

Demonstrated Love

Sometimes there can be a big difference between what we know to be true and what we actually experience when it comes to the things of God. One area in which this can be true is God's love. We can know a lot about God's love theologically, but do we live as people who have been deeply touched by the love of God? Do our lives say, "That is a man/woman who knows that the love of God has been lavished upon him/her!"? In our passage Paul explains the incomparable love of God. As we take a closer look at this today, may we understand and experience the love of God in new and fresh ways.

Opening Discussion: What is something that someone did for you this week that demonstrated love?

Read Romans 5:6-11

1. In what way was humanity unlovely (i.e. what words does Paul use to describe a person before salvation)?
2. How did God demonstrate His love to unlovely people?

Steve said:

God's love wasn't directed toward people who were even remotely deserving: "we were yet sinners" when Christ died for us. Paul never got over the fact that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," adding "among whom I am foremost of all" (1 Timothy 1:15). The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day were scandalized by the way Jesus made a bee line for sinful, shameful people. He talked with them, ate with them, touched them, invited them to be His disciples, and died for their sins. Jesus was not naive; Jesus wasn't blind to our condition. As Steve Garber points out, "God knew the worst about us and loved us anyway" (*Visions*, p. 187). He saw our selfishness, our addictions, our hatreds, and our idolatries, and He loved us anyway.

3. What thoughts or feelings do you have when you reflect on the idea that God knew the worst about you and loved you anyway?
4. In what ways should our experience of God's love practically affect how we live? Can you think of other passages that speak to this?

Steve said:

Brennan Manning (*Abba's Child*, p. 49) tells the story of a friend, John Eagan, who met with a spiritual director who told him something that changed his life:

"John, the heart of it is this: to make the Lord and his immense love for you constitutive of your personal worth. *Define yourself radically as one beloved by God.* God's love for you and his choice of you constitute your worth. Accept that, and let it become the most important thing in your life."

This is a very challenging idea because we tend to find our worth in our accomplishments and in what we do for God. But as believers we say with Paul, "Our primary claim to fame is that *God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" We need to allow this fierce, relentless love of God to captivate our hearts and imaginations.

5. How can we "allow this fierce, relentless love of God to captivate our hearts and imaginations"? How can we come to the point where we do define ourselves radically as one beloved by God?

Steve said:

Here in verses 9 and 10 Paul looks to the future and says that we will be saved by His life for all eternity. God wouldn't give His only Son to die for us and then quit refining us and leave our salvation incomplete. At the return of Christ we will be transformed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye; even our bodies will be transformed (raised immortal - see 1 Corinthians 15). Because of what God has done in the past through the death of Christ, we can be confident that He will save us completely in the future.

6. How does it produce hope in you knowing that God will save you completely in the future and that in this life He will never quit refining you?
7. How would you summarize the significance of this passage for your life right now?