

Eternal Love
Series: The Eternals
John 15:9-17
March 21, 2021

Thank you again for being in worship today. It has been a year of Sundays since things changed here due to the pandemic. What a year this has been, yet we know that God is faithful and has carried us through.

I invite you to turn to page 4 in your bulletins or if you are watching at home, pull out your journal.

We are in our 5th week of Lent and our series The Eternals, the things we can hold onto in our faith, especially in a time of chaos and uncertainty. We have talked about the Eternal Word, Eternal Life, Eternal Nourishment, and Eternal Comfort.

This week's eternal is this: Eternal Love.

I want us to look at John 15:9-17. This is from the Upper Room as Jesus is teaching His disciples before He is betrayed, arrested, tried, and crucified.

I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.¹

There are a several passages in the Bible that talk about love, and this one is up there. The love which Christ possesses for His own is very great. He speaks of this love and encourages His followers to love likewise.

I found today's outline in John Butler's "Analytical Bible Expositor," a commentary I use. He likes his points to all start with the same letter or have similar words. So, let's plug in.

First of all, this passage Examines His Love.

The character of the love which was in the heart of Christ is absolutely magnificent.

Point A is The magnitude of His love.

Verse 9:

I have loved you even as [or in the same way as] the Father has loved me.²

The human mind cannot fathom the greatness of the love of God the Father for God the Son. Therefore, to compare His love for us to that love says Christ loves us beyond human comprehension. Just think about that for a moment. Christ loves us like the Father loves Him, and that love is far beyond our comprehension, far more than any literature we have read or movie we have seen or expression we have experienced.

¹ John 15:9-17 (NLT2)

² John 15:9 (NLT2)

Christ loves you more than you will ever know or imagine. That's the magnitude of His love.

Point B is The mercy of His love.

We can't fathom His love, nor can we earn the love of Christ.

When we are first dating, we do things to merit the other person's love: flowers, candy, time together.

But we could never earn Christ's love. He loved us when we were unlovable. Christ did not love us because of who we were, but because of Who He is, and He is love (1 John 4:8).

Point C is The manifesting of His love.

How does Christ show this love to His own? Well, He tells us in verse 9. The first way Christ manifested His love to the disciples was to tell them. That is one way you manifest love to anyone is to tell them. Then, by dying for them and us. Verse 13:

There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.³

Paul wrote in Romans 5:7 and 8:

Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.⁴

Christ also desires to love us. Look at verse 16:

You didn't choose me. I chose you.⁵

Love desires and then chooses. A man loves a woman and desires her to be his wife, so he chooses her. Behind every choice of Christ is the love of Christ. Let me repeat that: Behind every choice of Christ is the love of Christ.

Second, The Experiencing of His Love.

Though Christ loves us, there are Christians who do not experience the benefits of this love. Jesus tells of at least three things one must do in order to experience the blessed benefits of His love.

Point A: It requires steadfastness.

Verse 9:

I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.⁶

We must remain or be faithful to the Lord to experience the benefits of His love. A woman who is unfaithful and leaves her husband will not enjoy his love as a faithful woman will.

Point B: It requires submission.

Verse 10:

When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love.⁷

Obedience to the Lord is also necessary if you would enjoy the benefits of His love. A disobedient child will not experience the love of his loving parents as will the obedient child though the parent loves both.

Point C: It requires stewardship.

³ John 15:13 (NLT2)

⁴ Romans 5:7-8 (NRSV)

⁵ John 15:16 (NLT2)

⁶ John 15:9 (NLT2)

⁷ John 15:10 (NLT2)

Verse 11:

*I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!*⁸

If we do not use our spiritual opportunities to listen to the Lord or read what He has said, we will not experience His love. Not reading a love letter keeps one from experiencing the love of the person writing the letter.

Finally, The Expressing of His Love.

Christ's love for us is to be expressed by us to others, especially to the saints.

Point A: The mandate to express His love.

Verse 12:

*This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.*⁹

This commandment has to do with saints loving saints. Some saints are hard to love, but we are to love them anyway.

Point B: The manner of expressing His love.

Again in verse 12:

*Love each other **in the same way** I have loved you.*¹⁰

The love we are to have for saints must be like the love Christ has for us. Therefore, it is to be sacrificial, devoted, unselfish, God-honoring, genuine, and a host of other noble characteristics exhibited by Christ in His love for us.

A pastor told the story of being at church one Sunday as a child playing "king of the hill" with his buddies, before church started. Their play stopped when a car pulled up to the sidewalk and, with help, out came a soldier, who had returned from Vietnam a few weeks earlier. But he came on crutches and he returned to back to the church he grew up in on that Sunday with only one leg.

The pastor said he has never forgotten that image. It served as a striking reminder to him of the cost of war. Battles require you to give your all and often sacrifice your all. The cost for any military campaign is great.

Jesus said:

*There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.*¹¹

The cost is great when we go up against the devil every day. He wants to destroy us. He wants to rob us of every ounce of faith. He wants to remove every bit of hope. He wants to deceive us into thinking that love for Christ is a waste of time.

Many have fallen away from their commitment to Christ. Their wounds were too great. Many have been attacked by the evil one and have suffered the consequences. Some have suffered innocently when someone nearby has decided to spend time with the enemy.

A military unit is caught in a fire-fight and they find themselves trapped. What do they do? They call for help and they know that there are soldiers who are willing to come to the battle to help out. They have signed up for the fight and when the fight comes, they are there to take on the enemy.

⁸ John 15:11 (NLT2)

⁹ John 15:12 (NLT2)

¹⁰ John 15:12 (NLT2)

¹¹ John 15:13 (NLT2)

We have a responsibility to each other as soldiers of the cross. There are wounded Christians all around us. Have we abandoned them? There are Christian soldiers fighting some tough battles every day. Do we just sit back and watch?

This passage from John 15 warms our hearts because of the love of Christ for us. It also challenges us to sacrifice for others, to love because He first loved us.

Jesus said: "Great love has no one than this....that he lay down his life for his friends." That's our command. Yes, serving as a soldier of the cross is costly - but it's worth every price!