

CHAPTER 20

GOD

IS LOVE

The plan seemed so wonderful at the time. More than 100,000 people would camp out in a pristine glade in upstate New York where everyone would get along and love each other. This meeting was part of a movement—one that its followers believed would change the world. The movement really began in 1967, which some called the “Summer of Love.” Its members were called hippies. The slogan expressed noble ideals: love, not hate; peace, not war. One of its cornerstones was “free love.” Hippies thought they could ignore God’s standards, as well as thousands of years of social rules, and gratify themselves with free sex.

The Woodstock Festival in the summer of 1969 culminated this national “Love-In.” Instead of the expected 100,000 hippies descending on a quiet countryside, 1.5 million long-haired young people wearing beads and feathers flooded the area for three days of music.

Was Woodstock really a place of peace and love? No. Peter Townsend, a member of the band “The Who” which played during Woodstock, said, “What was going on off the stage was just beyond comprehension—stretchers and dead bodies, and people throwing up, and people having [drug] trips... I thought the whole of America had gone

mad.”¹

Tempers flared; people were assaulted; a concession stand was almost ripped apart; roads were clogged for a twenty-mile radius. Nudity, sex, and drug dealing were going on everywhere. One young man was crushed in his sleeping bag by a backhoe. And when the uncontrollable crowd went on their way, they left behind acres of trash.

What was supposed to be a monument to free love and brotherhood was actually a hedonistic mess resulting in total chaos. Selfishness and a disregard for others reigned. The “Summer of Love” had turned into a time of disaster and disappointment.

Love is a universal need of all humanity. Everyone wants to be loved. But what is love? Tragically, our world understands very little about true love. We must turn to our Mighty Creator and Perfect Judge to understand what love is all about.

In Part I, we glimpsed God’s abilities through His power and majesty as Creator. In Part II, God’s integrity as Perfect Judge shines brightly. But these facets of God’s character do not mean much if we do not understand His love, mercy, and faithfulness—revealed to us in His role as gracious Savior. God’s love is not just words on a page, but was demonstrated in the deepest kind of sacrifice—Christ’s death on the cross. In this section, we will conclude our discussion of God’s attributes by seeing God as the gracious Savior who died for us.

GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL LOVE

In New Testament times, there were three primary words for love: *eros* (sensual love); *phileo* (brotherly love); and *agape* (unconditional, supernatural love). Our world speaks mainly of *eros* or *phileo* love, but God’s love is *agape*, the purest, deepest kind of love.

Love is the supreme expression of God’s personhood and flows out of His goodness. It affects all His other attributes. The Bible does not say, “God is holiness”

or “God is power,” but “God is love.”² God’s heart overflows with His supernatural and unconditional love for us. The psalmist proclaims, “The LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever.”³

People are sometimes willing to violate standards of honesty, righteousness, and morality to please others, but God never compromises His standards. His love is pure and holy; it does not suppress or negate any of His other attributes.

Many years ago I spoke on God’s unconditional love at a missions conference for the famous Park Street Church in Boston. A missionary with whom I had attended

seminary twenty years earlier approached me afterward. “I would never preach a sermon like that,” he scolded. “I leave talking about God’s love to the theological liberals. My message emphasizes faith.”

This man had lost sight of one of God’s greatest qualities. Paul writes: “We know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.”⁴

God’s love is the only reason we exist. It is the *why* of creation, whereas His power is the *how*. Love demands an object; therefore we are created as the object of God’s love. Love flows from Him as a pure river of grace and mercy without detracting in any way from His holiness and righteousness. Everywhere we look we see evidence of God’s loving concern for our well-being. Love is our doorway to knowing God intimately.

God’s love is expressed to all people, not just those who love Him. He loved us first before we loved Him—even when we were unlovable. That is hard for us to accept at times. Yet all people benefit from His loving care: “He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”⁵ When the sun rises, its warm rays are an expression of God’s love; when the rains come, they demonstrate God’s love to all.

GOD’S LOVE IS BEYOND EXPLANATION

Dwight L. Moody, a famous pastor and evangelist at the turn of the 20th century, tells of an experience shortly after building Moody Church. The congregation wanted to emphasize the love of God so they put “God is love” over the pulpit in lights. Every night they lit the sign so passersby could see them through the windows. Moody reports:

A man walking past there one night glanced in through the door and saw the text. He was a poor prodigal, and he kept going. And as he walked away, he said to himself, “God is love? No. God is not love. God does not love me. He does not love me, for I am a poor, miserable sinner. If God were love, He would love me. God is not love.” Yet there the text was, burning down into his soul. He went on a little further, turned around and came back, and went into the meeting. He didn’t hear what the sermon was, but the text got into his heart, and that is what we want.

It is of very little account what men say if only God’s Word gets into the heart. And he stayed after the meeting was over, and I found him there weeping like a child. But as I unfolded the Scripture and told him how God had loved him from

his earliest childhood all along, the light of the gospel broke into his mind, and he
went away rejoicing.⁶

Why would God stoop to love such unworthy people as we are? Our mortal minds cannot comprehend its vastness or its consistency. We will never be able to answer why, but we can believe it is true, causing us to love, appreciate, worship, and praise Him all the more in return.

GOD'S LOVE IS FREE

One night, I was speaking to several hundred men gathered in a skid row mission. To illustrate to these men the love and grace of God, I pulled a \$10 bill from my pocket and said, "The first person who comes to take this from my hand can have it as a free gift." Out of the hundreds of people seated before me, not a single person moved.

Finally, a middle-aged man, shabbily dressed like the rest, stood timidly to his feet and asked, "Do you really mean it?"

I said, "Sure, come and get it; it is yours."

He almost ran to grasp it, then he thanked me. The rest of the crowd began mumbling, as if to say, "Why didn't I have the faith to go and accept the gift?"

This gave me a marvelous opportunity to emphasize that we do not earn God's love. God's love is a gift to all who will receive it by faith; He offers it to us freely. Nothing we do will make God love us any more; nothing we do will make Him love us any less. He loves us because He is gracious, not because of who we are, but because of who He is.

Usually, in our world, the rich, beautiful, talented, and intelligent receive the most attention and "love." But our social situation has no bearing on God's love for us. When Jesus entered Jericho, He had to pass by that greedy tax collector, Zacchaeus, who was shunned by everyone in town. Zacchaeus's spiritual hunger was so great that he climbed into a tree to see Jesus. When Jesus passed under the tree, He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."⁷

Zacchaeus did not need a second invitation. Scrambling out of the tree, he quickly welcomed Jesus into his home.

God's love reaches out to the most socially despised and brings them within the circle of His love. As in the case of Zacchaeus and the prodigal described by D. L. Moody, God's love frees a person from sin and despair—no matter who that person is.

GOD'S LOVE IS UNCHANGING AND EVERLASTING

Some of the most devastating words a child can hear from his parents are: "I won't love you if you do that." The hurt of conditional love is also contained in the words of the teenage boy who says to a girl, "If you won't have sex with me, you don't love me." She yields to his embraces in a desperate attempt to hold someone who loves her, but when he gets what he wants, he leaves her. That same hurt reverberates like the echo in a canyon when after many years of marriage one partner says, "I don't love you anymore because..."

God's sacrifice in planning for our salvation was set in motion in eternity past: "He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His

sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ."⁸ There was never a moment when God did not purpose in His love to make the ultimate sacrifice for us. He planned to leave heaven's glory, beauty, and peace and take on the body of a man. You and I, who are not even worthy to call His name, are so loved that we were always on His mind!

Just before His betrayal, Jesus enjoyed the Passover meal with His disciples. They were about to experience incredible trauma when they saw their Master led away by soldiers, put on trial, and crucified. The Book of John explains Jesus' intentions during that Last Supper: "Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He now

showed them the full extent of His love."⁹

First Jesus had a meal of fellowship, then He washed the disciples' feet. As the Lord washed Peter's feet, Peter proclaimed, "I will lay down my life for you."

Jesus responded, "Will you really lay down your life for Me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown Me three times!"¹⁰

That is exactly what Peter did. During Christ's darkest hours, Peter turned his back

on his Lord.¹¹ Did Jesus reject Peter because of his betrayal? As the soldiers bound and dragged Jesus through the crowd, Jesus caught Peter's eye. His look seemed to say, "Peter, I know you feel badly for what you have done. Please know that I still love you."

When we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord, God envelops and infuses us with

His everlasting love.¹² We enter into a special eternal relationship with Him. John recognized this and exclaimed: “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that

we should be called children of God!”¹³ This love will be with us for eternity.

GOD BLESSES US BECAUSE HE LOVES US

Recently in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a homeowner was approached by a man who wanted to borrow his barbecue grill. Being goodhearted, he let the man take it. When the borrower returned it several days later, he offered the grill owner four tickets to a Milwaukee Brewers baseball game. The owner was delighted, and even though the Brewers lost the game that day, he and his family had a good time. When they returned home, they discovered that thieves had cleaned out their house of all furniture and appliances while they were gone. What had appeared like a magnanimous gift of tickets turned out to be a trick to get the family to leave so their house could be burglarized.

Sometimes, we find ourselves wondering when God’s goodness to us will end and we will find the “bottom line.” But we do not need to be suspicious about the good things God offers us. He will never misuse our love for Him.

Nothing we do will take away His love for us. Paul writes, “I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can’t, and life can’t. The angels can’t, and the demons can’t. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can’t keep God’s love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us

from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹⁴ We need never fear that His blessings are a disguise for other intentions. All God’s actions toward us flow out of His pure love for us.

GOD’S LOVE INVOLVES HIS BEST FOR US

When iron ore is dug out of a mountain, it is worth only a few dollars per ton. But when that same ore is placed in a Bessemer furnace and put under tremendous heat and pressure, it is changed into a high grade of surgical steel.

God uses adversity in our lives, not to destroy us, but to build our faith and to refine us into the kind of people He wants us to be. He cannot use self-centered weaklings. During those difficult times, God assures us that He will work for our

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good. Only He knows the future and how things will turn out. Most of the time we selfishly ask for things that we want, but they are not necessarily the things that are good for us. I am so glad that God has not always answered my prayers and given me what I wanted. I am sure I would have made situations worse. I am going to trust God, His wisdom, and His plan for my life through my adversity.

Because He loves us, God has prepared an incredible future for us. First He gives us an abundant life on earth. This is not a temporary provision, nor is it available only

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when we feel holy enough to accept it. In addition, God gives us a heavenly future

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with Christ. That is the hope of the one loved by God!

The words of this grand old hymn express God's love so clearly:

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!
Rolling as a mighty ocean
In its fullness over me;
Underneath me, all around me,
Is the current of Thy love;
Leading onward, leading homeward,

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To my glorious rest above.

We worship our loving God, not as a religious exercise or ritual, but with a sincere response to the love He has already shown for us! Where else will we find the love and acceptance we so desperately need? Certainly not in some unbiblical "Love-In" or an immoral relationship. Such love can come only from the tender heart of God.

Every day, praise Him for His unconditional, perfect love. Praise Him when you wake up in the morning, thank Him as you work, and tell Him how much you love Him before you go to sleep. Respond to His limitless, ever-present love to you by expressing your heart of love to Him.

LIFE APPLICATION

EXALT YOUR GOD—Dedicate yourself in worship to our loving God through the words of the hymn, *May the Mind of Christ, My Savior*:

May the mind of Christ my Savior, live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling all I do and say.
May the Word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph only through His power.
May the love of Jesus fill me, as the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self-abasing—This is victory.
May His beauty rest upon me as I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel, seeing only Him.

Praise Him for the many ways He has displayed His love in your life.

REFLECT HIS IMAGE—To help you understand love, read 1 Corinthians 13 repeatedly in as many translations as are available to you. Let the words and message sink into your mind and soul. Insert your name in place of the word “love.” By faith, ask God to develop these qualities in you.

SHARE HIS MAJESTY—Is there someone in your life who needs to know how much God loves him? Perhaps a parent, spouse, or friend has not shown a healthy love to them. First John 4:18 says, “Perfect love expels all fear.” Tell that person that there is someone who loves perfectly and unselfishly—our loving Creator. Look for ways to demonstrate God’s love to that person.

CHAPTER 21

GOD HELPS

US SPREAD

HIS LOVE

Our heavenly Father loves us, His children, in innumerable ways. Occasionally, we are able to witness a human love that is a reflection, small though it may be, of God's sacrificial and unconditional love for us.

On a cold Christmas Eve in 1952, when Korea was in the throes of civil war, one young woman struggled along a village street, obviously soon to deliver a child. She pleaded with passersby, "Help me! Please. My baby." No one paid any attention to her.

A middle-aged couple walked by. The wife pushed away the young mother and sneered, "Where's the father? Where's your American man now?" The couple laughed and went on.

The young woman almost doubled up from a contraction as she watched them go. "Please..." she begged.

She had heard of a missionary who lived in a neighboring village who might help her. Hurriedly, she began walking to that village. If only he would help her baby. Shivering and in pain, she struggled over the frozen countryside. But the night was so cold. Snow began to fall. Realizing that her time was near to deliver her baby, she

took shelter under a bridge. There, alone, her baby was born on Christmas Eve.

Worried about her newborn son, she took off her own clothes, wrapped them around the baby, and held him close in the warm circle of her arms.

The next day, the missionary braved the new snow to deliver Christmas packages. The sun sparkled over the countryside. As he walked along, he heard the cry of a baby. He followed the sound to a bridge. Under it, he found a young mother frozen to death, still clutching her crying newborn son. The missionary tenderly lifted the baby out of her arms.

When the baby was ten years old, his now adoptive father told him the story of his mother's death on Christmas Eve. The young boy cried, realizing the sacrifice his mother had made for him.

The next morning, the missionary rose early to find the young boy's bed empty. Seeing a fresh set of small footprints in the snow outside, he bundled up warmly in a winter coat and followed the trail. It led back to the bridge where the young mother had died.

As the missionary approached the bridge, he stopped, stunned. Kneeling in the snow was his son, naked and shivering uncontrollably. His clothes lay beside him in a small pile. Moving closer, he heard the boy say through chattering teeth: "Mother, were you this cold for me?"

That story reminds me of another mother and Son who sacrificed so much. One winter night, Jesus left his home, His glory, and the warmth of heaven to be born in a stable to an unwelcome world. Just before He was born, Mary, His mother, was not welcome in any of the cozy inns in Bethlehem. Instead, she delivered her baby in the darkness of a cold stable. The Creator of the Universe, the Perfect Judge who could destroy the world with a single word, was willing to endure this inauspicious beginning for you and me. That is unconditional love!

We who have experienced God's unconditional love are commanded to share that love with others. But how does God express His supernatural love through us? John writes, "We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in Him. God is

love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them."¹ The secret is letting God use us as His instruments to love others. We begin that process by loving God and serving Him wholeheartedly.

GOD WANTS US TO LOVE HIM WHOLEHEARTEDLY

Jesus declared, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul,

and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”² God, in His sovereignty, has created us so we find our greatest joy and fulfillment in loving Him.

One day when I was preparing a message, my young son Zac suddenly appeared with his stack of books and sat silently beside me. I was deeply moved to think that there were dozens of places in our home where he could have gone to read. I broke the silence: “Zac, I want you to know how much it means to me that you have come to sit with me.”

My heart melted to hear my son say, “Dad, that’s the reason I’ve come. I just want to be with you.”

In the same way, the great heart of God longs for fellowship with us. With incredible blessings in hand, He waits for us to open our eyes and ears and reach out in faith to receive them. Oh, how He desires to walk and talk with us as He did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. I encourage you to pour out your heart to Him; tell Him of your hurts, fears, and hopes. Read His letters of love found in the Bible. Then come into His presence through praise and worship. As you linger in His presence, His Spirit will commune with your spirit to refresh your body, soul, mind, and emotions.

GOD WANTS US TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS

As our intimate relationship with God deepens, we become more like His Son, Jesus Christ. As a result, we are able to love others unconditionally as God loves us. John writes, “Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.”³ God wants us to express His supernatural, *agape* love to others. We become examples of God’s love to the world as we love our neighbors through the enabling of His Holy Spirit.

I am reminded of the story of the Navajo Indian woman who had been cured of a serious ailment by a missionary doctor. She was greatly impressed by the love he manifested. “If Jesus is anything like the doctor,” she said, “I can trust Him forever.”

That woman did not need anyone to explain God’s love to her. She saw it in action through the doctor. God wants His people to be living examples of His love to others.

GOD WANTS US TO LOVE OURSELVES

One of the great preachers and Bible teachers of our time, Charles Stanley, delivered a message at one of our staff training sessions in which he revealed that he had grown up not knowing the love of a father. He had come to faith in Christ, gone to seminary,

and built a large church. One day when he was feeling burned out and at the end of his rope, he invited some trusted men to join him for a time of reflection on his life. For several hours he told them his story, how unloved he had felt as a child, how even as an adult he was not experiencing the love of God.

Finally, one of the men asked him to rest his head on his folded arms on the table. “Imagine God putting His arms around you while you focus on the statement, ‘God loves me.’”

As Stanley did so, tears began to flow. He felt overwhelmed by the love of his heavenly Father for the first time in his life. What had been an intellectual exercise of faith in the love of God had become very personal.

Jesus implied that we are to love ourselves when He said, “Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.”⁴ You do not need to be brighter, thinner, prettier, or richer in God’s eyes. These are the world’s standards, not God’s. He loves you and accepts you as you are. You have no reason to dislike yourself when your Creator demonstrated unconditional love by forgiving you and dying for you. You are complete; you have unfathomable value and dignity as a child of God!

GOD WANTS US TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES

Jesus taught His disciples, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”⁵ That is difficult, if not impossible, without the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

One man who demonstrated God’s love for his enemies is Richard Wurmbrand, a Romanian pastor who was imprisoned and tortured for his faith. He lost both parents, several sisters, a brother, and children during the Nazi Holocaust. During those terrible days, he was introduced to a Romanian soldier who boasted how he had killed Jews—even those who held little children in their arms.

This man did not realize that Wurmbrand was a Jew. Since Wurmbrand is a good German name and he was a Christian pastor, the soldier assumed that Richard was not Jewish. During the soldier’s boasts of cruelty against Jews, Wurmbrand did not say a word. Instead, he invited the man to his home.

The soldier accepted the invitation. When they arrived, Wurmbrand explained that his wife was sick in bed. After conversing until late at night, the Romanian pastor said, “Sir, I have to tell you something. But promise me that you will listen to me ten minutes quietly. After ten minutes, you can say whatever you like.” The soldier readily agreed.

Richard Wurmbrand then said, “In the other room, my wife is sleeping. She is Jewish, and I am Jewish too. Her family, which is also my family, perished in one of the big Nazi concentration camps. You boasted that you have killed in the same concentration camp where our family was sent. So you presumably are the very murderer of my family.

“Now I propose to you an experiment. We will go into the other room and will tell my wife who you are. I can assure you my wife will not say one word of reproach, will not look angrily at you, and will smile at you as at every guest. She will consider you an honored guest. Although she is sick, she will go and prepare for you coffee and some cookies. You will be received just like everybody else. If my wife, who is only human, can do this, if she can love you like this, knowing what you have done and can forgive you, then how much more will Jesus, who is love?”⁶

The tall German soldier tore at his jacket, crying, “What have I done, what have I done? I am guilty of so much blood.” This man who had never heard a prayer before knelt with the pastor and asked God for forgiveness.

Then the two men came into the room where Mrs. Wurmbrand lay. She had heard nothing about what had happened in the next room, but when her husband woke her, she did exactly as he described she would. When she heard that the soldier had repented of his sins, she fell around his neck. They both wept. Pastor Wurmbrand writes of the scene, “It was a scene of love like in heaven. That is what Jesus can do.

He is love.”⁷

When Christians begin to love God, they will love their enemies. The world today, as in the first century, will marvel when they see our loving attitudes and actions,

“How those Christians love one another.”⁸

GOD’S LOVE IMPELS US TO TELL OTHERS

Have you ever been around a grandmother who has just returned from visiting her grandchildren? She is so in love with those grandchildren that she cannot stop talking about them. You had better be prepared to look at a stack of pictures.

Have you ever been around a new Christian who is so in love with Jesus that he cannot stop talking about our Savior? So what happens over time? All too often, like the church of Ephesus recorded in the Book of Revelation, many believers lose their first love and stop talking about the God who loved us so much that He gave His Son

to die in their place on the cross.

The contrast between a new Christian and a “veteran” Christian is illustrated by the story of the young man who rushed back to his apartment one night after a Billy Graham meeting. He and his roommate had lived and worked together for several years. “I must tell you something,” he said to his friend. “Tonight I invited Christ to be my Savior, and He has changed my life!”

His friend smiled and said, “Wonderful! I have been a Christian for several years, all the time hoping that you would receive Christ as your Savior.”

Surprised, the new Christian said, “Ever since I’ve known you, I have been trying to live up to your standards, but have failed miserably. Why didn’t you tell me how I could know Christ?”

Paul writes, “Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer

live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.”⁹ When we genuinely realize how much God has sacrificed for us, our love for Him will stay warm and fruitful. We will not be able to keep the Good News to ourselves. God’s love *is* the Good News we share with those who have no idea what it means to be loved by Christ.

Let us continually, day to day and moment to moment, drink deeply from the wellsprings of God’s love. And after you are refreshed with that living water, pour some out onto dry, thirsty people around you. I assure you that seeing others respond to God’s love and forgiveness will be one of the most joyful experiences you will ever have.

LOVING BY FAITH

My prayer for you is the same as Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus: “May your roots go down deep into the soil of God’s marvelous love. 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 really is.”¹⁰

You may confess, “I don’t have that kind of love to share with anyone.” To experience and share God’s supernatural love, claim it by faith.¹¹

We have the potential to love anyone God puts in our path. One of the greatest

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lessons I have learned in my Christian life is “how to love by faith.” We may think we have lost our love for our spouse, for example. Yet when we *by faith* invite God’s unconditional love for an “unlovable” spouse to flow through us, we will discover a rekindled love that is alive and well. That is true as well for an “unlovable” boss, associate, or employee. Nothing breaks up the hardened ground of unforgiveness and bitterness like sincere acts and words of love.

Sometimes you and I must take the first step of restoration, by faith in love. A positive response from others may not always be immediate, but keep on loving and reaching out. There is no power on earth stronger than supernatural love.

An attorney came to Arrowhead Springs one day to complain that he just could not get along with one of his partners. They hated each other, he reported. So I suggested he tell his partner that he loved him and ask him for forgiveness for not loving him.

“I could *never* do that,” he protested. But after I explained the concept of how to love by faith, he agreed to approach his partner. He went into the office early the next morning and said to his partner: “Some time ago I became a Christian and my critical attitude toward you has changed. I’ve come to ask you to forgive me and to tell you that I love you.”

His partner practically fell out of his chair because he was so amazed at the dramatically changed attitude of the man before him. He asked, “How can I have what you have?” The attorney led his partner to faith in Christ, and they became good friends. A few days later they came to tell me of the miracle of their reconciliation and of God’s supernatural love.

Begin right now to love by faith. Make a list of everyone you do not like or have a hard time loving or those who have hurt you. Perhaps your list will include your boss, a coworker, your spouse, your children, a parent, a fellow believer, or a neighbor. Now ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with love for that person and claim by faith Christ’s great love for them. Then the next time you meet them, by faith draw upon God’s limitless, inexhaustible, overwhelming love for them. Through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, demonstrate your love by your actions.

Love, however, is incomplete alone; it requires action. Supporting God’s great love is another of His attributes: His infinite mercy. In the next chapter, we will find out how His mercy complements His love to bring us a hope for the future and a security in His presence.

LIFE APPLICATION

WRITE IT ON YOUR HEART—Commit the following statement and verses to memory. Then as you encounter situations during this week where you need to remember that God loves you, claim these promises by faith.

- Because God is love, He is unconditionally committed to my well-being.
- 1 John 4:16—“We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in Him. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.”
- Romans 8:39—“Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

COUNT ON GOD—God gives a wonderful promise in Romans 8. As you read Romans 8:38,39, consider the struggles and worries in your life. Trust your compassionate God to lovingly sustain you no matter what your circumstance.

OBEY GOD—First John 4:10,11 says, “This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.” Is there someone in your life that you have difficulty loving? Do not wait until you “feel” like loving him. Love is much more than a feeling, and often we must first love them by faith. Begin by praying for that person. Then, actively reach out to them in a display of kindness. You will be surprised how quickly the “feeling” of love may follow. Obey God and determine to love even the “unlovable” today.