

The Love of God

If we could but grasp how greatly God loves us, it would _____ our lives. No one _____ 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, the God who created us and sustains our very existence. Though mankind can be hard 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 _____ is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

God hasn't _____ His love for us; God displayed it beyond dispute in the death of Jesus upon the cross. First John 4:8-10 says, "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might _____ through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our _____." Though we were lost and unable to save ourselves by ourselves, God _____! Christ willingly died for our sins and washed us clean in His blood. Such love is truly beyond comprehension.

Jesus bore the cross to atone for our sins and open the _____ to 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 souls when we didn't deserve it, understand it, or appreciate it. Such amazing love!

Our reading comes from Ephesians 3:14-19, and contains one of the prayers of the apostle Paul.

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

Psalm 103:8-14 says, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to _____ and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our _____, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so _____ is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he _____ our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who _____ 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 _____. 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 _____. 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 _____ and forgive our sins, if we will remain faithful to Him.

Longer quotations may not appear in the Study Sheet, but can be read in the accompanying transcript.

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When you consider all that Jesus gave up in bearing the cross to save us from sin, you can't _____ His love. If anything, the magnificent love of Jesus was stubborn, unfailing, and utterly unselfish. Jesus didn't merely give up something; He sacrificed _____ completely. On the cross the innocent Lord Jesus sacrificed everything. He kept _____ and did nothing, while men slandered Him, falsely accused Him, condemned Him, scourged Him, mocked Him, and crucified Him. First Peter 2:22-24 says, "He committed no _____, 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 He continued entrusting himself to him who judges righteously or justly. He himself _____ 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 _____ sins, sins that we should've borne the punishment personally, we should have borne it in our own body, but He personally bore it in his body. The Lord _____ on Jesus the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). His suffering was not only physical, it was also _____. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "For our _____ he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God." Everything that Jesus did He did out of an undeniable and _____ love 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 _____ 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. They crucified Him. He prayed that the Father would _____ them. They mocked Him, insulted Him, and did their very _____ to Him. Through all of this suffering, Jesus remained quiet; He uttered no _____. He didn't even _____ them in return. He didn't call for the twelve legions of _____ to wipe them out. No, the Lord's stubborn love lasted for six 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 very end.

First Timothy 2:3-4 says, "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who _____ all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Again, 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 any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." God doesn't want anyone to be _____, but our heavenly Father grants us the freedom to choose Him or to choose sin. You can't make someone love you by _____. God wants us to know Him, to know the truth, and to love Him _____ for Who He is. This means we must be free to _____ Him or to reject Him. God loves everyone, but His blessing and grace are _____ 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 people _____ of God's "unconditional love." Yes, I know that Jesus said that God "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). God is certainly good to _____! Jesus didn't bear the cross just for us because we were so _____ and deserved it. No, Jesus died for us because we were _____ and needed 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 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 _____. The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will _____ my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him

and make our home with him. And whoever doesn't love me does not _____ my words. And the word that you hear is not _____ but the Father's who sent me" (John 14:23-24). God promises His love and abiding presence to those who love Him and keep His words. A person who doesn't love God won't _____ about keeping God's words.

It's fantasy to think that we can sin all we wish and still count on the _____ of God. It's 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 _____ 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 _____ on His love.

Hebrews 10:26-31 says, "For if we go on sinning deliberately (willingly, willfully) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a _____ for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of _____ that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who set aside the law of Moses dies without _____ 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 _____ 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 _____ his people.' It's a _____ 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 _____." 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 handling the word of _____. We shouldn't understand 1 John 4:8 without also consulting 1 John 1:5-7. 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 while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not _____ the truth. But if we _____ 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."

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 softness, 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 moral distinctions, but a God who _____ righteousness and _____ 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 company any person, however orthodox in mind, who will not _____ after holiness of life."

Hebrews 12:14 says, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will _____ 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 demand that we live by all those _____, but let's stop here and think. Is God trivial? Are His laws petty? No. God insists that His people live holy lives so as to _____ us and give us peace. We should consider the righteous way of life that Jesus Christ commands as a precious _____, not 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 benefits when we live _____ lives. God's goodness is one of the ways that He shows His love.

When we Christians sin against Him by _____ His commandments, He disciplines us with love. Godly discipline is not abuse; it's _____ given for our good. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, "My son, do not _____ 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.” The book of Hebrews explains that God “disciplines us for our _____, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful _____ of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:10-11). God disciplines our sins so that we may _____ His holiness and live with Him. He acts for the long-term, and the long term good, not simply for the moment.

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

Why is this important? Because the Lord created you and me for _____ than what takes place in this life. God loves you and is interested in your life here on earth _____ 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 knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

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 for their forgiveness. 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 our lives and blessing us richly. He leads us out of _____ to sin so that we can become children of God and live in righteousness. He leads us 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 He 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, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, forbearance, and loyalty. Love motivates us to be holy and faithful. It teaches us how to love the truth and live with integrity and virtue. We need God’s love to become better people.

The love of God should make you want to become a Christian. You become a Christian by placing your trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, turning away from sin, confessing Christ before others, and by being baptized into Christ. When you’re baptized, the Lord washes away your sins 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?