

What the love of God has done for us

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[0 : 00] If you want to look at your Bibles, Psalm 8, and this is from the New Living Translation.

O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth. Your glory is higher than the heavens. You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength.

Silencing your enemies and all who oppose you. When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you set in place. What are mere mortals that you should think about them?

Human beings that you should care for them. Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority.

The flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea. And everything that swims, the ocean currents. O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth.

[1 : 14] May God bless his word to us. And as we sing, it's a real privilege, isn't it, to come together and worship the Lord.

And a lot of people around the world aren't able to do that. They've never heard, or if they have heard, they're not allowed to in public. But we can.

And it's always good to come here. I appreciate you folk. Always feel welcome. And I know God has great things for you in the days ahead.

A number of years ago, a friend was trying to explain to me the awesome power of God. You know, it says that he holds everything together by the word of his power. And he was trying to explain to me just what that took.

What it took to take apart atoms, to split atoms. So he was thinking of in terms of dynamite and other things.

[2 : 21] And this incredible power. And he says, and that's the power that God has in holding everything together. And just trying to imagine the power and the majesty of God.

And King David didn't know anything about protons or neutrons. And he never saw the photographs that we've seen from the Hubble telescope of all the different galaxies and the star, you know, star chambers.

But when he looked up at the moon and the stars, he knew that his God put them there. And I just lost my second page.

Don't you just love that when you get to? No wonder David asked God, what are mere mortals that you should think about them?

Human beings that you should care for them. Not only was he awed by the majesty of God in creation, he was dumbfounded at how much God thought of mankind.

[3 : 23] Why would the creator and master of the universe care at all about his creation that causes him so much misery? Yet he gives us glory, honor, and his incredible love.

David was gobsmacked. We too should be awestruck by who God is honoring him for his great creation and power. And I thank you that this is pointed out in all the different hymns and songs we sang today.

At the same time though, it's important to remember who he has made us to be and how much he values us. This isn't to build up or puff up our ego or to excuse us from sin.

But it's to draw us closer to this one who loves us and gave himself on the cross to pay for our sins. It's to stir us with such awe and gratitude that we go and tell everyone possible what an amazing God we serve.

And this is what King David reveals in almost every psalm he wrote. He loved God from his youth and the more he got to know him, the more he was awed by God's kindness, forgiveness, and

unconditional love for him.

[4 : 36] His Psalm 139 expresses it well. And I want to read Psalm 139, at least most of it. Oh Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.

You know when I sit down or stand up, you know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home, you know everything I do. You know what I'm going to say even before I say it, Lord.

You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand. I can never escape from your spirit.

I can never get away from your presence. If I go up to heaven, you are there. If I go down to the grave, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me and your strength will support me.

I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become light. But even in darkness, I cannot hide from you. To you, the night shines as bright as day.

[5 : 49] Darkness and light are the same to you. You made all the delicate inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex.

Your workmanship is marvelous. How well I know it. You watched me when I was being formed in utter seclusion. As I was woven together in the dark womb, you saw me before I was born.

Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God.

They cannot be numbered. I can't even count them. They outnumber the grains of sand. And when I wake up, you are still with me.

And King David wasn't just writing about himself, was he? He was writing about every man, woman, and child. He knew that this revealed God's love and lifelong concern for every man, woman, and child.

[6 : 54] And in looking back at my life, and I know it would be the same for you, we recognize, maybe we didn't at the time, but we look back, we recognize how God was there.

How he was covering us. Even when we didn't have a clue what was going on, we look back and we see God had intervened. He was there even in the heartaches we go through and the challenges we face now.

He promises to use all of them for the good of those that love him and are called according to his purposes. God is all-powerful, eternal, all-wise, holy, yet infinitely gracious and kind.

God is all-powerful, loving us, loving us, welcoming us into his eternal family, just as that song we just sang. This should motivate us even more to live for him and share his incredible love for others. It's our personal experience of God and his love that will make, be our most powerful witness to others. And this is the thing, the greatest gift we have is our personal relationship with God.

[8 : 06] What God has done in us is our best, most powerful witness. I can go and tell others about what God has done through, you know, through some famous, you know, person or something that has come to faith.

But what will really touch him, the people that we know, is our personal witness. When I'd come back with a young lady and myself had been sent to Indonesia at the end of 1978.

And we came back in March of 1979 from working with some missionaries in Indonesia. And Narita Airport in Tokyo had just opened up, so there weren't very many people there.

And the flights, we were one of the few flights in at the time. And I was a penniless missionary. I think I had about a dollar and a half or something like that, which wasn't very much back then and even less now.

And the cheapest cup of coffee at Narita Airport was more than I had in my pocket. So I, instead of feeling miserable, I thought, well, I'll talk to somebody. And there were only a few people there.

[9 : 18] And here was, I thought I'd talked to this guy near me and found out he was this really top-notch lawyer for a big German manufacturing company.

And he had just come back from securing this very great contract to build, I think, a hydroelectric plant in Thailand.

So I thought, well, how will I witness to this guy? So I thought, well, I'll start with, you know, with last day prophecies. That always works, right? You know. So I was telling him about, you know, these last days prophecies.

Prophecies, they're true and it's important. They are being fulfilled. But as soon as I was talking to him about these last day prophecies, I can just feel kind of this spiritual perspex go up. And he wasn't receiving. He didn't say anything, but I could tell that he was not receiving. And so I was just praying in my heart, Lord, what do I do?

[10:21] And then I just shared with him and I says, you know, I know that these prophecies are true and the Bible is true. But, you know, the greatest thing that has touched me is just when I didn't like myself, God revealed his love for me.

And his love transformed my life. I could see the spiritual perspex go down and this man began to receive. That our greatest thing is what the love of God has done for us. And there's people that you know that I'll never see. There's people you know that Pastor Dan will never see. And that we have this greatest weapon of all is God inside of us and the sweet aroma of Jesus and how that's transformed our lives.

That he changed. And I don't know what happened to that man. But I know that over the years that God has set me next to really, you know, I come out of a very working class background. But as I've traveled in different places, God has set me next to vice presidents of these major corporations and given me the opportunity to share my personal testimony.

[11:45] Because, and when we do that, we realize that we have something valuable. The love that has transformed our life. People are waiting to hear that.

Just like you and me, people need to see what King David saw when he looked up into the heavens and realized how awesome God is.

And yet how amazing his love is for us. A 10-year-old girl at my church in Oregon desperately needed to hear this. She was very unhappy after her father left home.

And it shook her self-worth. And those of you that have seen this happen in families, you see that, you know, how the children really suffer from this. So her mother asked me to go and talk to her. And in talking to her, I read her Psalm 139 to reveal how much God thought about her. And that every one of those thoughts were good ones. And she began to change.

[12:49] She began to smile and to receive what was said. And this is a key, isn't it? It's not only hearing the truth, but receiving it and letting it transform our thinking and whole way of life.

This is what enabled King David to accomplish what he did in impossible situations. And to write such amazing Psalms. Awed by the incredible truth of God's thoughts about us, he received it and let it motivate his life to serve God.

I like that little story about, you know, they had this prayer meeting about praying for rain. And it was only a little boy that showed up with an umbrella. He received ahead of time, didn't he?

He was ready. And so often we hear the truths of Scripture, but we don't embrace them. And they're no good. You know, they're no good in here, are they?

They're no good in here. They have to get into our hearts. We have to let the love of God transform us. And no matter what we did in our past or what we're doing now, how many mistakes we made or what anybody else thinks about us, it's so important.

[14:04] Not just for our well-being, but for the well-being of this fellowship, the well-being of this community in this world, is that we receive God's love.

Not just believe it in our head, but let it sink into our hearts and let it transform our lives. This is the key, is receiving.

About this time, 45 years ago, I was at a very dark time in my life. I know I don't look that old. Well, maybe I do. Though born again and loving God, I was at the end of myself and couldn't see a way ahead.

How many have felt been that way? You've been there, haven't you? Just then I felt God speak to my heart, Steve, I love you.

That's all he said. Just, Steve, I love you. Well, I didn't believe it because I didn't like myself. And I didn't see any way out of the darkness. But those four words did something to me.

[15:11] They motivated me to go on. And as I went on, he began to change everything around me and set me on course to where I am today.

How could this holy God love me when he knew everything about me and I didn't even like myself? King David said that, didn't he? When God was honoring him with being king, he says, God, what are you doing this?

You know me. And yet you're honoring me in this way. The most important part is God reminding us of what was true all along, that he loves us.

But we had to believe it. We have to receive it. We have to let it do its work in us. Not just knowing the truth, but embracing it and letting it have the freedom to transform our lives.

Over the years, I have witnessed this transformation and broken lives as God's love reached where nothing else could. The joy of people who thought no one cared when they realized God does care is amazing.

[16 : 27] I love to see it. Sometimes you can see it immediately. Somebody comes in a broken life and then you just speak the love of God. And you see them begin to change right before your eyes.

For some people, it takes longer. But just to see the difference when they begin to receive that God loves them. People that never thought anything of themselves.

And believe me, when these go out, these are going to touch people. And may I encourage you to keep praying for every one of those boxes. Because there's a lot of broken kids out there.

That just a little box. You know, maybe there's not a scripture in there or whatever. But they're going to go out and they're going to know that somebody, someplace, cared enough to fill that box.

That could turn their whole life around. That little expression of love. This is why it's so important that we not only look up to see the power and majesty of God in creation.

[17 : 35] But we look to the cross where he demonstrated such love for us in Christ Jesus. We need to look up to the heavenly places where our life is hidden with Christ and God.

And then look around us to share the wonderful good news of God's incredible love for others.

Some will be so broken that it will take time, patience, and much prayer before they begin to believe that maybe this love is for them.

Others will reject it. But many others, I believe, will receive and be transformed. And what a beautiful thing this is when they do.

It's essential, though, that we first love, let God's love transform us so others know it's real. If we're not letting the love of God transform us, then it's going to be awful hard to tell other people that God loves them when we don't believe he does.

We need to first accept his love for us. You all know John 3, 16 and 17, right? Probably most of you have memorized it from being childhood like I have.

[18 : 54] For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

I not only memorized these verses but quoted them to others many times before I finally accepted that the incredible love mentioned here was for me as well.

As this love began to take root in me, it enabled me to see others with God's love. And that's the key, isn't it? When we believe he loves us as miserable as we are at times, then we can believe that he loves those people around us.

And this is a whole plan of God, isn't it? The whole plan of God and purpose for our lives is to receive his love, let it transform us, and then share his love with others, and then get ready to spend eternity with the one who fills the heavens with his majesty.

You know, God loves us so much. You know, sometimes people are going and ministers will go after big churches and all kinds of other things.

[20 : 23] But the most important thing of all is just God's love. Just that we receive his love. Be awed by his majesty. I love it when you're going someplace. And Oregon, where I come from, it is, you know, if you've ever been there, it is a beautiful state.

And amazing mountains and volcanoes, some that could blow up, some that already have done their job. And just beautiful scenery.

And it's amazing. And God did it. And when you go outside, if there's no fireworks going off and you can see the stars, that our God put them all there.

And he holds them there by the word of his power. But that same God is the same God that loves us even more than this young couple love their little baby.

It's his love that's most important. Let us seal this word and his love with this next song. Above all thrones, above all wonders the world has ever known, above all wealth and treasures of the earth, there's no way to measure what you're worth.

[21 : 45] Crucified, laid behind the stone, you live to die, rejected and alone, like a rose trampled on the ground. You took the fall and thought of me above all.

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