

"The Greatest Love"

The word "love" is used many ways. And we're wondering what is the true love and what is the greatest love ever known? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're considering the great love that God has for us.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures provide for us the greatest love story of all time. The willing sacrifice of Christ for you and me must never be taken for granted. This is not merely a story; it's true history message and should touch our hearts and lives. Jesus was no mythical figure; He was a real person who offered His real body on a real cross for a real problem to bring about a real solution. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." Well that's the kind of love that Christ had for us! Jesus knew that we were in a desperate condition and doomed to be lost. Ephesians 2:1 to 3 says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, (and) of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (And then he says) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Now if the text had stopped there, we would have no hope. Thankfully, Ephesians 2:4 to 5 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." God was indeed rich in mercy and great in love and He gave us hope and life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now we offer this study on the greatest love free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, 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. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from Isaiah 53:4 to 6, and we'll examine the sacrificial love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our reading today comes from the prophet Isaiah chapter 53 verses 4 to 6. And they include a passage that prophecies the death of Jesus. And we have example of this very passage that date from the second century BC. It is a true prophecy. It came to be true.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;

But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.

That is a true statement about the sacrifice of Jesus. How He died for us for our sins. Let's pray. Father we're so thankful for Jesus and for what He did for us. That He would give Himself to be crucified so that we might have life eternal and the forgiveness of sins. Father help us to love You with all our heart, and soul and mind and strength and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

John 3:16 and 17 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only (and some version say "only begotten) Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." This passage suggests the greatest love for the greatest number at the greatest cost and for the greatest salvation came in Christ. It indeed opens the way for all people to escape condemnation and to find salvation in Christ Jesus. Oh yes, Jesus died for everyone.

Paul proclaimed in 1 Timothy 1:15 to 16 that, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." Now the love of God was not simply for those of ancient times; it's for all people everywhere. For all time. God knew this sinful world needed a Savior, and Jesus came into the world with patience for a weak, flawed, and sinful world, including you and me.

God's heart and the Lord's heart wanted the best for us. They didn't want to see us lost forever and cursed with the devil and his angels. 1 Timothy 2 verses 3 to 6 says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time." Jesus was willing to give Himself, His own body and blood, as a ransom for our salvation. He gave us His word so that we might know the truth and be set free.

God loved the world. Have you ever thought about the people in this sinful world? Many in this world don't know and don't care about God, but God cares about them. God went so far as to demonstrate His love for them in the most dramatic way. Romans 5:6 to 8 describes the kind of people God and the Lord Jesus loves. It says, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Helpless people cannot save themselves by themselves; they need a Savior. Ungodly people don't care and never give God a second thought, but God cared about them. Sinners offend God with their selfish and sinful ways, but God still demonstrated His love for them, the sinners. God took the first step. It was a step of great love toward a weak, ungodly, sinful humanity. He loved them when they couldn't help themselves, when they didn't care about Him, and when they willfully sinned against Him. Oh we didn't beg God to take this step; He planned it to wake us up to the difference between being cursed for an eternity and being saved.

God wasn't merely wanting to save us; He wanted an eternal relationship with us. He wanted us to be His children and to follow His will. He gave us Christ who suffered the cross, the Bible to educate and guide us, the church as a family, the hope of eternal life, and daily grace and favor. Romans 8:32 says that, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also

with Him freely give us all things?” We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1 verse 3). And God’s love begins with the cross, but it lasts eternally. Count your blessings.

When Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B. C., Jeremiah mourned greatly; but he could still see God’s love. Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 3:22 to 24, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’” Oh God has never given up on us. We may give up on Him and turn from Him; but if we remain faithful to Him, He will remain faithful to us.

Jesus stayed faithful to His disciples, even though He knew they would scatter from Him when He was arrested and then crucified. John 13:1 says, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, (that is the night before Jesus died) Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” The upcoming death of Jesus left him troubled and grieved. Matthew 26:37 and 38 says, “And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.’”

Luke 22:44 says, “And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.” I’ve had anxiety a few times in my life, but I’ve never faced such overwhelming grief and distress. The thought of being falsely tried and lied about, the thought of beaten and scourged, the thought of shamefully being nailed to a cross, and the thought being a sacrificial offering for the sins of the whole world must have burdened His soul. Jesus knew that He would die a long, shameful, agonizing death. Because He loved us, He was willing to bear our sins on the cross.

Matthew 26:51 to 54 says, “And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and (he) drew out his sword, and (he) struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. (And) Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? “How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?””

The attitude of Jesus while He suffered reveals how very much He loved us. Jesus began His suffering with a prayer to the Father. His prayer revealed His heart for people. While one might expect Him to concentrate on what was happening to Him, He was focused on those who were putting Him to death. Luke 23:33 to 34 says that, “When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’” And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. While the pagan, Roman soldiers were callously putting nails through His hands and feet and gambling over his clothes, Jesus prayed for their forgiveness. He was dying even for the ones who were piercing Him.

Peter recalled the suffering of Jesus on the cross and offering His body as an example for those who suffer unjustly today. 1 Peter 2:21 to 24 shows the noble love of our Savior: “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin

and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” We too need to entrust our souls to God.

Jesus could see beyond what was happening to Him; He could see His suffering did show love for God and accomplish God’s will; and He could see His blood would show His love and cleanse people from their sins. 1 Peter 3:18 says, “For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, so that He might bring you to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.” Love filled everything that Jesus did on the cross. The cross could kill His body, but it could not kill His love!

Even after many hours of horrible agony, Jesus willingly remained on the cross. Jesus didn’t avoid the cross and didn’t quit while suffering. He didn’t call the twelve legions of angels to rescue Him and destroy His enemies. He didn’t threaten those who caused His suffering but prayed for their forgiveness. Jesus knew that to the end His suffering prematurely would mean He wouldn’t accomplish God’s will. That is if He gave up He wouldn’t accomplish God’s will to redeem us. Jesus came to this earth to be the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). And He came to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19 verse 10). “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20 and verse 28).

We too face many problems, just as they did in other times. Paul wrote in Romans 8:35 to 39, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God’s love will not leave us as long as we remain in His love. We must never turn our backs and leave God. The Lord Jesus said in John 15:9 to 10, “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” Jude 21 says, “keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.” The Lord Jesus said in John 14:21 that, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” 1 John 4 and verse 16 says that, “We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

The Lord expects us to love Him, just as He has loved us. After Peter denied the Lord three times, the Lord asked him about his love. John 21:15 to 17 says: When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” You see love isn’t just professed; it always acts and demonstrates itself. Do you love the Lord? Show it.

Let’s pray together. Oh Heavenly Father help us to love You with all our hearts. And to love others the way You have loved us. Help us to do Your will and to show that love that we have for You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Lord Jesus didn’t sacrifice Himself at such a great cost to leave us where He found us. Jesus didn’t bear the cross for us and then forget us. He wanted something better for us. And He loved us first, wanting us to love Him in return. He wanted a relationship with us that would last more than a

lifetime. He wanted to be with us eternally. Are you close to the Lord? Can you say that you really know Him? Are you in a right relationship with Him?

1 John 2:3 to 6 says, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." When you keep the Lord's commandments, you can say that you are truly in a right relationship with Him.

To begin your walk with Christ, you must obey the gospel of Christ. Obedience means that you do things His way, not your way. Jesus obeyed by doing the will of the Father. And we obey by doing the will of our Lord Jesus. By faith and love for Jesus, we obey by turning away from sin and turning to righteousness. We obey by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, confessing our faith in Him. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water so that our sins will be forgiven (Acts 2 and verse 38). We're buried and raised with Him to walk in newness of life, free from sin (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). Won't you obey today?

We hope that our study about the greatest love helps you to focus on loving God and doing His will. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send 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. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches that are in your area at www.searchtv.org. And you can watch SEARCH on YouTube anytime! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs when you watch. 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.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And 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 tell a friend about this program. And as always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.