

A Love Story: God's Story

Acts 10:34-43(NKJV) ³⁴Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. ³⁶The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— ³⁷that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. ³⁹And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom [£]they killed by hanging on a tree. ⁴⁰Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, ⁴¹not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. ⁴²And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Series Introduction

Love stories involve people. A man falls in love with a woman, the woman falls in love with the man and then they are in love. We have all heard stories of how a man's love caused him to put his life on the line and conquer insurmountable obstacles to be with the woman he loved. Or we have heard the stories of the sacrifices of parents who loved their children in ways others can't explain. These stories inspire us and make us want to love and be loved like that.

The greatest love story ever told is the story of God's love for us. It's the story of a God who loved a people who were not worthy of his love. And still, he loved us so, that he sacrificed his life to save us. The beauty of the story is that it is still being written today. Each of us has a story to add to the praise and glory of our God.

For the month of February we are exploring God's love story. His love story has four chapters; Your Story, Their Story, His Story, and Our Story. It is my hope that God's love story will inspire each of us to be used by God to share the story with others. In the first week we began with Your Story. Last week we talked about Their Story. Today we will continue with God's Story.

Telling God's story is a monumental task. If you stop and think about it, the entire bible is God's story. For the purpose of this series though, I want to share God's story in a

way that reveals his love for us. So I want to discuss how God made the world in love, how we broke his heart, and how his love still made a way.

God made the world in love.

When was the last time you did something for yourself? When did you take a trip for yourself, or shop for yourself, or go to the spa just for yourself? How many of you have ever gone out of your way to make something for yourselves? Maybe it was a painting, or a poem, a piece of furniture or a meal. Maybe we treated ourselves to a movie or our favorite TV show.

When we do something nice for ourselves or purchase something nice for ourselves, we kind of know just what we want. We know just where we want to be on the lake when we fish or just what we want to eat when we prepare that great meal. We know just how we want to look or just how we want to feel.

The feelings we get from those experiences can be so good that they give us inspiration to continue through the mundane moments in our lives. We know how to make ourselves happy. We know how to do good things for ourselves.

When we want to show ourselves some love, there is no better expert on the subject than us.

For me personally, if I want to show myself some love and do something nice for myself that I will enjoy, number one on my list is spending time with Dr. Manuel. If I really want to love myself, I spend time with her. In my mind every free moment is an opportunity for a mini-date. If I can get 1 hour to sit with her in a restaurant or go for a walk, or anything, I'm just as happy as can be. Sitting across the table from her is my idea of having a good time. It's because I love her. Second on my list is to go play golf but playing golf can move to number 1 if Dr. Manuel is driving the golf cart.

So think about the last time you did something nice for yourselves. Think about how it made you feel to show yourself some love.

What about God? If God were to do something amazing for himself to bring himself joy and feelings of love, what would it be? Turn to ...

Colossians 1:15-20(NKJV) ¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all

things consist. ¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. ¹⁹For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

When God set out to make something for himself, when he wanted to show himself some love, he made the world and everything in it. Paul says everything was made through him and for him.

You see there was no law that said God had to make the world. Nobody forced him to make it. God didn't have to create us. This world we live in and the people, plants, and animals in it were created for God's good pleasure.

So at creation when we hear God say "let there be light", he makes it just the way he wants it and says "it is good". He makes the plants, and animals just the way he wants it and says "it is good". When he is done making the world for himself on the sixth day, he looks at all of creation and God says "it is very good". Every tree, every bird, every animal, every mountain, every river, and every person were all created by God for God.

We are God's prize. We are his joy. We are the apple of God's eye. We are the objects of his love and affection. The world we live in was created out of the love of God. But this love story has some challenges.

You see, we broke God's heart.

We broke God's heart.

Romans 5:18-19(NKJV) ¹⁸Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Romans 8:19-22(NKJV) ¹⁹For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; ²¹because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, something happened to the world God created.

The man and woman that were created in God's image now had a tainted image brought on by a sin nature. Spiritually, we didn't look like God any more. We didn't have his nature. We didn't know his ways. We didn't have the ability to keep his commandments. We became self serving. We became corrupted.

God created a world for himself that was very good. But sin caused man to be very bad.

When mankind sinned evil was released into the world. Hatred and murder were released. Decay and corruption were unleashed. Covetousness and stealing were released. Lying and gossiping were unleashed. Fornication and adultery, immorality and homosexuality, anger and wrath, death and decay were all released into the world.

There were consequences to our actions. The natural order was disrupted. Death reigned. We lost our dominion. The enemy became the prince of the power of the air. Over time, our world became more and more sinful.

There have been many people who have said if God made the world, why did he make it so bad? The truth is, what God made was good. What we did was bad. Everything changed when we fell from grace. God's perfect world became flawed.

Can you imagine the disappointment? God made a beautiful, holy, wonderful world for himself but now it's filled with the sins that he hates. God made a world that he said is very good but now it's filled with people who are doing things he calls abomination. God has made a world for himself but it will never fully recover from the damage done to his creation.

One day, all of this world will be destroyed by fire. But God's love for the world he created was still strong enough to make a way.

God's love made a way.

Some may ask, why doesn't God fix it? We may begin to question whether or not he even cares about what's happening in the world. We wrestle with the thought "if God is so loving, why doesn't he do something about the pain we see in the world."

2 Peter 3:9(NKJV)

The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God is longsuffering toward us. Longsuffering is an act of love. Because God loves us, he doesn't desire that any of us should perish or suffer. Every day we live, we are given another chance to choose God. Every day we are alive God gives us a chance to repent of our sins and be made whole. New mercies are given to us every person day by day because God is willing to give us a chance to come to repentance. Every sinful person is living on borrowed time. Every non-believer is spared each day because of God's love. He loves them enough to not visit them and condemn them.

Why hasn't God dealt with those murderers? It's because his love is filled with grace, mercy, and longsuffering. They are already condemned but God wants to give them a chance to come to him and repent.

Why hasn't God dealt with those womanizers? He is giving them a chance to change. Why hasn't God dealt with those thieves and robbers? He wants them to choose him.

God wants to give everyone a chance because God's love has made a way. Peter went all the way to Cornelius' house to tell God's story.

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Peter shares with Cornelius the greatest love story of all time.

Romans 5:8(NKJV)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

It's the story of how God's love for the world is so strong that he gave his only begotten son. Whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Peter shares the story of a love that would lay down its life for a friend.

Jesus was betrayed by a friend but he still loved us. Jesus was rejected by the people he came to save but that didn't stop his love. Jesus was wrongfully accused and mistreated. Jesus was abandoned by his disciples. Jesus was beaten and whipped. Jesus was mocked and scorned.

It was God's love that gave him strength. It was God's love that allowed them to nail his hands and feet. It was love that let them pierce his side. It was love that allowed Jesus to die like a common criminal to take our sins away.

Love rolled the stone away. Love encouraged the witnesses. Love sent us power by the Holy Spirit. Love sent Peter to Cornelius' house. God's love made a way for us to turn away from sin and find our way back to God.

Conclusion:

Everybody take a breath. Breathe in and out.

When God made us, he breathed into us the breath of life. Because of sin, death came into the world. Without God's love, everyone in the world is one breath away from hell.

Breathe in and out.

More than anything, he would desire for us to choose to receive his love. With one choice we fell away from God. But God's love is so strong he has provided a way for us to choose to return to him.

Breathe in and out.

One day, God is going to take your breath away. The only way to ensure you will have eternal life is to hear God's story and accept his love.

God bless you.