

AMAZING LOVE

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

According to this wonderful verse there are three factors in the romance of redemption.

I. The Sin Of Man.

All are not the same age and do not like the same things. But all are alike in that all are sinners.

1. All are sinners by nature.

Over this we do not have any control. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." Because our forebears were sinners their wickedness was reproduced in us. Because we are tainted with sin we pass on the same corruption to our children. To deny this is to refute the Word of God, the findings of physiology, and the discoveries of psychology.

2. All are sinners by choice.

We know the basic requirements of God. We have heard them in our homes and our churches, and many of us have read them in the Bible. Yet, after knowing God's will for our lives, we persist in disregarding it. While it is true that Satan is always present and tempting us, nevertheless the choice of sin or the decision to sin is ours. We are free moral agents.

3. All are sinners by practice.

"There is none righteous, no, not one." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." From experience we know that all of us are sinners. We do not find any inherent strength to resist temptation. Our memories are stained with the memories of countless faults and failures. Also, from observation we know that all are sinners. We see others struggling, stumbling, and sorrowing over evil tendencies and wicked propensities. There are degrees of sin, but all are sinners. All have not sinned alike, but all are alike in that they have sinned.

4. All sinners have been under condemnation.

God's Word says: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." "He that believeth not is condemned already." "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

These are some of the inexorable, unchangeable, and universal decrees of God. There is no escape from them, no exception to them, and no excuse for trying to ignore them.

Not only is sin a solemn reality, but it requires punishment. Men grant this fact, even where the light of the Bible has not reached. To a greater or lesser degree the governments of the nations fashion their statutes around the principle that sin is something that requires punishment. Civilization itself would be imperiled if there were no punishment for sin.

Conscience says that sin must be punished. God's Word clearly states that all are sinners. "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." "For there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Every human being has been under the blight of sin and infused with its poison.

II. The Love Of God.

The book of nature does not tell us that God has love for sinners. If man transgresses the laws of nature, either knowingly or ignorantly, he must suffer the consequences. Impartially and relentlessly nature inflicts her punishment. There is no hint of any love, mercy, or pardon in the entire realm of nature. One reason for this is that nature was written before sinners had existence. In the Bible only do we find that God loves sinful man. It is the cardinal doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. In the New Testament especially do we find this truth iterated and reiterated. "God commendeth his love toward us." Love is not merely an element or attribute of God's nature, but it is the very essence of His being. He has wisdom, power, and justice, but He is love.

God loves His children. He is ready, willing, and anxious to give to us what is good for us. Those of you who are parents know how much you love your children; how much you are willing to do for them; and how anxious you are for their welfare in every respect. How unselfish is the love of father and mother! How self-sacrificing is their devotion in caring for their children! It is the desire of good parents that their children shall live better, and be more useful in life than they have been able to be.

Oh the vastness, the wideness, and the mightiness of God's love!

1. It is an ennobling love.

Some love is degrading; for example, the love of Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, and many of Hollywood's so-called beauties. There is a love which is defiling, debasing, desecrating, and down-dragging. God's love is pure, holy, elevating, and transforming. It transforms a sinner into a saint, and a slave of Satan into a joyous and useful child of God. It reaches into the very depths of our beings, using the blood of Jesus Christ and the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit to cleanse and to conquer the evil tendencies found therein.

2. It is an enabling love.

God never expects us to walk alone. He never withdraws His great and strengthening hand from us. He is a God of infinite, inexhaustible, patient, forbearing, and enabling love. What would any of us do without the enabling love of God, keeping us from stumbling, watching over us sleeplessly, tirelessly, and continuously, supporting us in trial, sustaining us in sorrow, and supplying our every need?

3. It is an enduring love.

This is not always true of human love. Many prove that their love is changeable, variable, and affected by their moods and circumstances. Very quickly they fall in and fall out of love. Enduring love is rare among people. Friendships are broken quickly. Misunderstandings are all too frequent. Time changes people. But God's love is without variableness or shadow of turning. We can always depend on the perpetual strength of God's love. We can build on it as a solid foundation.

"God commendeth his love toward us." The word which the Apostle uses that is translated "commendeth" means to establish, to prove, or to place beyond challenge or dispute. God placed His love on exhibition to prove its reality. Why was it necessary for God to commend His love? Because the human heart naturally doubts it. The mysteries of life sometimes cause men to place a question mark after the statement that "God is love." Men frequently ask, "Why does God permit wars and famines, floods and earthquakes, with their train of disease and death? Why does God permit human suffering and all the sorrow that is found in the world?" "God commendeth his love toward us." Note that the text

does not say, "God had commended," but it uses the perpetual present and says, "God commendeth." God demonstrates His love for us, and presents it for our examination, admiration, and appreciation.

III. The Death Of Christ.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The words, "Christ died for us," state the central fact of the gospel of divine forgiveness and salvation. Christ's death for us was the greatest demonstration of the love of God. The world may deny our preaching and criticize our living, but it cannot disprove the love of God for us. Knowing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He lived upon the earth, that He suffered the cruel Roman scourge, that He submitted Himself to the bitter agony of Calvary's cross, we must believe that "God is love."

1. Christ died voluntarily.

Not all the powers of earth and hell could have forced Him to the cross had He been unwilling to go. Of His own free will He bore our sins in His body on the tree. For sheer, pure, unadulterated love for each of us, Christ submitted Himself to the worst torture, voluntarily assuming our sins.

2. Christ died vicariously.

"As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." By His death this victorious Victim conquered sin, discomfited Satan, defeated death, and tore asunder the grave. Through Him we are more than conquerors.

In the words, "Christ died for us," the scriptural doctrine of atonement is expressed in the most unmistakable fashion. He took our place. He bore our sin. He endured our punishment. It was for sinners that He made this sacrifice. It was not for the worthy, but for the unworthy; not for the righteous, but for the unrighteous; not for the good and noble, but for the base and ignoble. He died "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

John Newton described the sacrificial death of Christ in these words:

"In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear;
Till a new object struck my sight
That stopped my wild career!

I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agony and blood;
He fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood.

Sure, never, till my latest breath,
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Tho' not a word He spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His blood had spilt,
And helped to nail Him there.

A second look He gave, which said,
"I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die that thou may'st live."

It was for me, upon a tree
He died in agony,
And now I give my life to live,
For Him who died for me."

We know that we are sinners. We also know that God loves us with an unchanging, unmerited, and everlasting love. We know that Christ died for us, giving His life's blood to redeem us from our sins. To you who are not Christians God says, "You are a lost sinner. You need to be saved. You cannot save yourself. I love you. My Son died for your salvation from your sins. In Him alone is there salvation for you. Won't you accept the offer of His mercy now?"

Receive Christ as your Saviour now. If you realize that you are a sinner, if you know that God loves you, if you realize that Christ died for you, if you have a desire to be saved, believe on Christ now.