people. Can you say that Christians live at a higher standard than them? No, because they have not understood what the new covenant can lead them into. God does not only give us forgiveness for our sins as we considered earlier, he also gives us strength to overcome sin in our life, strength to do everything every single thing that he commanded.

God is on our side against our passions which are sinful, against the lusts in our flesh, against the devil, against everything that will prevent us from becoming the type of person he wants us to become. You, as a man or a woman, God has got a plan for your life. He wants to make you like his son Jesus Christ in your character and it is to fulfill that purpose in your life that he has sent the Holy Spirit.

But like we considered in an earlier study, God doesn't force anyone into anything. He will do in your life and my life only up to the measure that we yield to him. You know if you can think of your heart like a hotel building with say a thousand rooms, a huge hotel building with many floors and a thousand rooms in it and you are looking at this building from a distance and you see light in one room in the darkness, you can say there is light in that hotel but it's only in one room.

Many people when they receive Christ into their life, it's like that. They've allowed him to occupy one room in their life. But think of every one of those hotel rooms are lit up with light, then you can say the hotel room is full of light.

Otherwise if it's only one room that's lit up, you can say there is light in that hotel but it's only in one room. So this is the difference between just receiving Christ into your life to forgive your sins and allowing him to fill you with his Holy Spirit. When you receive Christ into your life, ask him to forgive your sins, yeah, you can say that Christ has come and he's there, the light of the world is dwelling in you, great, what you're saying is right.

But you're not filled with light, you're not filled with the Holy Spirit. For that you have to open up every door of every room for him to occupy. Then he'll fill the whole being, your whole inner personality with his Holy Spirit and you will be what the Bible refers to in the Acts of the Apostles about certain people, men full of the Spirit.

You may have read that expression when you go through the Acts of the Apostles, certain men were full of the Spirit. This is what it means. There are people who out of gratitude surrender to the Lord every area of their life and the result was the Holy Spirit filled every area that they surrendered to him.

As I said earlier, the Holy Spirit will not enter an area of your life which you don't surrender to him and you will continue to have problems in your life in every area that's unsundered. Every area that you don't surrender to the Holy Spirit, to Jesus Christ, will be an area of darkness and that will be an area of your life over which the devil will have some power. It's much better to yield it all to Christ.

Your finances, your business, your house, your family, your children, everything. He can take much better care of all these things than you can. Why is it then most Christians don't surrender everything though they do open up one room in their heart to Christ? It's because they feel that God is a spoiled sport.

They feel that God will not allow them to enjoy life, that God will make life miserable for them or that God will expect them to do certain things which they may not want to do, which are not good for them. That's why I said right at the beginning, we need to be very clear in our understanding that God is a God of perfect love. He will never, never ask us to do anything which is not for our very best, not even for our good, but for our very best.

In fact, the Bible says that God makes everything around us work together in order to accomplish the very best for us. He says in Romans 8, verse 28, that God works all things for our very best, those who love God and who are called according to His purpose. And that is externally, in our circumstances.

Inwardly, He works in us through the Holy Spirit to do the very best for us within. So here we have a wonderful situation where the Holy Spirit is working within us to do what is the very best for us and working outside of us. Also, God the Father is working through His sovereignty, working everything for our very best.

So a Christian is a very blessed person. There is no situation in his life, if he has surrendered everything to God, there is no situation in his life where he need ever worry that things won't work out as God has planned. God may take his children through some difficult paths, sure.

Don't we want our children to become tough and strong? We don't want our children to have an easy way through life because they won't be able to fit, they won't be fit to face the world. God also allows His children to go through difficult paths, but it's all planned in love. And once we understand that, we will not hesitate to surrender everything to Christ.

Now we hear a lot of preachers telling Christians to surrender everything to Christ. And a lot of Christians hear that and agree with it, they nod and say that's right, but they don't surrender all because they are not so sure whether it's going to work out for the very best if they surrender everything to Christ. And that's why it's very important for us to be gripped by what Jesus tried to emphasize to His disciples that their Heavenly Father was interested in the very best for them.

He used so many illustrations. He said they never need have any fear because the Father who feeds the birds would feed them, the one who clothes the grass of the field would clothe them and take care of all their needs. There's a wonderful promise in Philippians 4 in verse 19 which says, my God will supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

That means God doesn't give us everything we want. Thank God He doesn't do that. His love is the love of a father who desires the very best for his children and a good father will not give his children everything they want, but he will give his children everything they need.

And that is how God is too. The promise in Philippians 4 and verse 19 is God will supply all your need. So think of that, the pictures that we have considered of God as a very compassionate mother and a very loving father, a combination of both as a parent interested in the very best for their child.

So a true child of God, one who surrendered everything to Christ is the most blessed man on the face of the earth, really. And it is this blessedness that the devil wants to deprive you of by warning you and telling you not to surrender this part of your life or not to surrender that part of your life. And that's the part of your life which is going to be under the control of Satan, the area where he's going to have power and that's the area of your life that's going to cause problems for you forever.

So isn't it wonderful to be able to give all, like it says in Romans 12 and verse 1, I beseech you brethren, Paul says, in view of all the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice to God which is your reasonable service or spiritual service of worship, which means the least that you can do to express your gratitude to God for all that he's done for you is to surrender your body to him and say, Lord, I want you to fulfill your plan in this body. Proverbs 3 and verse 6, it says, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. That means in every single area of my life, I'm going to be, if I say, Lord, I want to acknowledge you, you are going to be Lord of my life in every single area.

I want you to guide me and lead me. Then he will ensure that everything works out for the very best in every single area of your life. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.

God bless you.

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