

Love Lays Down its Life



The Love of God (Part 15)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we draw near to the close of another week. In my talk today I'll continue, and complete, our special theme for this season: The Love of God.

In my talk yesterday I spoke about how love behaves, from First Corinthians chapter 13, verses 4-6. We looked there at fourteen characteristics of love's behavior, seven that were negative, that's seven things that love does not do, and seven that were positive, seven things that love does do. I'm going to briefly recapitulate them without commenting on them. First of all the seven negative characteristics of love:

1. Love does not envy or is not jealous

2. Love does not boast or does not brag

3. Love is not proud or not arrogant

4. Love is not rude or does not act unbecomingly

5. Love is not self-seeking or does not seek it's own

6. Love is not easily angered or not provoked

7. Love keeps no records of wrongs or does not take into account a wrong suffered.

Those are the seven negative characteristics of love. Now we'll just list the seven positive characteristics of love.

1. Love is patient

2. Love is kind

3. Love rejoices with the truth

4. Love always protects or bears all things

5. Love always trusts or believes all things

6. Love always hopes or hopes all things

7. Love always perseveres or endures all things.

I summed up the seven negative characteristics in the phrase, love is not insecure. I summed up the seven positive characteristics, love is infinitely strong.

In my talk today I'm going to share with you another distinctive aspect of love's behavior. And this is stated for us first of all, in the New Testament by Jesus, Himself. The aspect of love's behavior that I'm going to speak about is summed up in this phrase, love lays down its life. Jesus, Himself, set the pattern and He gave it as a commandment to His disciples. This is stated in John chapter 15, verses 12 and 13, where Jesus is speaking to His disciples and He says this:

> "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (NIV)

First of all we need to see that for us as Christians, love is not an option. It's not something that we can decide whether we wish to do or not. There are many things in the Christian life which are optional. We may or may not do them. But love is no option. For those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, love is a command. Jesus says, "My command is this: Love each other..."

And also the degree and the kind of love that we are required to have is not left to us to decide. Jesus set the pattern and He has never authorized us to change it. Love each other, how or how much? Jesus says, "...as I have loved you." That's the command. Love each other as I have loved you. And then He goes on in that next verse to explain the way that love will act. "Greater love has no one than this, that on lay down his life for his friends." So the essence of this kind of love is that it lays down it's life. Now where the English translation says "life" the Greek word that's used is literally "soul." Love lays down it's soul. It's soul life, it's soulish life.

There are I believe three main functions of the soul as portrayed in Scripture. The will, the emotions and the intellect. And they are summed up, I think, in three simple verbs, each of which we can put the simple word "I" in front of. The will, I want. The emotions, I feel. The intellect, I think. So that is really the essential nature of soulish life. It's what I want. It's what I feel. It's what I think. Now love lays that down. In other words, love is not dictated to by what you want, by what you feel, by what you think. Love has a higher standard. Love's motivation is what is good for the other person. And where there is a conflict between what is good for the other person and what you want or you feel or you think, love lays down the latter.

Love is no longer motivated by what you feel. You may feel you want to rest, but the person you love needs help. Or you may think that a certain situation is this way, but thinking that would keep you from helping the person who needs help. So you are not dictated to by what you think. Or you may want something, but somebody else needs something which conflicts with your want. So in every case, where there is a conflict between the good of another and what you want, or what you feel, or what you think, you surrender the latter. You're not dictated to, you're not motivated by what you want, what you feel, what you think where the good of the other person is the issue. The good of the other takes precedence over your own soulish nature. So love lays down its life. Its soul life, it is not dictated to in such situations by these things. In his first epistle, chapter three, the Apostle John likewise lays down this requirement for love, that it lays down it's life. In First John 3, verses 16-20, this is what John says:

> "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laide down his life for us. [If Jesus hadn't come and set the pattern, we wouldn't really have known what this kind of life is. But we know because Jesus came, gave us the pattern, and also gave us the command.] This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."

With this awareness of the love of God manifested in Jesus, comes an obligation. If we receive God's love, then we are obligated to show that love to others. So John says, 'Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.' This is in line with what Jesus Himself said, 'Greater love has no one that this, that one lay down his life for his friends.' But John goes on in that third chapter of his first epistle to give it a very practical application, and sometimes I've afraid we're content with religious platitudes and we don't move on into the practical outworking of what the New Testament teaches. In the next verse, after saying we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers, John says...

> "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"

In other words, it's not enough to just feel emotional, or express love in words, but there are very practical ways in which we're obligated to express love. And in particular John says, "If one of our fellow-believers has a material need and we have material sufficiency and we are able to supply his need, if we do not supply his need we cannot claim that the love of God lives in us." That's a very searching standard

which we each need to apply to ourselves. And then John goes on for appeal that we should not be hypocrites and I think it's very important as Christians that we give heed to this.

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

In other words it's not enough to talk about love. It's not enough to use religious platitudes, it's not enough to say "God bless you." or "Jesus will help you." Because many times it isn't Jesus who has to help them, it's us.

> "This then is how we know we belong to the truth, and we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." (NIV)

There again you see the security of true love. Our heart does not condemn us when we are demonstrating true love. We are at rest in God's presence. This rest comes only through love actively expressed.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be sharing with you another rich and exciting theme from the Word of God.

As I look back over the Old Year, I have to praise God for His faithfulness in enabling me to continue and expand this radio ministry. I also want to say a special thank you to each one of you who has shared with me the financial burden for the ministry. I pray God's richest blessings for you in the year that lies ahead. And pleas continue to let me hear from you!

My special offer this week is my book The Marriage Covenant. It's appropriate to our theme for this week, because it shows you how you can release the love of God into this most vital and intimate of all relationship: the marriage relationship.

Also, my complete series of talks this week on The Love of God (Part 3) is available in a single, carefully edited cassette.

Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

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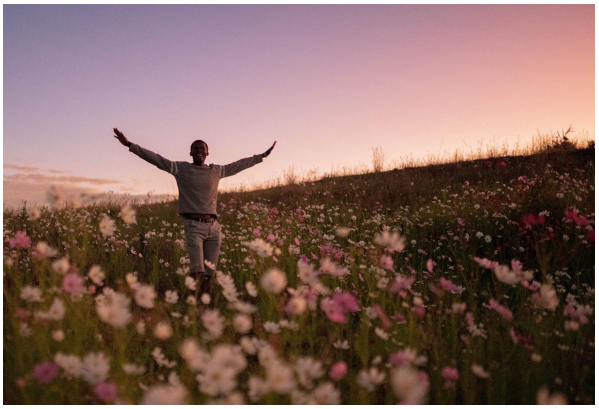

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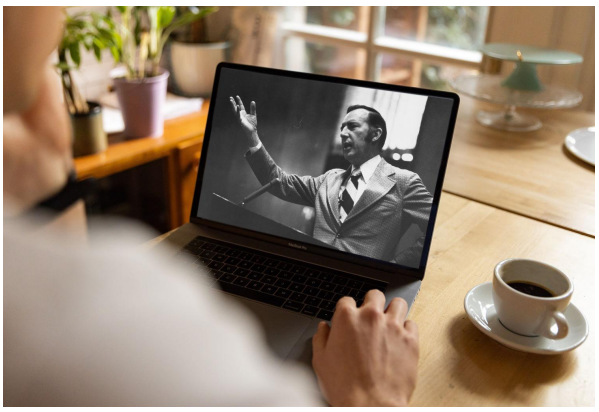

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