

Knowing and Believing God's Love



The Love of God (Part 6)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you keys to successful living which good has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry. I'm continuing this week with our special theme for this Christman season: The Love of God.

But first, let me say thank you to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we will be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write even if it's only a brief personal note.

Now back to our Christmas theme: The Love of God.

It is my sincere desire for each one of you, my radio listeners, that this Christmas season will be truly blessed and meaningful for you. It is for this reason that I have chosen as my theme: The Love of God. If you truly taste the love of God at this time, then your blessings will not be limited to a few brief hours of carnal pleasure, but they will last on into the New Year that lies ahead and throughout the rest of your life, yes, and beyond that through an endless eternity.

On the other hand, if you go through life without truly knowing God and His love, then it will make no difference how much pleasure or success you may gain in other ways, ultimately you will have lived in vain.

In my talks last week I focused on two simple, but profound statements: God is love and God is light.

Today, and through the rest of this week, I'm going to develop this theme more fully. The theme for my talk today is Knowing and Believing God's Love.

I want to begin with a passage from the first epistle of John, chapter 4, verse 16, First John 4:16 and I'm going to read it in two translations so that we can get as far as possible the full impact of what the Bible is saying to us through this verse.

> "And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love,and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." (NASB)

Then the other version:

> "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (NIV)

You see one version there says, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us." The other says, "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us." The point that I want to bring out is that it is one thing to know intellectually, theoretically, maybe out of Scripture or out of a sermon about the love of God, but it is something quite different to believe it or, as the other version says, "to rely on it." I want to make it clear to you that there is a step beyond knowing, it is believing or relying on. It's in a sense casting yourself upon. It means in a sense taking a risk. You really believe that God loves you so you commit yourself to Him without reservation. You'd never do that if you didn't trust in His love. If you want to analyze everything and work everything out in advance, then you'll never take this step of commitment, of total yielding to God, of putting yourself without reservation in His hands, of relying on Him, trusting Him to do whatever He wants, no strings attached, no conditions.

You see, that is how God initially loved you and me, and He brings us to a point where He wants the same kind of response from Him, no strings attached, no conditions, no reservations. It's not just knowing. It's believing in a sense of relying on, committing ourselves to, accepting for real what God says, what the Bible says about God, that God is love.

I think there are so many people who have heard sermons about the love of God, who know about it in that way, intellectualy, but they've never relyed on it. They've never stepped out in faith and said, "God, here I am. Take me and make me what you want me to be. I lay down no preconditions. I make no reservations. Here it is. This is my response to your love. Your love was unconditional, no strings attached. My response is myself, unconditional, no strings attached. You have me, God. Do what you will with me. I'm yours." That, I believe, is what John means when he says, "We know and rely on the love that God has for us." It's beyond intellectual reasoning. It takes us beyond our understanding. It takes us into a realm where, in a sense, the understanding begins to protest and says, "You're going to far. That's fanaticism. You're going overboard." And so for that very reason I believe in the next verse but one of First John chapter 4, John goes on and speaks about fear. In First John 4:18 he says:

> "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love." (NIV)

So there comes a point where if we let fear dictate to us, it will hold us back from surrender. We'll reason it out and we'll say the price is too high, the risks are too great. But there is a kind of love that drives out fear, that leaves no room for fear. A love that enables us to make that total surrender, that complete acceptance of all that God is, all that God says and all that God does. A love that drives out fear and brings us into real unity, communion with God.

Now I want to turn to a prayer of the apostle Paul in which he prays for God's people, and in this prayer he prays essentially that we may all enter into the experience of this kind of love that I'm talking about. This beautiful prayer of Paul is recorded in Ephesians chapter 3 verses 16 through 19, and this is what he said:

> "I pray that out of His glorious riches He [that is God] may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (NIV)

What a prayer that is. One could spend a month analyzing that prayer. I just have a few moments, but let me point out that there is a culminating point in this prayer of Paul's that we, God's people, may know the love that surpasses knowledge and that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. So it's in knowing this love that we can enter into the fullness of God.

Let me point out certain basic principles that are involved in this prayer of the apostle Paul. First of all he says in verse 16 that "...He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being." So it's only through the Holy Spirit, it's on a supernatural realm. Natural understanding, natural reasoning, even the naturally emotional responses of man will not take us into this realm that God is here speaking about.

And then he says that it's through faith: "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." It's only to be appropriated by faith. It's not just knowing, it's believing. As we respond in faith, we enter into this realm. But if we are not willing to make the faith response, if we are not willing to go beyond the level of our own reason and understanding, then we cannot enter into all that Paul here writes about.

And then he speaks about grasping: "...how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." I call that grasping dimensions that cannot be measured. We can see them in vision but there is no measuring stick that can measure those dimensions. How wide, how long, how high and how deep is the love of Christ? It's grasping dimensions by faith through the Holy Spirit that cannot be measured by the intellect.

And then, as I have already said, the climax comes that we may know of this love that surpasses knowledge. How can you know love that surpasses knowledge? Well I believe the answer is what I've been trying to explain in my talk today, it's by faith, it's by yielding, it's by a response that goes beyond reason or rationalization. It's through faith, through yielding, stepping out beyond the limits of what seems reasonable, relying on the love of God, casting ourselves upon God's love, no strings attached, no reservation, no precondition. I believe that is the response that is required.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow my theme will be: God's Ultimate Motivation.

Radio Program

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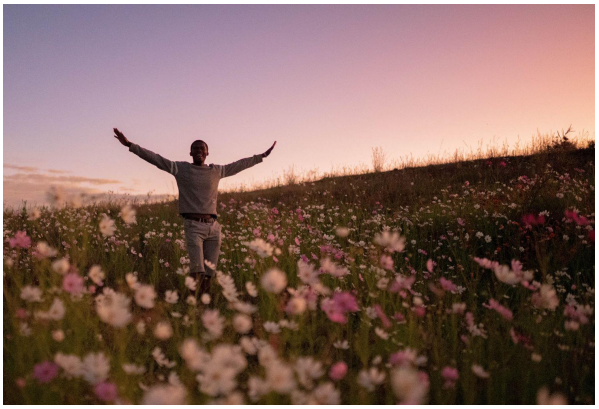

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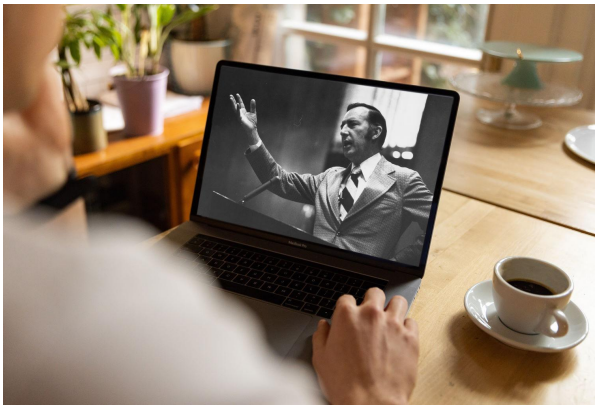

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