

40
DAYS
— *of* —
LOVE

PAUL DAVID TRIPP

40

D A Y S

— *of* —

L O V E

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40 Days of Hope

40 Days of Love

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40 Days of Love

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INTRODUCTION

IT IS ONE OF THE MOST WONDERFUL, encouraging, comforting, and motivating passages about God's grace for us while we live in this groaning world and wait for redemption. It builds to this glorious crescendo:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all

creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:31–39)

Why is love the crescendo of this remarkable Romans 8 passage? Why is the zenith of all Paul wants us to know about God's grace a promise of the love of God? Paul understands something very fundamental that reaches to the height and depth of the life of every human being. The highest human joys are connected to love. The greatest human fears are about love. The most painful of human moments have to do with love. The unceasing longing of every human being has to do with love. Everyone cares about love. Everyone thinks about love. Everyone talks about love. Everyone worries about the vulnerability of love. No one has ever had to teach a child to want to be loved or cry when he or she feels unloved. There is no emotion, no experience, and no quest more authentically human than love.

There are two questions that every human being everywhere has asked, regardless of race, ethnicity, geography, history, age, or economic or social status:

Will someone love me?

Once they get to know me, will they still love me?

In this fallen world, the topography of love is rough and rocky. None of us walk a smooth, straight, and sunny pathway of love. Familial love fails all of us in some way. Marital love, with all of its romantic hopes and dreams, never quite fulfills

our expectations. Friendship love never fully delivers what we wish. Online media love is a digital fabrication. When it comes to love, we spend much of our lives disappointed. Again and again, we are disappointed with love, and we repeatedly disappoint people who look to us for love. The point is that, in this fallen world, the kind of love that we long for is fleeting, elusive, and often disappointing.

This is what is so powerfully glorious about what Paul writes at the end of Romans 8. It speaks to the deepest hunger in the heart of every human being with a promise so amazing that it seems almost too good to be true—there is a love that will never forsake us. There is a love that will never fail in any of its commitments to us. There is a love that is sacrificial and generous all the time. There is a love that is so strong that nothing in all of creation can break it. There is a love that is faithful and true, no matter what. There is a love that is unbreakable, even when we are unloving and undeserving. There is a place where you can find an absolutely unbreakable bond of love, the kind of love you have dreamed of, and that your broken heart has cried out for.

You will never find this love in your spouse, children, parents, friends, or neighbors. There is only one place to find this peace-producing, joy-fulfilling, and heart-resting love—God. What every human heart longs for is the love of God. Only his sacrificial, forgiving, accepting, patient, kind, merciful, wise, and faithful love will ever satisfy the longing of our hearts. Only his love produces the rest, hope, and courage in us that then

ignites our desire and ability to love others. When we bask in his love, we want to be visible representatives of his love in the lives of others. In his love, we find our identity. His love gives us new meaning and new potential. His love frees us from our bondage to chasing after love where it will never be found. The experience of his true love protects us from being deceived by counterfeit forms of love. Only his love can rescue us, restore us, and rebuild us. In reconciling us to him, his love has the power to reconcile us to one another.

There simply is nothing like the love of God. It is the most powerful force in the universe. Love is what we need—God’s love, that is. You and I could never earn it, deserve it, or achieve it. It reaches into the sinful muck of humanity, cleans us up, draws us close, and launches us to brand-new living while staying faithful to the end, even if we are not. In loving us, God gives us the greatest gift ever given—the gift of himself.

It is good to stop once in a while and spend time meditating on the glorious beauty of God’s love. This devotional is designed to help you do just that. May it be used to make your heart glad, fill you with courage and hope, and ignite in you a desire to be an ambassador of God’s gorgeous love.

DAY 1

Unlike human love, which is often fickle and temporary, God's love never fails, no matter what.

I LOVE PSALM 136. I love all of the psalms, but Psalm 136 blows me away every time I read it. I love the repetition that makes this psalm stand out from all the others. I love the fact that Psalm 136 is a history psalm that, because of its refrain, gets turned into a love poem. I love that it affirms again and again what we desperately need to hear again and again—not once or twice, but twenty-six times! Now, I think that whenever God speaks, you and I should humbly shut up and listen, but I also think that we should pay careful attention to those places where God chooses to repeat himself, and even more so when he repeats himself so many times!

Why does God repeat, over and over through the pen of the psalmist, “for his steadfast love endures forever”? There are two answers to this question.

First, there is no reality more radical and foundational to a biblical worldview and a personal sense of identity than this. What is the biblical story? It's the story of a God of love invading the world in the person of his Son of love to establish his kingdom of love by a radical sacrifice of love, to forgive us in love and draw us into his family of love, and to send us out as ambassadors of the very same love. The entire hope of fallen humanity rests on this one thing—that there is a Savior who is eternally steadfast in redeeming, forgiving, reconciling,

transforming, and delivering love. Without this, the Bible is a book of interesting stories and helpful principles, but it is devoid of any power to fix what sin has broken.

The second reason God repeats this refrain is that we have no experience in our lives of this kind of love. You always begin to understand anything that is new to you from the vantage point of your own experience. All the human love we've experienced has been flawed in some way. But not God's; his love is perfect and perfectly steadfast forever. It is the single most stunning reality in the life of a believer. God has placed his love on us and he will never again remove it. There's a reason to continue, no matter how hard life seems and how weak you feel.

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Psalm 118

DAY 2

*You have one place of hope, security, and rest.
It is found in these words: "God is love."*

IT IS SOMETHING EVERY HUMAN being does. It separates us from the rest of creation. It causes us much anxiety and much joy. It shapes the decisions and investments that we make. It calms our fears or leaves us scared and feeling alone. It turns all of us into theologians and philosophers. Where we land in this pursuit shapes the way we look at life and interpret the things that happen to us. It proves that we don't live by instinct or by impersonal determinative forces. It exposes the fact that we are deeply spiritual beings. It is one of our most foundational quests. As different as we are one from another, in this way we are all the same. We all are looking for something in which to place our hope. We're all in search of security.

I don't know if you've thought about this, but there are only two places to look for hope. You can search for it horizontally, thinking that something in creation will give you the security, peace, and inner sense of well-being that you seek, or you can seek it vertically, entrusting your life into the loving hands of your Creator. People put their hope in creation all the time. They seek satisfaction of heart in the love of other human beings or in the success of their careers. They think their hearts will be satisfied by a certain set of achievements or by a certain catalog of possessions. But none of these things has the power to satisfy your heart. They are all meant to point you to the one

place where your heart will find secure rest. You and I need to face this reality—creation will never be our savior!

So where is hope to be found, hope that will never disappoint or shame you? It really is found in three of the most glorious words ever penned in human language. These words have the power to transform you and everything about you. These words can end your frantic search and give your weary heart rest. These words describe the one who alone is capable of carrying your hope: “God is love” (1 John 4:16). Because he is love and because he has placed his love on you, you have security and hope even in those scary moments when it feels as if you have neither. The one who is love sent his Son of love to be a sacrifice of love so you and I could be rescued by his love and rest in that love forever and ever.

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

1 John 1:1–4

DAY 3

We are often quick to anger and slow to love, but God is not like us. He's slow to anger and abounding in love.

YOU KNOW THE SCENE. You've rushed to the grocery store to get a few critical items your family needs. Your plan is to get in and out as quickly as is humanly possible. You sprint down the aisles and grab your stuff, then run to the checkout lines, only to discover that the self-serve lanes are closed for repair and only one clerk is working. Just as you reach her lane, a woman pulls in front of you with a cart of 150 items. You can feel your chest tighten. It's not enough that she slowly reexamines every item as she puts it on the belt, but after emptying her cart she pulls out 120 coupons that have to be cross-checked with the corresponding grocery items. You're beginning to get angry. Finally her quest to save every last penny is over, but then she discovers that she has to pay. It's as if it's a fresh concept to her. Until this point, she has made no move toward her purse, which is about the size of a camping tent for six. As she begins to pull makeup, cookies, and small children out of her purse, you bellow, "Come on, are you kidding me?" As everyone at the front of the store turns to look at you, you realize you said it louder than you planned.

Examine the moment with me. You are livid at this woman, but she didn't purposefully delay you. You are seething, but you have lost only ten minutes out of your day. You're incensed, but the whole thing is ridiculously minor. You're mad because

your anger is close to the surface. You're irritated because anger is more natural to you than patient love. You have not loved the woman in front of you well because you were so busy focusing on yourself that you had little energy left to respond lovingly toward her.

Isn't it comforting to know that God is the polar opposite of what I have just described? He who has the right to be angry with us and the power to do whatever his anger desires is in fact slow to anger. The Bible doesn't tell you that he abounds in anger, but it is quick to reassure you that he is abounding in love. Be thankful today that God is not like us, because if he were, you and I would be damned. Be thankful that he is incredibly patient and eternally kind. Be thankful that he is tender, gentle, and gracious. Be thankful that he does not treat you as your sins deserve. Be thankful that because of the work of Jesus, he will respond to you with lovingkindness even on your worst day. "The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression" (Num. 14:18).

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Psalm 104



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