

# Omaha Conference 1983-01 the Love of God - Jeremiah 31:3

by William MacDonald

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*The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of God's love and calls believers to demonstrate that love through their actions and service to others.*

**Duration:** 34:45

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 31:3, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:4

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "Christian Giving"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of giving in the Christian ministry. He highlights that love cannot be fully expressed unless it is put into action and reaches those in need. The speaker refers to Ephesians 4:28, which encourages believers to work with their hands in order to have something to give to those in need. He emphasizes that the Christian ministry is a ministry of giving and that God loves those who give generously. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's everlasting love and how it should inspire believers to love and give to others.

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## Transcript

You don't have to look around to see all the hard work that goes into a conference like this, the devotion, the sacrificial labor down there in the kitchen and all around, and we really are grateful. I'm very grateful to have been invited. I just leave with one regret, that is, that I didn't get to know more of you and get to know you better, and I've been smitten with a terrible taste of jealousy here to see all the musical talent here.

Paul, it isn't right to have so much concentrated in one place, is it? We need some of it out in California, believe me. Several have asked about the Discipleship Interim Training Program. We often have visitors coming and sitting in and spending some time with us just to see if it might be what the Lord might have for them.

So, I just want to issue an invitation to anyone who might be interested, and you're not quite sure, feel free to fly the friendly skies and come out and pay us a visit. We were speaking about the glory of the Lord, and we spoke about his knowledge this morning, and I'd like to close this afternoon, that is, as far as my part is concerned, by speaking about his love. One of the great themes of Scripture is the love of God, and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's look up some Scriptures without apology, either Jeremiah chapter 31 and verse 3. Jeremiah chapter 31 and verse 3. The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Isn't that magnificent? I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Second, we all know John 3.16. God so loved the world.

I don't know any smaller word with more in it than that word, so. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Romans chapter 5, verse 8. But God commended his love toward us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Read this preceding verse. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet for adventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commended his love toward us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And then Ephesians chapter 2, verses 4 and 5. Ephesians chapter 2, verses 4 and 5. But God, who is rich in mercy for his great love for which he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath christened us together with Christ by grace. Ye are saved. And then 1 John, way over to 1 John chapter 4, verses 8 and 10.

1 John 4, verse 8. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. And verse 10. Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loves us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

And incidentally, when it says there that God is love, that's not a definition of God. We don't worship love, but it's a description of his character. God is love.

If I were to ask you to define love, to define God's love, what would you say? I have found that a very difficult word to define. We all know what love is. We all know from the word what God's love is, but how would you ever define it? It's hard.

Here's the suggestion. Love is his strong and tender affection which gives freely and actively for the highest good of loved objects. His strong and tender affection which gives freely and actively for the highest good of loved objects.

The love of God, it had no beginning and it will have no end. Incidentally, all the attributes of God, all of the glory of the Lord are infinite and eternal. They're just like himself.

No attribute can conflict with another. His love has no limits. It goes out to all.

His love is pure. It's a wonderful thing in a world like ours to know a love that's absolutely pure. When men use the word love today, they more often than not take lust.

Someone has said lust cannot wait to get. Love cannot wait to give. That's true.

Love manifests itself in giving. God so loved the world that he gave. Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.

You find those two words together very, very often in the scriptures. It's part of the whole concept of love. Love gives.

A man comes to me and says, I don't love my wife anymore. I say, you're selfish. It's like saying I can't give to my wife anymore.

Most of the marital problems that arise today arise because of extreme selfishness. Instead of giving actively and freely, for the highest good of love's object, we take of self. Love keeps the welfare of others, not of self.

God's love keeps the welfare of his people, and not of himself. I think it's a lovely feature of God's love that it goes out to the unlovely as well as the lovely. How unlike man's ways.

Not only so, but it goes out to enemies as well as friends. Imagine that love that goes out to his enemies. It's wonderful to see that love reproducing human beings too.

I've often told a story, I'll tell it again, of dear brother Theo McCulley. His son, Ed, was a model son. McCulley told me that Ed never caused them a moment's concern in their life.

He was just the ideal son. You remember how he went down to Ecuador and was killed as a Christian martyr by Alcaceres there. After that death, one time, I was praying with Dr. McCulley, and on his knees he prayed this prayer.

He said, Lord, help me to live long enough to see those fellow slaves who killed our boys that I may throw my arms around them and tell them I love them because they loved my Christ. God did allow him to live long enough to see those outcast slaves who killed those five young missionaries. Dr. McCulley went down and he threw his arms around them and told them he loved them.

Dear friends, that isn't human. That's divine. That's God's love shed abroad in a human heart.

God's love went out to his enemies. We were enemies of God in our own faith. I think it's marvelous to think of the transcendent God and to think of us on a planet, and the planet we're on is just a speck of cosmic dust in the universe.

It's nothing. Earth, plus lots of vain man, we think this planet is everything. But, I mean, as far as its size and relation to the universe, it's nothing.

And if the planet we live on is nothing, just think what I am on that planet. If the planet is a speck, what am I? And yet I have my sins in my own state, I have my sins lifted up against God in rebellion, and he looks down and he loves me. And to this planet, which is less than nothing in the universe, he sends his lovely sons to die for me.

And on this planet, and all the universe, the cross of Calvary was erected. Tell you what, never was a love story like that in all the universe. His love goes out to his enemies as well as his friends.

I think it's wonderful to remember that his love is not drawn out by any virtue in us. The cause of his love lies only in himself. I like it.

Deuteronomy, chapter 7, says so much in this regard. We sing, Why should he love me so? Why should he love me so? Why did my savior, the Calvary, though, why should he love me so? Chapter 7, verse 7 of Deuteronomy, it says, The Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people. For you were the fewest of all people, that is Israel, but because the Lord loved you.

Put those two verses together and they say, The Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you because you were innocent, but because the Lord loved you. Sounds like double talk, but it's divine double talk, and it's great. Why did he love me? Because it's his nature to love me.

It's his character to love me. There was nothing in me that ever stimulated that love. God's love is utterly unselfish.

Never looking for anything in return. To me, that's wonderful. Almost everything we do is tinged with selfishness.

I have to remind myself of that even in the service of the Lord, that even my service for the Lord is tinged with sin. Did you know that? Everything we do is tinged with sin. Praise God, we have a great high priest, and he bears a plight on his miter, and it says, for the iniquity of holy saints.

In other words, he takes care even of false motivation, in tissue first. He purifies it all before it gets to the throne of God. God's love doesn't keep a count of wrongs.

So easy for us to do that. Kari Ten Boom tells the story of a time in her life when she was wronged by another person, and one time she was telling a brother about it, and she said, but I've forgotten it. He said, I was in the right, he was in the wrong, but she said, I've forgotten it.

And he said, are you sure he was wrong? She said, I have a letter to prove it. He said, you haven't forgotten it. I said, after I read that, I was really smitten, because I went through a bad patch in life at one time, and a letter was written to me, and I put it away in my file there, and there it is, that's evidence.

I never referred to it, it was just there resting comfortably in the file. And when I read that from Kari Ten Boom, I realized I hadn't really forgotten. I hadn't really forgotten.

I had no peace in my soul until I went to the file and got that letter out and tore it in a million pieces. You know, those things really eat at us like ulcers, don't they? What a wonderful relief it is when we turn it over to the Lord and get rid of it and tear up the letter. Love doesn't keep accounts of wrongs.

Love thinks of others, not of self. You have a beautiful montage of that in Philippians chapter 2. The Lord Jesus, he came down to this world, he didn't think of himself. He thought of others.

Others, yes. The Lord, others. And Paul imitates the Lord Jesus.

He says to the Philippians in chapter 2, "...Yea, and if I be poured out as a drink offering upon the service and sacrifice of your faith, I rejoice with you all." You say, what does that mean? Well, it means Paul is saying to the Philippians, look, what you're doing for the Lord is the main thing. The sacrifice you're making for the Lord, that's the sacrifice that counts, and I would just be satisfied to be poured out as a libation on your big sacrifice. And when he says poured out as a libation, that means martyrdom.

He said, you Philippians, you press on, you're doing what really counts. I'd just be willing to be martyred and to be that, the crowning touch on your service and sacrifice of faith. Boy, that's something of others, isn't it? And then Timothy, in that same chapter, Timothy thought of others, not of himself.

Paul said, I have no man like mine that he will naturally care for your state. And then Epaphroditus, in the last part of that chapter, same thing. Epaphroditus thought of others, not of himself.

He says he was tricked right unto death for the work of the ministry, and he was troubled. He wasn't troubled because he was sick, he was troubled because the Philippians had heard he was sick, and he didn't want them to be troubled. That isn't the way I am.

When I'm sick, I get the mini-graph going and send out prayer letters all over the world, you know, and Epaphroditus, he didn't want them to be troubled, he didn't want them to be worried. He was sorry they heard he was sick. What a wonderful chapter.

The love of God. Christ is the sun in that chapter, and the three moons is reflecting the glory of the sun in Philippians chapter 2. Let each esteem others better than himself. And I think that means look upon others as being more important than yourself.

I often think of that story of the two boats that wanted to cross the river from opposite banks, and there was a fallen tree across the river, and that was the only bridge that there was. And so they both hopped onto the tree and started to cross. It was a narrow tree, there was just enough of one at a time.

And so they came to the middle and their heads kind of butted. If they fought it out, they'd both go into the river, turn around, they couldn't be narrow. One of them got down and let the other walk over him, and they both got to the opposite side of a safe place.

He esteemed the other one more important than himself. And you know, in a way, that's what the Lord Jesus did. He came down to this world, he didn't think of himself.

He took the place of a bond servant. Imagine the Lord of Glory coming and becoming a slave to this world. Oh, it was love.

It was wondrous love. The love of God to me. It brought my savior from above to die on Calvary.

He became a bond servant. A young fellow came up to me here at the conference and reminded me of a story I had told once of dear brother Charles Van Ryn. Charles Van Ryn was a teacher at Emmaus when I was back there years ago.

And he and his wife Margaret lived up in the dormitory. They were kind of dorm parents for the men there. One day I happened to walk up in the dorm about 9.30 in the morning, and the men had all used the wash stations there.

They were washing and shaving, and the floor was afloat with silky water. And I saw Charles Van Ryn, one of the instructors, down on his hands and knees cleaning up. He didn't have to be there, but he had a certain art.

It made me think of George Washington. Somebody saw him performing a menial task once, and they said, Mr. Washington, you shouldn't do that. You're too big a man for that.

He said, no, I'm not. I'm just the right size. And love is like that.

Love has the servant's heart. Love repays discourtesy with a kindness. Isn't that the way the Lord has treated us? Love repays every discourtesy with a kindness.

And yet love is jealous. God's love is jealous, and jealousy is used in a good way in the Bible. In fact, jealousy is one of the glories of God.

He's jealous of his people's undivided affections, because he knows that's what's best for them. I try to remind our students all the time of this. All the laws of God are for our good, not for God's.

All the laws of God are for our good, not for God's. They're for our happiness, for our contentment. A little boy dragged off to church with his father, and during the service he got kind of reckless, and the father had to teach his ears to make him behave.

And as he was passing out, an usher said to him, You don't look happy, Johnny. He said, I'm not. He said, Why? Well, he said, It's hard to be holy and happy, too.

Well, it isn't. You can't be happy unless you are holy. And I think it's so important to realize that people talk about legalism.

Anything you say, that's just legalism. I can't go through a commandment in the Old Testament or the New Testament that's for God's good, not for ours. Maybe you can think of some I've never been able to.

God could exist without any of those commandments that's for our good to pay attention to them. And love is chastening, too. I think this is important.

A lot of people think love is just all much, but God's love is a chastening love. Love can be firm. God can be firm with us, too.

Parents are firm with their children. They ought to be. Why? Because they don't love them.

No, the Bible says because they love them. If a parent doesn't discipline his child, he hates his child. Strong language but it's true, that's the thing.

And God chastens his people. And then God's love, of course, is inseparable. Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

In that lovely passage in Romans, Paul ran back to universe to think of something that could possibly separate us from the love of God in the past tense of a single thing. This should have a practical influence on our lives. For instance, our love for God should be an undivided love.

If a man loves the world, he's an enemy of God. There is a world that crucified my Savior on the cross. If I'm going to go on arm in arm with the world, I'm a traitor to Jesus Christ.

That's why John says, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loved the world, the love of the Father is not in him. That's strong, isn't it? My love for God should be undivided.

My love for God should be obedient. If you love me, keep my commandments. That's one way we manifest our love to him.

Our love to him should be a worshipful love. It's wonderful to see children, boys and girls, loving their parents. It's a wonderful thing.

It's wonderful to see God's people loving him. How thou canst love me as thou dost, and be the God thou art with darkness to my intellect, but sunshine to my heart. Then I think the lesson here is, too, that we should have love for the present, a sacrificial love for the present.

The scripture says, If any man sees his brother in need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in him. That's a certain verse, isn't it? I have the means of alleviating the need of a brother, and I refuse to do it. How dwelleth the love of God in him.

Our love should be sacrificial, and I think our love should be for all the present. I'd like to emphasize this. I've often said, and say again, there's no Christian that I can't love and learn from.

I've never met a Christian yet that I couldn't learn something from. There are some Christians I can't agree with in many of their doctrines and many of their practices, and yet I can think of some right now, and I can learn of their enthusiasm for Jesus. I love it.

You can go into their meetings and be from the lower classes of society and feel right at home. I love it, because Jesus was always speaking of the last, the least, and the lowest of needs. It's great to see that love for one another keeps us blessed.

Other believers keep us blessed. And then I believe that God wants us to manifest His love to the world around us. The poet said, Let me look on the crowd as my Savior did, till my eyes with tears broke in.

That means you with pity, the wandering sheep, and love them for love of Him. It's a wonderful thing to see the love of God reproduced in a human life. Let me give you some practical illustrations of it.

When a plate is passed to the apple, and one of them is bruised, love takes the bruised apple, so somebody else won't get it, or a banana that's overripe. Love cleans the wash basin and the bath tub after using it. Then, ooh, how mundane can you get? But that's the way love is.

Love thinks about those things. Very, very practical. Let me say that again.

Love cleans the wash basin and the bath tub after using it. Nobody likes to go into a bath tub with rings, and I'm not saying they're wedding rings either. Love replaces the paper towel when the last one is taken.

So easy to go in and just grab the last one, you know, and that's somebody else's problem. No, love thinks of that somebody else and replaces it. Love puts out the lights when they're not in use.

See, it's very practical. Love has a hymn to its garments that reaches the very dust that can reach the stains of the streets and lanes, and because it can, it must. Love picks up that crumpled penis on the floor. We come into the lobby of the chapel here, and there's a crumpled two-neck down it.

So easy to walk over and say, oh, well, the janitorial chap will take care of it. Love picks it up and disposes of it. Love empties the garbage without being asked.

Some of you husbands are feeling elbows in your ribs at this point. Love doesn't keep people waiting. I'm afraid I'm stepping on toes.

You know I don't like to step on toes. But love doesn't. Love doesn't keep people waiting.

Love is faithful to its promise. It says 8 o'clock, there at 8 o'clock. I keep people waiting.

I'm saying your time doesn't count. It's my time that's important. See, selfishness.

Love keeps itself in the place of that other person. I wouldn't want to be kept waiting. Okay, then I won't keep anyone else waiting.

Love serves others before self. We have a little joke at the intern programs. You don't allow the serving dishes to congregate in front of you.

Those irreverent fellows invariably try to get them to congregate in front of me because I made the rule. Love takes a swallowing baby out of the meeting. It's the sweetest sound in the world, of course, it's the sound of a crying to the mother.

It really is. But it might not be so sweet to the people who are listening. And I like this.

Love speaks loudly so the deaf can hear. Once again, we try to get this across to the interns. And any time you ever speak at a meeting, there's always someone there that's hard of hearing.

And I tell them, brother, you can get up and you can preach a wonderful message. But if you don't preach it loudly enough, it's just the same as if you were speaking in a foreign tongue to those people. A lot of people have a hard time projecting their voice.

Paul says, I'd rather speak five words than be understood. You speak 10,000 words in a tongue. So it's very important that the scripture says, and then he says, the scripture says also not curse to death.

Isn't that funny that the great God of the universe could legislate about something like that? Well, it's very wonderful. Because God knows Paul and human nature. And I tell the students, if you don't speak loudly, I don't care how wonderful the message is you're giving, if you speak loudly, you get back to the door and the people pass out, somebody will come and say to you, I heard every word you said.

It's not, that was a great message. It might have been a great message, but that isn't what they say. They say, I heard every word you said.

It's a tip to you young people. Don't follow. Speak so the deaf can hear.

Love, speak loudly so the deaf can hear. Love works. Oh, this is revolutionary.

Love works in order that it might have to give to others. Turn to Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4. I love this verse. It tells how God makes a philanthropist out of a thief.

Verse 28, Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good that he may have to give to him that needeth. Why, there's a guy who was a thief before he was saved, and now Paul says to him, by the Spirit of God, you go and get a job. Why? Oh, so I can provide for my own needs and the needs of his family.

You know, Paul says, look beyond that, so that you'll have money to help others who are in need. God loves a cheerful giver, and I try to emphasize over and over again to our men that the Christian ministry is a ministry of giving. Now, I know that isn't what you learn at the average seminary where you get courses and pastoral training, and when you go and sign a contract with that church, you be sure that the salary is adequate for that anything you make for funerals and weddings is in addition and all of these sub-qualities.

In other words, what am I going to get out of it? But that isn't the way the Lord indoctrinated his disciples. He said, Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For with what measure you give, it shall be given unto you again.

The Christian ministry is a ministry of giving. How can we imitate the love of God if we are not givers? Very practical, isn't it? It should be practical in our lives. Love does not rest on the mountain.

It must go down to the vale, for it cannot find its fullness of mind till it's kindled for lives that fail. God's will is that something of that supernatural love be shown abroad in my life. I've known this, that I might be able to argue with people and win the argument, but they don't enter the kingdom.

But if they can just see Christ in my life, it will affect them. When I was in the Navy, there was a young fellow there, somebody here may know him. His name was Burt Gray, the young Christian fellow.

And over in Honolulu, he used to go and teach Baptist after hours, and he demonstrated Christ, and he demonstrated the love of the Lord Jesus. And there was another fellow named Dick Headless, who used to go out and teach Baptist. Dick was unsaved, and he watched Burt Gray.

And they were always watching him. They said, you're talking differently. And one night, he went up to Burt, and he said, Burt, you're different.

You have something I don't have. I don't know what it is, but I want it. And it wasn't hard for Burt to lead him to the Lord Jesus that night.

No argument, no Christian evidences, no apologetic, or anything like that. Just the evidence that transforms life. I think the best argument for God in an age of fact is a well-saved life.

The world today is dying for a little bit of love. They don't know how to react, but they seek God's love set upon in our hearts. Shall we pray? Father, we've told it out now.

We would pray it in. With our souls on our knees before thee, Lord, we would pray, May the beauty of Jesus be seen in us. Help us to know something of this love that we've been talking about today.

Lord, it's so easy just to pat on ourselves after the world around us, to rise no higher than flesh and blood. Oh, Father, we pray that your supernatural love might be known in our lives, that the world may take knowledge of us that we've been with Jesus. Help us to put it into practice as we go away from the conference.

We ask in his name and for his glory. Amen. Amen.

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