

4_ THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

This is the last lesson in our series dealing with the subject of “love.” We focused our attention so far on the romantic love that a man and woman share in marriage, the love God intended for us to experience within the family, and the love that exists between true friends. Today we’ll consider the most supreme love of all_ the love of God. I’m calling this lesson “**Everlasting Love**”. Let us read once more from **1st Corinthians 13**.

⁴ “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails...”

As we stressed in past weeks, this is love that can be understood in any language, it is love that is modeled, a life that is lived. The love of God is expressed in the Bible with the Greek term *Agape*. As I understand it this is a word that had fallen out of general use in Jesus day, but He recovered it out of the archives and resurrected it. Evidently the way that “love” was being expressed in that culture was so far removed from the love of God, the words they used for love were inappropriate. .

I have heard agape defined as unconditional, everlasting love. It is selfless and sacrificial. It voluntarily suffers inconvenience, discomfort, and even death for the benefit of another without expecting anything in return. *Agape* is the best and noblest of loves_ one that mere humans are incapable of consistently displaying. It is a decision, a matter of will that is not influenced by feelings. *Agape* is action, not emotion. It is deliberate and unconditional love that results in choices and behaviors for the benefit of others. **The Old Testament** has over **300** references to *agape* love. Here are just a few. Pay close attention to the highlighted words as God speaks...

Exodus 34:67_ “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”

1st Chronicles 16:34_ “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.”

Psalms 36:5_ “Your love, O Lord, is higher than the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.”

Psalms 62:11_ “Power belongs to You, God, and with You, Lord, is unfailing love”;

Psalms 63:3_ “Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You.”

Psalms 103:17_ “From everlasting to everlasting is the Lord’s love with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children’s children—”

Moving now the New Testament: **Romans 5:6-8_ ⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Not that we deserved it or were good_ but due to His love.**

Ephesians 3:17-19_ And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Power to get hold of the concept of how marvelous is this divine love _ like nothing we’ve ever experienced,

1st John 3:1_ What great love the Father has lavished upon us that we should be called the children of God. He lavished His love upon us! Are you beginning to get the idea that God’s love is pretty amazing?

If not, I don't know what else I could possibly say. God said it better than I ever could. This love is incredible_ almost inconceivable. It's intense. It's immense. It's enduring and everlasting. Now, think on **1st Corinthians 13** again. Isn't it a description of God's love?

⁴ "God is patient, God is kind. He does not envy, He does not boast, He is not proud. ⁵ He is not rude, He is not self-seeking, He is not easily angered, He keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ God does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ God always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ God never fails..."

Wow...but we can't leave it there. Yes, God's love is so awesome, but He wants for us to love like He does. He wants to give His love to us and then love through us. To love Him, to love our spouses and the members of our families and our friends and neighbors_ and even our enemies_ those who don't love us and would even hate us. **Ephesians 5:1-2** says we are to: **Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.** But can I honestly say...

⁴ "I am patient, I am kind. I do not envy, I do not boast, I am not proud. ⁵ I am not rude, I am not self-seeking, I am not easily angered, I keep no record of wrongs. ⁶ I do not delight in evil, but rejoice with the truth. ⁷ I always protect, always trust, always hope, always persevere. ⁸ I will never fail..."

Really? Or is it more like: *"God, I'm not as patient as I should be. Too often envy and pride overtake me. I don't mean to be rude or selfish. Sometimes I'm too thin skinned. I fly off the handle too often. Even though I'm a benefactor of Your great grace and love, I hold grudges. I haven't always been the safest person to be around. I've hurt people with words and deed. I tend to be wary of people_ and my faith in You isn't as strong as it should be. The way I talk doesn't always reflect hope_ and sometimes when things get tough, I just want to quit. I let people down. Worse than that, I let You down. I've hurt You with my sin_ I want to believe that You could somehow still could love me_ but how dare I even hope that You might?"*

That was me once upon a time, but I learned better in time. **If that's you and you've given up hope**, I ask you to hope again. Seriously confess your sin to God and ask Him to flush out whatever impurities there are and fill you with His love. **Romans 5:5_ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us...** See, not just to feel His love but be filled with it_ dare to hope and you will not be disappointed.

But "no", you may think. *"He won't do that for me. I'm too far gone. He may have great love, but surely I've messed up so many times. I'm ashamed to even think about the things I've done. I've ignored Him so long and moved so far from Him."* Think again. Listen to **Romans 8:35-39_ ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?** That's what we think sometimes, When times get tough, we feel God doesn't care. But hear Paul. ³⁶ **As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."** Paul is saying, look we apostles have suffered misfortune too - because we know we are loved by God and been bold enough to proclaim it. ³⁷ **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.** ³⁸ **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,** (Nothing that Paul forgot that you've done or had done to you)...

...will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Unconditional love – not that He's never been grieved by our choices_ even heartbroken_ but He loves us still.

I spoke to a defense attorney last week who said she was questioned about how she could defend someone who was obviously guilty. She said it wasn't her job to judge, let alone condemn. That she tried to look at the defendant the way God might, It got me to thinking that I'm guilty as sin_ and the evidence is undeniable, but I also have an advocate, 1st John 2:1 says **"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."** So, don't put your confidence in what you did but in what Jess did_ He paid your penalty and took your place.

Do you feel like you understand this love? You don't_ and neither do I. My sister Sheila got to visit the Grand Canyon for the 1st time last year. She said she'd heard about it. She'd seen pictures, even read up on it: Google said it is **277** miles long, up to **18** miles wide and more than a mile deep. But until she stood on the edge of the canyon she didn't have a clue as to how majestic it was. All she could do was say "Wow." That's the way it is with God's love. We read about it. Preachers tell us about it. We sing about it. But we will likely never fully understand how marvelous it is until we come face to face with God. But, we can experience more of it than we do_ the more we rest **in the arms of God**_ and allow the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our heart_ for only He can offer us this everlasting love...