

God Loves Sinners

#0397

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—March 10, 1972

I know we're going to have a blessed time tomorrow afternoon with these different services planned, and we look forward to a special blessing upon those who are baptized tomorrow afternoon. Good to share in the reaping, isn't it, as well as the sorrows and joy of the sowing.

Last Friday night, you will remember that we studied from John 14:15:

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments" John 14:15.

And we noted that just as it takes gas to keep a car running, it takes love to keep the Christian running. Love is the motive power, the *impelling*, *propelling*, *compelling* power that keeps us moving for God. If we have difficulty, then, with any point that God requires, if any commandment seems hard, what we need is more what? More love, more love.

We also noted last Friday night, you remember, that the way we get love is from Him. That as we behold the love of God, the love awakens in our hearts. And so, we read in 1 John the fourth chapter:

"We love Him, because He first loved us" 1 John 4:19.

We do not originate love. We reflect love. This evening, I want to note especially what kind of love God has and how He shows it. If we love Him, we will keep His commandments, but thank God, He loves us *long* before we keep any of His commandments. He's in the loving business. And the great manifestation of His love is not toward angels or saints, but sinners.

Turn, please, to Romans the fifth chapter beginning with the sixth verse:

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" Romans 5:6–8.

That expression, "God commendeth His love toward us," means this is the way God proves His love for us. This is the evidence He gives of His love. What is it?

"...In that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"
Romans 5:8.

Have you ever looked at someone that you considered good, perhaps saintly, and said in your heart, "I can see how God might love her or him, but I don't see how He can love me."

Any such thought indicates that we still do not understand the love of God. The love of God is not a matter of God finding us obedient, finding us cooperative. The love of God begins while we are rebels. I say "begins." I mean His manifestation of it.

"God commendeth..." Romans 5:8

Or proves.

"...His love toward us..." Romans 5:8.

In this:

"...that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"
Romans 5:8.

You notice in the opening verses, he says Christ died for whom? The ungodly. That is, those that weren't like God. Is there a soul in this world that Jesus didn't die for? No, no. He died for all, the Bible says. He died for all. The very men that were nailing Him to the cross, the ransom was being paid for them. You remember that He prayed for them, as Luke puts down the record, while they were driving the spikes through His feet and hands.

As He groaned in agony He said:

"...Father..." Luke 23:34.

Do what?

"...forgive them; for they know not what they do..."
Luke 23:34.

He was dying for them.

You know, it's a wonderful thing that before the sun set that evening, the centurion, who commanded that Roman group of soldiers, accepted Christ as his Savior. As the Son of God expired there at three o'clock in the afternoon, the centurion who had witnessed all the events of that day, as he felt that earthquake, as he saw the darkness, as he heard the Savior's expiring cry and saw Him die, he confessed his faith. He said:

"...Truly this man was the Son of God" Mark 15:39.

In fact, there were three that day that the Savior won in His closing hours. Another was the man that carried His cross out to the place of execution, Simon, the

Cyrenian. Simon's sons were disciples, but Simon had never accepted Christ. He did that day, as he bore the cross.

And then, of course, there was that memorable experience of the thief who died on one of the other crosses by His side. And as he beheld the Lamb of God dying there, the Just for the unjust, the conviction came to him that here there was hope for him. He, a thief, a murderer, a criminal, cast himself helpless upon the mercy of Jesus, and the dying soul was ransomed by the dying Savior.

Have you ever noticed, dear friends, the distribution of those three? Simon was from Africa. The thief was from Asia. The centurion was from Europe. And thus, was represented the vast extensive outreach of Christ's salvation. Not to any nation, or continent, or race. Not to any particular group or groups of people was the offer of pardon and the expression of mercy to be given.

And so, after His resurrection again and again, Jesus told His disciples:

"...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" Mark 16:15.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" Matthew 28:19.

My point is Jesus died for everybody, and He wanted everybody to know about it. And He died for the ungodly, our text says. He died for us:

"...while we were yet sinners..." Romans 5:8.

Do you believe that, my friend? Do you really? Well, if you do, you'll never wait to come back to God, hoping that things will be better either on your part or His part some other day.

You remember that the scribes and Pharisees when Jesus was on earth criticized Him because He spent time with people they called sinners—the tax collectors and others who were looked upon by the Pharisees as outside the mercy of God.

They criticized:

"...This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" Luke 15:2.

They wouldn't be seen eating with a publican, but Jesus sat as an honored guest at their table. Nobody was outside of the circle of *His* love. But why *did* He? Because He loved them because He loved them.

If there's somebody here tonight that wonders how God could love you, I'll tell you how you can find out. Not by looking at yourself. That'll only discourage you. The better acquainted you get with yourself, the more you wonder why God would

ever love you. But the secret lies, oh, the wonderful secret lies in studying Him. The reason He loves you, my dear friend, is that He is love. The reason He loves you is that He is love.

You remember in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said:

“...He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” Matthew 5:45.

Does He do that? Why sure. The sun shines just as bright on the rebel as it does on the loyal. Why? Because God is love.

It's true that there are some things God can do for the man that cooperates with Him, but that isn't because God is partial. And it's true that there are consequences of sin that come to the wicked—pain and suffering and death. God is sorry over that, and God suffers *with* those children of His that are in rebellion. But my point is this. God is all the time seeking how to give more evidence of His love.

It was the world that God loved. Repeat with me once again John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” John 3:16.

“Well,” somebody says, “if God loves everybody so much and Jesus died for everybody, then everybody will be saved, won't they?”

God would like to have it that way, friends. He's made full provision. He's bought and paid for the right to save everybody. But salvation is from *sin*, and sin is a matter of choice, isn't it? Yes. And if I choose to continue in lawbreaking, if I keep my will on the side of rebellion, then the love of Jesus is all in vain as far as I'm concerned. Oh, I pray that none of us will disappoint Him in that way.

But remember, the saving power is His love. It is the goodness of God that leads the sinner to repentance. It is the love of Christ revealed on Calvary that convinces us of God's willingness to save us and His ability to save us, the certainty of it. And thus, we become:

“...confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it until the day of Jesus Christ”
Philippians 1:6 [marginal reading].

Oh, I'm so thankful for the saving, holding, drawing, keeping, victory-giving power of love.

Now, you remember in 1 John the fourth chapter, we are told that God is love. That's His name, His nature.

I want you to turn now to Proverbs the 18th chapter, the 10th verse:

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” Proverbs 18:10.

As we read this text, doubtless many of us think of the city of refuge in the ancient service, a place that was a haven for the man that was running from the avenger of blood. If he could make it to that city of refuge, get within its walls, he was safe. Nothing could touch him.

Now, this is the picture here. And what is that strong tower of refuge? The name of the Lord. And His name is love.

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous *runneth* into it, and is safe” Proverbs 18:10.

In *Mount of Blessing*, page 119, we read a beautiful comment on this:

“Live in contact with the living Christ and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go. Know and believe the love that God has to us and you are secure. That love is a fortress impregnable to all the delusions and assaults of Satan. ‘the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe’”
Mount of Blessing, page 119.

Can it be that the only reason I sin is that I lack a knowledge of or faith in the love of God? That’s the truth. That’s the truth. Go back to the Garden of Eden. Think of our first parents, happy in that beautiful home. How, how does Satan seek to lead them astray? By casting into their minds doubt concerning the love of God. And how does he do that? By raising a question over God’s restrictions. He follows the same program today.

Has he ever come to you and said, “Oh, don’t you wish you could do what everybody else does? Don’t you wish you could eat what everybody else eats, and drink what everybody else drinks, and go where everybody else goes, and do what everybody else does? *If God really loved you, He’d let you do a lot of those things.*”

Wasn’t that what he said to Eve? Wasn’t that the whole point of his sermon, that radio broadcast from the forbidden tree?

“Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Genesis 3:1.

And she answered him, “Why sure, we can eat of the trees of the garden except one. God told us not to eat of that. If we did, we’d die” [a paraphrase of Genesis 3:2–3].

“Oh,” he says, “you won’t die. You won’t die. See, I’m eating it and I don’t die. And if God really loved you the way He says, why wouldn’t He let you eat of this tree? It would probably do something wonderful for you like it has for me” [a paraphrase of Genesis 3:4–5].

“God doesn’t love you”—this was the insinuation, this was the doubt. And it took effect. Eve came up to that tree believing in the love of God. She went away excited over the great interest that a stranger had manifested in her, and her hands full of the tempting fruit with which to entice her husband to join her. And he did.

Oh, my friends, what did they lose? They lost the certainty of the love of the Creator. And this was manifested in their effort to do what? To hide. Always before, they had welcomed the Lord as He came to visit them. But now, as He comes into the garden, no one runs to meet Him. There’s no voice of welcome, no greeting of joy.

Watch the Lord as He walks those paths, calling out, “Adam, oh, Adam, where are you?”

And finally, unable longer to conceal themselves, the guilty pair came trembling, downcast. Adam said:

“...I was afraid... and hid myself” Genesis 3:10.

How that must have hurt God. These dear ones, upon whom He had lavished His love, were now afraid of Him, afraid of Him. They had lost the knowledge of the love of God. And that’s what sin always does, friends.

We can never sin as long as our hearts are full of the truth of God’s love. Whenever we break the law, it’s because we do not see how much God loves us. Therefore, when we’re tempted, the answer is *run* to the tower, *flee* to the city of refuge. What is it?

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower...” Proverbs 18:10.

Run into it and be safe.

Looking at the love of God, we know that He wouldn’t withhold any good thing from us. We know that He’ll do anything necessary to save us, to keep us from falling. He wouldn’t let us go. He wouldn’t desert us.

“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things”
Romans 8:32.

Oh, thank God, it is looking at God’s love that saves us, and that keeps us. And we need this blessing, dear friends, not only at the beginning of the Christian life. Certainly, it’s the way to begin. But again and again, we must remember that the same power that saves us is the power that keeps us. We keep Him the same way we get Him—by looking at His wonderful love.

And so, He says:

“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is none else” Isaiah 45:22.

You know, if we can learn this lesson it'll help us in our relations with one another, in the home, in the school, in the church and in dealing with people in general. What is it that wins us to God and His program? It's love. What is it that persuades us to give up the bad things and choose the good things? It's the revelation of God's love. And this same love manifested *through* us will draw and win others.

To win some, we must be winsome. To draw men to Christ, we must reveal the Savior's love. And this is no cheap, silly permissiveness. Oh, no, friends. The law of God is supreme in God's dealings with men.

But at Calvary, God proved that while His law cannot be changed, it cannot be altered, it cannot be relaxed, that God in Christ will take upon Himself the penalty of that law to show us that He would rather die than lose one of us. It is that spirit coming into *our* hearts that will make us able administrators, whether in the home, the church, the school, or wherever.

You know, I read an interesting little story. It was written before anybody here was born. It's found in the little book that was printed a number of years ago called *Scrapbook Stories*. Elder Ernest Lloyd, for many years editor of *Our Little Friend*, the children's paper, selected these from scrapbooks that Sister Ellen White had in which she had gathered together various incidents from her reading that she thought would be especially interesting for children and young people.

I want to read you this little one. It's not too long, but you'll see why I want to read it.

“‘I wish father would come home.’ The voice of the boy who said this had a troubled tone.

“‘Your father will be angry,’ said Aunt Phoebe, who was sitting in the room reading a book.

“Richard raised himself from the sofa where he had been for half an hour, and with a touch of indignation in his voice, answered: ‘He’ll be sorry, not angry. Father never gets angry.’

“‘that’s Father, now!’ He started up after the lapse of nearly ten minutes, as the sound of a bell reached his ear, and went to the door. He came slowly back, saying with a disappointed air: ‘It wasn’t father. I wonder what keeps him so late. Oh, I wish he would come!’

“‘You seem anxious to get into deeper trouble,’ remarked the aunt, who had been in the house for a week only, and who was not sympathetic toward children.

“‘I believe, Aunt Phoebe, that you would like to see me whipped,’ said the boy, a little indignant; ‘but you won’t.’

“‘I must confess,’ replied the aunt, ‘that I think a little whipping would not be out of place. If you were my child, I am quite sure you would not escape.’

“‘I am not your child, and I do not want to be. Father is good, and he loves me.’

“Again the bell rang, and again the boy left the sofa and went to the door. ‘It’s Father!’ he exclaimed.

“‘Ah, Richard!’ was the kindly greeting, as Mr. Gordon took the hand of his boy. ‘But what is the matter, my son? You don’t look happy.’

“‘Won’t you come in here?’ Richard drew his father into the library.

“Mr. Gordon sat down, still holding Richard’s hand. ‘You are in trouble, my son. What has happened?’

“Richard’s eyes filled with tears as he looked into his father’s face. He tried to answer, but his lips quivered. Then he opened the door of a glass case and brought out the fragments of a broken statue which had been sent home only the day before.

“A frown came over Mr. Gordon’s face as Richard set the pieces on a table. ‘Who did this, my son?’ was asked in an even voice.

“‘I threw my ball in the room once-only once, in forgetfulness.’ The poor boy’s tones were husky and tremulous.

“For a little while, Mr. Gordon sat controlling himself and collecting his disturbed thoughts. Then he said cheerfully: ‘What is done, Richard, can’t be helped. Put the broken pieces away. You have had trouble enough about it, I can see. I will not add a word to increase your distress.’

“‘Oh, Father!’ And the boy threw his arms about his father’s neck. ‘You are so good.’

“Five minutes later Richard entered the sitting room with his father. Aunt Phoebe looked up expecting to see two shadowed faces, but she did not find them. She was puzzled.

“‘that was very unfortunate,’ she said a little while after Mr. Gordon came in. ‘It was such an exquisite work of art. It is hopelessly ruined. I think Richard was a naughty boy.’

“‘We have settled that, Aunt Phoebe,’ was the mild, but firm, answer of Mr. Gordon. ‘It is one of our rules in this house to get into the sunshine as soon as possible’” [*Scrapbook Stories* compiled by Ernest Lloyd].

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him” Matthew 7:11.

“But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way” 1 Corinthians 12:31.

The way of love, the way of charity, the way of forgiveness, the way of mercy. Tonight, we’re looking once again into that great wonderful love of God. And as we behold His face, aren’t we thankful that He loves us? Aren’t we? We wouldn’t want to grieve him, would we? And dear ones, when we’re tripped up into sin, when, like the boy that threw his ball carelessly, forgetfully, something happens, thank God we know that our Father will be there to help us out, help us out. We need not linger under the shadow of failure.

Bless the Lord. He says, “I’m there to pick you up, to help you up.”

Oh, I know He loves us. He loves you, my friend. Anybody here tonight that’s failed this week? Ah, dear one, the love of God has sought you. The love of God has brought you to this meeting. The love of God is seeking to get through to your soul. God wants you to know that He loves *you*, not because you’ve been good but because He’s been good. Love is not dependent on what you have done.

It’s true you can make Him happy by responding to that love. It’s true, dear friends, that He is so grateful and appreciative and joyful when you choose to love Him back and keep His commandments.

But remember, He loved you before one act of obedience was ever done. And listen, if He loved us enough to die for us when we were rebels and didn’t love Him at all, now that we’ve accepted Him, if we chance to fail, does He wait until we get real good and sorry before He starts loving us again? No, no. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. And so, beholding that love, we want to get back into the sunshine as quickly as possible, right?

You know, last week in a testimony meeting Sister Virginia was telling us about an extra stanza of “Jesus Loves Me.” How many of you remember it? Wasn’t that good?

“Jesus loves me when I’m good,
When I do the things I should,
Jesus loves me when I’m bad,
But it makes Him, oh, so sad.
Yes, Jesus loves me.”

Oh, friend, do you see that if we understand this simple truth, we’ll never get the idea that we’ve got to do *something* to get God to love us? No, no. No, no. He’s done everything to get us to love *Him*. That’s where it starts, and that’s how it keeps on. And that’s the way we get victory.

Wouldn’t you like to sing that? Let’s start with that first stanza.

“Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so,
Little ones to Him belong,
They are weak but He is strong.

[Chorus] Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me when I’m good,
When I do the things I should,
Jesus loves me when I’m bad,
But it makes Him, oh, so sad.
[Chorus]”

I believe we can be comfortable with somebody like that. What do you say? And the closer we get to Him, the more we’ll know Him, the more we’ll enjoy Him, the more we’ll make Him happy.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” 1 John 4:11.

What do you say? Reveal that kind of love. Exalting the law? Yes. But exalting the law of love, remembering that:

“...love is the fulfilling of the law” Romans 13:10.

If we love Him, we’ll keep His commandments—if we love Him [a paraphrase of John 14:15]. And the way to get love is by looking at His love.

How many of us would like to send Him the word of response tonight? Thank the Lord.

Now, we'll have a little testimony meeting, and I'm going to make an unusual request tonight. You folks that spoke last week or spoke the week before will you all listen tonight? I know there are some folks here either that weren't here last week, or the week before, or didn't get a chance to speak that would like to speak tonight. So, you folks that didn't speak last week and didn't speak the week before, you come up now if you'd like to bear your witness. We'll give you a chance.

[Testimony meeting follows]

[Comments by Elder Frazee during testimony meeting.]

Well now, would you lead us in that stanza?

"I love Jesus, does He know,
Have I ever told Him so,
Jesus loves to hear me say,
That I love Him every day,

Yes, I love Jesus,
Yes, I love Jesus,
Yes, I love Jesus,
Because He first loved me."

Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Parker.

[Testimony meeting continued]

"My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign,
My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art Thou,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus 'tis now."
Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, #321, first stanza.

Will the audience stand, please.

Now, dear Lord, we thank Thee with all our hearts for such a wonderful Savior, such a wonderful love. And we're going out to share with others the goodness of Thy character, the beauty of Thy way. Dismiss us with Thy blessing for Jesus' sake, amen.

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