

How To Know We Love Christ

Recognizing the Signs

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Last week, I said at the end of the sermon ["Loving Christ and Revelation 2"] that there is a good reason why the message to Ephesus tells them to return to their former devotion, and that reason has a great deal of bearing on us at this time in our history because we are facing a very similar problem.

The reason is stated in quite a number of places. It is scattered all through Paul's writings. But in one of Luke's writings, Acts 1:6-7, you will find the basis for their problems stated. This was not the real problem, but it was just bearing on them. The real problem was within them—it was the way they were evaluating the situations that they found themselves in. This is one of the factors that bore on why they were reacting the way they did and why Jesus had to encourage them to recapture their earlier devotion.

Acts 1:6-7 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."

There it is! The message that these men took to the world was one of great hope—the hope of a Savior; the hope of a Redeemer; the hope of One who is going to establish the Government of God on earth, a government of truth and justice. It will have the Christians bearing rule under Him, if they remain loyal and overcome.

However, it just had not happened the way that they expected it would occur. Time went on, and conditions got worse. And sometimes it was very difficult for them to maintain their loyalty as a Christian to Christ.

Hebrews 2:1-3 captures the essence of what this problem was in terms of the way that they reacted to it:

Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we [Christians] must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away...

You have heard of people who supposedly were in love, drifting apart. It is not that anybody seemingly intended that one or the other drift away, but it happened because maybe one or both were not paying attention to the relationship. Something else had grabbed the interest of one or the other (or both), and so they began to drift apart.

Hebrews 2:2-3 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*.

Here we have a penetrating insight into their attitude—the Ephesian church, or the Ephesus era of people—a penetrating insight into their attitude seen in an epistle that was written somewhere around the mid-60s AD. This was thirty-some years before the book of Revelation, and I think that we can assume from the book of Revelation that things did not get any better—that things were gradually getting worse. Rather than the people recapturing what had been their devotion before (because of the writing of the apostle Paul, which appears now in the book of Hebrews), they did not recapture it. Instead they continued to drift apart.

In Hebrews 10:32-35, we see a little bit more that is bearing on their response to the situation—why they were drifting away.

Hebrews 10:32-33 But recall the former days [meaning the early time in their relationship to Christ; the early days in their conversion] in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated...

You can see that they were going through persecutions, difficulties, because of the times they were living in, because of their desire to remain faithful and loyal to Christ.

Hebrews 10:34-35 ...for you had compassion on me in my chains [Paul was going through some of the same things] and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods [meaning that their property was taken away from them] knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence [or your boldness], which has great reward.

The deferred expectation of the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God—the combinations of high expectations of Christ's return and the ever diminishing hope that he would come in their lifetime, combined with the difficulties of Christianity, were getting to them.

Does that have any application on us today? Is it possible that we, too, feel that maybe the return of Jesus Christ is further off, and we are becoming to have somewhat the same attitude as these people did?

Lets take a look at another writing of Paul, this time in I Thessalonians. This is one of the earlier books of Paul. In fact there are some who feel that this was the first letter that the apostle Paul wrote, somewhere around 50 AD By the first letter, I mean the first letter that God inspired and preserved that the apostle Paul wrote.

I Thessalonians 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

You know what follows this verse; it is the information, the instruction, regarding the return of Jesus Christ at the seventh trump.

So, where is 50 AD? It is nineteen years after Christ's death and resurrection, and He has not returned yet, and it is a topic of hot conversation in the

fellowship of the people of the church of God. Some are already beginning to worry, already some are beginning to feel that it is taken too long. Their hope is being deferred.

So, Paul has to write them and instruct them regarding the return of Jesus Christ and to exhort them, and get their hope back on track once again.

I Thessalonians 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep...

These people were so far gone already in 50 ^{AD} that they were being neglectful—they were going to sleep. Do you remember the parable that Christ gave, all the way back there in Matthew 25, about the ten virgins? They all slumbered and slept, and the Thessalonians were now going to sleep spiritually.

I Thessalonians 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch [let us be alert] and be sober.

Meaning: Do not get all emotional about this thing, but keep your minds on track using the Word of God. In II Thessalonians, which followed the writing of I Thessalonians by several months, we find the subject gone into again.

II Thessalonians 2:1-2 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

You see, already some had lost heart to the point that they were saying, "Christ has already come. He is here on earth." So they could not look forward to that, could they?

II Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

You can see why he wrote what he did in the book of Hebrews. These people were drifting away.

II Thessalonians 3:6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

Brethren were being disorderly! Do you see how it was getting to them, what their reaction was? "Oh well, He is not going to come. It is not just around the corner."

How neglectful were they getting? They were getting very disobedient by their neglect of the faith that was delivered, and they were letting that salvation slip away from them.

II Thessalonians 3:8-9 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you not because we do not have authority [that is, the authority to take tithes] but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

There were people who quit working! They were just going to wait it out. What kind of a category would you put them in?

Do you see how strange and twisted the people's judgment was becoming? They were being neglectful of their relationship with Christ. Because the relationship was being neglected, they were losing contact with Christ. The Spirit of God was diminishing in them and the influence of the Spirit of God was just vaporizing away.

II Thessalonians 3:10-13 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord

Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.
But [here comes the problem stated about as succinctly as one can put it] as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

That was the problem in the first century church.

Impacting on that—the foundation of it—was the people's perception that the return of Jesus Christ was being delayed. They were weary with suffering, persecution and other hardships associated with being a Christian. And those hardships were social, because their friends, relatives and others who were not Christians ostracized them. Their persecution was economic in that it was difficult for them to get a job, just as it is today because of Sabbath responsibilities and Holy Day responsibilities. And so, the combination of these things got to them to the place where they were weary with doing well.

Can you see why I said to you that it is something that can bear on us as well? Why it has application to us?

Here we are, getting so close to the return of Jesus Christ, the world is so filled with all kinds of signs—they are in the street; they are wearing at you; they worry you. You see it on television, you hear it on the radio, everywhere you look, you see signs of the times and it is a stressful situation to be in, and still, Christ does not come. And we say, "How long, oh Lord, is it going to be?"

We can become neglectful. We can let it slip. We need to be exhorted—we need to be stirred.

So Christ gave them warning in Revelation 2:1-7. He gave them warning as to what their problem was. He gave them advice as to what they were to do, and then at the end of it, He gave them incentive to do it—to correct the situation that they had allowed themselves to deteriorate into.

Galatians expands on this being weary with well doing.

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Now think of the principles that are involved here, in regard to the letters to the churches and especially the one that we have been going through here. He says, "I know your works" and "he who overcomes." Their problem was that they allowed their love to deteriorate—the love that they formerly had. They had become weary. There were all kinds of forces impacting on them, and it was understandable that they would become weary.

But notice the exhortation. What Paul is writing here is, he is saying in effect, "Hang on." He is saying, hang on, because, "if you sow the right things, you will reap the right things." There is always a period of time, a delay between the sowing of seed and the reaping of the harvest. He is telling these people, "Do not give up! Keep sowing the right seeds!"

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

"Hope deferred," the proverb says, "makes the heart sick." Devotion to Christianity is not easy in this world because the pull to just slide by is constantly present, and these people were losing their attentiveness. Remember, one of the synonyms for devotion is attentiveness, and these people were losing their attentiveness in their devotion to Christ.

The reason was that they had lost sight of the real goal, and they neglected entirely what Christ was doing for them on a daily basis. Christ had not lost His attentiveness to them. But because they had allowed themselves to drift, they were not aware what Christ was doing for them out of His love for them. It was like He was being spurned (if you can think of this in a human sense), where one of the two parties involved in a love match is doing all the good things and the other person is passive in the relationship.

So, there was Christ, making the effort through His apostles—through the church and His ministry by means of the Spirit—He was trying to stir them up. But they were not paying a great deal of attention.

How quickly they forgot that without Him, we can do nothing (John 15)! We are talking about spiritual things. If they were going to have any spiritual growth and reward, it was because of their relationship with Christ. But, they were forgetting that their supply of the Spirit, as it were, was coming from Him. He is the main trunk—He is the vine, we are the branches and so the relationship, here, is all-important.

Daily He prepares us for the Kingdom. "I go and prepare a place for you," He said. He is working with us on a daily basis. He forgives us, He leads us, He is patient with us, and He is providing for us; and instead, what they did, they were looking longingly at the world for gratification and relief.

If one feels that their affections are abused, then it impairs that person's power to grow, because we tend to follow the lead of our emotions. We are very emotional beings. I am sure that these people felt that because He had not returned according to their expectations, and because Christ and the Father had allowed them to go through these persecutions—both economic and social—they were feeling neglected, they were feeling as though their affections for Christ were being abused. And so, they were allowing themselves to follow the lead of their emotions, and what one likes to do one gradually becomes. We follow the lead and then we set our will to do what we like to do.

In Exodus, we have an example of what happens when a leader goes off, as it were, and does not return within the expected time of the people. We have a very clear-cut example of what was happening to the Ephesians.

Exodus 32:1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Moses went up to Mount Sinai; Christ went up to Mount Zion in Heaven. "What has become of him? We do not know what has happened to him! He is up there. He is supposed to return, but he has not returned according to our expectations."

And so what do the people decided to do? They look to the world, in this case, to Egypt. In the Ephesians' case, it was the world around Ephesus, the world there in Asia Minor. They looked to the culture to gratify them and they began to drift in that direction.

Exodus 32:6 Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Moses' return was delayed longer than the people thought that he should be gone, so their affections pulled their attention elsewhere—that is what happened to the Ephesians, only it took a lot longer because of the Spirit of God that was in them. These people in Exodus did not have the Spirit of God. The people in Ephesus—in the church—did have the Spirit of God and so what took place very quickly in the book of Exodus, was dragged out over a much longer period in the first century church. So the people's affections in the first century church were taking them back into the world, and they reacted, and they followed them.

In Colossians 3, we find that the apostle Paul offered a solution to the people, long before the book of Revelation was given, because even then, the Christians were being affected by what was going on around them.

Colossians 3:1-5 If then you were raised with Christ [that is, out of the waters of baptism, symbolic of the resurrection of Christ; you were raised to a new life in Christ] seek those things which are above, [the heavenly things, the Spiritual things] where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died [here is his reasoning: You died—you died to sin, and you showed that death by being baptized, by being buried in water], and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your

members which are on the earth [and then he goes on to name specific things.].

This was what Christ told the Ephesian church to do in broader generalities. Here we see it in the book of Colossians, in a very specific way.

Because Christ said what He did, we can understand that it is not impossible to redirect our energies and feelings. If we tie Galatians 6:7-10 together with Colossians 3:1-4 and Revelation 2:1-7, we can see that Paul was essentially saying that the rewards are in the *doing*—in the works. "I know your works." Christ said. The solution is, "you need to re-direct your energies, go back to the devotion that you formally had. And, if that devotion is there, if that love is there, then the right works will come and you will overcome."

God's way is such that it begins producing the good soon, not late. And the apostle is saying that if we begin sowing the right seed, then we will begin to reap the fruit of the harvest that will come, because God's Word always produces. God says that His Word will not go forth and return empty.

This is His Word, and He is telling us what to do, and we can be assured that there will be production of the fruit if we sow the right things, if we turn our energies back to the way they should be.

The harvest, then, begins to be reaped—soon, in the sense of well-being—a sense that things are well with God. Another scripture that you can tie this to is John 3:21 and the next several verses—it just ties in there so well. So in Ephesus the people's lack of love was showing in what they were doing. It was not ignorance that was motivating them, but a loss of affection for Christ.

This is serious business. I showed you through a number of scriptures, that if there is no love for Christ, there is no salvation. Now let us just review those verses again, in I Corinthians 16:22, where Paul writes,

I Corinthians 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. [strong words!] O Lord, [He says] come!

He appeals to God to send Jesus Christ.

Now we will add to this. Remember how Christ showed in John 8 that if one does not love Him, that one simply is not a son of God. No son of God—no salvation.

That raises a question that is pertinent to this series that we are going through, and is very important to our life at this end time, which is, how does one know whether one loves Christ?

The answer to that is this: By evaluating oneself in the same categories one would if they were concerned whether they loved another human. God gives us analogies by which we can understand His purpose, His plan, and our relationship with Him.

What I am saying here is that all we have to do is look at our relationship with humans. How do we know if we love another human being? What are the categories that we would evaluate ourselves in? We might say in this way, "In what way does love show itself between a husband and wife, between parents and children, or between brother and sister?"

Now if we can evaluate ourselves in those categories, in our relationship to Christ we are going to be able to see whether or not we love Him.

I am going to give you eight categories in which we can evaluate ourselves.

1. If we love another person, we like to think about them.

If we love another person, we do not need to be reminded about them, do we? We do not forget their name. We do not forget their appearance. We do not forget their character. We do not forget their opinions, or their tastes, or their occupation, because that person's name—what that person is—is at the forefront of our mind, almost all the time. What that person *is* comes to mind immediately. There is a reaction to what that person is. Even though that person may be distant from us—in Britain somewhere, or Germany, or Russia—regardless where they are on the Earth, our mind knows where they are and what they are.

Malachi 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of

remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who **meditate** on His name.

Do you know what meditate means? It means to think—in this case, who think on His name. This scripture is definitely end time. I think there is no doubt about it. It leads right into chapter four where my Bible has the heading, "The Great Day of the Lord." We are talking about the time of the end. God is concerned about those who think about Him.

Why would He be concerned about those who think about Him? Because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks! They are going to be talking about Him!

There is a prayer of Paul's to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 3:16-17 ...That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, [now he is going to expand on what He means] that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you be rooted and grounded in love.

Now let us put these two scriptures together, Malachi 3:16 and Ephesians 3:17.

"Dwell in your heart..." Do you know what that means literally? It means to be settled down and be at home. It means to make a permanent abode. What it is doing is indicating "an abiding, continuing presence." "Christ in us," it says, "the hope of glory."

Here is where the love part begins to come back in again. If we do not ever think about Christ, is He really in us? I mean, is He so distant from us that we do not think about Him?

When Paul uses "heart," He is not speaking about the muscle; it metaphorically stands for the mind—feeling, will—of a person.

Christianity is based on a personal relationship between God and man. God is not an "It" that can be tossed in a corner and forgotten, and then

occasionally remembered and used in times of emergency. God desires a maintained experience and relationship with Him—a continuing intimate relationship, the kind that there is in a loving family and which requires some effort on our part. Trusting in obedience, talking to Him in prayer, and studying His Word make that effort. But then, even more is required and Malachi 3:16 shows what that is.

God is shown in that verse listening to His people and what they think about Him. It is very interesting what comes out of their heart of their hearts—what they say about Him—to each other. Remember, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." What we think about comes out in what we talk about.

Now, so important is this to God that He has a book written about this and it is not, if you read it carefully, it is not a book of the people's names. That already exists in the Book of Life. It is a book about what His people say about Him—what their comments are.

Do you think He is not interested in the relationship, and the heat, and the passion of that relationship for Him? The reason He is so concerned is because it is going to determine what we do with our life—our works. It is going to affect our conduct. He does not want to lose any of us. He wants us to grow as greatly as we possibly can.

Unfortunately, there are some among us who can hardly ever be engaged in a conversation about God, about His Word, His way of life, prophecy, the glories of God's creation, or whatever else might have to do with God. Sometimes these people escape the fellowship with God's people at a church service by busying themselves with deacon- or deaconess-type work like Martha did.

That is why Jesus said to Martha, "Mary has chosen the better part." She wanted to be with Christ. Martha went off and did the physical work. It is not that the physical work is not necessary, but Christ was not going to be with them for very long and there are other things that are more important.

No true Christian needs to be reminded of Christ.

Do you know what the secret of a good memory is? Love and affection!
What we love, we think about.

If we love sports, we think about sports, we talk about sports. I have been caught in that trap and it is not that there is anything wrong with sports, but it can get too big and dominate other things that are more important. What we love, we think about and we talk about! This is why God says back in Psalm 10 that He is not in the thoughts of the wicked. They do not think about Him—about God, unless they are forced to. And because they do not think about Him, they are wicked. So what we think about is a determining factor as to whether we love Christ.

2. If we love a person, we like to hear about them.

II Peter 1:1-4 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord, [catch that word *knowledge*; like to hear about] as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

II Peter 1:11-15 ...for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, (the knowledge) though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding *you*, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

If we love a person, we like to hear about them. I remember as a boy, being taken to my grandmother's church, which was a Pentecostal church, and hearing and actually singing a song called, "Tell me the old, old story." And, I liked the song because of the melody, and it has stuck with me, and so have some of the words. But the words now are far more important to me than the melody ever was, because I understand a great deal more about the thought that the author was trying to convey or to express in the poem that he wrote that somebody put to music.

I recently heard of someone who is repelled, revolted, upset, and angry because they did not want to listen to some tapes of Mr. Herbert Armstrong's sermons or broadcasts. What saddened me was that they did not have the spiritual capacity to look beyond their personal antipathy toward Mr. Armstrong, or to the truths that were being conveyed to them from God's Word. But instead, they were looking at the messenger, and you might say, slaying or killing him and forgetting all about the message.

If we love someone, we find pleasure listening to someone else talk about him. We are all ears—at attention—whenever somebody talks about them. We want to hear them described, and we want to hear their doings expounded, we want to hear their sayings, and we want to hear their plans. Others might be indifferent, but if you really love that person that is being spoken about, why, we are all ears!

The true Christian delights to hear about Christ and enjoys most that fellowship where He is being talked about.

Now you can see this principle at work in the public, in our culture, with the groupies who form fan clubs so that they can get together and talk about their athletic hero, or their entertainment star. They want to hear the latest that so and so did; who they are married to now. Is such and such pregnant? Is anybody in jail? Are they on drugs? Have they written new music? Have they come out with any new albums? How many home runs have they hit? And on and on it goes. They want to hear about this person who they idolize.

The principle is there and it is so easily seen. I mean, they even go to the extent where they publish newsletters that contain the latest gossip about the one that they love, because they want to be kept informed.

This is the same principle that is involved in our relationship with Christ. If we love someone, we like to hear about him or her.

3. If we love a person, we like to read about them.

Do you not take pleasure whenever you receive a letter from someone who might be many miles away from you and they fill in the details of what they have been doing for the past number of months or maybe even years? Sure you do. If somebody else picked up your letter and they were not really interested in the person the letter was from, they would probably scarcely take any trouble to read it through.

But those who love the writer see something in the letter, which others cannot see, and to them that letter is a treasure.

Turn with me to John 5. Jesus said:

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

I do not know whether He did that in "fast-forward" or what, because there are an awful lot of scriptures in the Old Testament that talk about Christ.

II Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Christian is going to delight to read the scriptures, because they tell us about the One that we love. They tell us about what He expects of us and it is no wearisome task for them to read. That person does not have to be reminded. He cannot really be very happy to be apart from what Christ has written for a very long period of time. A person who loves Christ begins to feel lonely and apart from—detached from—Christ if he is not reading what Christ has written to him for any period of time, and indeed the conscience will begin to be smitten.

4. If we love a person, we like to please them.

If we love a person, we are glad to be able to consult with them, to seek their tastes and opinions. Why? So we can please them. We act on their advice; we do the things that they approve of. In fact, we will even deny ourselves to meet their wishes and abstain from the things that we know that they dislike.

Anybody who has gone through a courtship understands this. If we find that the one who is the object of our affection does not like the way we do a certain thing, does not like the colors that we are wearing in our clothing, does not like the style of it, does not like the car we drive, does not like the same things we like, what will we do? We will try to conform as long as it is lawful. We will try to please them in anyway that we possibly can, if we love them. But, if we are indifferent to them, who cares what they think?

So you see why this love is so important? Love is the mainspring of the right kind of works.

The people who do not love Christ, they are working, they are doing things, and they are expending their energies on things that they love, but what they love is not Christ. And because it is not Christ, they do the wrong works.

We will even learn things that we are not naturally inclined toward, because we think it will give the other person pleasure. I mean, there are guys who are nuts over baseball, nuts over golf, or whatever it might happen to be—hunting, fishing—and the poor girl, she will put herself through agony to go hunting with the guy, go fishing with the guy, go out to a boring baseball game with the guy, go golfing, learning it or whatever, just to please the guy because she loves him.

Are we that way with Christ? Do we do what we can, everything we can, denying ourselves or learning new things because we want to please Him? We want to please Him because we love Him. These are the things we must evaluate ourselves on.

II Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

"Be diligent to show yourselves approved." That is what a person does who is in love. The Christian studies to please Him. The Christian strives to be Holy, in body, mind and spirit to please Christ. And if you show that person anything that Christ delights in, he will follow after it. Or if Christ hates the thing, he will stop it. To him, the commands of God are not grievous. Christ's burden is light. It is the principle that we find out there in Boys Town in Nebraska, "He ain't heavy; he's my brother."

5. If we love a person, we like and want to be with his friends.

We are drawn to them because of the common tie—the common love for the same person. Even when we meet these people for the very first time, we do not feel as though they are perfect strangers to us because of that commonality. It seems as though there is a spirit that emanates from them. It is almost something that we can feel or see. It is something that our senses seem to be attuned to. That is why people who have traveled around the world, say that they can go into another congregation [of God's church] and they know that it is of the same Spirit as the one that they traveled from.

There is a bond or union between us because we both love the same Person. To the Christian, then, Christ's friend is our friend. We are members of the same body. We are children in the same family. We are soldiers in the same army. I am using those analogies that are in the Bible. We are pilgrims on the same road.

Paul writes:

I Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Fellowship means, sharing, or communion with, companionship with, or association with. We have been called into an association—a companionship, a fellowship, a communion with Christ. All those words are synonyms. The only difference might be the degree of the intimacy that is expressed by using the synonym, but it indicates all of the synonyms. And fellowship indicates people having things in common—doing things together because they have something in common. And that something we have in common is our love for Christ.

This particular verse is written in such a way as to be translated either "with," or "in." It can go either way. Our fellowship is *with* Christ, or our fellowship is *in* Christ. The case there is both subjective and objective in I Corinthians 1:9.

I John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

We all have been called into a fellowship, both with Christ and with those who make up the spiritual body, to be with Him and in Him—"in Him," indicating the church, the body.

Physically, we may not have a great deal in common. We may be different nationalities, we may even speak different languages, we may come from somewhat different cultures, but spiritually, we do have the same Father and Christ.

This in no way automatically removes the reality of our differences, but because of that commonality—because there is a specific agreement on the most important things of life—we can walk together, and the differences can be overcome because we love Christ.

6. (This is one of the ones which is really heavy—important:) **If we love a person, we are jealous about his name and honor.**

Therefore, we do not like to hear His name ill spoken of, or used in a profane manner. We feel bound to defend His interests, maybe even to the place where we defend His reputation and His name with our life. And so, we will defend the name, the reputation, the Word, the church of the One we love against any who disparage Him, regardless of their position in life—king, governor or neighbor.

Proverbs 22:1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold.

What it is saying is that, a good reputation, based upon what a person is, in his dealings with others, is certainly of greater worth in God's eyes, than wealth. Now, I want you to see the way that God backs this up in His own Word, in regard to Himself.

Ezekiel 39:25 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.'

He is going to protect His name's reputation; He is going to protect what it means. Now, how is He going to do it, here, in this context He is talking about? He will follow through with what He says that He will do. He will be faithful to His Word, because He does not want His reputation in any way disparaged by people being able to say, "God said He is going to do this, but He did not do it."

So Israel does not deserve to be brought back from their captivity. They are not sinless. They are an unholy people. But because God has said what He will do, He will back that up, because He is jealous about the reputation of His name.

The apostle Paul expresses his feeling about the Corinthian church:

II Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Jealousy has a well-deserved bad reputation, because it is essentially self-centered. But it has a positive aspect when the affection and passion that it contains is directed at upholding the well-deserved reputation of the one who is loved.

The Third Commandment bears directly on this subject. It is a command which is easily and carelessly broken. Unless we are continually conscious of our responsibility to bring honor upon the name of God, which we will do if we love Him. We will be jealous to uphold the reputation of His name.

In Revelation 15:3-4, we have a view into the future—a picture of those who have resisted and have gotten the victory over and overcome the beast, his image and his mark. They are standing on a sea of glass, and they are singing a song, the song of Moses. And it says there in verse 3:

Revelation 15:3-4 Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! [This is what they are singing.] Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.

Glorify means "to magnify." It means "to make bigger, to bring out the detail, to embellish, to make shine, to bring honor upon, and to build up." This is what a person does when they are jealous for the name of God.

They will glorify that name! In John 17:4, in Jesus' prayer:

John 17:4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

If a person is jealous for the name of God, because they love Him and they want to uphold His name, they will glorify Him, magnify what He is in their lives.

The Apostle Paul writes:

I Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

This point is a heavy-duty point because it involves the literal and visible expression of our love by our conduct. If we love another person, we will bring honor upon them; we will show that love.

7. If we love a person, we like to talk to them.

We do not express ourselves freely with those we do not know. We feel restraint because we do not know how they are going to take it. We do not know what they are going to do with it, and so we hold ourselves back. But we feel free to express ourselves with those that we love. We tell them our thoughts, we pour out our hearts to them. We find no difficulty finding subjects for conversation with those people, and though we may be silent and reserved in the presence of those we are not sure of, we find it quite easy to talk to a much loved friend. We have much to say to them and when we are in their presence time seems to fly by. Time goes fast when you are having fun, especially having fun with a friend.

Now we have much to say and could expand on this point a great deal, but you know that I am talking about prayer, and I just gave a series of sermons on prayer, so we will move on at this point.

8. (This is a fun one.) When we love a person, we always want to be with them.

Thinking about one who is loved, or reading a letter from them, or talking to them, are all fine, and those things have their place. But when we really love someone, we really long to be in their company. We want to be with them continually, without interruption, and without any goodbyes.

Notice how Paul expresses his longing to be with some brethren:

Romans 1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established.

He wanted to be with them. It would be so much more effective than a letter, so much more effective than hearing things through a second or a third person, that if we could just be eye to eye, face to face, see one another's expression and feel one another's presence there, it would be so much better than hearing through some other means. A telephone might be fine, it is better than nothing, it is better than a letter, but neither one of them is as good as being with the person and being able to get the effect of all of the senses.

Philippians 1:8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

That adds another thing to it. He was affectionate in his feeling for these people. Perhaps if we can make an evaluation on the letters that Paul wrote, it seems that there was no congregation that Paul felt affection for like he did for the Philippians. They seem to have been, if I can put it this way, his finest congregation. Any criticism that is in the letter is so small by comparison to the other letters. It contains his sweetest, kindness expressions for them.

They did not seem to be a rich congregation like the Corinthians, and there is no indication that they were a large congregation, but they seem to really be on the ball spiritually. He loved them.

We can carry this principle further. In II Peter 3:12, it is from a different context, and a different word, but the word means, to long for.

II Peter 3:12 ...looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.

Do you know what hastening means? In modern English it means, a waiting with eager desire. We look out on this hard, vicious and boiling world, and we say, "How long, oh Lord, is it going to be? How long before we are done

with sinning? Done with the guilt? Done with repenting, the uncertainty of living, the sadness and the anxiety and the pain that we see all around us, and what we are going through?"

It is no wonder that Solomon remarked what he did back in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is poignant in regard to the principle that we are talking about here.

Ecclesiastes 6:9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

Is this not what happened to the people in the Ephesians era of the church? Longing with desire for the return of Jesus Christ, how much better it would be if they could see Him with their eyes, but because their hope was deferred and their spirituality was weak, they became weary in well doing.

Are you eager with desire for the return of Jesus Christ? Are you looking forward to the time when our relationship, our companionship with Him is going to be unbroken, and unending? There will never be a goodbye; He will always be available. You might understand what John meant in I John 3:1-3:

I John 3:1-3 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

That is what the Ephesians were not doing. They wanted to be with Christ, but they were losing their love and they wanted to jump over the responsibilities of the relationship, but they still longed for Christ's return and we cannot allow that to happen to ourselves.

Now, in conclusion, Paul says:

I Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

At the last trumpet, that desire will be satisfied.

I think in looking over the list that we all will find areas of strength and areas of weakness which must be worked upon in order to recapture the love that we have lost through the years of not working to make it stronger and growing.

So they are again.

1. If we love a person, we like to think about him.
2. If we love a person, we like to hear about him.
3. If we love a person, we like to read about him.
4. If we love a person, we like to please him.
5. If we love a person, we like his friends.
6. If we love a person, we are jealous about his name and honor.
7. If we love a person, we like to talk to him.
8. If we love a person, we like to be always with him.