

# Melva's Corner



## A Life Without Failure (Learn To Love)

August 27, 2007

**Central Truth: God's love for you is unconditional and undeserved. He loves you in spite of your disobedience, your weakness, your sin and your selfishness. He loves you enough to provide a way to abundant, eternal life.**

Love is the greatest thing in the world - the greatest privilege and power known to man. Its emphasis in life and word changed the course of history as the first-century Christians demonstrated a quality of life never before witnessed on this earth. The Greeks, Romans, Gentiles, and Jews hated one another. The very idea of love and self-sacrifice was foreign to their thinking. When they observed Christians from many nations, with different languages and cultures, actually loving one another and sacrificing to help each other, they responded in amazement, "Behold, how these people love one another!"

Everybody wants to be loved. Most psychologists agree that man's greatest need is to love and be loved. No barrier can withstand the mighty force of love.

Today, let me share with you the first of four vital truths about love that will help you understand this amazing concept:

1. **God loves you unconditionally.**
2. **You are commanded to love others - God, your neighbors, your enemies.**
3. **You are incapable of loving others in your own strength.**
4. **You can love others with God's love.**

There are three Greek words translated into the one English word "love"; eros, which suggests sensual desire - it does not appear in the New Testament; phileo, which is used for friendship or love of one's friends or relatives - it conveys a sense of loving someone because he is worthy of love; and agape, which is God's love: the purest, deepest kind of love - it

is expressed not through mere emotions but as an act of one's will.

Agape is God's supernatural, unconditional love for you revealed through Jesus' death on the cross for our sins. It is the supernatural love He wants to produce in you and through you to others, by His Holy Spirit. Agape love is given because of the character of the person loving rather than because of the worthiness of the object of that love. Sometimes it is love "in spite of" rather than "because of."

God underscores the importance of this kind of love through the inspired pen of the apostle Paul, recorded in I Corinthians 13. In this beautiful and remarkable passage of Scripture, Paul writes that, apart from love, anything that you might do for God or others is of no value. Consider these words:

**"If I had the gift of being able to speak in other languages without learning them, and could speak in every language there is in all of heaven and earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making noise.**

**If I had the gift of prophecy and knew all about what is going to happen in the future, knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would it do? Even If I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love.**

**If I gave everything I have to poor people, and if I were burned alive for preaching the Gospel but didn't love others, it would be of no value whatever"**

In other words, no matter what you do for God and for others, it is of no value unless you are motivated by God's love.

But what is agape? How does this kind of love express itself? Paul gives us an excellent description:

**"Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong.**

It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.

All the special gifts and powers from God will someday come to an end, but love goes on forever...

There are three things that remain - faith, hope, and love - and the greatest of these is love.

In the next chapter the apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, admonishes: "Let love be your greatest aim."

### **God Loves You Unconditionally**

God loves with agape, the love described in I Corinthians 13. He loves you so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross for you, that you might have everlasting life. His love is not based on performance. Christ loves you so much that while you were yet a sinner, He died for you.

God's love for you is unconditional and undeserved. He loves you in spite of your disobedience, your weakness, your sin and your selfishness. He loves you enough to provide a way to abundant, eternal life. From the cross Christ cried out, Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing." If God loved those who are sinners that much, can you imagine how much He loves you - His child through faith in Christ and who seeks to please Him?

The parable of the prodigal son, recorded in Luke 15, illustrates God's unconditional love for His children. A man's younger son asked his father for his share of the estate, packed his belongings, and took a trip to a distant land where he wasted all of his money on parties and prostitutes. About the time that his money was gone, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He finally came to his senses and realized that his father's hired men at least had food to eat. He decided, "I will go to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired man.'"

While he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming and was filled with loving pity. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. I think that the reason he saw his son coming while he was still a long distance away was that he was praying for his son's return and spent much time each day watching that lonely road on which his son would return.

Even as the son was making his confession, the father interrupted to instruct the servants to kill the fatted calf and prepare for a celebration - his lost son had repented; he had changed his mind and had returned to become part of the family again.

God demonstrated His love for us before we were Christians, but this story makes it obvious that God continues to love his child who has strayed far from Him. He eagerly awaits his return to the Christian family and fellowship.

Even when you are disobedient, He continues to love you, waiting for you to respond to His love and forgiveness. Paul writes:

**"Since by his blood he did all this for us as sinners, how much more will he do for us now that he has declared us not guilty? Now he will save us from all of God's wrath to come. And since, when we were his enemies, we were brought back to God by the death of His Son, what blessings he must have for us now that we are his friends, and he is living within us!"**

The love that God has for you is far beyond our human comprehension. Jesus prayed, "My prayer for all of them (the disciples and believers of all ages) is that they will be of one heart and mind, just as you and I are, Father . . . I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one - so that the world will know you sent me and will understand that you love them as much as you love me."

Think of it! God loves you as much as He loves His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. What a staggering, overwhelming truth to comprehend! You need have no fear of someone who loves you perfectly. You need never be reluctant to trust God with your entire life for He truly loves you. And the almost unbelievable part of it is that He loves you even when you are disobedient.

When you are disobedient, He disciplines or corrects you because He loves you.

Hebrews 12 teaches about the love that motivates God's discipline:

**“My son, don't be angry when the Lord punishes you. Don't be discouraged when he has to show you where you are wrong. For when he punishes you, it proves that he loves you . . .”**

Let God train you, for he is doing what any loving father does for his children.

Since we respect our fathers here on earth, though they punish us, should we not all the more cheerfully submit to God's training so that we can begin to really live?

Our earthly parents trained us for a few brief years, doing the best for us that they knew how, but God's correction is always right and for our best good, that we may share His holiness. Being punished isn't enjoyable while it is happening - it hurts! But afterwards we can see the result, a quiet growth in grace and character.

Christ's death on the cross has once and for all satisfied the wrath and justice of God for the believer's sin. God chastens and disciplines you to help you grow and mature spiritually.

The early Christians endured persecution, hardships and unbelievable suffering. Yet Paul wrote to them:

**“Who then can ever keep Christ's love from us? When we have trouble or calamity, when we are hunted down or destroyed, is it because He doesn't love us anymore? And if we are hungry, or penniless, or in danger, or threatened with death, has God deserted us? No, for the Scriptures tell us that for his sake we must be ready to face death at every moment of the day - we are like sheep awaiting slaughter; but despite all this overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us enough to die for us.**

**For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away. Our fears for today, or worries about tomorrow or where we are - high above**

**the sky, or in the deepest ocean - nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ when He died for us."**

**Such love is beyond our ability to grasp with our minds, but it is not beyond our ability to experience with our hearts.**

**Scriptural References:**

**" Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away."  
(Corinthians 13:8 NIV)**