

## "God's Love for Us"

If we could but grasp how great the love of God is for us, it would change our lives. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. This is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." No one loves you like the Lord Jesus. Stay with us while we explore God's love.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way Lord's Way. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's way. From start to finish the Bible is God's supreme story of love and redemption. The more we read the Bible, the more we can understand the heart of the God who created us and sustains us in our very existence. Though mankind can be hard to love, God has never faltered in wanting to bless those who seek His face and draw near. James 1:17 says, that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." We're truly grateful that you've joined us today; we want to be part of your life each week.

Now God hasn't hidden His love for us; God displayed it beyond dispute in the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The Bible says in Romans 5:6 to 8, "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." We were weak, ungodly, and sinners; but Christ was still willing to die for our sins and to wash us clean in His blood. Such love is truly abundant and beyond comprehension.

Jesus bore the cross to forgive us of our sins and to open the door to have a loving relationship with our Father in Heaven. The Lord loved us when we were weak and couldn't save ourselves. He helped us when we were ungodly and had little thought of Him. He died for us while we were sinners, who had offended Him. Christ loved our souls when we didn't deserve it, understand it, or appreciate it. Such amazing love!

Now if you want to study more about God's love, we offer the information on this program free. If you want a printed copy of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now we also stream this program on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Ephesians 3:14 to 19, and we'll explore God's love for us.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 3, verses 14 to 19, and actually include part of a prayer that Paul is praying. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." Oh, what a wonderful prayer.

Let's pray together. "Father we pray and bow our knees before You, knowing that You are our great Father, and that You love us. And help us Father to understand more fully, the height and breadth and length and depth of the love that You have for us. We know it surpasses knowledge, but we pray that You will help us to have a deeper understanding of that love, and to love You in return, and to be obedient to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Old Testament uses a rich and amazing word to describe the love God has for His people. The Bible says God is abounding in this kind of love. Some versions call it “steadfast love,” some “lovingkindness,” and some simply “mercy.”

Psalm 103, verses 8 to 14 says, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He doesn’t deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.”

“Steadfast” love is the deepest and best love; it’s the kind of true love that doesn’t let go and doesn’t fail. It’s loyal, faithful, kind, and good. It’s compassionate and merciful. This type of love is built upon a voluntary covenant, an everlasting commitment to those who are in His favor. Psalm 86:15 says, “But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” Because the God of Heaven is kind and good, He’s willing to pardon and forgive our sins, if we’ll remain faithful to Him.

When you consider all that Jesus gave up in bearing the cross to save us from sin, you can’t doubt His love. If anything, the magnificent love of Jesus was stubborn, unfailing, and utterly unselfish. Jesus didn’t merely give up something; He sacrificed Himself completely. On the cross the innocent Lord Jesus sacrificed everything. He kept silent and did nothing, while men slandered Him, falsely accused Him, condemned Him, scourged Him, mocked Him, and crucified Him. 1 Peter 2:22 to 24 says, that “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he didn’t revile in return; when he suffered, he didn’t threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”

Jesus bore the punishment and death for our sins, sins we should have borne, and the punishment we should have had, and He bore it personally in his own body. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). His suffering was physical and spiritual. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For our sake he made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Everything that Jesus did, He did out of an undeniable and pure love for us. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane to know that he would suffer scourging and crucifixion? According to Matthew 26:38 Jesus was greatly troubled and sorrowful, even to the point of death. Luke 22:44 says, “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.”

They didn’t simply bind Jesus, they nailed His hands and feet to a rugged cross and suspended Him in the most agonizing position. As they crucified Him, He prayed that the Father would forgive them. They mocked Him, insulted Him, and did their very worst to Him. And through all of His suffering, Jesus remained quiet; He uttered no threats. He didn’t even revile them in return. He didn’t call for the twelve legions of angels to wipe them out. The Lord’s stubborn love lasted for six long hours on the cross. And no matter how ugly men were to Jesus, Jesus, His steadfast love held Him to the cross. He loved us to the end.

1 Timothy 2, verses 3 to 4 says, “This is good, and it’s pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Again, 2 Peter 3 verse 9 says, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not

wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” God doesn’t want a single soul to be lost, but our heavenly Father grants us the freedom to choose Him or to choose sin. You can’t make someone love you by force. Nor did God did make us robots who mindlessly act at His command. God wants us to know Him, to know the truth and to love Him freely for Who He is. This means we must be free to choose Him or reject Him. God loves everyone, but His blessing and grace are reserved for those who choose to love Him. We must freely and lovingly choose to believe in Him, to repent of our sins, and to follow Him.

Occasionally I hear people speak of God’s “unconditional love.” Yes, I know what Jesus said in Matthew 5:45 that God “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” God is certainly good to all! And Jesus didn’t bear the cross for us only, because we were so good and deserved it. No, Jesus died for us because we were sinful and lost. And in that sense, He unconditionally took the initiative; but we cannot for that reason assume that to remain in God’s love we can do whatever we wish. We can’t assume that God’s love for us will continue to bless us if we turn from Him.

The Lord’s steadfast love, His covenant love of promise, has conditions. The Lord Jesus said in John 14, verses 23 to 24, that “If anyone loves me (now did you hear the word “if”), (if anyone loves me) he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. But whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.” God promises love and abiding presence to those who love Him and keep His words. A person who doesn’t love God won’t care about keeping God’s words.

We cannot sin all that we wish and still count on the favor of God. It’s a fantasy to think we can rebel against God and still be right with Him. It’s fantasy to think we can remake God in our own image and still please Him. It’s fantasy to think we can rewrite His commandments, ignore His holiness, corrupt His character, and forget His justice but still count on His love.

Hebrews 10:26 to 31 says, “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who’s set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It’s a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” We must never take the love and grace of God for granted. It’s too valuable to squander.

You might be thinking at this point, “Well Phil don’t you remember what the Bible says? God is love.” Yes, I know 1 John 4 verse 8. But picking a passage out of the Bible and ignoring other verses that are just as inspired isn’t accurately handling the word of truth. We shouldn’t understand 1 John 4:8 that “God is love”, without also consulting 1 John 1:5 to 7. These verses say: “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, God, while we walk in darkness and sin, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

J. I. Packer said in his book, *Knowing God*, “that the God who is love is first and foremost light, and sentimental ideas of his love as an indulgent, benevolent softness, divorced from moral standards and concerns, must therefore be ruled out from the start. God’s love is holy love. The God whom Jesus

made known to us is not a God who is indifferent to moral distinctions, but a God who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, a God whose ideal for his children is that they should 'be perfect. . . as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5 and verse 48). He won't take into his company any person, however orthodox in mind, who will not follow after holiness of life."

Hebrews 12 and verse 14 says, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Some might wonder if God loves us, why does He insist on our living holy lives? Some think if God loved us, He wouldn't demand that we live by all those rules. But let's stop here and think. Is God childish and trivial? Are His laws petty? No. God insists His people live holy lives to protect us and give us peace. We should consider the righteous way of life as a precious gift, not a burden, petty, or trivial. God isn't being mean when He asks us to treat others kindly or to refrain from evil. He's showing us His love by helping us live good lives.

When we sin against Him by going against His commandments, He disciplines us with love. Godly discipline is not abuse; it's training given for our good. Proverbs 3:11 to 12 says, "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." Hebrews 12 verses 10 to 11 explains that God "disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." God disciplines our sins that we may share in His holiness and live with Him. He acts for the long-term and for that good not just simply for the moment.

Now our society despises discipline, thinking love leaves people alone to do anything they want. They believe speaking against any behavior is mean-spirited and judgmental. But God speaks against sin out of love not meanness. Remaining silent about sinful behaviors that ruin lives is far more mean than warning somebody about sin. God speaks out against sin because He cares. He wants to bless us.

Why is this important? Because the Lord created us for more than what takes place in this life. God loves you enough to be interested in your life here on earth and in the hereafter. He wants you to live with Him forever and ever in heaven. And like Paul, we pray "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful that You love us enough to discipline us and to help us to understand what is good and what is bad. We're thankful that You loved us enough to send Your son Jesus to the cross to die for us, even when we didn't understand it or deserve it. And Father we're thankful for the day to day blessings You give us. Help us to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Lord Jesus touched lives throughout His ministry. He healed the sick, the lepers, the blind, and the deaf. He raised the dead, walked on water, stilled the storm, and fed the multitudes. When men did their worst to Him, He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they not know what they do." Peter described Jesus in Acts 10 verse 38 as One who "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." The Lord Jesus is still doing good in the lives of people. He leads them out of bondage to sin and to become children of God. He leads them out of distress into hope, out of doubt into faith, and out of apathy into love.

We need the love of God in our lives every day! The more we grasp how much God loves us, the more we'll determine to demonstrate that same kind of lasting, committed love. Knowing the love of God will make us better fathers and husbands, better mothers and wives, better citizens, better

children, and better friends. God's love teaches us patience and kindness, compassion and forgiveness, and forbearance and loyalty. Love motivates us to be holy and faithful. It teaches us to love the truth and to live with integrity and virtue. We need God's love to become better people.

The love of God should make everyone to want to become a Christian. And you become a Christian by placing your trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, turning away from sin and begin showing your love for God, confessing Christ before others, and by being baptized into Christ. When you're baptized, the Lord washes away your sins (Acts 22:16) and adds you to His family the church. Nothing you will do today is more important than becoming a Christian. Won't you become one today?

We hope we've helped you understand the love of God. If you want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org).

Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs that you watch; this helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.