

LSE 04-17-22

People who have been Christians for a long time often say things like, "Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate demonstration of love." We just sang a song called, "Redeeming Love." To many people that just sounds confusing or wrong. What does any of this have to do with love? I think the problem is what we often mean by the word "love" isn't the kind of love in view when it is used in the Bible. We may say that we love football, pizza, sunny days or our favorite pet. Often what *we* mean when we use the word has more to do with how we feel or how someone else makes us feel. To us it is often just a stronger and more intense version of "like." That isn't typically the kind of love used in God's Word.

One passage that connects the word "love" to Jesus' death is Ephesians 5:25

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"

In what way did Christ give Himself up for the church? This can help us understand the Biblical concept of love.

Another passage that mentions love that Jesus taught shortly before His death is John 15:12-14

12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do what I command you.

In John 14:15 Jesus also said, "If you love Me you will keep my commandments.

We might perceive commandments as being unloving, but that is a problem with our perception of love, not with Jesus.

So let's get back to how Jesus expressed love by laying down His life for us.

First, He didn't cater to what the church wanted. Those following Jesus right up to His death expected and wanted Him to become the physical king of Israel and defeat the Romans. John 6:15 mentions an instance when they intended to take Him by force to make Him king. Jesus didn't allow that. It would have felt good to them, but it wouldn't have solved the real long-term problem.

Second, Jesus wasn't focused on whether or not His actions would make them like Him.

Instead, the way Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested and later killed caused His followers to desert Him. He didn't score high on a likeability scale. But that isn't what the Biblical type of love is about, either.

Instead of focusing on the short term feelings, Jesus focused on creating a solution for their real long term problem. That was their sin which separated them from God. Jesus' death

satisfied the penalty for sin - for all sin, for all time. That's infinitely more beneficial; eternally more beneficial. That's God's kind of love - desiring and working for what is ultimately and eternally beneficial for us, even if it doesn't feel good to us or make us like Him. Most people would like God more if He added \$100k to their bank account. That's not a problem with God, but with our own short-sighted perception. God's kind of love is way bigger and more significant than something that just makes us feel good for a while. Nothing in this life even compares to eternity. Once we really understand the significance of what God has done for us, we do appreciate Him and understand how superior that sort of love is compared with short term feelings.

It is that "Redeeming Love" that we celebrate during this remembrance of Jesus' death and His victory over death at this time.

Father,

Thank you for the perfect plan that brought Jesus to this earth to live as a regular human, set the perfect example, and yet still be killed on a cross. Thank you for paying the penalty for our sins and giving us a way to be forgiven and live with You forever. Nothing more beneficial could ever be done. Thank you for the love you demonstrate for us in this and so many other ways. Bless our time of remembrance now, and the bread and juice that remind us of Jesus' body and blood; a real body that was killed, real blood that flowed from His wounds. Thank you that His victory over death is just as real, and so is our hope of spending eternity with You. Lord, we confess we aren't worthy, but please enable us to participate in this memorial in a worthy manner. In Jesus' precious and holy Name we pray, Amen.