

# The LORD's Love Declaration

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of the prophet Zechariah, Zechariah chapter 8.

We're going to look at the whole chapter, but if we just read again from the beginning. And the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath.

Thus says the Lord, I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain.

You know, we're familiar with many of the love songs that have been written and sung over the years. In fact, most of the love songs that we hear on the TV or the radio, they're songs that declare, you could say, undying love.

And although I'd probably say that most of the modern love songs, they aren't a patch on some of the more classic love songs, like Unchained Melody by the Righteous Brothers, or Brown Eyed Girl by Van Morrison, or even I Will Always Love You by Whitney Houston, or even the well-known words of Eva Cassidy, where she said, Oh, my love is like a red, red rose that's newly sprung in June.

[ 1 : 26 ] Oh, my love is like a melody that's sweetly played in tune. All these love songs, they are all declarations of love. But as you know, it's one thing to say that you love someone, but it's another thing entirely to show someone that you love them.

Because love, it isn't a fuzzy feeling or an emotional experience. Love isn't just a declaration with words. Love is a demonstration with works.

Love isn't just a declaration with words. Love is a demonstration with works. And we see that clearly presented to us in the Bible, because God has declared his love for us.

John 3.16, God has declared his love for us.

But more than that, God has demonstrated his love for us. Paul says that God demonstrates his love towards us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

[ 2 : 51 ] And so, my friend, the declaration and demonstration of God's love for us was at the cross of Jesus Christ. And John, John, who is the apostle of love, you know, he repeatedly points out to us God's declaration and demonstration of love for us.

He says in his first letter, 1 John chapter 3, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God.

And he goes on to say, Herein is love. This is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us. And he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

And John records in John 15 the words of Jesus, Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

You know, my friend, the gospel, it calls us to respond to the declaration and demonstration of God's love. And we're to respond, not just out of a sense of duty, but also because of our declaration of love.

[ 4 : 05 ] You know, it's not only the Lord who declares and demonstrates his love towards us. We are also to declare and demonstrate our love towards the Lord.

We are to love him because he first loved us. And as you know, and as we mentioned earlier, Psalm 116 is the Christian's love song.

It begins with that great confession, I love the Lord because my voice and prayers heeded here. I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear.

You know, Psalm 116 is the Christian's love song. It's our declaration of love for the Lord. And you know, it's good and helpful to declare our love for the Lord.

But we must also demonstrate our love for the Lord. Because as we said, love isn't just a fuzzy feeling or an emotional experience. Love isn't just a declaration with words.

[ 5 : 08 ] Love is a demonstration with works. Therefore, we must practice what we profess. We must practice what we preach and proclaim.

Because if we declare that we love the Lord, then we must demonstrate that we love the Lord. If we declare that we love the Lord, we must demonstrate that we love the Lord by our Christian character, conduct, and conversation.

You know, that's why Isaac Watts, when he said that he surveyed the wondrous cross upon which the Prince of Glory died, he said, that's love so amazing.

So divine that it demands my soul, my life, my all. So we must not only declare our love for the Lord, we must demonstrate our love for the Lord.

Because the Lord has declared and demonstrated his love for us through the cross of Jesus Christ. But this evening, you know, hidden away in the Old Testament, in this book of Zechariah chapter 8, what we have here is the Lord's love declaration.

[ 6 : 24 ] This is the Lord's love declaration. And I'd like us to consider the Lord's love declaration under three headings.

Because we see the place of love, the people of love, and the promise of love. The place of love. The place of love, the people of love, and the promise of love.

So first of all, the place of love. The place of love. If you look with me at verse 1. The word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath.

Thus says the Lord, I have returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain. You know, as we've discovered in our study so far, Zechariah, he was called, commissioned, and commanded to comfort and challenge God's people with God's word as they began living and looking beyond lockdown.

[ 7 : 38 ] You remember that the Israelites, they had spent 70 years in lockdown in Babylon due to their rebellion and rejection of the Lord. But now, by God's grace, this remnant has returned to the promised land of Israel.

And they've returned to rebuild, and restore, and renew, and rededicate their lives to the Lord. And as we saw when we looked at chapters 1 to 6, the Lord spoke to this returned remnant through his prophet Zechariah.

And he did so using eight night visions. And these eight night visions, they were to remind and reassure this returned remnant that even though they were still unsettled and uncertain and unsure about the future, the Lord was still with them.

But then as we considered chapter 7, last Lord's Day, we saw that the returned remnant, they asked a question about fasting. But what was remarkable was that the Lord turned that whole question about fasting on its head, and it became a lesson about covenant commitment.

Where the Lord turned it all on its head, and he asked the returned remnant, are you committed to me? Are you committed to your Lord? But you know, the reason the Lord asked the returned remnant about their covenant commitment was because in this chapter, chapter 8, the Lord declares his covenant commitment towards the returned remnant.

[ 9 : 13 ] In fact, the Lord emphasizes his covenant commitment by repeating his covenant title throughout the chapter. I don't know if you noticed as we read the passage, that the Lord's self-description and self-declaration is that he is the Lord of hosts.

He is the Lord of hosts. Literally, he is the Lord Almighty. He is the Lord of the armies. He is the commander and chief of all the heavenly hosts.

He is the Lord of hosts. And that self-declaration and self-description, if you counted how many times it's mentioned, it's repeated 18 times in this chapter.

And then if you were to count again, there's 10 times that Zechariah prophesies with that prophetic formula, thus says the Lord of hosts, thus says the Lord of hosts, thus says the Lord of hosts.

10 times he says that. But you know, what ought to stick with us and stand out for us is that the title Lord in capital letters, it's used in this chapter no less than 22 times, which should clearly

emphasize to us that this chapter, it's all about the Lord's covenant commitment.

[ 10 : 41 ] Because as you know, the Lord, the title Lord, it means the one who keeps covenant. The title Lord, when you see Lord in capital letters, it's referring to the one who keeps covenant.

And it's a title that refers to the covenant king, the second person of the Trinity, the son of God, the pre-incarnate Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because he is the Lord, he is the one who keeps covenant, he is the covenant king, and he's committed to his covenant and his covenant people.

And he's committed because as the Lord, he's the covenant king. He's a covenant making and a covenant keeping God. He makes promises and he keeps his promises.

And you know, that's why he's trustworthy, my friend. That's why you can trust all his promises.

Because he's committed to his covenant. He makes promises and he keeps his promises.

[ 11 : 48 ] And as we'll see in a moment, the Lord loves his people. The Lord loves his people. But he also loves a place. He also loves a place.

The Lord loves the promised land of Israel. That's the emphasis of the Old Testament. Because that's the land that the Lord promised to Abraham and all his descendants after him.

That's why it's called the promised land. It was promised to Abraham and to all his descendants.

But within the promised land, there was a particular place that the Lord loved.

And that was Jerusalem. In fact, we're told in verse 2 that the Lord was jealous for Jerusalem. The Lord says, I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy.

Zion, of course, was the mountain or is the mountain. It's still standing. Zion was the mountain upon which the city of Jerusalem was built. And when King David captured Jerusalem, he made Jerusalem the capital city of Israel.

[ 12 : 56 ] And it's where his palace was. It's where he resided as king in Israel. But more than that, Jerusalem was where the tabernacle and the temple was built.

Jerusalem was where the ark of the covenant rested. Jerusalem was where the Lord dwelt among his people. And because of that, the city of Jerusalem was the focal point of the nation.

Everyone looked to Jerusalem. And you know, we see that in many of the Psalms. We see it in Psalm 122, Psalm 125. We see it in Psalm 48, which says that Mount Zion is the holy mountain.

It's elevated in beauty. And it's the joy of all the earth. And because Mount Zion is this elevated mountain, Jerusalem is known as the city of the great king.

It's the city of the covenant king, the Lord of hosts. And you know, we mustn't forget that when we're looking at Zechariah chapter 8 here, this chapter was given to remind and reassure this returned remnant who are now in the process of rebuilding and restoring the temple and the city of Jerusalem after it had been ruined.

[ 14 : 12 ] And this chapter was to remind and reassure them that the Lord was still with them. And the Lord of hosts was still upon their side. He hadn't changed. His promises hadn't changed.

The passing of time had certainly gone, but he hadn't changed. And you know, that's why the Lord said he was jealous for Jerusalem with great jealousy.

He hadn't changed. You know, we often think of jealousy as selfish and sinful with covetousness at its root. And it is because it seeks to bring glory and blessing to self.

But when it comes to the Lord, the Lord's jealousy is a holy jealousy. It's a holy jealousy. Which means that it's not selfish and it's not sinful.

It's a holy jealousy because the Lord is first of all holy, but he has created us primarily to glorify him and to enjoy him forever.

[ 15 : 22 ] Therefore, the Lord is not willing to share his glory with anyone or anything. He is jealous for his glory.

And Jerusalem was the place where his glory dwelt. And Jerusalem was the focus of God's glory. He and God was jealous for Jerusalem because he was not willing to share his glory with anyone or anything else.

And you know, that still stands today. The Lord is not willing to share his glory with anyone or anything else. And that's why we are to live our lives soli deo gloria.

We are to live our lives soli deo gloria to the glory of God alone. To the glory of God alone. And that's what the Lord is reminding his people here.

They're to be committed to the Lord because the Lord is committed to them. The Lord was jealous for Jerusalem because it was the place to which the return remnant was restored and renewed.

[ 16 : 33 ] The Lord was jealous for Jerusalem because it was a restored place. It was a renewed place. But it was also a place of redemption. Future redemption.

Look at verse 3. It says, Thus says the Lord, I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain.

You know Jesus could have been crucified anywhere in the nation of Israel but for the Lord it had to be Jerusalem. It had to be on the holy mountain of Mount Zion.

It had to be outside the city of the great king. It had to be near the place where the Lord dwelt amongst his people because the Lord loved this place and the Lord was committed to this place.

In fact, and this is the wonder and glory of the gospel, the Lord was so committed as the covenant king. He was so committed to Jerusalem and his glory and the glory that was not to be shared with anyone else.

[ 17 : 45 ] He was so committed as the covenant king that he became flesh in order to dwell among us as the covenant king and die for us as the covenant king.

And it happened, the wonderful thing is my friend, it happened at the place of love. It happened at the place of love. The gospels remind us that it was on Mount Zion outside the city walls of Jerusalem on a little hill called Calvary.

It was in Aramaic called Golgotha, the place of the skull. And we're told that it was there that they mocked and ridiculed him. It was there that they crowned him with a crown of thorns.

It was there that they nailed him hand and foot to a tree. It was there they crucified him. It was there they crucified him. My friend, that was the place where the Lord's love was declared and demonstrated to lost sinners such as we are.

It was at Calvary. It was at Calvary. But you know, you read this passage and it's through the cross of Calvary that the Lord says in verse 4. Through the cross of Calvary, thus says the Lord of hosts, old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age.

[ 19 : 11 ] And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets. Thus says the Lord of hosts, if it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in my sight, declares the Lord of hosts.

Through the cross of Calvary, the Lord promises that both old and young will come together. They will mix together. They will congregate together.

And not just this return remnant, but the redeemed people of the Lord. My friend, the Lord is describing, he's describing the church of Jesus Christ.

And how beautiful she really is because there's nowhere else in society where old and young come together and mix together and congregate together.

There's nowhere else except the church. and as the Lord says, it's a marvelous thing. It's a wonderful thing. It's a beautiful thing. It's the doing of the Lord and it's marvelous in our eyes.

[ 20 : 21 ] And my friend, it's something that we should cultivate and cherish as a congregation because the thing is, if Jesus is for everyone, then our congregation is for everyone.

if the offer of the gospel is for whosoever, where everyone is included and no one is excluded, if the offer of the gospel is for everyone, then our congregation should be willing and welcoming to everyone.

Whether young or old, male or female, rich or poor, member or adherent, in Christ or out of Christ, saved or lost, our congregation should be willing and welcoming for everyone to hear the declaration and the demonstration of the Lord's love towards lost sinners.

Because that, my friend, is a marvelous thing. It's a wonderful thing. It's a beautiful thing. And so as we consider the Lord's love declaration in Zechariah chapter 8, we see the place of love.

Then secondly, we see the people of love. So the place of love and the people of love. The people of love.

[ 21 : 40 ] Now look at verse 7. Thus says the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God in faithfulness and in righteousness.

You know, at the end of this month, Alison and I will be 10 years married. Now, I know what you're thinking, so I'll just say it for you. Alison must be a very patient and a very gracious woman to have put up with you, Murdo, for so long.

And I won't deny that that's true. It's very, very true. But you know, the greater truth is that the Lord has kept us. The Lord has kept us because, as you know, in the world that we live in today, Christian marriage and biblical marriage, it's under attack.

But the reality is, a society or a government, they can't redefine what the Lord has instituted. Because it's the Lord who defines marriage.

Because it's the Lord who declared and demonstrated that his covenant of grace is a marriage. marriage. That's why at a wedding, when a couple are getting married, it's described as a covenant.

[ 23 : 03 ] Because a covenant is a promise. It's a legally binding contract between two parties in which both parties, they make vows, they make promises that they will uphold and keep their side of the covenant until God shall separate them by death.

A marriage is a special occasion. But it's also a solemn occasion because it's a covenant. It's a covenant before the Lord.

You know, that's why at a wedding, both the couple and the congregation, they're to stand when they make their vows. Because they're standing and they're speaking in the presence of the Lord, the covenant king.

Therefore, marriage, it's all based upon what the Lord has defined, declared, and demonstrated in his covenant of grace towards his people. Marriage is all based upon what the Lord has defined, declared, and demonstrated in his covenant of grace towards his people.

Because in the Bible, we're reminded that the Lord has covenanted to be committed in loving and looking after his people. He has covenanted to be committed in loving and looking after his people.

[ 24 : 24 ] And the thing is, the Lord loves his people. And he loves his people not because there's anything special or anything that stands out about his people. No, the Lord graciously loves us because he chose to love us.

He covenanted to love us. He is committed to loving us. And the one there is, my friend, there is nothing we can do to make him love us any more than he already does.

And there's nothing we can do to make him love us any less. No amount of good works, self-righteousness, tithing, or church attending will make the Lord love us any more than he already does.

But the thing is, we know that this marriage with the Lord, between Christ and his bride, the church, we know that this marriage is a failed marriage right from the start.

Because when it comes to upholding our side of the contract, when it comes to our covenant commitment to the Lord, we faint and fail.

[ 25 : 33 ] But you know, the wonderful thing is the Lord doesn't faint and fail. Is that not what Asaph confessed in Psalm 73? When Asaph went to church, he said, My flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never.

For of my heart God is the strength and portion forever. My friend, we faint and fail in our covenant commitment to the Lord. But the wonderful thing is, it's a covenant of grace.

This covenant is a covenant of grace, where despite how many faintings and failings, the Lord promises to remain committed to his covenant and his covenant people.

And you know, that's why in 1 Corinthians 13, that wonderful chapter, all about love, and it's there that Paul describes the love that Christ has for his bride, the church.

And he not only emphasizes the prominence of Christ's covenant love, he also emphasizes the permanence of Christ's covenant love.

[ 26 : 40 ] He says, love is patient and kind. Love does not envy and boast. Love is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way.

Love is not irritable or resentful. Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in truth. And then he says, love bears all things. Love believes all things.

Love hopes all things. Love endures all things. And then he says, love never ends. Love never ends. And I find that's the characteristic of the Lord's covenant commitment towards his people.

It never ends. It never ends. He is 100% committed. And that's what the Lord emphasizes here.

He emphasizes his covenant love and his covenant commitment towards his covenant people. He

says in verse 7, thus says the Lord of hosts, behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country.

[ 27 : 50 ] And I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people. And I will be their God in faithfulness and in righteousness.

righteousness. You know, I love what the late John L. Mackay says in his commentary at this point. He says there's nothing lukewarm or half-hearted about the Lord's attitude towards his people. There's nothing lukewarm or half-hearted about the Lord's attitude towards his people. But, he says, that should be true of the other side of the relationship as well.

That should be true of the other side of the relationship as well. And my friend, there's no doubt that we faint and fail in our covenant commitment to the Lord. But that shouldn't be an excuse.

That shouldn't be an excuse for being lukewarm or half-hearted in our covenant commitment to the Lord. As you know, the word lukewarm, it's only mentioned once in the entire Bible.

[ 29 : 03 ] But sadly, the word lukewarm was a direct description of the church of Jesus Christ. In Revelation chapter 3, the church in Laodicea is described as being neither cold nor hot.

And for the Lord, lukewarm was pukewarm because he wanted to spit the church out of his mouth for their lack of commitment.

It's a solemn reminder about our need to be committed. And you know, that's what the Lord is reminding and re-emphasizing to us here. He repeatedly uses the phrase throughout these verses, he uses the phrase, let your hands be strong.

let your hands be strong. Let your hands be strong. In other words, he says, don't be lukewarm in your love for the Lord.

Don't be half-hearted in your covenant commitment. Don't put anyone or anything before the Lord. Make him your priority.

[ 30 : 13 ] Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and then all the other things will be added unto you. Don't be lukewarm or half-hearted in your commitment to the Lord.

For the Lord says in verse 16, he says, these are the things that you shall do. Speak the truth to one another. Render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace.

Do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. And love no false oath. For all these things I hate declares the Lord.

The Lord emphasizes that we are to love truth and love peace. My friend, the Lord, he has declared and demonstrated his love towards us in the person of Jesus Christ.

As we said, love isn't just a declaration with words. It's a demonstration with works. And the gospel calls us to respond to the declaration and demonstration of God's love in Jesus Christ.

[ 31 : 22 ] We are to love him because he first loved us. Therefore, my Christian friend, if you declare that you love the Lord, then you must demonstrate that you love the Lord by your covenant commitment.

If you say that you love the Lord, then you must demonstrate that you love the Lord by your covenant commitment. If you declare that you love the Lord, then you must demonstrate that you love the Lord by your Christian character, conduct, and conversation.

Because, my friend, this love, it is so amazing, and it is so divine, that it demands your soul, your life, your all.

love, and so as we consider the Lord's love declaration, we see the place of love, and the people of love, and then lastly and briefly, we see the promise of love.

The place of love, the people of love, and the promise of love. The promise of love. Now look at verse 20. Thus says the Lord of hosts, peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities.

[ 32 : 42 ] The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, let us go at once to entreat the favour of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts. I myself am going.

Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favour of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, in those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

You know, in these closing verses, we have the promised fulfilment of the Lord's covenant with Abraham. Abraham, he was not only given the promise of land, he was also given the promise of blessing to all the lands, to all the nations, to all the families of the earth.

And through his prophet Zechariah, we're told that the Lord will remain committed to his covenant promise. The Lord will remain committed to his covenant promise, so much so that the love of God in Jesus Christ, it will not only be declared and demonstrated in Jerusalem, but it will also be displayed to all the nations.

And you know, the Lord asserts and he assures his people that the declaration and demonstration of his love, it will begin in Jerusalem. it will begin in the place of love.

[ 34 : 13 ] It will begin in the place of love, but through the people of love, by their commitment to the covenant and the great commission, the promise of love, it will spread out from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And you know, we see a glimpse of that on the day of Pentecost. When Peter stood up to preach the gospel. In Acts chapter 2, we read that this congregation, this multitude from all these different nations, they were gathered before him, and we're told that there were people from, there were Parthians and Medes and Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia.

There were people from all these nations, and they all heard about the Lord's declaration and demonstration of love. My friend, it began in Jerusalem, as Jesus promised.

It began in the place of love, but through the people of love, the church, us, through the people of love, by their commitment to the covenant and the great commission, this promise of love was to spread from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And my friend, from its beginning as a tiny mustard seed, the Lord's promise of love is that the church will expand and the congregation will grow and blessing will flow to all the nations of the earth, where both Jew and Gentile will come and seek the Lord of hosts.

[ 36 : 07 ] They'll come and seek the covenant king, the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, I was thinking that as Euro 2020 begins, it begins a year later than planned, but you know, when you look at all the nations represented, the gospel has gone to all these nations.

Turkey, Germany, France, Wales, England, Finland, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Scotland. When you look at all the nations represented, the gospel has gone to all these nations and more because that was the promise of love.

That from the place of love, Jerusalem, through the people of love, the church, the promise of love will be declared and demonstrated and displayed to lost and hell deserving sinners.

My friend, from the place of love, through the people of love, the promise of love will be declared, demonstrated and displayed to lost and hell deserving sinners.

But you know, even though these nations have been reached by the gospel, there are still many, many people in these countries and in their communities that haven't embraced this promise of love.

[ 37 : 32 ] There are still many people in our country and our communities and our congregation who still haven't embraced this promise of love.

My unconverted friend, the promise of love to you when you submit and surrender your life under the banner of God's love, the promise of love for you is that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come neither height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That's the promise of love and that's the Lord's declaration to you this evening. He is declaring to you His love.

He has demonstrated to you His love. He is displaying His love to you. That's the Lord's declaration of love towards you this evening. And as Isaac Watts said, this is a love so amazing, so divine that it demands your soul, your life and your all.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Heavenly Father, we give thanks to Thee for Thy love, for Thy love that has been shown to us, demonstrated to us, declared before us in the person of Jesus Christ.

[ 39 : 18 ] And Lord, that we would look to the cross, that we would survey the wondrous cross upon which the Prince of Glory died, and that we would see that greater love hath no man than this, that a man laid down his life for his friends.

You are my friends, he says, if you do whatsoever I command you. And that this love that is so amazing and so divine, it demands everything from us.

It demands our covenant commitment. It demands our wholehearted commitment. It demands our soul. It demands our life. It demands our all.

Help us, we pray as thy people, to give our all for Jesus because he has given his all for us. All that we would not be found wanting, but that we would be found in Christ, resting in him, waiting upon him, giving everything to him, seeking first his kingdom and his glory, that he would have the

