



**“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen” (Romans 16:24).**

## **Christian Love Reaches Out**

**Central Truth:** Our love should reach to all people for Christ’s sake.

**L430. Date:** November 1988. **Text:** Romans 15:15-16.

**Topic:** Love: Of Others; Missions; Witnessing.

Love must be expressed. Christian love is expressed by service to people in the name of God. Even God expressed His love by what He did for us: *“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him”* (1 John 4:9). The most familiar verse in the New Testament says, *“God so loved the world, that he gave . . .”* (John 3:16). Love is expressed by what it does and the spirit in which it does it.

Christian love is not the expression of our natural affection toward people or toward God. It is God’s divine love flowing through us (Romans 5:5). The presence of His love in us is proof that we belong to God through faith in Jesus. It is the outflow of the life of God.

Love is inclusive, not exclusive. It reaches out and envelops people. It does not withdraw and refuse people. God’s love is so great that He included the whole world of mankind, even those who did not love Him but were in rebellion against Him. You will never meet a person whom God does not love. And it is His love in us that enables us to love as Christians. We include people in our commitment to serve them for their good. That is love in action.

### **I. CHRISTIAN LOVE REACHES OUT IN MISSIONARY EVANGELISM (Romans 15:15-31)**

**A. Missions is in obedience to Christ** (Romans 15:15, 16). He

commanded us to go into all the world (Matthew 28:18-20) and teach every person (Mark 16:15) in each nation (Luke 24:47). That commission could be viewed as an exciting opportunity or as a dread responsibility.

(1) Missionary evangelism is a privilege. Paul called it *“the grace that is given to me of God.”* Grace is special favor, an undeserved privilege. Paul considered his call to the gospel ministry a *“grace”* given him of God. *“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Ephesians 3:8).

(2) Missionary evangelism is humbling. It makes one a *“minister”* (servant who waits upon the welfare of another). God makes us *“able ministers of the new testament”* (II Corinthians 3:6), so He is the one who enables us. We depend on Him to make us able to do His work of leading people to Christ. We could never do it without Him. So we put pride to death and commit ourselves to serve others in the gospel.

(3) Missionary evangelism is a sacred service. We are dealing with *“the gospel of God”* (Romans 15:16). That is a treasure beyond estimation. It is not a matter of words but of power in the Holy Spirit (I Thessalonians 1:5). There is no greater joy than that of completing a ministry in which we *“testify the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24). What a privilege that is!

(4) Missionary evangelism is a spiritual service, being *“sanctified by the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 15:16). Even the most menial service is hallowed when it is consecrated by His blessed ministry. We do our best, and our human limitations are overcome and made effective by the work of the Spirit (John 16:8-11).

**B. Missions is empowered by God** (Romans 10:17-19). It is not our doing our best with limited human resources. It is God making strength out of our weakness and doing His work.

(1) It is a divine power. *“Mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God”* marked Paul's ministry (Romans 10:19). Jesus promised the same to us. *“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me”* (Acts 1:8). Effective Christian service is always explained as *“the Lord working with them, and confirming the word”* (Mark 16:20). We take no credit for what God does.

(2) It is evident power. People are aware when God is at work. They can discern the skills of man from the ministry of God. God uses what the world calls foolish, weak, base, and despised to do His work and magnify His name (I Corinthians 1:26-29). All glory goes to God, for faith is not based on man's skills but *“in demonstration of the Spirit and . . . in the*

*power of God*” (I Corinthians 2:4, 5).

(3) It is continuing power. God's working is not limited to one year, or one place, or one person. He works with us *“always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20). Every witness given for Christ is accompanied by God's power (Isaiah 55:10, 11). His power confirms our ministry today.

**C. Missions meets a desperate need** (Romans 15:20, 21). There are some areas where the name of Jesus Christ is unknown (verse 20). There are some people who have never heard His gospel. To each of those we are commissioned to go (Mark 16:15). Does any person have the right to hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard it once? It is our mission to *“declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people”* (Psalm 96:3).

God calls for a worldwide proclamation of the gospel. *“To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand”* (Romans 15:21; see also Isaiah 52:15). The plan of God is that the *“everlasting gospel”* should be preached *“to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people”* (Revelation 14:6).

**D. Missions requires surrender of personal preferences** (Romans 15:22-32). Duty sometimes conflicts with desire. Paul wanted to visit believers in Rome. He made plans for the trip but was hindered once and again. He had obligations where he was, and that kept him from visiting them.

Many of God's faithful workers do what is needed rather than what is preferred. But duty becomes delight when it is performed in devotion to the Lord. Thank God for the commitment which keeps a person serving where he is needed.

Obedience is greater than pleasure (Romans 15:29, 32). The essence of Christian commitment is to present oneself to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:2; Luke 9:23). That commitment must be renewed daily. And daily God rewards such a faithful servant. It is the way to live the Christian life.

**E. Missions extends to the ends of the earth** (Romans 15:24-32). God has decreed that the outreach of missionary evangelism is to be through the agency of willing workers. Some must be willing to go and others must be willing to support them as they go. Paul expected the church in Rome to help finance his ministry in Spain (verse 24). The church in Corinth was established by the free service of Paul as he supported himself and received offerings from other Christians.

God is looking for available men and women to serve Him today. When you hear Him call, *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”* be ready

with the answer, “*Here am I; send me*” (Isaiah 6:8).

Missionaries and missions projects are to be financed by the people of God. The church at Philippi set a good example in her support of Paul (Philippians 4:15-19). Be liberal when you have opportunity to help support missions.

Missionaries must be undergirded by the prayers of God's people (Romans 15:30-33). The apostle Paul appealed to the Roman believers to ask God for three things concerning him. Do you see them in verses 31, 32? (1) Pray for the protection of the missionary as the church prayed for Simon Peter when he had been imprisoned (Acts 12:1-18). (2) Pray for the ministry of the missionary that he may be a blessing to those whom he would serve in the name of Jesus. (3) Pray for the spirit of the missionary, that he may be “*refreshed*” in the Lord. Every missionary says his greatest need is the prayer support of the people of God. You may not have money to give, but you can pray. You and your church can have a part in missions.

## **II. CHRISTIAN LOVE REACHES OUT IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (Romans 16:1-27)**

**A. Love receives the servants of God** (Romans 16:1-3). Phebe was probably a convert to Christ out of heathenism. (Her name is one of the names of a pagan goddess, indicating her background.) But she was a faithful worker for Christ in the church at Cenchrea, the seaport nine miles from Corinth. Paul urged the church in Corinth to receive Phebe and meet her needs. John condemned Diotrephes because he refused to receive Christians who came to him (III John). Hospitality is a mark of the Christian, for love welcomes the servants of God.

**B. Love remembers the faithful workers.** Read the list of names in Romans 16:3-16, 21-23. Notice how many women are mentioned. Notice how unknown the persons are who are named. Notice their willingness to sacrifice and their courage in ministry. Notice Paul's affectionate greeting extended to each of them.

Let us remember that God uses both males and females. The great work of the kingdom of God is done by men and women whose names are never publicized for honor. Those unknown soldiers of God set an example in their courage for Christ and their willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. A cord of love binds closely those who are thus devoted to the Lord Jesus.

**C. Love preserves the fellowship of believers** (Romans 16:17-19). Christian love reaches out to all, but it approves only that which is good.

Love must be tempered with discernment. It not only welcomes the repenting sinner, but it also rejects the impenitent one. Those who are not faithful to Christ are rejected in love because any other course would confirm them in their sin.

How beautiful it is when Christians “*all speak the same thing*” without divisions among them, being “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Corinthians 1:10).

“*Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow*” (Ecclesiastes 4:9,10). Do that to a believer who stumbles and preserve the unity which Christ has established.

**D. Love awaits the victory** (Romans 16:20-27). Victory is certain. “*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*” (Romans 16:20). He promised it (Genesis 3:15), and He will certainly do it. When Jesus returns, He will consume the wicked one and utterly destroy him (II Thessalonians 2:8). Believe it and rejoice while you wait for it.

Victory will include the establishing of God's people. He is “*of power to stablish you*” (Romans 16:25). We are “*rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith*” already (Colossians 2:7). The overthrow of the devil will not change our security in Christ. Judgment on evil vindicates God's people and has no danger for them.

The gospel will be “*made known to all nations,*” praise the Lord (Romans 16:26). The end will not come until the gospel is preached around the world (Matthew 24:14).

Then will come the answer to the prayer, “*To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen*” (Romans 16:27). It will happen. Hallelujah!

## Questions

1. How did God best show His love to us?
2. How is missions related to our love to God?
3. What do you understand by the term Christian missions?
4. What is your church doing in world missions?
5. What are you contributing personally to world missions?
6. What challenge do you find in Psalm 96:3?
7. How can we love Christians whom we have not met?
8. How does love promote intercessory prayer?
9. How does love preserve Christian fellowship?
10. What can you do this week to express Christian love?

