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Love Is...

730-A

Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)



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Love Is...

How rich, how deep, the love of God?
Can ever man redeemed perceive
The height, the breadth, the depth, of all
The love of God he has received?

No! finite minds just cannot grasp
The depth of what that love can mean,
For all it holds within its grasp
The eyes of man have thus not seen.

And yet, in Jesus Christ, we can,
Day by day, and hour by hour,
Behold the storehouse of that love
And marvel at its depth and power;

Experiencing that precious love,
Released through Christ, the Living Word;
Falling to our knees in awe,
Singing out in joyful chorus, "Jesus Christ is Lord!"

Oh, the love of God. If we each had upon this earth a thousand years, we could perhaps know a hundred times as much as we know of the love of God. Yet, at best, we would but have a fragment of it, like a tiny drop of water taken from an ocean whose expanse stretches seemingly beyond the horizons. We can never grasp the whole of it, but we are entreated to devote a lifetime to increasingly understanding a portion of the unsearchable riches of the love of God. Using the spade of the Spirit and the treasure of the Word, we dig yet a little deeper into the riches of His love. We have been traveling for some months now down the highway of God's Living Legends. We have been following the road signs etched in Scripture and thus pulling off along the way into the homes of God's greats to see them as they fight the fight of faith and behold in them the crux of our own spiritual battles.

We have stopped at the homes of Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Lot, Moses and dozens of others as well. In recent months, as we have journeyed through the province of the judges, we have stopped to visit the likes of Ehud, Deborah, Barak, Gideon and others. We have seen in God's chosen people, Israel, a personalized portrait of our own inconsistencies and our own rebellion. We have seen

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an overview of the principles of spiritual warfare as the Israelis again and again encountered the enemy.

In the last lesson, we pulled off at a rest stop and determined that we had been looking at ourselves and our circumstances too long. It was time to stop and drink at the fountain of God's love for a lesson or two. We need to behold a God who cares. He is a God who, in Judges 10:16, the moment His erring children repented, was moved to grief over their misery. He moved into action to demonstrate His love. So, in the last lesson, we paused to look at the character of God. We determined from His Word that God, by nature of the essence of His being, is love. Therefore, when you have seen God, you have seen love. We concluded from 1 John 4 six basic things about the love of God.

1- All real love comes from God. Love is a gift we receive at conversion, therefore only a Christian has the capacity to love.

2- God is love. He does not simply demonstrate love or give love, His very nature is love. Therefore, it is impossible for Him not to love you and still be God.

3- God demonstrated this tangibly at Cavalry. So now man is without excuse. No man can say, "Does God love me?"

4- A primary way for the world to see the love of God (present tense) is by how we love one another.

5- Love is the antithesis of fear. There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear.

6- Love cannot be initiated or even imitated by man. God is the transmitter. We are the reflectors. Therefore, our task is to drink of His love, the more to have to give away.

So we began to behold in the last lesson a God who cares, by focusing on His character. This lesson continues and concludes this mini-study on the love of God by looking at Part II, the characteristics of God's love. Paul said in Ephesians 3 that God had a goal for every Christian.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

Maybe able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height (of His love);

And (thus) to know (experientially and progressively) the love of Christ, which (surpasses) passeth (mere) knowledge,

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hat ye might be (until you become literally) filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Paul wrote that we are to know experientially and progressively the love of Christ that surpasses mere knowledge. We then become filled with all the fullness of God Himself. Paul's desire was that you and I come to progressively grasp the breadth of His love, the length of His love, the depth of His love and the height of His love until we become filled with His love.

Remember, we are only tasting of it, whetting our appetites that daily we might come to hunger for more. So we pull back the curtain and begin by looking at the breadth of His love, and oh, how broad the love of God is. Can you define love? Not totally. Not anymore than you can define God. But God, knowing our need for something tangible to define the intangible, has drawn in Scripture a list of characteristics that begin to emerge as a portion of that definition. So let's take a look at nine signs of the love of God: The first is this:

1- We need to understand that love is a choice. Deuteronomy 10:14,15 says,

Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. (Deuteronomy 10:14,15)

Love is a choice, not an emotion. That is why God can command you to love. That is why He said, "Husbands, love your wives. Christians, love your neighbors as yourself." God even went so far as to demand that we love our enemies. So love is not the result of feelings. Feelings may or may not be the result of love, but love is not the result of feelings. We choose whom we will love and we choose then the depth with which we will love them. Love is a choice. Therefore, the husband who says, "I just don't love my wife anymore," is simply saying, in disobedience to the word of God, that he has consciously made a choice not to love his wife. He may think he is saying that his feelings for his wife have changed. You can answer him, "Of course, they have. Feelings always change." The only thing consistent about your feelings is that they are inconsistent. Anything from the weather to pizza and dill pickles can affect your feelings. Someone else may compete for your feelings, but they need not compete for your love unless

you choose to let them because love is a choice.

2- Love is more than an ordinary choice, it is a choice that leads to a commitment. A commitment is “the giving by agreement, the essence of one’s rights to another”. Love, if it is love, is a choice that leads to a commitment. God made a choice in John 3:16 where it tells us that He so loved the world that He GAVE. John 1:12 tells us that He gave them that chose to receive Him the power to become the sons of God. He chose to love, then demonstrated that love by an act of commitment. We acknowledge His love by an act of commitment and the two of us, we and He, become one. We become the bride of Christ. That is the way marriage is supposed to be. The man chooses to love his special, chosen, one certain woman. He is to initiate the love. She is the responder. He chooses to love her and determines to make a commitment. She chooses to return that love and determines to make a commitment. We, as the bride of Christ, are the same. In the case of marriage, it is a binding commitment, a choice leading to the yielding of rights one to another. So love is a choice, which when acted upon, leads to a commitment.

Now here is where God’s love radically departs from the world’s philosophy in signs number 3 and 4.

3- God’s love, both as it is initiated and continued, is unaffected by the desirability or the response of the object of that love. God did not choose Israel or us because we were so desirable. Deuteronomy 7 reminds us of that,

The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

But because the LORD loved you, (He chose to love you) and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 7:7,8)

In fact, I Corinthians 1 reminds us that He deliberately chose to love the weak, the foolish, the lowly of this world to bring to nothing the things that are something in and of themselves. Nor did God choose us for our responsiveness, how much we could love Him. We see this in Romans 5 as Paul says,

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

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But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6,8)

That is why God's commitment to us has no strings attached.

4- Hebrews 13:5 tell us that He will never leave us or forsake us. His love is unconditional. If we respond to His love or not, if we become more spiritually desirable or not, He will love us either way. That is why He can tell us to love our enemies. That is why a husband can love his wife whether or not she is lovely, whether or not she is lovable, whether or not she is loving. He can still choose to love her because God's love is unconditional and God's love is available to Him.

So you see, God's kind of love is a choice. It is an unconditional commitment that doesn't change and isn't affected by either the desirability or the responsiveness of the one being loved. If you grasp that fully, then you can fully begin to love. Now that kind of love always issues forth in certain attitudes and actions. It always manifests itself in at least four basic ways. They are test patterns by which you can measure how clearly the signal of God's love is being broadcast through your life.

The first three are found best illustrated in Philippians 2 where Paul lifts up the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and proclaims, Here is the love of God,

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

(Philippians 2:2,3)

God's kind of love buries pride and humbles itself. In lowliness of mind and humility of spirit, it assumes simply that on the ladder of importance, all others rank higher. Therefore, no one who really loves can pull rank on another. No one who really loves God's way is impressed with himself or his position, rather he is moved to humility over God's work in others' lives.

Not only is God's love characterized by humility, but secondly *it is characterized by unselfishness.*

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Philippians 2:4)

Not only does God's love elevate the position of others above yourself, it elevates the needs of others above your own. So the

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petty arguments in the average home over who gets whose way and who is right and who is wrong will fade into oblivion if either one of the two principle parties comes to learn to love God's way.

The third characteristic is vulnerability.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
(Philippians 2:5-8)

Paul said that the love of God was perfectly demonstrated in the Son of God as He humbled Himself and gave of Himself and became totally vulnerable to the point of yielding Himself to the taunts and the indignities of the crowds. He became vulnerable even unto death, the most humiliating, degrading death known to man. When a man becomes vulnerable, he stands to lose three things: *his rights, his respect and his reputation*. Jesus willingly gave up all three in order to demonstrate what love really is. Oh, the power that could be unleashed if you and I allowed that kind of love to flow through our lives. We, too, would see the world turned upside down.

The fourth characteristic of love, and the eighth sign of God's love is forgiveness. God always forgives. Do you? Not usually. Not often. Not nearly always. God never holds a grudge. God always forgives because it is the nature of God to forgive.

Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

(Isaiah 38:17)

Reread Luke 15:11-27 this week. It is the story of the prodigal son. It is God's reflection of love personified through forgiveness. If you cannot forgive, you do not love because love is forgiveness.

So love is a choice which leads to a commitment, and is unaffected by the desirability or the responsiveness of its object. Instead, it reflects deep humility, perfect unselfishness, total vulnerability, and complete forgiveness. You say, "Nobody can love like that." You are right. Nobody can but God. But God lives

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in you and God living in you can love like that.

This brings us to the ninth sign of love and that is that *love is supernatural*. We learned that last week in 1 John 4. If you can do it without God, it isn't love. It may be an imitation of love, but it isn't love because love comes from God. It transcends human standards, defies human reason and overcomes human power. It is superhuman because it is supernatural.

Real love always accrues real glory to God. Oh, the breadth of the love of God, to grasp it in its utter simplicity, to receive it in its utter transparency, to share in the utter transforming power of the breadth of the love of God. But not only does its breadth leave us breathless, but its breadth also leads us to see how long it is. Again, we stand in awe. For God's love for us never ends.

As we read in the last lesson, *nothing can separate us from that love*. Not death, not life, not angels, nor principalities nor powers, nothing now or nothing yet to come, nor height nor depth nor any other living creature can separate us from the love of God, ever. Man's love apart from God is temporary because man's security apart from God is temporary. But God's love is eternal because God is eternal. Not only is His love inseparable but *it is unchanging*. The Psalmist is quoting God in Psalm 89, who says,

Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. (Psalm 89:33)

Isaiah 49 is very powerful. Here we find the age-old lie of Satan,

But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. (Isaiah 49:14)

Read the promise in the next verse,

Can a woman forget her sucking (nursing) child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

(Isaiah 49:15)

"Perhaps even occasionally a mother may forget but I will not forget you," promises God.

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; (Isaiah 49:16)

That, Beloved, is love. It is unchanging love. Isaiah better illustrates it,

For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of

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the whole earth shall he be called.

For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed;
but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall
the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that
hath mercy on thee. (Isaiah 54:5,10)

In other words, Jehovah says, "I love you, Israel, forever." Everything else in this life is changing or decaying. But not the love of God. It is not only inseparable and unchanging, *it is eternal*. John 13:1 is one of the most beautiful verses in the whole Bible. It dissolves man's petty concepts of love beneath the warmth of God's real love.

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. (John 13:1)

Even when they forsook Him and fled, even when they cursed Him and denied Him, He loved them to the end. The love of God never stops. You may break His heart, defile His reputation, trample underfoot His convictions and His commandments, but like the waves of the sea as the tide comes in, though you resist it and resent it and refuse it, still it comes, still it remains the eternal, unchanging, permanent love of God. Nothing can ever separate you from it, nothing can ever change it and nothing can ever cause it to cease. He has always loved you, He loves you today. He will always love you. Such is the length of the love of God.

But even beginning to grasp the length of God's love only drives you to reach out to touch the depth of God's love. Oh, the depths of God's love, the tenderness of it. It is a choice, but it does not manifest itself in cold, calculated insensitivity. The God of eternity loves tenderly, compassionately, personally. Listen to how the Scriptures describe the tenderness of the love of God.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. (Zechariah 2:8)

Read Isaiah 62:5,

For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Isaiah further demonstrates this love as it says,

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his

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presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.
(Isaiah 63:9)

Zephaniah elaborates as it says,

The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.
(Zephaniah 3:17)

God's love is so tender. We are the apple of His eye, the bride of His Son, the joy of His life. He uses visible illustrations to further amplify the tenderness of that love.

He loves us like a loving Father,

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.
(Psalm 103:13)

He loves us with the sensitivity of a mother,

As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
(Isaiah 66:13)

He loves us as a perfect friend.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
(John 15:13)

Perhaps the most tangible illustration of God's tenderness is found in John 11. There we read that one of Christ's most beloved friends, Lazarus, was sick. It was no secret how much He loved Lazarus and His sisters.

Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.
(John 11:3,5)

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

Jesus wept.

Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!
(John 11:33,35,36)

My dear Christian, Jesus loves you like that. When you weep, He weeps. The angels of heaven must gather often at the throne and again and again with amazement must cry, "Oh, how He loves him. Oh, how He loves her." Oh, the depth of the love of God. We marvel at the breadth of it, the length of it and the depth of it.

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That leaves us only to be amazed with the height of it. How tall is God's love?

God's love stretches all the way back to heaven, that is how tall it is. It reaches all the way down to change a life and then through that life touches another and another so that the cycle of its power never ends. It returns itself to God, magnified through lives bringing with it to heaven the lives of those touched by it. That is the height of the love of God. John 13 how it works. It is revealing love, as Jesus gives a new commandment,

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:34,35)

Galatians shouts it as a transforming love,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

It is enabling love,

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (Ephesians 5:2)

It is an encouraging love,

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:15,16)

It is a cleansing love,

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood... (Revelation 1:5)

It is a growing love,

But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. (I John 2:5)

It is a multiplying love,

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And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it:
that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them,
and I in them. (John 17:26)

It is a sacrificial love, as we find in Ephesians 5:25. It is a responsive love, as we see in 1 John 4:10-19. It is a uniting love, as we find in Colossians 2:2. That is the height of it. It starts in heaven, touches earth, changes a life, cleanses it, transforms it, encourages it, and enables it to grow and multiply into and through the lives of others until, like that sweet smelling perfume, it reaches back to the heart of God. Oh, the height of the love of God.

My friend, you and I have only glanced at a tiny fragment of the love of God today. We have seen just a shadow of its breadth, a shadow of its length, a shadow of its depth, a shadow of its height. And while we have seen just a shadow, how awed we ought to be at the real thing. We ought to be awed enough at least to begin to understand what real love really is.

Ask yourself the question, "What is love?" Love is a decision to die for an angry rebel. Love is a "Thou shalt be with Me," to a thief on a cross. Love is a, "Father, forgive them," to a vicious mob. Love is a, "Woman, behold thy son." to a grieving mother.

Ask yourself, "What is love?" Love is tears of grief at the tomb of a friend, tears of longing over a blinded city, the absence of condemnation to a convicted prostitute, the presence of forgiveness to angry officials. What is love? Love is robes of glory laid aside for the robes of a carpenter's shop, hands of royalty nailed to a tree, the feet of God blistered by hours of walking to heal a total stranger. That is what love is. Love is a cross on a hill, a tomb on a hillside, a mansion laid up in glory. Love is sight for blinded eyes, a leper leaping for joy, a lame man carrying his bed. That is what love is.

Love is a weary mother reaching with outstretched arms to comfort a crying child, the way God does. Love is a faithful father loving, waiting, caring for that rebellious son who has left the fold, just as God does. Love is a husband who gives his life for a wife who never understands, that's what God did. Love is a woman who loves that unlovable man that she married because in so doing she is returning to God perfect love.

What is love? It is all of God given to transform all of man. Capture the breadth of it. It is a choice that leads to a commitment, but it is unaffected by how desirable or responsive the one you

love may be. In fact, the less desirable, the less responsive, the more of itself it seems to give. It is humble, unselfish, vulnerable and forgiving, and it can be because it is supernatural. Capture the length of it. It is inseparable, unchanging, unending. It always will be ours because we will always be His. How deep is the love of God, how tender. We are the apple of His eye, the bride at His wedding, the joy of His life. Like a father, He has compassion. Like a mother, He comforts. Like a perfect friend, He gives us His life. When we weep, He weeps. Oh, how often the angels say, "See how He loves him. See how He loves her."

Oh, the height of His love. Down it comes to change. Out it goes to reproduce itself in others. Back it springs to heaven carrying into glory the beauty of that love in lives returned to Him. Drink of His love, beloved. His love will overflow your life cascading into the lives of all you touch. The glorious, miraculous love of God.

That is but a glimpse of it. But from what we have seen, I would like to ask you three questions in closing.

1- How can you refuse a love like that? If you have been guilty of resisting God's love or refusing God's gift, I ask you, why? Why would anyone turn his or her back on that kind of love? While you were yet a sinner, He died for you. Herein is love, not that we loved Him but that He loved us and gave Himself a ransom for our sins. God deliberately chose to love you. He absolutely refuses to reject you. No matter what you have done, no matter what you have said, God chose to love you and He made a commitment to die for you. My dear friend, if you are outside the family of God, outside the family of Jesus Christ, it is because you have chosen to reject the love of God. In humility He came, God Himself. Unselfishly He came, God Himself. Vulnerably He came, God himself. In forgiveness He came, God Himself, because of His great love for you. One more time, He invites you to come to Him, to receive His love, to return His love and begin at last to live in His love. How can you refuse a love like that? Open your heart right now, and quietly invite this Son of God to live there. Confess your need, your sinfulness, and accept His love once and for all as full payment for all of your sins. I pray that you will. How can you refuse a love like that?

2- How can you accuse a love like that? In the hearts of so many, even in the name of Christ, there is a bitter, untrusting concept of God. It is an accusing spirit. It springs from a heart

that doesn't understand the love of God. Something happened in your life, maybe way back, that caused you to question His love. You are no different than anyone else, my friend. We live, as we said in the last lesson, in a world that we have made a mess of. Sin is the cause. Satan is the culprit. Yet, in the midst of it all, in the midst of that sadness, that trauma, that grief, God continues to love you like a Father, like a Mother, like a Friend. Through it all you are the apple of His eye. Yet, you have succumbed to a bitter spirit. You have pretended to receive the God of love, but you have rejected the love of God. Can't you see right now how much He cares for you? Can't you see the breadth and the length and the height and the depth of His love for you? How can you accuse a love like that? How can you accuse Him of being unjust when His name is righteousness? How can you accuse Him of being inadequate when His name is Wonderful, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace? How can you accuse Him of not caring? He is perfect love. He has always loved you. He will always love you. Bow down today and confess to Him that you never really understood how much He loved you. Ask Him to take away that bitter spirit. Ask Him to take away that angry, accusing spirit. Simply exchange it for more of His love. How can you refuse a love like that? How can you accuse a love like that?

3- How can you abuse a love like that? In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul gives us a whole new reason for obeying God. He gives us a whole new motivation for obedience. Fear of the consequences? No. Fear of wrath? No. Fear of our own guilt? No. Paul says that now there is a higher law. It is the love of Christ that constrains you. You are driven to obey out of a heart filled with love. A little child may obey his teacher out of fear of punishment. He may obey his neighbor out of fear of rejection. But, oh, the joy in a father's heart when his son obeys him just because he loves him. Oh, the joy when a son's greatest grief is that he broke his father's heart, for he would rather die than abuse his father's love.

Some of us have been struggling to do all the right things for all of the wrong reasons. Then we wonder why we fail to be faithful. Maybe we need to surrender to the love of God. Maybe we need to so yield to His Lordship, so fall in love with the One who is so in love with us, that to look into those eyes of love and see them grieve over what we have done, will be more than we can bear, until joyfully, cheerfully, we come to obey Him because we don't want to ever again break our Father's heart. Can we refuse a love like

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His? Can we accuse a love like His? Can we abuse a love like His?

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Oh, the breadth of the love of God,
God choosing the likes of me;
God giving Himself to seal that love
On a rugged, Roman tree.

And oh, the length of the love of God,
An eternal, unending refrain;
The mountains and hills may vanish from sight,
But forever His love will remain.

And oh, the depth of the love of God,
What tender, compassionate care;
Like a mother protects and provides for her own
Our Master is always there.

And oh, the height of the love of God,
From heaven to earth's fertile sod;
It touches a life that touches a life,
And back it flows to God.

How broad, how long, the love of God,
How deep, how high it goes;
It'll change a man, then change a home,
And on and on it flows

Until a weary, wary world,
Uncertain God is above;
Will stand in awe and know He's there,
Because they've seen His love.

So drink at its fountain, beloved,
And shout to the world "It is true!"
That the love of God and the God of Love,
Have taken control of you!

For Focus and Application

1- Paraphrase (put in your own words) Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:17-19. What do you think it means to be "rooted and grounded" in love? What do you think it means to "comprehend with all the saints"? Define breadth, length, depth, and height. How could the love of Christ surpass mere knowledge?

2- Explain in your own words what you think it means that

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love is a choice. How can you choose to love someone you do not like? What illustrations can you find from Scripture to demonstrate that truth?

3- To love someone is to commit to them. How do you commit yourself and the rights that accompany that commitment when the person you commit yourself to chooses not to return your love?

4- If love is characterized by humility and vulnerability, what seems to be missing in society's concept of love today? If forgiveness is a part of the very definition of love, why can't people today forgive those they say they love when they feel wronged? What is lacking? Are we defining love by man's behavior or defining man's behavior by God's love?

5- The Bible gives many illustrations of God's kind of love. Name three of them.

6- If you have never received Christ personally into your life, you are refusing the greatest love ever known to man. Why do you think you are saying "no"? Do you understand how much God loves you?

7- If you are holding on to a bitter spirit because of something that has happened to you, and you have bought the lie that a God of love would never have allowed that, you are accusing God of being a liar, and you are blaming God for things He did not do. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to go to your grave accusing God of being less than loving, when the very definition of love is God Himself? How could you accuse a love like His? Ask Him to forgive you. He will. Turn your eyes and your heart to the Scripture and meditate on His great love for you. Focus on Calvary. That's love.

8- What motivates you to obey God's laws? Fear of punishment? Fear of peer rejection? Or do you love Him so much that to break His heart breaks yours? Spend time alone this week asking God to reveal to you what your motivations are. Ask Him to so fill you with His love that the very thought of grieving His Spirit would break your heart, as well.

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