

## June 2002: The Love of God

by Aaron Greenway

Have you ever had someone in your life that loved you unconditionally? Have you ever had a group of friends (or maybe just a couple of friends) that God sends our way to love us? I can think of a group of people in my life who are just like that, my pastor, a friend in Mexico, a group of friends in Peru, in my church, and a few that I went to school with. These are precious gems that should never be taken for granted.

Also, most of us at least have our mothers who bore us, who wiped our dirty faces, who tolerated the muddy footprints on the recently-cleaned carpet, and who rocked us to sleep. I remember as a little boy what my mother would tell me every night before I went to bed, “Good night, Buster Brown”. To this day only my mother could get away with calling me that. Heh! But, we see the love of a mother for a child in our own lives. We also see the role of our fathers, who taught us, instructed us and made sure we had food and a place to sleep. My father and I always took bike rides, went fishing, and worked on the car. While the love of an earthly father isn’t as direct as a mother’s at times, we still experience it in these other ways. Our parents seem to be those who love us with an unconditional love.

There are many things that I understand about the Scriptures, much of which I have studied in Seminary. But one thing that will continue to elude me is the love of my Heavenly Father. I guess the reason for this is that I know myself too well. I know my own weaknesses and the things I struggle with, and yet, somehow God still loves me, even when I leave muddy footprints on the spiritual carpet. Why God chose to love me is something that I cannot fathom. And it is so incredibly powerful that when I think about it, I am left in tears.

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Can you imagine letting someone down, breaking their heart, and disappointing them deeply and then having them turn around, throw their arms around you, kiss you, and tell you that they love you and forgive you. This is what God has done for us, because of His Son. Jesus Christ is the ultimate expression of the Father's love. Jesus Christ is the final answer to the question "Does God love me?" And if that weren't enough God has given us family, friends, money, a house... The list goes on! Our God is so full of love and mercy that He poured it all out on the cross and He continues to give and give...and give!

What does the Scripture say about God's love? The Apostle John was called "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 19:26; 21:7, 20). As a result, I would think that John would have some insights into the subject...and he did. I John 3:16a tells us, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us." Later, John tells us that God is love and "in this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:8b-10).

Sometimes, I feel that we talk about God's love in a very abstract way or we believe that God has forgotten us in the hard times. Neither of these suffice. For it is only when we see our need, that we will see God's love. I can see the love my parents had (and still have) for me just by seeing what I needed as a child and then seeing their provision. But in order to see it, it requires humility and a loss of self-sufficiency. Perhaps, that is one reason why Jesus said that one who comes must come as a little child (Mark 10:15). If we never see our need, our sin and our hopelessness, then we will never see the answer to those things.

Have you experienced God's unconditional love and acceptance in your own life. I am where I am today because my parents took the time to love me, because my friends took the time to love me. And I am where I am eternally because God, in His mercy, loved me! There are no words to describe it and the self-sufficient will never see it. And it is that love that causes us to love the One who first loved us (I John 4:19).