

## God's Love for Us Ephesians 3:14-19

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

If we could but grasp how greatly God loves us, it would \_\_\_\_\_ our lives. No one loves you like the Lord Jesus. From start to finish, the Bible is God's supreme \_\_\_\_\_ of love and redemption. The more we read the Bible, the more we can understand the \_\_\_\_\_ of God who created us and sustains our very existence. Though mankind can be \_\_\_\_\_ to love, God has never faltered in wanting to \_\_\_\_\_ those who seek His face and draw near. James 1:17 says, "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."

God hasn't hidden His love for us; God has displayed it beyond dispute in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus Christ upon the cross. **Read what the Bible says in Romans 5:6-8.** We were weak, ungodly, and sinners; but Christ was still \_\_\_\_\_ to die for our sins, to wash us clean by His blood. Such love is truly abundant and beyond comprehension.

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

### **Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Ephesians 3:14-19.**

The Old Testament uses a rich and amazing word to \_\_\_\_\_ the love that God has for His people. The Bible says that God is \_\_\_\_\_ in this kind of love. Some versions call it "steadfast love," some "lovingkindness," and some simply just "mercy."

### **Read Psalm 103:8-14.**

"Steadfast" love is the deepest and best love; it's the kind of \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_ to pardon and forgive our sins if we remain \_\_\_\_\_ to Him.

When you consider all that Jesus gave up in bearing the cross to save us from sin, you cannot \_\_\_\_\_ His love. If anything, the magnificent love of Jesus was stubborn, unflinching, and utterly unselfish. Jesus didn't merely give up something; He sacrificed Himself \_\_\_\_\_. On the cross the \_\_\_\_\_ 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. **Read what 1 Peter 2:22-24 says.**

Jesus bore the punishment and death for our \_\_\_\_\_, and it's the punishment that we should have borne. He bore it personally in his own \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). His suffering was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew \_\_\_\_\_ sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Everything that Jesus did, He did out of an undeniable and pure \_\_\_\_\_ for us. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane to know that he would \_\_\_\_\_ 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 agony He \_\_\_\_\_ more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

They didn't simply bind Jesus; they \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_ them. They mocked Him, insulted Him, and did their very \_\_\_\_\_ to Him. Through all of His suffering, Jesus remained \_\_\_\_\_; 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. No! The Lord's stubborn love lasted for \_\_\_\_\_ long hours on the cross. No matter how ugly men were to Jesus, Jesus' steadfast love held Him to the cross. He loved us to the end!

First Timothy 2:3-4 says, "This is good, and it's pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires \_\_\_\_\_ people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his \_\_\_\_\_ as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that \_\_\_\_\_ should perish, but that \_\_\_\_\_ should reach repentance." God doesn't want anybody to be lost, but our heavenly Father grants us the \_\_\_\_\_ to choose Him or to choose sin. You can't make someone love you by \_\_\_\_\_. God wants us to know Him, and to know the truth, and to love Him freely for Who He is. This means we must be free to \_\_\_\_\_ Him or \_\_\_\_\_ Him. God loves everyone, but His blessing and grace are \_\_\_\_\_ for those who choose to love Him. We must freely and lovingly choose to \_\_\_\_\_ in Him, to \_\_\_\_\_ of our sins, and to \_\_\_\_\_ Him.

Occasionally people speak of God's "unconditional love." Yes, I know Jesus said in Matthew 5:45 that God "makes his \_\_\_\_\_ rise on the evil and on the good, and sends \_\_\_\_\_ on the just and on the unjust." God is certainly \_\_\_\_\_ to all! Jesus didn't bear the cross for us because we were so good and deserved it. No, Jesus died for us because we were sinful and \_\_\_\_\_ saving. 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 \_\_\_\_\_. We can't assume God's love for us will \_\_\_\_\_ to bless us if we turn from Him.

The Lord's steadfast love, His covenant love of promise, has \_\_\_\_\_. **Read what the Lord Jesus said in John 14:23-24.** God promises His love and He promises His abiding presence to those who love Him and \_\_\_\_\_ His words. A person who doesn't love God won't \_\_\_\_\_ about keeping God's words.

It's a fantasy to think that we can sin all we wish and still count on the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. It's fantasy to think that we can \_\_\_\_\_ against God and still be right with Him. It's fantasy to think that we can remake God in our own image and still \_\_\_\_\_ Him. It's fantasy to think that we can rewrite His commandments, ignore His holiness, corrupt His character, and forget His justice but still \_\_\_\_\_ on His love.

**Read what Hebrews 10:26-31 says.** Oh friend, we must never take the love and grace of God for \_\_\_\_\_. It's too \_\_\_\_\_ to squander.

You might be thinking at this point, "Phil don't you remember that the Bible says, 'God is \_\_\_\_\_.'" Yes, I know 1 John 4:8. But picking a passage out of the Bible and ignoring other verses that are just as inspired isn't accurately \_\_\_\_\_ the Word of God. We shouldn't understand 1 John 4:8, "God is love," without also consulting 1 John 1:5-7. **Read 1 John 1:5-7.**

As J. I. Packer said in his book, *Knowing God*, "the God who is love is first and foremost \_\_\_\_\_, and sentimental ideas of his love as an indulgent, benevolent \_\_\_\_\_, divorced from moral standards and concerns, must therefore be ruled out from the start. God's love is \_\_\_\_\_ love. The God whom Jesus made known is not a God who is indifferent to \_\_\_\_\_ distinctions, but a God who loves righteously and righteousness and He \_\_\_\_\_ iniquity, a God whose ideal for his children is that they should 'be perfect. . . as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48). He will not take into his \_\_\_\_\_ any person, however orthodox in mind, who will not follow after holiness of life."

Hebrews 12:14 says, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the \_\_\_\_\_ without which no one will see the Lord." Some might wonder if God loves us, why would He \_\_\_\_\_ on our living holy lives? Some think that if God loved us, He wouldn't \_\_\_\_\_ that we live by all those rules. But let's stop here and think. Is God trivial? Are His laws petty? No! God insists His people live holy lives so as to \_\_\_\_\_ us and give us peace. We should consider the righteous way of life that Jesus commands as a precious \_\_\_\_\_, not as a burden or something petty or trivial. God isn't being \_\_\_\_\_ when He asks us to treat others kindly or to refrain from evil. Everyone \_\_\_\_\_ when we live good lives. God's goodness is one of the ways that He shows His love.

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

Our society \_\_\_\_\_ discipline, thinking love leaves people alone to do anything they want. They believe that \_\_\_\_\_ against any behavior is mean-spirited and judgmental. But God speaks against sin out of love, not meanness. Remaining \_\_\_\_\_ about sinful behaviors that ruin lives is far more cruel than simply \_\_\_\_\_ someone. God speaks out against sin because He \_\_\_\_\_, and He wants to \_\_\_\_\_ us.

Why is this important? Because the Lord created you for \_\_\_\_\_ than what takes place in this life. God loves you and is interested in your life here on \_\_\_\_\_ and in the hereafter. He wants you to live with Him forever in \_\_\_\_\_. Along with Paul, we pray “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through \_\_\_\_\_; *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 \_\_\_\_\_, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

The Lord Jesus touched \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.” Peter described Jesus in Acts 10:38 as One who “went about doing \_\_\_\_\_ and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” The Lord Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_ doing good in the lives of men and women. He leads them out of \_\_\_\_\_ to sin to become \_\_\_\_\_ of God. He leads them out of \_\_\_\_\_ into hope, out of \_\_\_\_\_ into faith, and out of \_\_\_\_\_ into love.

We need the love of God in our \_\_\_\_\_ every day! The more we grasp how much He loves us, the more we’ll determine to \_\_\_\_\_ that same kind of lasting, committed love. Knowing the love of God will \_\_\_\_\_ better fathers and husbands, better mothers and wives, better citizens, better children, and better friends. God’s love \_\_\_\_\_ us patience and kindness, compassion and forgiveness, and forbearance and loyalty. Love \_\_\_\_\_ us to be holy and faithful. It teaches us how to love the \_\_\_\_\_ and to live with integrity and virtue. We need God’s love to become \_\_\_\_\_ people.

The love of God should make you want to become a better Christian. When you become a Christian by placing your trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, when you are turning away from sin, when you’re confessing Christ before others, and when you’re baptized into Christ, you become a Christian. When you’re baptized, the Lord washes away your sins; He adds you to His family, the church. And nothing you will do today is more important than becoming a Christian, and professing Your love for God. Won’t you become one today?

Get involved with a church of Christ in your area. They’re the reason that we don’t ask for money. If you’re looking for a church home, a Biblical church home, we’ll be happy to help you find one. Churches of Christ love and they want guests to come and worship with them and if you go and worship there, you’ll be glad that you did.