



## **Amazing Love**

By Wendy Wood

The God who created the universe, the galaxies, the stars, the planets, the earth and everything in it, wrote a book. He chose to reveal Himself and His purpose in bringing sinners to Himself through Christ. He chose to call us and elect us to unite us to Christ through faith and thereby invite us into relationship with Himself. He has preserved His word throughout centuries, so that we might study Him and know Him. This is a loving God.

Yet, we doubt His love constantly. We ask ourselves, if not out loud, “How could a loving God give me this husband?” “How could a loving God allow my mother to die of cancer?” “How could a loving God allow a tornado or flood to wipe out thousands of people?” How could a loving God put me in an unloving family for my childhood?” “How could a loving God allow me to suffer so long?” We tend to look at our circumstances to define God’s love, rather than look at scripture and interpret our circumstances through the truth that God reveals about Himself in His word.

## **God’s love is covenantal**

In Jeremiah 31:3 God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” God’s love is everlasting because He is everlasting in character. His love is based on who He is, not who you are. Deuteronomy 7:6-9 shows us that God’s love was set on us by His choosing. We cannot lose His love because we did nothing to earn it or deserve it to begin with.

***“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and***

***redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.”***

***(Deuteronomy 7:6-9)***

God's love is covenantal love. He swears by His own name that He will love His people. When our circumstances tempt us to question and doubt God's love, we must go to His word and renew our minds in the amazing faithfulness of His love. His love is set on us by His purpose, and nothing can thwart His purpose. (Job 42:2).

### **God's love is compassionate**

God's love is not only everlasting, it is compassionate and gentle. Psalm 91 is a beautiful picture of His love as protection and refuge in times of distress.

***“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust. For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge, his faithfulness is a shield and buckler” (vs 1-4).***

God paints a picture of Himself as a bird with large wings which He uses to protect His young and vulnerable children. He covers us in His love and promises that nothing can harm us in the eyes of eternity. Isaiah 40:11 draws a picture of God as the Good Shepherd protecting His sheep under his arm and carrying a wounded lamb next to His warmth. God does not promise that we will be free from experiencing hardships and trials. In fact, much of scripture tells us that all true children of God will experience suffering and persecution. However, God's love is gentle and protecting. His love is a refuge and shelter in those times of hurting. When we feel like our circumstances have taken us out of God's loving care, we must go back to His word and who He reveals Himself to be. God is the protector and keeper of our souls - our eternal being that will be with Him forever. He is holding our salvation and eternity in the shelter of His wing and under the refuge of His arm. Your feelings are not real. Your thoughts determine how you will respond to your hardships. Set your mind on the Truth. God's love is gentle, protecting, and compassionate.

### **God's love on the cross**

Nowhere do we see God's amazing love more on display than on the cross. Even before ever getting to the cross, Jesus endured injurious treatment. Matthew 27 tells us "they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped

him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him” (vs 27-30). Why did a loving God allow His Son to endure such treatment? First and foremost because He is displaying His glory - the beauty of His character in holiness, righteousness, mercy, grace, justice, wrath, love. He is zealous for His glory but when we are in Christ, our good is tied to His glory. Jesus suffered and died because it glorifies Him and we see that in His love for us! On the cross, the crowd and soldiers continue to mock him and falsely accuse Him of lying and blasphemy. Jesus experiences the ultimate suffering when He cries out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Here we would be tempted to question God’s love if we were the ones on the cross. Yet, Jesus commits His Spirit to His Father and willingly dies to fulfill the will of God. God’s love for Jesus, and us, kept Jesus on the cross for three hours. God loved Jesus (“This is my Son, whom I love”) and us so much that he ordained Jesus to suffer and die in our place (Acts 2:23). Jesus endured the complete wrath of God for our sins. God determined how much and how long Jesus’ suffering would be because He loved Jesus completely. Jesus knew that “the joy set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2) to glorify God and be in His Father’s presence was worth it. Jesus trusted His Father completely that this was the way to victory and, in Jesus’ case, re-uniting with the Father. Why three hours? God does not reveal everything to us (Deuteronomy 29:29). You can be sure that whatever the length of your suffering, it is the right duration. God loves us so much, that He purposed Jesus to suffer beyond description, so that we could be united with Him through faith by grace. When the temptation to doubt God’s love and care for you comes, stop and think about the cross. Think about God choosing

His Son, whom He loves, to suffer the entirety of God's wrath on Himself, to rescue you from eternal separation from Him. There can be no doubt of the genuine, strong love of God in the face of the cross.

## **God's love is for your sake**

One of the hardest times to trust God's love is when a trial is continuing on for a length of time and you start to despair that God has forgotten you. John 11 is my favorite view of God's unusual way to love us. Here, Jesus is across the Jordan doing ministry with His disciples. Mary and Martha send word to Jesus that their brother Lazarus is sick. Twice, within three verses, scripture mentions that these are people Jesus loved (vs 3 and 5). Yet, when Jesus hears that someone He loves is sick, He doesn't rush to Lazarus' side to heal him. John 11:5-6 says, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was." What?! Jesus loved them. How could a loving God not rush to their sides to immediately take care of the situation and remove the suffering? God has already provided the answer in verse 4. "It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it". Jesus loved them TOO much to rescue them immediately from this suffering. He has greater plans for them to simply live a comfortable and easy life. Verse 15 says, "and for your sake, I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe." Wow! Could it be that your suffering is FOR YOUR SAKE? Could it be that God loves you too much to cut your suffering short and not allow it to produce in you all that is meant to? Could it be that God loves too much to

end the trial before you give Him glory? God knows that true joy and life are found only in glorifying Him. Your trial, your difficult situation, is for your sake. It is designed by the love of God, SO THAT you may believe, give glory to God, and find true joy.

And then, Jesus acts. We see Jesus “deeply moved” in verse 38. Jesus hears the doubt of his friends and their questioning of His motives and He is grieved for their hearts and souls. Jesus is FOR us. And that means that He does whatever it takes to reveal His glory and draw us to Himself because as we delight in Him, we glorify Him. It is all linked to His love. Jesus cares about Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and He cares about you. He was moved by compassion. Jesus was affected by the doubts, questions, pain, and sadness of those He loved. He then acts on their behalf. He calls Lazarus out of the grave, just as He will call us out of the grave for eternity. We will rise when He calls us home, too. God’s love is compassionate. God is standing outside of time looking through the lens of eternity. The situation with Lazarus was playing a bigger role from that eternal perspective than just a family hurting over the death of a loved one. Your suffering is playing a bigger role in the perspective of eternity than you can see. It will take trust and faith in God, and in His love, to endure joyfully and trust His love.

### **Your response to God’s love**

God’s love is not in question. That circumstance, that broken relationship, that illness, that trial that has gone on for years and years, is evidence of God’s love for you. Will you trust Him? Will you give thanks to God that He loves you too much to cut the

suffering short? Will you thank Him for not rushing to rescue you immediately because He has something greater planned?

God's love is beyond description and, frankly, beyond understanding. But God makes Himself known in His Word. Dig in. Feast on the amazing love of God as revealed by Him.