



Can it be that the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5 are the characteristics of God—and He loves us with those attributes? In 40 readings designed for daily devotions, Jessica Thompson takes you across the whole Bible to reveal the loving character of the triune God.

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LOVE

# Motherly Love

*The LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed:  
The LORD—the LORD is a compassionate and gracious God,  
slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth.*

EXODUS 34:6

Have you ever seen a first-time parent completely smitten with a baby? You know that mom must be utterly exhausted, sleep-deprived, and hormonal, but the way she looks at her little one exudes dedication and love. I remember feeling so in love with my firstborn that I would tear up just holding him close, rubbing his chubby little hands. I remember not wanting to be apart from him, even when he was asleep. Those feelings were there with my other two, but by then I was so busy that I wasn't afforded the luxury of reveling in my emotions.

Think of that tender, motherly type of love and read our verse again. "The

**We are accustomed to thinking about God in terms of Father, but how often do we think of His love for us as tender or motherly?**

LORD is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth.” The word for love in these verses is also sometimes translated “tender mercies or compassions,” from the word *womb* to connote a motherly type of love. We are accustomed to thinking about God in terms of Father, but how often do we think of His love for us as tender or motherly? Isaiah 49:15 says this: “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or lack compassion for the child of her womb? Even if these forget, yet I will not forget you.” One of the most compassionate and devoted types of love that we know here on earth is between a mother and her child. God is saying that His love is so compassionate, devoted, sacrificial, and committed that it makes a mother’s love look like one that is forgetful.

Martin Luther describes this type of love as “goodness in action.” A good mother’s love acts. She takes care of the needs of her child. She forgoes sleep and many of her own needs so she can devote herself to her child’s well-being. God’s love is an action-filled love. He takes care of your needs. He gave His very Son, His beloved Son, because of the depth of His love for us. His love isn’t empty sentimentality. His love moves Him toward us.

The Lord’s love is steadfast. It doesn’t vacillate. His love isn’t hot one day and cool the next. His love stays the same. God’s love is always pursuing. He chooses to define His love this way because we doubt that He could continue to love us after what we have done, what we have thought, what we have looked at, what we have said. His love is able to look our unloveliness straight in the face and never even consider wavering in His devotion to us. He cannot waver; that is not who He is.

Today remember God's love for you. Think about His love in the terms He uses to describe it. Consider His tenderness toward you. Let that tender affection move you to love Him in return and to love others.

Be blessed by these words written by a Scottish pastor in the nineteenth century:

How soothing, in the hour of sorrow, or bereavement, or death, to have the countenance and sympathy of a tender earthly friend! . . . these words tell thee of one nearer, dearer, and tenderer still—the Friend who never fails—a tender God! By how many endearing epithets does Jesus exhibit the tenderness of His affection to His people!

Does a shepherd watch tenderly over his flock? “The Lord is my Shepherd!”

Does a father exercise fondest solicitude towards his children? “I will be a Father unto you!”

Does a mother's love exceed all other earthly types of affectionate tenderness? “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you!”

Is the apple of the eye the most susceptible part of the most delicate bodily organ? “He keeps them as the apple of His eye!”

When the “Shepherd and Bishop of Souls” finds the sinner like a lost sheep, stumbling on the dark mountains, how tenderly He deals with him! There is no look of wrath—no word of upbraiding—in silent love “He lays him on His shoulders rejoicing!”<sup>1</sup>

# Loved from Eternity Past

*I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
therefore, I have continued to extend faithful love to you.*

JEREMIAH 31:3

Charles Spurgeon writes about this passage, saying, “He loved you without beginning. Before years, and centuries, and millennium began to be counted, your name was on his heart. Eternal thoughts of love have been in God’s bosom towards you. He has loved you without a pause; there never was a minute in which he did not love you. Your name once engraved upon his hands has never been erased, nor has he ever blotted it out of the Book of Life.”<sup>2</sup>

**Love is who He is at  
His core.**

It is God’s very character to extend love to you. Love is who He is at His core. He loved you from eternity past and

will love you into the eternal future. His love extends through time and space and beyond anything we will ever understand. He promises to continue in this faithful love for you.

Let's read our verse for today with more context of the whole chapter from Jeremiah: "The people who survived the sword found favor in the wilderness. When Israel went to find rest, the Lord appeared to him from far away. **I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued to extend faithful love to you.** Again I will build you so that you will be rebuilt, Virgin Israel. You will take up your tambourines again and go out in joyful dancing" (Jer. 31:2–4, emphasis mine). These verses are spoken to a people who knew suffering. They are described as a people who "survived the sword." It may be as you are reading this today you feel like you are just trying to survive the sword, or perhaps you are so freshly out of a time of suffering that you're still not sure if you survived or not. Maybe you are currently experiencing pain that seems to be taking the very life from you. You feel no rest. You feel no joy. You only know tears and heartache.

Your heavenly Father's message to you today reminds you that you are loved. You are not loved in a standoffish manner. You are loved with a warm, everlasting love. These verses do not say, "To all the people who survived the sword, see, it wasn't all that bad. You made it. Stop complaining. You should have trusted Me more." No, that is not how God relates to us. He acknowledges the suffering. He doesn't minimize it. He calls it as it is. "You survived the sword." The Lord sees that you are in the wilderness. He doesn't say, "This isn't a bad spot at all! Just have a better outlook, and you will see this

isn't actually a wilderness at all—it's an oasis!" No, the Father recognizes that the place you are in is difficult. He doesn't try to pretty it up or put a good spin on it.

Yet God declares that we find favor even there. We find the outlandish favor of His love—the favor of a Father whose love is not dependent on how we are dealing with our circumstances but depends only on who He is. He sees that we need to be rebuilt. He sees we need restoration, and He promises to bring that. He knows that real hardships strip us of our joy. He doesn't tell us that joy isn't important or that we should just suck it up; instead He gives us the hope of "joyful dancing." We may not fully experience the joyful dance in this lifetime, but for certain in eternity to come we will know joyful dance in a way we never even imagined. Then we will fully realize what His faithful love means for us. We will dance because we will see how His love has kept us. We will dance with all the other wilderness wanderers and rejoice because of the love of our God.

# God Loved

*For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

JOHN 3:16

*God loved.* This is the beginning and the completion of our faith. These two words give us hope and fill us with joy. God, the Creator of the universe, the one who was and is and is to come, the giver of life, the sustainer of all things, majestic in holiness, beautiful, wonderful, splendid—this God *loved*. He feels affection for, His heart is drawn toward, His eyes are set up, His mind is full of thoughts of, He loves.

God loved *the world*. His heart is for the world. His love is for you. His love is for me. His love is for the sinner. His love is for the dust He took and reshaped into a man and into a woman. God loves those who reject Him. He loves those who disdain Him. He loves those who seek Him. He loves those who long for Him. He loves the world. This love comes from who He is. This love is bestowed upon the unlovely by the Lovely One. God is love.

God loved the world *in this way: He gave*. God's love is not static. God's love is not impotent. God's love moves Him to give. God's love moves Him toward us. God does not look at us with a cooled affection. God loves us and is moved into action. His love moved Him to give. His loved moved Him to sacrifice. His love moved Him toward us.

God loved the world in this way: He gave *His one and only Son*. God's love for us moved Him to give the most precious gift He could give. When we love we give, but we never give

**God gave His all: He  
gave Himself.**

completely, we never give without some self-service, we never give without some self-protection, and we always hold a little bit back; our love

is imperfect. When God loves He gives all. His love served us and cost Him. His love sacrificed His very self for us. He gave His Son. Spurgeon asks what more God could give: "When the great God gave his Son he gave God himself, for Jesus is not in His eternal nature less than God. When God gave God for us he gave himself. What more could he give? God gave his all: he gave himself. Who can measure this love?"<sup>3</sup>

God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, *so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life*. He loved and gave so we would not perish. He loved and gave so that we could live eternally. He loved and gave so we could be with Him forever. Our past, present, and future are changed because of His love for us. All we have to do is believe—believe God is as good as He says He is, believe He loves us the way He claims to, believe that all we must do is receive.

This verse is perhaps the best-known of all the verses from God's Word. Think on this well-loved verse today and about what great love God has for you. Consider how that love moved Him to give. Remember what that love moved Him to give. God's love for you has changed everything. Believe that love is for you today.

# Loved Completely

*I live by faith in the Son of God,  
who loved me and gave himself for me.*

GALATIANS 2:20

The apostle Paul's declaration in this verse makes my heart explode with happiness. Jesus, the Son of God, loves me and gave Himself for me.

Who loved me?

Jesus, the Son of God. To be loved by anyone, truly loved, is a cause for happiness. But to be loved by Jesus is a cause for exultation. Read and take hold of how Jesus is described in Colossians 1:18–20: “He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so expansive, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his

**God isn't detached when He thinks about you. His heart yearns to be in relationship with you.**

death, his blood that poured down from the cross" (MSG). This One with infinite power and worth—this is the One who holds you in His heart.

What did He do?

He loved you. Take each of these words and think on them individually. He loved *you*. He doesn't just tolerate you. He doesn't just think of you fondly. He doesn't just hope for the best for you. He loved you. This word *love* is full of emotion. God isn't detached when He thinks about you. His heart yearns to be in relationship with you. He wants you to know about His love for you and to live a life propelled by that knowledge.

What did His love cause Him to do?

Jesus gave His life for you. His love isn't just sentimentality. More than deep feelings, God's love is action. His love moved Him to give not just His heart but His entire self. He did this so we could have perfect relationship with God and so we could love others with the love we have been shown.

The entire book of Galatians is devoted mainly to reminding us that our work isn't what saves us but rather that Jesus' work on our behalf is what makes us whole. Paul writes this letter to remind the people of Galatia to stop working to earn their salvation and to stop working to try to earn love. We need to hear that message every single day as well because so much of our lives is spent trying to prove to God and to others that we really are worth being loved. Jesus puts a stop to that. He says, "I love you because I do. I love you in the fullness of

who I am. I love you and will give Myself to you because even on your best days you fail at giving yourself to Me.” This type of love changes us.

John Flavel, an author and pastor from the seventeenth century, wrote,

“The Son of God, who *loved* me and *gave* Himself for me!”

Galatians 2:20

Out of Christ’s condemnation—flows my justification!

Out of His agony—comes my victory!

Out of His pain—comes my ease!

Out of His stripes—comes my healing!

Out of His gall and vinegar—comes my honey!

Out of His curse—comes my blessing!

Out of His crown of thorns—comes my crown of glory!

Out of His sin-atonement death—comes my eternal life!

O what a melting consideration is this!<sup>4</sup>

When we focus on God’s great love, the Holy Spirit moves our hearts to love others. We can’t help but want to spread that love. Then even on the days when we resist His work, Jesus, the Son of God, continues to love us and to remind us that He gave His life for us.

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