

## Knowing God's Love

Psalm 103: 1-22 NLT

*"<sup>1</sup> Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. <sup>2</sup> Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. <sup>3</sup> He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. <sup>4</sup> He redeems me from death and **crowns me with love and tender mercies.** <sup>5</sup> He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!  
<sup>6</sup> The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly. <sup>7</sup> He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel. <sup>8</sup> The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with **unfailing love.** <sup>9</sup> He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. <sup>10</sup> He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. <sup>11</sup> **For his unfailing love** toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. <sup>12</sup> **He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.** <sup>13</sup> The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. <sup>14</sup> For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust. <sup>15</sup> Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. <sup>16</sup> The wind blows, and we are gone— as though we had never been here.  
<sup>17</sup> But **the love of the Lord** remains forever with those who fear him. His salvation extends to the children's children <sup>18</sup> of those who are faithful to his covenant, of those who obey his commandments! <sup>19</sup> The Lord has made the heavens his throne; from there he rules over everything. <sup>20</sup> Praise the Lord, you angels, you mighty ones who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands. <sup>21</sup> Yes, praise the Lord, you armies of angels who serve him and do his will! <sup>22</sup> Praise the Lord, everything he has created, everything in all his kingdom. Let all that I am praise the Lord."*

There are a lot of materials one can read about LOVE. I have read many and put together a few thoughts from them today. In particular, I find verse 9 of this text interesting. It says, **"<sup>9</sup> He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever."** The implication is, that God does not accuse us or remain angry with us if we persist in wickedness rather than asking for forgiveness. That He *can't* stay that way even though we may deserve that. In Micah 7: 18 it says, **"<sup>18</sup> Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy."** Though some chose to continue in sin, and find that He is not pleased with them, our chance to find forgiveness is always there. He is gracious and full of love, of that there is no doubt.

Love is not merely one of his attributes, but **his very nature**. The Scripture say, **"And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him"** (1 John 4:16).

If someone were to say that God is love, they should not imply that love is God. This sermon, is based on Psalm 103, and it uncovers and reminds all of us of God's endearing love from one of the Old Testament's most stirring passages.

**Illustration:** *Several years ago, a student in seminary class stood to his feet and announced to the professor, "I don't believe in God!" The professor, unraveled, replied, "Describe this God you*

don't believe in?" After the student had described an unlovely and vengeful God, the professor confessed, "I don't believe in that God either. My God is a God of love." We do not need to look very hard to see the love and hand of God working to direct us toward His grace over and over again. Yet, we must accept it.

**Let's look at His Love....**

## **First ~ The Description of God's Love**

How do you describe a rose to a blind person?

How do you describe Handel's Hallelujah Chorus to a deaf person?

How do you describe the thrill of downhill skiing to one who has never walked?

How do you describe the impeccable, infinite love of God, to impure, finite humans?

One of the most vivid characteristics of God is that, He is a God of love. The Psalmist was descriptive in recording the nature of God's love. He stated that he was "**filled with unfailing love**" (Psalm 103:8), <sup>11</sup> **For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.** (Psalm 103:11), He continues on with <sup>13</sup> **The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.**" (Psalm 103:13), and <sup>17</sup> **But the love of the Lord remains forever with those who fear him. His salvation extends to the children's children.**" (Psalm 103:17). Did we hear the qualifications? With those who fear Him. That is not fear as most of us think of it, it means respect for Him. Honor unto Him, obedience unto Him. The Psalmist describes God's love well. Our issue is not what we are reading about His love, our issues is that we see His love through the lenses of our human families and lives.

In this passage we can see LOVE as it is supposed to be seen. Our vision is limited, and skewed, by what we see taking place around us in this world, and thus, our ability to understand it, and describe it to others, is limited. But God's Word gives us the best description we need. This is why we need to be in the Word and allow the Word to penetrate our hearts and minds as deeply as we will allows it to. To discover His love.

**First assignment today**, When we get home, we should pray about and then define God's love for ourselves so that we might better describe it to others.

## **Second ~ The Definition of God's Love**

<sup>2</sup> *Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me.*"

The point I want to communicate today is not simply that God "**loves,**" but that **He is love itself.**

Love is not merely one of his attributes, but, **His very nature.** The Scripture say, "**And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love, remains in God, and God remains in him**" (1 John 4:16). To say that **God is love**, is not to imply that **love is God.** People use the word love far too often without considering what they are saying. We say we love a lot of things in this world. Does that imply that those things are or have become God?

There is a difference, if we would stop and consider what this statement means. There is a difference in me saying ***my dog is a girl***, and ***my girl is a dog***. They have two completely different meanings. ***By the way guys, do not say that to your girl or anyone else is a dog.*** The point I am trying to make is, God is love, means ~ that ***God wants the very best for us.*** That ***God has our best interest in mind.*** That ***He wants to give us good gifts and provide us with "all His benefits"*** (Psalm 103:2, NIV). Just as it states in verse 2, ***"2 Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things He does for me."***

As busy as we can become in this world, often for good reasons, we are called to remember just how good the Lord has been, and is, to us every moment of every day. ***God is Good, All The Time.***

Too many people believe, and sometimes teach, that love is a ***feeling or emotion***. Yes, feelings and emotions are involved in love, but ***the greatest part of love is action.*** I remember when I was working with Samaritans, Dr. Darold Jones, and the ministry slogan was, ***"Love in Action."*** (***God In Action***) Our mission projects were about going and doing. Not simply understanding that we know about love. It was putting LOVE into action. Love is a verb (***what we do***) more than a noun (***a feeling***).

***Many marriages, even among Christians, are failing because we value feelings over actions.*** (***May I state that again***) I cannot count the number of couples I have sat with and counseled, who would say ***"that they don't feel the love that they once did for their mate."*** They fell ***"out of love."*** It is my opinion, there is really no falling out of, or into love. We can fall out of bed, fall in the bathtub, but typically ***we grow to love*** with someone over time. Our love for another grows, from ***what we see them do for us***, and ***what we do for them.***

Now, imagine if Christ, just before the cross, went to the garden and said; ***"I hate this feeling, I don't feel like doing this,"*** thus He decided to base His decision upon how He felt. If that had happened, we'd all be hopelessly doomed to hell.

***The good news, of course,*** is that Jesus resisted those feeling or thoughts, even though He prayed three times to have the cup removed. He was more interested in doing the will of His Father, than what He felt like doing...***thankfully.*** Thank you, Lord, for showing us what we are called to do in our lives. Actions, not just words. ***LOVE Him / LOVE Others***

**Illustration:**

*A woman sought counsel from Dr. George W. Crane, a psychologist, and thus confided that she hated her husband, and intended to divorce him. "I want to hurt him all I can," she declared firmly. "Well, in that case," said Dr. Crane, "I advise you to start showering him with compliments. When he thinks you love him devotedly, then start the divorce action. That is the way to hurt him."*

*Some months later, the wife returned to report that all was going well. She had followed the suggested course. "Good," said Dr. Crane. "Now's the time to file for divorce." "Divorce!" the woman said indignantly. "Never. I love my husband dearly!" ***Love is defined by what we do!****

## Third ~ The benefit of God's Love

The Psalmist shares with us valuable insight and uncovers all the areas in life that God's love has touched. In turn, he reveals the benefits and blessings for us.

### A. Spiritually (v. 3, 12)

***"<sup>3</sup>He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases." "<sup>12</sup>He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west."***

Spiritually, God's love removes the barrier that separates us from him, by canceling the debt of our sin, so that we can enjoy a loving relationship with him. God's love removes our sins as though they never existed. Keep this passage in mind, so the next time you start feeling sorry for yourself, God's Word can remind us of the blessings we have.

### B. Emotionally (v. 3)

***"<sup>3</sup>He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases."***

A great deal of our physical and emotional illness, is due ***to moral failure. (Please hear and remember that)*** In God's removing sin and guilt, from our lives, God's love brings healing to life. Physically and emotionally. Perhaps, that is where we should start?

### C. Eternally (v. 4)

***"<sup>4</sup>He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies."***

The pit, which is mentioned in some translations, is referred to here, as death. God's love rescues us, fallen humanity, from our own seemingly desire to destroy ourselves. It is amazing how so many people start destroying themselves, and look to blame others. With God redeeming us, in the process, we find HOPE, LOVE as He grants us eternal life.

### D. Authoritatively (v. 4)

***"<sup>4</sup>He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies."***

God's love places a crown of royal glory and authority on us. God's love ". . . ***made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father***" (Rev. 1:6). We have been crowned with his love and given a new citizenship on earth, and well as in heaven. Praise the Lord.

### E. Physically (v. 5)

***"<sup>5</sup> He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!"***

Like a good father, he desires to give us the good gifts of strength and endurance. Jesus, the embodiment of God's love, came enjoying life, and He wants his children to do the same. You see, those feeling of despair we might feel from time to time, they do not originate from Him, they are from the world. God gives us "***good things***" as He renews us!

### F. Judicially (v. 6)

***"<sup>6</sup> The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly"***

Here we find a major difference between divine love, and what so often passes for love among people. ***Often, love is expressed as a virtue that accepts everything.***

But God's love, always makes judgment calls. ***Divine love hates what is wrong, and embraces what is right.*** Thus, the Lord gives to those who are being oppressed ***“righteousness and justice.”*** If we seek after Him and follow His Word, we will discover His Love. Filled with Grace, righteousness and justice. This is but a glimpse of the kind of incredible, incomprehensible love God has for us.

As we examine it, keep in mind what the Lord calls us to give to others, ***“No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends”*** (John 15:13). If we want a visible definition of love, all we need to do is look at what God did for us in Christ. ***“But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!”*** (Rom. 5:8).

If we really want to understand love, don't listen to love songs from the 80's, 90's or whatever generation, or people who throw the term love around loosely. To get to the depths of what love means, and be truly loved, look to the cross of Christ.

Why, ***because it was there God's love came to mankind.*** The cross is the ultimate expression of God's incomprehensible love for mankind. As humans, we tend to base our love upon what we get, rather than what we can give away.

There was letter once written which said this:

**Illustration:**

*Dearest Jimmy, no words could ever express the great unhappiness I've felt since breaking off our engagement. Please say you'll take me back. No one could ever take your place in my heart, so please forgive me. I love you, I love you, I love you!*

*Yours forever, Marie.*

***P.S. And congratulations on winning the state lottery.***

So, if you ever wonder if God loves you, look at the cross. The cross is God's way of saying, ***“I love you this much,”*** with his arms outstretched. God's final words to us are etched on a Roman cross. They are blood red. They are scream as loud as they can, so as to be heard. They simply say, ***“I love you.”***

***Closing Prayer...***