

# Love I

ODCC 15/11/09 (x.pages)

**Text:** Ephesians 3:14-21 & 5:1-2

## Introduction

1. This is my second last message out of Ephesians. In the past month or so we have randomly looked at Paul's letter and I want to end off with love. I don't want to preach too long today and so will give this message in 2 parts.
  - a. I feel that this is perhaps the most important message for believers.
  - b. And I hope that we will see that, in fact, it is really the gospel message in that it is the "aroma" that attracted us at first, and then the "taste" that confirms the deliciousness of the aroma and the life that results from the eating.
  - c. Or, another way of putting it is that it is the "birth" which is the beginning and then it is the "life" which is the living.

## God's love for us

1. The Scriptures are full of this theme: GOD IS LOVE! That's what John tells us in his letter (1 Jn 4:8 & 16).
  - a. The Gk word for "is" means *consists* – it is an essential feature of God. Love is an essential feature of God just as light is an essential feature of the sun.
  - b. You cannot stop the sun from shining: it is impossible because of the continual energy being released and light is the result.
  - c. It is possible for the sun to be blocked, i.e. by thick clouds, or but leaving it and descending into a deep cave so we remove ourselves from it and enter into a pitch-black place.
  - d. There are all kinds of illustrations: **the dark clouds** could be the difficult and uncertain times in our lives where we think God does not love us much; and **the dark cave** could be the place where people go to escape the love of God (God's love is not always desired).
2. Jesus spoke to Nicodemus and His quote is probably the most well-known of Bible verses: "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life*" (Jn 3:16).
  - a. God is also righteous, holy and just but He has largely held back His justice so that His grace and mercy and love may be the attribute.
  - b. He has demonstrated His justice throughout the history of the Bible so that we may not have a wrong impression of God's inability or unwillingness to act.
  - c. As we heard a few weeks ago, just as there are natural seasons in our world, so there have been seasons (or times) of God's activity in the history of mankind which He will bring to a conclusion eventually. This is the season of God's favour – the time of His patience, mercy, grace and love.
3. God has held back His judgement because of Jesus. Because of the cross upon which He died as a sacrifice, taking upon Himself the guilt and punishment for our sin.
  - a. The almighty God becoming one of the lesser creatures that He made so that he could identify with man as a man.
  - b. A holy God becoming a curse as the sin of all men was laid on Him. It says in Galatians, "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'*" (3:13).
  - c. "If I see the blood," said God, "I will pass over." When the Israelites in Egypt killed the lamb and painted its blood on the doorposts and lintel, and the angel of death passed over, it never touched any life in that home but any home without the blood, every firstborn died.
  - d. The lamb was symbolic of Jesus who would become the Lamb of God. The blood, as we have commemorated in the communion, applied to a life, causes God to pass over with judgement.
  - e. And wherever the blood is not applied, judgement will come. As Jesus continued to Nicodemus in the next verse: "*Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son*" (Jn 3:18).
4. The cross stands in the history of mankind as the most important act of God. It is the symbol of His great love.

- a. Paul says, “*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” The **Message** puts it like this, “*God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him*” (Rom 5:8).
  - b. It’s like this dam wall that hold back a huge amount of water. I spent some time at Lake Kariba while in the army and had the privilege of being able to see the dam wall at the base. It is massive! But when you stand on the wall and look towards the body of water it is holding back then it doesn’t seem that big. The dam is 220kms long and 40 kms wide at its widest point. It holds **185 cubic kilometers** of water which weighs about **200 billion tons**. If that dam wall ever crumbled the destruction it would cause would be unimaginable.
  - c. The cross stands like that dam wall holding back the judgement of God so that men may be embraced by the love of God.
5. I can’t explain in full and I know it’s a subjective experience but some years ago God allowed me to see myself as I really am. I didn’t see anything good: always complaining, never satisfied, always critical of others. Full of wrong desires. Selfish, etc. I saw all of those things as if they came in a single package. And at the same time I caught a glimpse of God’s holiness and purity. Talk about light and darkness. When I saw that I became terrified because I understood something of the scripture, “*For all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory.*” But then, between us was the cross and when I saw the cross my terror turned to love because I realised that God loved me and on the cross made a great sacrifice.

## Conclusion

1. *I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*