

# THE MERCY [LOVING KINDNESS] OF THE LORD IS FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING. Psalm 103:17

(The Immutability of God, 4<sup>th</sup> in a series)

Sermon to the saints of the Most High God at Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka,  
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God is unchangeable (or immutable) in his love and affections to his people; his love to them is “*from everlasting to everlasting*” (**Psalm 103:17**), without any variation in his own heart, however different the manifestations of it may be to them. He ever rests in his love (**Zephaniah 3:17**), and never changes, nothing can separate from it (**Romans 8:35, 39**). He is love itself (**1 John 4:8, 16** “*God is love*”), and it is as unchangeable as himself (**Malachi 3:6** “*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*”), “*the same today, yesterday, and for ever*” (**Hebrews 13:8**).

It is important to note that in the book of Psalms when the word “mercy” is used, such as in **Psalm 103:17**, it is properly translated, “loving kindness.” In **Psalm 136**, each verse ends with “*for his mercy endureth for ever.*” Or, rather, “*for his loving kindness endureth for ever.*” Let’s look and see.

*“O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. To him that made great lights: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: The sun to rule by day: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for*

*ever. To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. To him which smote great kings: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: And slew famous kings: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever: And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy [loving kindness] endureth for ever.” (Psalm 136:1-26)*

If a three-fold cord is not quickly broken (**Ecclesiastes 4:12**); consider the strength of this 26-fold cord of **Psalm 136**. Repetition by the Holy Spirit has a purpose.

**Psalm 89:2:** *“For I have said, Mercy [loving kindness] shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.”*

**Psalm 100:5:** *“For the LORD is good; his mercy [loving kindness] is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”*

**Isaiah 45:17:** *“But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.”*

**Jeremiah 31:3:** *“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”*

**Ephesians 2:4-7:** *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”*

And for the final Bible reference **here** for this portion of the sermon, I refer you to **Romans Chapter 8**, which amplifies the doctrines of grace as the Church teaches (“*Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people.” Psalm 3:8*). and ends with this: “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...For I am*

*persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39).* The word “creature” is created thing. Time, or eternity, is a thing created by Almighty God.

As to **Zephaniah 3:17**'s, “he will rest in his love” [*“The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.”*]

Trapp: “[He will rest in his love] And seek no further. Heb. He will be silent in his love, passing by small faults without any the least signification of his displeasure; as if he were even fond over his Church, and did err in his love towards her, as husbands are licensed to do toward their wives, Proverbs 5:19 [*“Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.”*]. Some render it *obmutescet in amore suo*, he shall be dumb in his love, so as he cannot speak through excess of love. Lovers are so transported sometimes that they cannot utter their minds.”

After he had created heaven and earth he rested. **Genesis 2:2-3.**

Spurgeon says that this clause teaches “the doctrine that Christ will always be faithful to those on whom he has set his heart’s affection.”

Spurgeon devoted a sermon to this clause from **Zephaniah 3:17**, “*he will rest in his love.*” And he has some good things in that sermon.

“There are some who teach that Christ’s love may be set on a man, and yet that it may afterwards be removed from him. Where, then, remains the comfort of God’s people if their teaching is true? But, thank God, it is not true; for the promise of the text is that Jesus “will rest in his love.” If their doctrine is according to the Scriptures, where is the value of Christ’s affection at all? In what respects can he be said to stick closer than a brother? How can it be true that many waters cannot quench his love, neither can the floods drown it? If these men are right, must not the apostle Paul

have been wrong when he declared that he was persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation should ever be able to separate the saints from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord? Shall we imagine that the apostle was mistaken, and suppose that this erroneous teaching is the truth of God? Shall we turn away from the positive testimony of Holy Scripture, and believe the falsehoods of men in its place, especially when that Scripture is itself so full of consolation for God's people that, if it can ever be proved to be untrue, they may put their hands on their loins in agony of woe, and go to their graves full of misery and despair?"

Gill says: "[H]e will rest in his love; continue in his love, without any variation or change; nothing shall separate from it; it shall always remain the same; he will take up his contentment and satisfaction in it; he will solace himself with it; it will be a pleasing thing to him to love his people, and to show it to them; he will take the utmost complacency and delight in expressing his love by words and deeds unto them: or, as some render it, "he will be silent because of his love" *{r}*; and not upbraid them with their sins; or reprove, correct, and chastise them in his hot displeasure; or say one word in a way of vindictive wrath: and he "will make" all others "silent"; every enemy, or whatever is contrary to them; such is his great love to them *{s}*; he will forgive their iniquities, and cover their sins, and in love to them cast them behind his back."

The fall of Adam made no difference in the immutability of his love. Though the special objects of his love fell with Adam, in his transgression, into the depths of sin and misery, this did not hinder his love. God continued his love, and manifested it in sending his Son to be the propitiation for their sins, and commended it (**Romans 5:8**: "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"), by giving full proof and demonstration of it, in the delivery of Christ to death for them, even while they were yet sinners.

Nor does the sinful state and condition they were brought into, and continue in from their birth to their conversion, make any alteration in his love. In order to further prove the great love with which he loves them, he "*quickens them when dead in trespasses and sins*" (**Ephesians 2:4-5**). He looks upon them in all the impurity of their natural state, and says to them, "*live*" (**Ezekiel 16:6,8**); and this time, as it is a time of life, it is a time of open love. **Ephesians 2:4-5**: "*But God, who is rich in*

*mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;).” Ezekiel 16:6,8: “And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. ... Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” Titus 3:3-5: “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”*

Back to Spurgeon’s sermon on “*he will rest in his love*” of **Zephaniah 3:17**:

“[I]f Christ had intended to cast us away because of our sins, why did he ever take us on? Did he not know, beforehand, that we should be rebellious, and did not his omniscient eye see all our sins, and detect all our follies? Are we ungrateful? He knew that we would be. Are our sins extremely heinous? He knew how heinous they would be. He could foresee everything; every spot that was to be on us, was on us before his omniscient eye when he chose us; every fault that we should commit was already committed in his estimation. He foreknew and foresaw everything; yet he chose us just as we were. If he had intended to abandon us, and cast us away, would he ever have accepted us at all? If Jesus meant to divorce his bride, foreknowing all her faults, would he ever have espoused her? If he determined to cast away his adopted child, since he knew that child’s unfaithfulness, would he ever have adopted him? Oh, do not think, beloved, that Christ would have done all that he has done for nothing, that he would have come from heaven to earth, and have even gone from the cross to the grave, and allowed his spirit to descend into the abode of the dead, on a useless errand! Would he not have recoiled, and said, “I know my bride will prove to be unworthy, therefore I will not espouse her?” But since he has espoused her, and has put the red ring of his own atonement on her finger, and has so far been faithful to her, what shall ever constrain him to divorce her? What can ever induce him to cast from his bosom her whom he died to save? It must be true that “he will rest in his love,” for he has so far rested in it, though he has had much to mourn over in his chosen ones.”

Nor do the hidings of God's face from them after conversion, prove any change in his love to them. For though he hides his face from them, and forsakes them for a moment, in a little seeming wrath, to show his resentment at their sins, to bring them to a sense of them, to humble them before him, and to cause them to seek his face and favor; yet with great mercies he gathers them again to himself, in the most tender manner, and with lovingkindness. He has mercy on them; and, for the strengthening of their faith in his love, swears he will not be wroth with them; and declares his lovingkindness to be more immoveable than hills and mountains. **Isaiah 54:7-10:** *“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.”*

Afflictions are no evidence of a change of affections to them; though he may thoroughly chastise them, and, as they may think, severely, yet he deals with them but as children. They are his dear sons and daughters, and pleasant children, in whom he takes the utmost complacency and delight. His chastisements are rather proofs of sonship, than arguments against it. God's rebukes of them are rebukes in love, and not in wrath and hot displeasure; though he visits their transgressions with a rod and stripes, he does not utterly, nor at all, take away his lovingkindness in Christ from them. **Jeremiah 31:18, 20:** *“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God....Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.”* **Hebrews 12:6-8:** *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”* **Revelation 3:19:** *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”* **Psalms 89:32-33:** *“Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.”* Nor is the unchangeableness of the love of God to his people to be disproved by his being said to be angry with them, and then to turn away his anger from them. **Isaiah**

**12:1:** “*And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.*” Anger is not opposite to love. Jacob was angry with his beloved Rachel (**Genesis 30:2** “*And Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God’s stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?*”), and a father may be angry with his beloved child, and love him not the less. The Bible is full of such teachings. See, for example the following: **Isaiah 10:25, Isaiah 40:1-2, Isaiah 51:3, Isaiah 54:8, Isaiah 57:15-18, Isaiah 66:13, Deuteronomy 30:1-3, Psalm 30:5, Psalm 85:1-3, Jeremiah 31:18-20, Ezekiel 39:24-29, Hosea 6:1, and Hosea 14:4-9.**

Wrath and hatred are opposed to love, which are never in the heart of God towards his beloved ones. This “anger” is said after the manner of men, and according to our apprehension of things. The Lord doing somewhat similar to men when they are angry, who frown and turn away. And when God frowns in his providence, and deserts his people for a while, they judge he is angry. In reality, it only shows his discipline at their sins, but not at their persons. And then, when he smiles upon them again, and manifests his pardoning grace and mercy, they conclude he has turned himself from the fierceness of his anger, **Psalm 85:2, 3:** “*Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.*”

In ending, I want to share one of John Kent’s (1766-1843) hymns with you. A shipwright (ship builder) he lived in Bideford, Devonshire, which is on the coast of England near the Bristol Channel (southwest England). Our Matthias hales from Bradford, West Yorkshire, about 300 miles northeast (8 hours by train).

‘Twas with an everlasting love  
That God his own elect embraced  
Before he made the worlds above,  
Or earth on her huge columns placed.

Long ere the sun's refulgent ray  
Primeval shades of darkness drove,  
They on his sacred bosom lay,  
Loved with an everlasting love.

Then, in His love and His decrees,  
Christ and His bride appeared as one,

Her sin, by imputation His,  
Whilst she in spotless splendor shone.

O love, how high thy glories swell,  
How great, immutable, and free!  
Ten thousand sins, as black as hell,  
Are swallow'd up, O love, in thee!

Lov'd when a wretch defil'd with sin,  
At war with heav'n, in league with hell,  
A slave to every lust obscene,  
Who, living, lived but to rebel

Believer, here thy comfort stands,  
From first to last salvation's free;  
And everlasting love demands  
An everlasting song from thee.

*“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*  
**(Hebrews 13:20-21)**

I love you. Amen.