

Preached on 11/26/23 at GBC

“God’s Everlasting Love”

Jer.31:3

When it comes to knowing and understanding the "*love of God*", the unregenerate mind is absolutely clueless - "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: NEITHER CAN HE KNOW THEM, because they are spiritually discerned.*"(I Cor.2:14) There's no doubt that religious sinners speak about God's love, and have read and claim for themselves the precious promises of verses like **John 3:16**, yet the true concept of God's love, e.g., the extent, power, and efficacy of the "*love of God*", escapes them completely. To them God's love is similar to their own love, based on performance, sentiment, and emotion. They are no different than those who made up national Israel, thinking that God loved them and would bless them because they had, as well as thought they were keeping God's holy law - "*For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. 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, 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. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, THE FAITHFUL GOD, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.*"(Deut.7:6-9) But we should expect no more from any unregenerate sinner, either moral or immoral, seeing we understand and know them to be held in the natural depravity and darkness of their Adamic nature. **But here's the thing:** Even those who have been redeemed and justified by Christ's perfect life of obedience and His vicarious death at Calvary as our Surety and Substitute **DO NOT YET FULLY COMPREHEND** the "*love of God*". Paul told those at Ephesus - "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*"(Eph.3:16-19) The word "*rooted*" literally means to "**strike root or be thoroughly established**", while the word "*grounded*" literally means "to lay the **FOUNDATION**". Our Lord used the same word to describe the faith of all God's elect – "*He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded UPON A ROCK. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.*"(Lk.6:48,49) **Now turn over to I Cor.3:10-15.** In order for us to more fully comprehend the "*love of God*", and for believers to be "*rooted and grounded in love*", we have to be carefully taught from the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit concerning the "*length, breadth, height, and depth of the love of Christ.*" That is why I have chosen this wonderful passage for us to look at and prayerfully consider this morning . Read it with me - **Jer.31:3**. There are several distinct truths Scriptures like this, as well as other Scriptures throughout God's Word clearly reveal to us concerning God's Love as a powerful drawing principle.

Here's the **FIRST DISTINCT TRUTH** I would have us consider: God's love toward His elect **IS NOT** nor **COULD IT EVER BE CONDITIONED** on them, i.e., their obedience, their faith,

their sincerity, or their perseverance to the end - "*The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I HAVE LOVED thee.*" I want to be very careful here that I don't press the Scripture beyond what God intended them to convey to our minds and understanding. But I also want to be as clear as I can in dealing with this comforting and encouraging truth for God's CHILDREN. I know that this religious world portrays it like God's love toward man is conditioned on His "foreknowledge" or gaining knowledge of those sinners who He sees "accepting Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior." That's not what the Holy Spirit was declaring to us through Jeremiah's words. He plainly stated "***I HAVE LOVED THEE***". God didn't look down through time and see national Israel or any other sinner, Jew or Gentile, doing anything that would cause God to love them. **Matter of fact**, according to the Scripture, God's love toward the sinner is based on the **FACT** that they are **IN HIS SON**, by Divine election, Divine Redemption, and Divine regeneration and conversion - **Rom.8:38,39**. The great hymn writer Isaac Watts stated it this way: "Christ be my first elect he said; Then chose our souls in Christ our Head. Before He laid the mountains birth, or laid foundations for the earth." The Prophet Isaiah stated it better: "*Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*"(Isa.42:1) Listen to Paul's words - "(For [the children] ***being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil***, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) *It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*"(Rom.9:10-13) All of this was **BEFORE** God saw **ANYTHING** in the sinner. God can **ONLY LOVE** us as we are **found in His Son**. I encourage you to read **Ephesians 1** and then tell me that isn't the case. Outside of Christ, instead of being a God of love, our God **IS A CONSUMING FIRE** - "*For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*" (Deut.4:24); "*For our God is a consuming fire.*" (Heb.12:29)

The **SECOND DISTINCT TRUTH** we gain from studying the "*love of God*" is the fact that God's love toward His own is an "***EVERLASTING LOVE***" - "*The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an EVERLASTING LOVE.*" As if it isn't enough to **KNOW** that God **LOVED ME**: a sinner by birth, by nature, by practice, and even by choice, but to **KNOW** that this love for me is an **EVERLASTING LOVE** is a truth that should totally captivate our hearts as redeemed sinners. **Think about it this way**: If God is eternal, without beginning and without end, and the Scriptures tell us: "*For I am the Lord, I CHANGE NOT*"(Mal.3:6), that means to us that there has never been a time when God didn't love us, and there will never be some point where God will cease to love us. Solomon in his wisdom declared: "*I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.*"(Ecc1.3:14,15) This truth forever does away with the false and deceptive notion of universal atonement and the universal love of God for all men without exception. Think about the well known verse **John 3:16**. This verse isn't teaching us that God sent Christ into the world to suffer, bleed, and die **in order to show how much He loved us**. It is teaching us that **BECAUSE** of God's everlasting love for His elect, and because His holiness and justice demanded perfect satisfaction from each and every one of those God chose in Christ, God's love PROVIDED in the person and work of His "only begotten Son", the Lord Jesus Christ, **EVERYTHING His holiness and justice demanded**. This is where unregenerate sinners make a tragic mistake by thinking the love of God is like their own love toward one another - "*God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and*

shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"(Num.23:19) **Now listen to me very closely:** Man's love **IS ALWAYS** a conditional love. Whether it's our love to our friends, or to our spouse, **OUR LOVE IS CONDITIONAL - ELABORATE**. On the other hand, God's love to His own **IS NOT CONDITIONAL LOVE**, i.e., conditioned on the sinner. The Apostle John gives us the clearest definition of God's love in **I Jn.4:9,10** - "*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, **BUT THAT HE LOVED US**, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" Our Lord displays the heart of God's love in the words of His High Priestly prayer in **Jn.17:22-24** - "*And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, {and **hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.**} Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*" Christ's prayers are **ALWAYS HEARD** and **ALWAYS ANSWERED**. So what He plainly tells us is that the Father has the same love for those Christ represented as He does for His holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, Son, **and that love NEVER VARIES**. God's love doesn't grow cold when our hearts do, nor does it grow any hotter based on our performances. Listen to our text again: "*The **LORD** hath appeared of old unto me, saying, **Yea, I have loved thee with an EVERLASTING LOVE**.*" **God's love for us is the ONLY TRUE CONSTANT in this world**. I don't know about you, but that gives me comfort and encouragement at all times and in all circumstances, whether good or bad. I always think about Peter after denying our Lord 3 times and going away sorrowful. In spite of Peter's willful rebellion and sin against the God sent Messiah, the same Lord He denied prayed that Peter's faith wouldn't fail, then singled out Peter by name and sought him in his deep distress - "*But go your way, tell his disciples and **PETER** that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*"(Mk.16:7) Listen to the Prophet Micah: "*Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.*" (Mic.7:18)

That brings us to the **LAST TRUTH** we gain from studying the "*love of God*" - God's love is an active force, moving heaven, earth, and hell to eternally secure the salvation of **EVERY SINGLE OBJECT OF HIS LOVE** - "*Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: **THEREFORE WITH LOVINGKINDNESS HAVE I DRAWN THEE**.*" The eternal God didn't love us from all eternity with an "*everlasting love*", and then entrust this eternal matter of salvation to our depraved hearts and minds, our so-called "freewill". Everything that's involved in **TIME** has to do with God's pleasure, **NOT THE PLEASURE AND BENEFIT** of sinful, rebellious sons and daughters of Adam - "*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*"(Rev.4:11) Since everything was and is created and maintained for God's glory and honor, **i.e., His pleasure**, and His pleasure is **HOW** He can be revealed as both a "*just God and a Savior*", the very nature and character of God **DEMANDED** that He do everything to secure this appointed end. God's pleasure **DEMANDED** that He send one "*mighty to save*", the Lord Jesus Christ, the **ONE** in Whom the God the Father declared from heaven that He was "*well pleased*". Christ's perfect work as Mediator of the New Covenant, fulfilling all the demands of God's law and justice against all those the Father chose and gave to Him **DEMANDED** that all those for whom He lived, bled, suffered, died, and rose again as their Surety and Substitute, ultimately be with Him where He is - "*Father, I will that*

they also, whom thou hast given me, **be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.**" **Listen to me:** God didn't leave this to chance, and He certainly leave it in man's fickle "freewill". The Father's election of sinner, and Christ's **REDEMPTION** of sinner's is applied and made effectual **IN TIME** by the work of God the Holy Spirit - "**With lovingkindness I HAVE DRAWN THEE.**" The word "**drawn**" is a powerful word. It literally means "**to draw out or DRAG**". Let me give you an example - "**Canst thou DRAW OUT (SAME WORD AS DRAWN) leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?**"(Job 41:1) So this being "**drawn**" by God is a powerful, life-giving force that can only be effected by God the Holy Spirit - **Ps.110:3**. It's not that God "drags" a sinner into heaven kicking and screaming, against their will. God simply makes His people willing in the day of His power, by this "**lovingkindness**" that draws them. When God by the Spirit through the preached Word comes to the elect sinner's heart, He gives them "**eyes to see and ears to hear**", and by God-given faith they both look on, see, and love Him who they pierced – "**We LOVE Him, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.**"(I Jn.4:19) This is exactly what our Lord taught by His words in John 6 - "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.**"(Jn.6:37-39) "**No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.**"(Jn.6:44) This **DRAWING** can only be accomplished by God teaching a sinner – "**It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.**"(Jn.6:45)

Let me say this in closing: The salvation of **ONE SINNER** required the power of God, as well as the willingness of God. And that which moved both God's power and His willingness was "**that great love wherewith He LOVED US.**" It is only by a constant, prayerful meditation on these truths that we "**grow in grace and knowledge of the truth.**" May we as God's children prayerfully study this glorious truth of God's love with a willing desire to be "**rooted and grounded**" in His love, and not our own love.