

Jeremiah 31:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

This verse is one of Scripture's most profound declarations of God's covenant love. 'The LORD hath appeared of old unto me' references God's past revelations to Israel—at Sinai, in the tabernacle, through prophets—establishing continuity with covenant history. The divine declaration 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love' uses the Hebrew *ahavah* (אַהֲבָה), denoting covenant loyalty, choosing love, and steadfast commitment, not mere emotional sentiment. 'Everlasting love' (*ahavat olam*, אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם) emphasizes the eternal, unchanging nature of God's covenant affection—not based on Israel's merit or behavior but rooted in God's sovereign choice and character. 'Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee' employs *chesed* (חֶסֶד), the quintessential Hebrew term for covenant faithfulness, loyal love, and steadfast mercy. 'Drawn' uses *mashak* (מָשַׁךְ), meaning to pull, drag, or attract with irresistible force—depicting God's initiative in salvation, not human achievement. This divine drawing anticipates Jesus' teaching: 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him' (John 6:44). The verse establishes that salvation originates in God's eternal love, is accomplished through His covenant faithfulness, and secures believers eternally through His unchanging character.

Historical Context

This promise appears in Jeremiah's 'Book of Consolation' (chapters 30-33), written during Judah's darkest hour as Babylonian conquest approached (circa 588-586

BC). While Jerusalem faced siege, starvation, and impending destruction, God revealed His eternal love and future restoration plans. The historical context makes this declaration stunning: Israel had broken covenant repeatedly through idolatry, injustice, and rebellion. They deserved complete abandonment. Yet God declared His love 'everlasting'—not contingent on their faithfulness but grounded in His sovereign election. The exile would refine, not destroy; discipline, not divorce. The 'appearing of old' recalled God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 6:6-7), and Sinai covenant (Exodus 19-24). Despite Israel's subsequent unfaithfulness, God's love remained constant. This promise found partial fulfillment in the return from exile (538 BC onward) but awaits complete fulfillment in the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) through Christ. Paul later explained that God's love for His elect never fails (Romans 8:38-39) because it originates in eternal election, not temporal behavior.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God's love as 'everlasting' and initiated by His 'drawing' challenge any belief that salvation depends on human effort or merit?
2. What comfort does this verse offer to believers who struggle with doubts about God's continued love during trials or personal failures?

Interlinear Text

מִכָּח וְקִ	יְהוָה ה	נִרְאָה ה	לִי י	אֶהֱבֶה ת	עוֹלָם
of old	The LORD	hath appeared	H0	love	thee with an everlasting
H7350	H3068	H7200		H160	H5769
	אֶהֱבֶה יְיָ	עַל	כִּי י	מִשְׁכָּתִי יְיָ	
	unto me saying Yea I have loved	H5921	H3651	have I drawn	
	H157			H4900	
	דָּסָד:				
	therefore with lovingkindness				
	H2617				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 103:17 (Eternal Life): But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

Hosea 11:4 (Love): I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

Deuteronomy 33:3 (Love): Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.

1 John 4:19 (Love): We love him, because he first loved us.

2 Timothy 1:9 (Parallel theme): Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Romans 8:30 (Parallel theme): Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Isaiah 45:17 (Eternal Life): But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

Deuteronomy 10:15 (Love): Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

Malachi 1:2 (Love): I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

1 Peter 1:3 (References Lord): Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

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