

Because He First Loved

Romans 8:35 – 39

1 John 3:16 – 18

- **Opening Illustration**

- A woman woke up one morning, turned to her husband and said, "Honey, I just had a dream that you bought me a new gold necklace. What do you think it means?" He answered, "I don't know, but Valentine's Day is coming soon. Then you'll know." A few nights later, she again woke up after having a dream. She said, "This time, I dreamed you gave me a pearl necklace. What do you think it means?" "You'll know on Valentine's Day," he replied. The morning of Valentine's Day, she again woke up telling him about her dream: "This time I dreamed that you brought me a diamond necklace. What do you think it means?" "Honey, be patient," he said. "You'll know tonight." That evening, the husband came home with a package and gave it to his wife. Delighted, she opened it--and found a book titled *The Meaning of Dreams*.
- Ron Mehl in his book "The Ten(der) Commandments shares these insightful thoughts on ways love – the real thing, can be immediately recognized:
It may come in a normally reserved father's quick tear.
Or in a teenage son's spontaneous, awkward hug.
Or in a little girl's crayoned drawing, created just for you.
Or in a friend's quiet willingness to put his or her own shoulder under your too-heavy load.
Or on a lonely, blood soaked cross one dark Friday, somewhere outside the city gates.
- Scripture tells us that "God is love" - what does that truly mean? What it means to me is if there's no God there's no love; if God is love, He can't be anything to the contrary – He can't be something that He is not; also means without God in a person's life through a relationship with Christ, a person can't truly know what real, genuine, unconditional love is
- **READ 1 John 4:7 – 11, 19**

- **1 - God's love is inseparable**

- You cannot separate God, the only one true holy God, and love; can't know one without the other; **REFER v. 7b, 8**
- Romans 8:35 (NIV)
35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
- **** S ** Sin cannot separate us from God's love, but sin does hinder us**

from experiencing His love

- God still loves us regardless of what we've done; He will always love us regardless of what we do
- John 3:16 starts off with words – *For God so loved the [whole] world ...*
- **Question:** Do you still love regardless of what someone may have done, or not done to/for you? Based on what conditions do you show, express your love?
- God loves no matter what we've done or what we may do; He loves because He is love and He is love unconditional
- **** S **** Suffering cannot separate us from His love
 - Paul knew suffering; Studying Philippians, just read this week - Philippians 4:12 (NIV)
12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.
 - What normally happens in suffering, struggles people pull away from God; God doesn't pull away from us
 - **Question:** Do you show love to someone who is suffering, struggling in life? Or, are there other things that are more important to you?
 - **Question:** Again, based on what conditions do you show, express your love?
 - God loves us no matter what our current circumstance or situation is; He is love and He is love unconditional
- **** S **** Sickness cannot separate us from God's love
 - Doug Nichols story: “While serving with Operation Mobilization in India in 1967, I spent several months in a sanitarium with tuberculosis. While there, I tried to give tracts to the patients, doctors, and nurses, but no one would take them. You could tell that they weren't really happy with me, a rich American (to them all Americans were rich), being in a government sanitarium. They didn't know that as a missionary, I was just as broke as they were!

I was quite discouraged with being sick, having everyone angry at me, not being able to witness because of the language barrier, and no one even bothering to take a tract or Gospel of John. The first few nights, I would wake around 2:00 a.m. coughing. One morning as I was having a coughing spell, I noticed one of the older (and certainly sicker) patients across the aisle trying to get out of bed. He would sit up on the edge of the bed and try to stand, but because of weakness would fall back into bed. I really didn't understand what was happening or what he was trying to do. He finally fell back into bed exhausted. I then heard him

begin to cry.

The next morning I realized what the man was trying to do. He was simply trying to get up and walk to the bathroom! Because of his sickness and extreme weakness he was not able to and he simply wet the bed.

The next morning the stench in our ward was awful. Most of the other patients yelled insults at the man because of the smell. The nurses were extremely agitated and angry because they had to clean up the mess, and weren't very gentle moving him from side to side to take care of the problem. One of the nurses in her anger even slapped him. The man, terribly embarrassed, just curled up into a ball and wept.

The next night, also around 2:00 a.m., I again awoke coughing. I noticed the man across the aisle sit up to again try to make his way to the bathroom. However, still being so weak, he fell back whimpering as the night before. Just like any person, I don't like bad smells, but I didn't want to become involved. But even though I was sick myself, not knowing why I did it, I got out of my bed and went over to the old man. He was still crying and didn't hear me approach. As I reached down and touched his shoulder, his eyes opened with a fearful look. I simply smiled, put my arm under his head and neck, and my other arm under his legs, and picked him up.

Even though I was sick and weak, I was still stronger than he was. He was extremely light because of his old age and advanced TB. I walked down the hall to the restroom, which was really just a smelly, filthy small room with a hole in the floor. I stood behind him with my arms under his arms, holding him so he could take care of himself. After he finished, I picked him up and carried him back to his bed. As I began to lay him down, with my head next to his, he kissed me on the cheek, smiled, and said something which I suppose was "thank you."

What happened the next morning was amazing. One of the other patients whom I didn't know woke me around 4:00 with a steaming cup of delicious Indian tea. He then made motions with his hands (he knew no English) indicating he wanted a tract. As the sun came up, some of the other patients began to approach, motioning that they would also like one of the booklets I had tried to distribute before. Throughout the day people came to me, wanting the tracts. This even included nurses, hospital interns, doctors, until everybody in the

hospital had a tract. Over the next few days, several indicated they had trusted Christ as Savior as a result of reading the Good News!

What did it take to reach these people with the Good News of salvation in Christ? It certainly wasn't health. It definitely wasn't the ability to speak. What did God use to open their hearts to the Gospel? I simply took an old man to the bathroom. Anyone could have done that! -

- **Question:** Is your love for someone based on their physical condition? Again, based on what conditions do you show, express your love?
- God loves us no matter what our physical or spiritual condition is; He is love, He is love unconditional

- **2 – God's love is incomparable**

- **** S **** God's love is incomparable because of its reach
 - **Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)**
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, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - **REFER v. 9, 10**
 - You can never, ever get far enough away that God's love cannot still reach you
- **Illustration:** One evening in a country village, a cottage caught on fire. In a few seconds the thatched roof and the timbers were ablaze. There was no fire engine in this remote place and the villagers stood around helpless. Suddenly, a young man burst on the scene and cried out.....what can nothing be done to save them ? When no one responded he jumped through the flames and darted into the house. A moment later he emerged with a child under each arm. He had carefully hidden the children under his coat to prevent them from being burned, but he himself was burned badly. The parents of the two children perished in the flames. There was much sympathy in the village for the two children, and many expressed a desire to adopt them. Later, two people petitioned the court for adoption. One was the town mayor. He had money, position, and everything that the children would need to make sure the children were provided with the best of everything. The other man who petitioned the court was the man who has risked his life to save them. When the judge asked this man why the court should allow him to adopt the children, he did not answer with words. Instead he held up his hands which bore the scars from his burns. He let those scars do the arguing for him !
- **** S **** God's love is incomparable because He sent His only Son to the

world; but didn't just send Him to us, gave Him up as a sacrifice for us; God let the nail-scarred hands, wounded side of Jesus do the talking for Him – to show us just how much He loves us

- **REFER v. 11**

- **1 John 3:16 (NIV)**

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

- **Question:** How much are you willing to sacrifice in order to show your love? Once again, based on what conditions do you show, express your love?

- **God loves us no matter what the cost; He is love, He is love unconditional**

- **3 – God's love is inescapable**

- **REFER v. 12**

- **If you have surrendered your heart and life, and trusted in Christ by faith as Lord and Savior, God's love is in you**

- **** S **** Because of that God is here with us, He is always present, also He's here in hearts and lives of those who have believed in His Son

- **We cannot escape the presence of God. Where His presence is, so also is His love**

- **Romans 8:39 (NIV)**

³⁹ *nothing* in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- **** S **** God is always pursuing you in His love

- **God went looking for Adam and Eve even after their fall and disobedience**

- **** S **** God is pleading with you in His love; pleading with you to come and enter into a personal relationship with Him by faith through believing in His Son, Jesus Christ

- **Question:** What is your response to God's pleading?

- **Close**

- **God loves us no matter what we've done or may do**

- **God loves us no matter what our current situation or circumstance is**

- **God loves us no matter what our physical or spiritual condition is**

- **God loves us no matter what the cost**

- **Finally, based on what conditions do you show, express your love – not only for others, but for God also?**

- **God is love, He is love unconditional**