

God Loves Sinners

Ephesians 3:14–19

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I must confess that I am tired. I have spent this week being stressed about everything in our sanctuary. I could not stop thinking about the crew repairing the drywall and painting the room. I have to admit that the ongoing chatter about snow covering the country has burdened my mind. I even contemplated canceling our time of worship. I let all the talk about bad weather give me a bad attitude about Sunday. I was walking across the parking lot to my car after grocery shopping on Saturday and a thought hit me. It would be so easy to cancel worship, blame it on the weather and sleep in. Then I woke up Sunday and let the dog out. The cold wind hit me in the face. The dog looked at the snow and I knew we needed to cancel worship.

But more than all these little things, I got sidetracked from praying for sinners to know the love of God. The most important thing for anyone to know is the love of God. To know the love of God is to know Jesus. To know Jesus is to be saved. Knowing Jesus is confessing, repenting, and trusting Jesus forgive your sins, and give you new life now and life eternal.

When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Ephesians 3:14–19 (NLT)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (ESV)

How far does God's love reach, from the most majestic worship in heaven to our lowest points of despair and sin. Let me explain that worship in heaven is beyond description. Those in heaven are worshiping God because He loves them, they love God. The love of God starts in heaven. Love on earth is corrupted to the point of absolute confusion. Love in heaven is perfect, magnificent, unconditional, generous, awe-inspiring, tremendous, and many other words that I don't know. The love of God in heaven has come to earth, into our world. His name is Jesus.

All that love in heaven, is also here on earth. However, God's love on earth is rejected, twisted, miscommunicated, misused. God is not the one who is messing up love on earth, we are. God's love has always been and always will be pure. God's love is reaching out to all no matter where they are on earth.

Love is originating in God. The love of God is alive, it's living. God is love. Wherever God is there is love. I believe in God's love. I have experienced God's love. The only way to believe in God's love is to experience God's love. We experience God's love in a relationship of faith and trust with Jesus.

As humans we struggle believing we can be loved. That's because we crave love, we long for love, we yearn for love. It's in our nature to be loved, to be accepted. We come out of the womb wanting to be loved. As people of every age and skin color, of every culture and ethnic background we want to be loved. So, we've taken the perfect love of God and corrupted it to meet our desires.

Thinking that we knew what we wanted we made love into anything that made us feel good. Wondering how we might encounter perfect love without God, we corrupted love. Now God's love is almost meaningless, nearly unattainable, a breath away from those who don't know Jesus.

As a result of our corruption of love, individuals cannot acknowledge that God loves them. People in our families, the folks that live next door, the person you work with aren't able to fathom God being able to love them perfectly, unconditionally, magnificently, tremendously, and all the ways that God loves us.

We've said we love, but then we can't love unconditionally. We've tried to love, but it's never perfect. We've sought out a magnificent love, only to discover it was tarnished. We don't love others when they make mistakes. We stop loving one another when they don't follow our direction. We make judgments about others, not loving them because they're different. We don't feel loved when our lives become challenging. We can't accept love because we're filled with anger. As we fall lower and lower we tell ourselves we aren't worthy of love.

When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. Ephesians 3:14–15 (NLT)

Every person, young and old, near and far is loved by God. Can we see people the same way God sees them? God sees every person just as they are: sinners, selfish, greedy, thieves, liars, adulterers, murderers and He still loves each person. As for you and me, we don't easily love people who are horrible sinners. We divide up sinners into groups: bad, worse, worst.

God sees us all the same. The sin of misusing His name is as bad as selfishly desiring your friends possessions. Murder is the same as stealing and lying in God's eyes. God who is love, loves each person He created and wants to be with them forever. God does not discriminate. You may have denied Him, rejected Him, and He still loves you and wants to bring you to heaven. You may have done a thousand good things one hundred times over again, but never acknowledged God. God loves you and is ready to welcome you back. We get double crossed and that ends the relationship. Someone treats us like a fool, we want revenge. When others abandon us, we begin a smear campaign. This is not the height and depth of God's love. This isn't even love in any form.

The love of God touches every person. No matter how low they have fallen, God loves them. We think we're unworthy and we are, God loves us. We think we're pitiful, disgusting, and repulsive. God loves us. We may have given up on life and ready to end our life. God loves us.

The depth of God's love can only be measured in Jesus. He willingly gave up His life, dying on the cross to take away our sins. That is a deep, deep love. That love reaches from heaven to the lowest pit, and the lowest sinner.

Can we express to family, neighbors, and co-workers the height and depth of God's love? Yes, we can. We can pray for each person to know the height and depth, the width and length of God's love. This is the first step in helping others come to Jesus. As we pray for them to know God's love, we can

also pray that they will receive the seed of the Good News of Jesus. Our prayer is for that seed to be watered and harvested. Our prayer is that each family member, neighbor, and co-worker will see their sin and their need for Jesus; that they will love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. Ephesians 3:18 (NLT)

When we pray for family, neighbors, and co-workers they will see clearly the love of God.

When scripture uses the word may, it is not permission, but according to God's will, if you are willing. God's desire is for every person is saved. The Lord doesn't want anyone in hell. Jesus fixed this problem by living, dying, and rising from the dead. He took away the sins of every person who believes in Him. He has given us new life and life eternal in heaven. He has provided us with power and understanding, among many other things.

What's next in this equation is our willingness to want what God wants. Without our willingness to chose Jesus as our Savior and Lord we are doomed. Until we are willing to confess our sins this life will be miserable.

Life is miserable, but with Jesus we find hope, peace, joy, power and love. When we decide with our mind, to give our body and our soul to Jesus we are then in God's will. The word "may" becomes a reality. It's not wishful thinking. The hope, peace, joy, power and love are given to us. As we willingly trust Jesus we experience a greater depth and width of God's love. As we turn to Jesus in faith as our Savior and Lord during everyday situations we experience the heights and length of God's love.

What I'm saying and what scripture is teaching is a mind, spirit, and soul clearly aware of God's love. Even as a believer I am not always aware of God's love. I don't see the depth and width of God's love at first because I'm looking at my problems. This is true of every saint and especially every sinner. The darkness of every day keeps every person from seeing the love of God.

Therefore, we can pray for sinners to see that God loves them. How many sinners to do you know that think God hates them, dislikes them, is out to get them or just doesn't care? Nearly every sinner I know is in at least one of those mindsets. They see their circumstances and wonder why God is doing this terrible thing to them. They walk through life, day after day, thinking God is absent. They may even wonder out loud with the question, where's God? Sinners as a general rule have such misinformed idea about God that they blame God for their situation. That's why it's so easy to be angry with God.

What needs to happen is for sinners to see the love of God. They need to see that God loves them as an individual. The sinner needs to experience the love of God during their daily activities. The love of God may not appear like a host of heavenly beings suddenly escorting them through life. God is going to work through those who are saints, those who love Jesus, who are filled with the Holy Spirit to show His love.

May sinners experience the love of God. We need to pray that their eyes and ears, their mind and spirit are open. Sinners need to be ready to see the love of God. Sinners need to experience the love of God.

May the saints share the love of God. Saints, you and me, will pray for sinners to ready to receive the love of God. Saints, each one of us, will pray to share the love of God with a sinner over and over again.

May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Ephesians 3:19 (NLT)

Pray for family, neighbors, and co-workers to experience the limitlessness of God's love. The only way to be saved is to experience the love of God in Jesus Christ. We are Bible-believing disciples of Jesus committed to making more disciples. We have experienced God's love. We have a personal relationship with the creator of the world. We are made one with Jesus through the power of His Holy Spirit.

I question if some of my family members know the height and depth of God's love. I wonder if my neighbors know the length and the width of God's love. When I say these things, when I think these thoughts they are not as judgment.

I no longer think that the world, people are me are saved. I once thought that every person I met knew Jesus. I've come to discover that most people haven't experienced the love of God. Most people are lost. Most folks are sinners that haven't been redeemed. Most folks have never known the love God has for them in Jesus Christ.

They need our prayers. They need to be saved. They need Jesus.

Too many people are still driven by greed. Too many individuals in our neighborhoods and our jobs are still driven by personal satisfaction. Too many members of our families are still committed to sinful attitudes and actions.

They need our prayers. They need to be saved. They need Jesus.

The gift of God is Jesus Christ. Salvation is found only in Jesus Christ. The love of God is experienced only by trusting Jesus. We will pray for sinners. We will lift up to the God of heaven and earth our co-workers. We will bring into the throne room of grace our neighbors. We will place at the foot of the cross our family members.

Our prayers will not go unanswered. God in heaven will speak to the sinners we give to Him. God will show them His love. God will make clear to them their sin and their need to be saved.

Let's be committed to praying for God's love to flow into and through us. Let's be committed to be God's love.