



CrossRoads Notes:

Turn your Bibles to Jeremiah 31:3

Title: The God Who Shepherds You

Theme: Grasping God's Everlasting Love

“The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.’” (Jeremiah 31:3)

Introduction: Chapter thirty-one of the book of Jeremiah held words of comfort for Israel as she was in captivity, assuring them that God in due time would restore them and their children to their own land, and again make them a great and happy nation, especially by sending the Messiah, in whose kingdom and grace would be enjoyed by all who would receive Jesus Christ. There would be a day that they would repent of their sins, and God will graciously accept them in their repentance. God would enrich their spiritual blessings and these blessings would be offered to the seed of Israel forever. (The Expositors Bible Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary)

The Children of Israel are offered the blessings that were promised to Abraham. Abraham's seed goes beyond the Jewish nation and people, they are offered to the Gentiles as well. (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:14)

Proposition: *I would propose to you that there was a time when sin held you captive and God out of His love for you drew you to repentance.* He appeared to your spiritual heart and the Holy Ghost drew you to Christ. He graciously accepted your plea for forgiveness and has set you in His everlasting love and care, if and only if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

Interrogative Sentence: *Just how is God a Shepherd to His people?*

Transitional Sentence: *The first step to experiencing God's love is to first understand and admit the fact that there is a “love mask” that modern mankind likes to put on.* There are eight masks that mankind likes to wear in desperation to experience love.

The first is “Performance.” People convince themselves that if they achieve at something this will gain them love.

The second is “People.” Often people will look to people in their lives for affirmation and value. Do not get me wrong, people should give affirmation to people who are diligent, faithful and work hard to do their best for the Lord and others. It is one thing when God moves upon someone's heart to give affirmation but it is another when people compromise God's righteousness in their lives to gain praise from man.

The third is “Pity.” There are people who will put themselves down so people will go out of their way to come to them and give them special attention.

The fourth is “Position.” Some feel like, “If I can only get that manager position, than I can reach for the CEO spot on the corporate ladder, then I will have value.”

The fifth is “Physical Affection.” Too often, people equate human contact with love. If there is no sacrificial giving and living before those we want physical affection from, then we are wearing a mask of false love.

The sixth is “Pleasure.” I can’t wait until the next thrill or high or grand experience. It is a mask covering up that need for true love that can only come from the Lord.

The seventh is “Possessions.” If I can only have that lake front property, live in that neighborhood, drive that car, worship in the same type of church that I saw on TBN.

Lastly, is “Problems.” This is usually a juvenile form of love mask, the crying out of a young adult wanting expressions of love on His own terms and not God’s. This problem also arises in adults and sadly even in the church setting.

In the Old Testament, those wanting their own way or carefree people not interested in God ways were referred to as the “rabble.” (Numbers 11:4; Ezekiel 23:42) . These rabbles are people who are quit aware of the God of heaven and earth but they lived by their own agenda.

Transitional Sentence: *Once someone is aware of all the love masks and is willing to throw those masks aside they may experience true love, God’s love, by searching what the Bible says about God, who is love.*

The Bible boldly proclaims that there is only one love in the universe that has lasting value and satisfies that longing to be loved. That true love that enables Christians to express genuine love to the Body of Christ, to family members, to friends and co-workers.

The answer to finding the God who is love is found in the Bible, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Bible tells us this about love, “So we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.” (1 John 4:16) In the very same epistle we find that Scriptures warn us with, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8) My prayer for you is the same as the apostle Paul’s prayer. “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.” (Ephesians 3:17-19)

William Barclay in his exposition on Biblical love covered four major areas of life as we know it.

One, “regards to creation:” It is hard for us to understand why God would take time to even create this world, knowing that mankind walks in disobedience and gives a poor response to His Word and continually causes Him grief. Man’s very nature, without the leading and control of the Holy Spirit causes nothing but trouble. A full Biblical understanding in creation is essential to understanding His very nature. Being a creating God He creates and being a loving God He desires to create man to live in a world that could express His love to others. True love must have someone to sacrificially love and there must be someone to receive that love.

This picture is seen in marriage: (Genesis 2:18) (Exodus 20:4-5)

Two, regards to “Free Will:” Unless love is a free response it is not a love that brings true satisfaction here on this side nor leads to everlasting life. If God had only been law and no Holy Spirit to bring true life to the written Word men would move like robots or they would serve because they are programmed and when people become legalist towards the Word of God they serve for all the wrong motives.

Three, regards to “Providence:” God’s love is reflected in His constant care of everything at all times. There is no single Hebrew or Greek word that expresses the idea of God’s providence. Providence is normally defined in Christian theology as the unceasing activity of the Creator whereby, in overflowing bounty and good will. (The New Bible Dictionary; Psalm 145:9; Matthew 5:45-48) He upholds His creation in ordered existence. (Acts 17:28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3) He guides and governs all events, circumstances and even the free acts of men. (Psalm 107; Job 1:12;2:6; Genesis 45:5-8) He directs everything to its appointed goal, for His own glory and the glorification of Jesus before the lives of everyone. (Ephesians 1:9-12) Providence is presented in the whole of Scripture as a function of divine sovereignty. God has His hands over all, doing just what He wills. (Psalm 103:19; 135:6; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11)

Four, regards to “Redemption:” This redemption means more than just saving souls from spending eternity in hell, but for redeeming the heart of man so he can have communion with God, to do the work of God with Christ walking in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. This redemption, purchased through the blood of Christ frees from the bondage of sin.

Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.” “Redemption” (apolytrosis) means deliverance from the bondage of sin on payment of a price, and that price was the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:15 says, “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”

The beloved John gave us this Biblical examination in regards to God’s love shining through us, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8)

James C. Hefley wrote an article titled, "White Man" to "God's Man:"

What sacrifices are you making to show God's love to others? Do you grasp God's love for you and have you embraced His love by accepting Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord?

Transitional Sentence: *There is no way that we can cover all the areas of life that God has shown His love to so many. God is love. There is another aspect of God's love that the Holy Spirit wants you to grasp today. God is Jehovah-Rohi, "The Lord Our Shepherd." Psalm 23:1 says, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Verse 6 says, "Surely [God's] goodness shall follow me all the days of my life." (Psalm 23:6)*

Nathan Stone tells us that "Rohi" {RO'EH} primary means to feed or lead to pasture, as a shepherd does his flock.

After God sent the prophet Ezekiel to rebuke the poor shepherds of Israel for not properly feeding the people of God, the Lord made this promise, "I Myself will search for My sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so I will look after My sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness... I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak..." (Ezekiel 34:11-12; 16) We live in that dispensation right now.

The word, "dwell," refers to God being present with His people in manifold ways, protecting, guiding, feeding and fellowshiping. God offers the intimacy of His presence. He may be known as a shepherd is known among his sheep.

Not only is God our Shepherd, but Jesus teaches that He is our Shepherd. He said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." (John 10:11) He is the fulfillment of Ezekiel 34:11-16

He qualified Himself to become the Great Shepherd by becoming the sacrificial Lamb of God who died for the sins of the World. The Book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers. (Hebrews 2:11) The Bible says that Jesus came not to help angels, but to help us. (Hebrews 2:16) Jesus shared in our humanity so by His death He might destroy Satan who holds the power of death. (Hebrews 2:14) As our Shepherd, Jesus is able to minister to us in every part of our lives and intervene on our behalf. Hebrews 4:15-16 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

Because He learned obedience and was made perfect through what He suffered (Hebrews 2:10; 5:8) through our suffering, He is able to help us learn obedience and be made in to His image. (Romans 8:28-29) As the good shepherd He meets every genuine need. (Philippians 4:19) He leads us to the healthy pastures of God's Word because it is only by feeding on His Word Christians can grow in Christ and survive in their relationship with God. (Matthew 4:4) It is because of our Chief Shepherd's prayer that we can enjoy God continuous presence by the Holy Spirit of truth who promises to guide us in all truth and abide within us. (John 16:13; 14:16)

Brethren, when we are sorely tired He will lead, protect, and provide. When we are weary and wounded He will anoint our heads and heal our wounds and refresh our human spirit with seasons of refreshing. He will put us and keep us in His everlasting love.

Do you know how much God loves you? Are you connected to His love and is His love making a connection to others around you? Is He really the Shepherd of your heart? John says if you know God, you will express His love to others.

In Closing: You cannot get God's love unless you are connected to the God who shepherds you and you must be willing to express His love to others if you are going to enjoy His love.

Walter B. Knight wrote about a coal miner who worked in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. He was standing in the rear car not paying attention to what was coming up ahead. He got entangled in some high voltage wires and was left hanging and his feet could not touch the ground or his arms reach out to any place to grab. Someone saw him dangling in mid air hung up in the electrical wires, so they turned off the electricity and then got him down. Had his feet been able to touch the ground or his hands found something to grab onto, the electricity could have found a way out and He would most likely be dead.

God's love is like that in a sense that first we must get connected to God's love through Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord and in order for us to enjoy His love we must be a willing vessel for His love to get out of us, to be lived out through us by loving others for the sake of Christ and Christ alone.

Are you allowing the Chief Shepherd to lead and guide you? Do you know His love and are you allowing His love to be shown through you by loving others.

Let us pray!