

Keeping Love Alive (Part 2)

What You Do When You Love A Person

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We are going to begin this sermon by turning to Romans 5.

Romans 5:5-8 And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

I want you to exercise your mind to think back upon the sermon that I gave three weeks ago on this same subject. That first sermon laid the groundwork for this sermon. The title I gave to that sermon was "Keeping Love Alive," and the title of this sermon is "Keeping Love Alive (Part 2)." That first sermon contained concepts and perceptions to help us to understand that even in a relationship with God, love must be maintained. That is, effort must be made on our part to sustain it. Think about this simple principle, that if a relationship is one-sided, it does not remain a relationship. It takes two to tango.

Now unlike lust, love does not just magically happen. Merely being attracted to another is not all by itself love. Love is a sustained and continuous concern for the well-being of another, combined with actions to positively support the building and preserving of the relationship that has begun.

Biblically, these actions are the "works" that God has appointed that we should walk in, as Paul stated in Ephesians 2:10. They do not earn us salvation. Salvation is a freely-given gift based in faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who died to pay the penalty for our sins; but nonetheless, works are required by God for *our* good. They not only demonstrate our trust in Christ's sacrifice and in God's word, they are the spiritual exercises that promote our growth in God's creation of us becoming conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Works help us inscribe God's mind, God's character, and God's attitude toward becoming ours. In addition, those works glorify God.

Faith in God cannot merely be intellectual. It must be combined with action. It will then produce the growth that God desires. This is why reciprocity is always a component in one's relationship with God.

If we had begun our reading in Romans 5 with verse 1, we would have seen that Paul actually made a masterful transition beginning with faith, moving onto hope, and then concluding with love. The love, of course, comes in verses 4 and 5.

This series of principles is supported by two powerful examples that follow in the verses after verse 5. The first is this: God did not wait until we were good or deserving of Him to demonstrate His love, but rather He demonstrated it to us when we certainly did not deserve it one bit. And second: the proof of His love is that He gave the life of His most precious loved-one—His Son—as the demonstration of His love.

What is helpful for us to understand regarding Christ's death is that it was substitutionary. If you can recall at the time Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac, at the last moment God substituted a lamb, and that lamb took the place of Isaac. The lamb was then sacrificed. It is the same in regard to us in our relationship with God. Christ's sacrifice is substitutionary. It is as though we are standing there waiting for the electricity to come zapping us dead, and He steps in, takes us off the chair, and takes our place. He literally of course does not do this, but spiritually that is why He died. It was for taking our place.

What I am getting at here is that this substitutionary death is very personal. God is not running a haphazard catch-as-one-can operation by throwing a net into the ocean and seeing what He drags in. Rather, God is overseeing and selecting as His plan develops toward the end. That is one major, major area of our salvation that God provides, and He is our provider to the end.

In the sermonette today, Bill quoted Philippians 2:13, "For it is God who works in us, both to will and to do." But His providing does not end there at all.

Hebrews 1:1-3 God, who at sundry times and in different manner spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

We must not think of God's love as being limited by supplying Christ's sacrifice. One of the things that these verses touch on in Hebrews 1:1-3 is that God's love is continuously

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expressed in a multitude of ways each and every day since the worlds began. I will give you an example. In verse 2 it says, "by whom also he made the worlds." That word "worlds" should actually be translated "ages." "By whom also he made the ages," indicating periods of time.

What he is really saying here is that it is God who is guiding and directing what we call "history." It is God who is shaping the events of time all the way through in order to bring about the purpose *He* is working out. It is *He* who raises up kings. It is *He* who raises up nations. It is *He* who puts nations down. It is *He* who moves people—individuals, whole nations—from one place to another.

During those times it is He who may even bring to pass wars in order to create the circumstances that are going to move mankind to do something. What I am saying here is God is continuously pushing the buttons of what is going on in this world. He is active all the time, tending to the affairs of what He has created. He is not just sitting back waiting for things to happen, and saying, "Ooh, here is a time that I can intervene." Not so. He is actively involved.

It is He who gives us every breath of air that we breathe. It is He who brings rain. It is He who holds back the rain. You name it, and God is intimately involved in the natural world, and He is involved in the spiritual world in that creation. That is why Paul said in Philippians 2, "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to do."

If we would just understand the practical aspects of this, we would understand that God is in us. All of this reinforces Paul's statement in Romans 5:10 in which he says that we are saved by the life of Jesus Christ.

I just gave you an example of how it is that this is done. His active involvement in the creation in physical and spiritual affairs makes it possible for our salvation to be completed and for us to be in the image of Jesus Christ. God is overseeing and creating all that we call history. He upholds all things, including the natural things. God is actively involved in the every day operation of managing His creation.

If we do not work with and within God's sustaining—that is, the physical things and the spiritual things—I guarantee you that life will fall apart for us. The same principle holds true in the physical areas of life. If we try to challenge the laws of God physically, who is going to lose?

Let us make it real obvious. If we think that we can challenge the law of gravity by jumping off a cliff and commanding our fall to stop, who are we kidding? We have no

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power over those physical laws. We have to work within them for good things to occur. The same is true in spiritual areas as well. We have to work within the spiritual law of God in order for God's creation of Jesus Christ in us to take place.

This is my specific purpose in this particular sermon. Because our responding to God's love is so important, He demonstrated it through Christ's death and made it possible for us to stand before God, but we have to respond and work within the spiritual purpose of God in order for things to work out spiritually. The remainder of this sermon is devoted to a variety of points that will help us evaluate whether we love Him. He demonstrated His love. He continues to demonstrate His love day by day.

Now what do you think it is that He wants back from us? He wants His love in us to come back at Him. So building upon the foundation of that previous sermon, I am going to go over the first point, which was actually at the tail end of that sermon, in order to provide a foundation for the remainder of those points, because that first point is actually foundational to all the ones that follow.

My purpose in this is to ask you to evaluate yourself in the light of the points I am going to give you as to whether you are responding to God's love by giving love back to Him.

1: If we love another person we like to think about that person.

Do you like to think about God? How deep do those thoughts get?

Psalm 10:4 The wicked through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

To be blunt, we do not need to be reminded to think about those we love because they are always, or nearly always, in our mind in a good, pleasant, enjoyable and hope-filled way. For instance, we do not forget their name, their appearance, their manner, their character, their opinion, their tastes, or their occupation. The person that one loves comes to mind often during the day, and we seek ways to please that person. Even though they may be geographically distant, they are present in thought.

Did you ever stop to think that all through the day we are almost constantly planning what we are going to do next, and then next after that, throughout the day? But the planning of what we are going to do next touches on what we are presently doing, and we do that thinking ahead so that we can use our time efficiently and effectively. This is done in order that we make the best use of our time. This planning ahead also includes

what we are going to do next after the present job is completed, and after that the next, and onto the next. I think you get the point.

I bring this up because the word translated "thoughts" in Psalm 10:4 has an interesting twist to it. It is sometimes in the Bible translated as "plans" or even "schemes." This is because the word, in its normal usage, suggests evil. Just right in this verse the word "thoughts" is coupled with the descriptor "wicked" thus revealing a major foundational difference between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous take God into consideration in all their planning. It is not something forced in any way; rather it is evidence of God's reality to them and of their loving respect for Him. The thoughts of the wicked reveal that they do not think about Him at all. Do you know why? The reason is because He means nothing to them. He is simply not part of their life.

From here I want us to go to the book of James. This is an entirely different kind of context, but it involves thinking and saying, and wisdom, and things like that

James 3:13-16 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conduct his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

Are you aware of what this overall theme is in this chapter? It is the use of the tongue; therefore behind the use of the tongue is supposedly thinking, thoughts. Now, what comes out of our mouth? Is it good? Is it building up? Does it include God before the words ever come out? Is it foolishness that comes out of our mouth, or is it wisdom? Is it love, or is it some form or degree of hatred? This is what James is talking about here.

James 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

The point that James is making here, when combined with what we just read in Psalm 10, is that God must be in our thinking regarding the words that come out of our mouth, and that He must be taken into consideration. The source of one's thoughts and one's reasons for thinking them is going to make all the difference in the world to conduct as to what comes out of one's mouth. What we are seeing is the major difference between

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the righteous and the evil. The difference is who and what we think about for the simple reason that action follows thought.

We just read in Psalm 10 that God is not in the thoughts of the wicked. Can you easily see what is going to come out of their mouths? You should be able to. Thus, the thoughts of God enter most of the righteous people's plans.

When we do evil, it is because we are thinking about the wrong things. It is that simple. It is because God is not in all of our thoughts. That is an epitome to strive for, because if He is, it is really going to put a damper on anything evil that might come out of our mouth.

We are going to put two scriptures together. Malachi 3:16 is one of those verses that is very important to us.

Malachi 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spoke often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

Now we will go to Ephesians 3, and at least in thought we are going to come back to what it said there in Malachi 3:16. It is very important to our lives. In Ephesians 3 Paul is actually making a request in his prayer here. You can see this in verse 14.

Ephesians 3:14-19 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Let us put these two thoughts together. Verse 16 is an appeal to God that Christ might strengthen us. In verse 17 he provides the purpose for the appeal, and that purpose is that Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith, and if Christ is there we will think about the right things.

The term "dwell in our hearts" indicates being at home, being comfortable, and being at ease. It indicates a permanent, abiding, pleasant continuing presence. The word "heart" metaphorically means "one's mind, one's feelings, and one's will." Paul is showing that Christianity is based in a personal relationship between God and man. God is not an "it" that can be tossed into a corner and forgotten, except for emergencies. He is central to life's well-being.

How do you think Christ feels about a relationship that is distant and inconsistent? God desires a maintained, continuing, intimate relationship in a loving family, and meeting this requires a great deal of effort on our part. That effort is made through trusting Him in obedience and talking to Him frequently in prayer. In fact, we are exhorted to be *instant* in prayer. We are to be thankful in every circumstance of life in spite of life's twists and turns, and we must study His word.

But even more is required in this intimate relationship, and Malachi 3:16 adds it. In that verse God is shown *listening* to what His people think about Him in their heart of hearts, and what they say about Him to each other. Do you understand this? Our every word is being judged by God. He is listening. I do not mean this as a threat, but it is something that we need to be informed of. This is how close the relationship is. This is so important to our relationship to God that there in Malachi 3:16 he says that God is having prepared a book of remembrance made that can include not only *who* said what, but what they said. That is incredible!

Do you think He is not going to have the goods on us? He wants us to be good though. That is His intent, that this will provide motivation for us to love Him more deeply than ever before. Words have weighty value for good and bad, and yet we are so often careless. That is what James was talking about in James 3.

In Matthew 12 Jesus said this:

Matthew 12:34-35 O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things:

See, it is not impossible. A person who really has God in mind, and God's well-being in mind, and God's glory in mind, can say good things. The fact that He is in us can be a prod to that.

Matthew 12:35-37 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings

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forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.

Do you think I was kidding about what I said about Malachi 3?

Now what is your mind in regard to loving God? When we love another human being, male or female, many, many of our thoughts are on that person to do everything we can to please him or her. Why can it not be the same in our relationship with God? It can. It may seem overwhelming at first, but God is not asking us to do something that is impossible, because it is He who lives in us and works toward that end for our benefit. If we want our relationship with Him to improve, that is a very good place to start.

Unfortunately, there are some among us who can hardly ever be engaged in a conversation about God, about His word, about His way of life, about prophecy being fulfilled, the glories of God's creation, or whatever it is that has to do with God, His way, and our life within it. No true Christian needs to be reminded about Christ. I will tell you the secret to being able to do this. Affection for anything is the secret to having a good memory about it.

There are people that I hear on the radio. When I am driving around I will tune in to a talk program that involves sports. There are some people who call in who can give you statistics from 1927 on for the New York Yankees. They have an affection, and they remember almost *everything* about what they have an affection for. Is God asking too much of us for us to love Him when He is the source of our salvation? When we love somebody, it gives us encouragement even to think about them. You know that is true.

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

II Peter 1:1-4 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

With that little background of those four verses, listen to what Peter said:

II Peter 1:12-15 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things [remembrance of some of the things he mentioned in those four verses I just read, that we can be partakers of the divine nature, and besides that there are wonderful promises], though you know them, and be established in the present truth. Yes, I think it meet [fitting or right] as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me. Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

When I was a boy I went to a little country church. I think it was a Pentecostal Assembly of God or something like that. I am not real sure. I did not go because I wanted to go. I went because my mother made me go. But nonetheless, one of the things that stuck in my mind was that once in a while we would sing a song that many of you might be able to relate to. It was called "Tell Me the Old, Old Story." I liked the song primarily because it had a catchy melody to it, and because of the catchy melody I paid a great deal of attention, and the words stuck in my mind. Let me tell you, the words in that song are a great deal more meaningful to me now because I understand a great deal more thoroughly of the thought the author was trying to express.

Conversely, I have heard of someone who was repelled and revolted at listening to tapes of some of Mr. Armstrong's sermons and broadcasts. What is saddening is that the person did not have the spiritual capacity to look beyond his or her personal antipathy for him to the truths from God's word that he was teaching them, and so the truth got lost in their hatred for him.

If we have affection for someone, we find pleasure listening to somebody talk about that person. Let me give you an illustration. This helps to explain why there is so much in newspapers and magazines and news broadcasts about entertainers. Their positive contributions to the cultural well-being of America are very small, but people are all ears when stories about them appear in publications or in the news. That sells the publications and makes money for the publishers, and so we desire to hear all about the "beautiful" people. We want to hear them described, to hear of their doings and sayings, and of their plans. Now others may be indifferent, but our ears really perk up when we hear something of the one we are attracted to.

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The true Christian likes to hear about Christ and enjoys most that fellowship where *He* is talked of. You can see this principle most intensely demonstrated 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. Who is he or she dating? What clothing are they wearing? (or not wearing?) Who is their next movie going to be with? They even publish newsletters to keep each other informed. It is this practice of devotion that needs to be emulated to help keep love alive.

Sometimes I hear of people who do not even attend services, not because they are sick, but because they are tired. What are they thinking about? Do they think that this somehow pleases Christ? Sometimes they do not come because of somebody in the congregation they do not like. Maybe it is the preacher. But where is Christ in this picture? Is He not fellowshiping with us on the Sabbath? The very thing that they need in order to be re-energized is to be where He is fellowshiping with those that love Him and are hearing of Him.

As an institution, it is the church's responsibility from God to its members to help keep the flame of love alive through enabling people to hear about the One they love. There is an interesting statement by Paul in Philippians. The way it is translated is a little bit vague.

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous [or tedious, or tiring], but for you it is safe.

What Paul is referring to here is that he did not mind at all going over and over again, repeating again and again what we have come to rejoice in about Christ. He added on later, "and be thankful." He was expressing the same principle that Peter did in II Peter 1. Peter said, "I shall not be hesitant at all to remind you over and over again, telling the old, old story," and that is what Paul is saying here. He did not mind doing it at all.

Point 3: If we love a person, we like, we love to read about that person.

This is closely related to Point 2, but yet it is different. The second point was that we like to *hear* about them. This one is we like to *read* about them. This third point involves something that is private and personal. In this case, when we read about him or her, it is not something that we are just hearing in general, but rather that he or she is speaking to you personally. Do you think of your relationship in reading in God's word that Christ is speaking to you personally?

Do we not take pleasure whenever we receive a letter or an email from a loved one who is many, many miles away and that person fills in the details of what he or she has been doing for the past number of days, months, or even for years? Of course we do. This is the principle that is involved here.

Now if a disinterested person found a letter or an email that was sent to someone else, that person could scarcely spend the time reading through it. But those who love the writer will see something in the letter others cannot, and to them it is a treasure. Now check yourself. Is your interest level high enough that you seek every opportunity of reading about Him every day?

Jesus commanded in John 5:

John 5:39 Search the scriptures: for in them you think you have eternal life: and *they* are *they* which testify of *me*.

He said it that way because the testimony given *of* Him, *by* Him, and *about* Him is critical to our salvation. "*They* are *they* that testify of *Me*."

Let us go back to Luke 24. This happened on the road to Emmaus.

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

How would you like that? I bet that was embarrassing to them, thinking about what preceded that. But on the other hand, do you look at your reading of the scriptures as being somewhat the same? It is.

II Timothy 3 tells why it is so important to you and me to do this.

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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

To read of Christ furnishes us so that we will be able to carry out the good works. This is a critical point and is exceedingly important to this section regarding this very principle,

because it is difficult for us to maintain a consistent program of what we are talking about in this third point.

In Ezekiel 16 we have the story of God rescuing Israel from their bondage. As we read through this I want you to think of this in terms of your conversion and your salvation. Ezekiel 16 is not a happy story, even though it started out very well. We are not going to read through the whole thing because I just want to get the essence of it. We will pick it up in verse 6. Think of this in terms of your conversion.

Ezekiel 16:6 And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live.

It sounds a little bit like Jesus commanding Lazarus, "Lazarus, come forth!" and He gave him life. Well, we were as good as dead before conversion. That is what He is talking about when He said "being polluted in your blood," and "Live."

Ezekiel 16:7-13 I have caused you to multiply [to thrive] as the bud of the field, and you have increased and waxen [grown] great, and you are come to excellent ornaments: your breasts are fashioned, and your hair is grown, whereas you were naked and bare. [He is describing a process of maturing.] Now when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love [He entered into a covenant.]; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yes, I swore unto you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. [God is demonstrating His love.] Then washed I you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with embroidered work and shod you with badger's skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk. I decked you also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen and silk and embroidered work; you did eat fine flour and honey and oil: and you were exceeding beautiful, and you did prosper into a kingdom.

When you read something like that and you begin to think of *our* relationship to Him, do we do anything worthwhile, brethren? Is there any aspect of His work that we really

contribute very much to? Why should we not love Him, after all He does?

Ezekiel 16:14-17 And your renown went forth among the heathen for your beauty: for it was perfect through *My* comeliness, which I had put upon you, says the Lord Good. But you did trust in your own beauty and played the harlot because of your renown, and poured out your fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of your garments you did take, and decked your high places with different colors, and played the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. You have also taken your fair jewels of my gold and of my silver which I had given you, and made to yourself images of men, and did commit whoredom with them.

As I said, it turns into a not so very pretty picture. Here is a powerful warning of what this lady fell into. The kingdom of Israel is a persuasion that we desperately need to resist. She did not, and she became, as we might say, worldly. She turned away from God's love and turned toward those things that were materially and physically attractive to her.

Now like prayer, reading of Him requires that one impose a discipline upon one's self. This is because human nature is so frivolous and so easily attracted to other interests. It finds more excitement in those other things than in Him. The appealing distractions of this world always must be held in check. It is a constant battle against those persuasions. They are attractive to human nature. There is no doubt they are appealing to it, but it is something we have to discipline ourselves against.

We will look at this at a somewhat different angle.

John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.

I think you understand He is using terminology here that is something we would not either eat His flesh or drink His literal blood, but they stand for eating Him, the word of God, which feeds us spiritually.

John 6:52-58 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink

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his blood, you have no life in you. Whoso eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats me, even he shall live by me [or through me]. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live forever.

I think you understand He is talking about what we eat with our mind—that which feeds our thoughts. And whatever feeds our thoughts is going to determine what comes out of our mouth and the conduct that comes from our body and our mind. So if the mind is fed the right things, the right words and the right actions will follow. It depends on what we eat.

So reading of Him is a very personal part of the relationship and helps keep Him in mind and strengthens resistance to the world's spiritual persuasions. In fact, it will severely blunt one from allowing idolatries to be established. So test yourself by this point, to evaluate whether you really love God, because it is especially critical to maintaining and building the relationship.

Point 4: If we love a person, we like to please that person.

John 8:29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I do *always* those things that please him.

This point interlocks tightly into the previous point. This is because reading of Him in a right attitude greatly contributes to us learning what pleases Him. In other words, we are letting Him talk and letting Him tell us, "This is what I expect of you." "This is what I want you to do." "This is what I enjoy." "This is what I would like to see you change."

If we love Him, we are glad to consult with Him, seeking out His tastes and opinion for the very purpose of pleasing Him. We will act on His advice and do the things He approves of. We will even deny ourselves to meet His wishes and abstain from things we know that He dislikes. We will even discipline ourselves to learn things and to do things toward which we are not naturally inclined, because we think it will give Him pleasure, and honor Him.

We are going to read a fairly long number of scriptures in II Timothy.

II Timothy 2:3-16 You therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that labors must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abides faithful: he cannot deny himself. Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the disciplining of the hearers. Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

This entire section is devoted to an exhortation to us to be diligent, hard working like a farmer, to do what pleases Jesus Christ. This is what a person who loves Christ will do.

When dating and courting before marriage, if we truly love the person do we not do everything we can to show ourselves approved to the other? If we do not care, we will not be diligent to do that. It would just be a ho-hum relationship; just another date. But if it is somebody we care about and really have affection for and considering even marrying and spending a lifetime with that person, becoming one with him or her, then we become "goody-two-shoes." We start trying to do everything we possibly can to please that person.

Let us go back over those verses and skim through them to see that this is exactly what Paul is saying in principle that we should do with Christ. In verse 4 it even says that if one is enlisted by Christ, that one may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier. Hey! This is a real privilege to be pointed out by this person as one to receive this blessing. And so the positive response begins. He goes on and encourages us to make sure we do things lawfully, to not go overboard in the wrong way. He promises then that if we do this we will be the first ones to receive the benefits of what we are doing.

In verse 7 he says, "I want you to think about what I am saying. Consider this." And then

he begins reminding them of things regarding the examples of Jesus Christ and himself. Jesus Christ wanted to please His Father so much He was willing to suffer anything His Father wanted Him to do. He was diligent at showing His Father that He wanted to do whatever pleased Him. He said, "I always do what pleases Him." That brought a great deal of persecution, psychological pain and physical pain to do that; but He nonetheless followed through on His sacrifice.

The apostle Paul then said, "Jesus was not the only one that sacrificed and had to endure things. Look at what I had to endure so that you can be in God's kingdom." You can look at one of the chapters in II Corinthians as he lists one thing after another. One time he was left for dead. He probably might have very well been dead, because he received such a severe beating from clubs and rocks and whatever else that was thrown at him.

How many times did he receive whippings and 39 stripes? How many times did he have to walk long distances, suffering from thieves, the weather, or whatever else that might have come along? What he is doing is reminding us that others have gone before us in doing this in order to please the One who loves us.

But he does not just drop it there. In verse 10 he then reminds us what an awesome future there is that lies before us, and then beginning in verse 11 he reminds us of Christ's faithfulness to what He used in His character. He does this to remind us that this awesome future is secure if we reciprocate Christ's love.

In verse 14 Paul again urges Timothy and the ministry to help the brethren to always keep these things in mind. Then in verses 15 and 16 Timothy himself is urged to be diligent about pleasing Christ, while at the same time keeping himself clear of hair-splitting, knit-picking arguments. Do you know why a person involves himself in knit-picking arguments and so forth? That person's pride is driving him. It is the drive to control and to be looked upon as being the authority. Paul said to avoid that kind of thing, to not even get involved.

One who really loves Christ will put up with a great deal. He will discipline himself when he would rather not. He will push himself when he would rather rest, and he will do this because he loves Christ. If you show that kind of person anything Christ delights in, he will follow it, or conversely, if Christ hates it, he will stop doing it. To him the commandments are not grievous and Christ's burden is light.

The Christian has an attitude of "He ain't heavy, he's my brother," because of his love for Christ. Do you have that kind of an attitude? That is what Paul is asking.

Point 5: If we love a person, we want to be friends with that person's friends too.

In fact we are drawn to his or her friends because of the common tie of our love for the same person. Even when we meet them for the first time we do not feel that we are perfect strangers, because there is a commonality in the spirit; thus a bond of union begins to develop between us because they love the person we love.

Now to the Christian, Christ's friends are our friends. Remember, Christ told them they were no longer slaves; they were friends. This occurs because we are members of the same body. We are children of the same family; we are soldiers in the same army; and we are pilgrims on the same road.

I Corinthians 1 says that God is faithful.

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

Fellowship means sharing, or communion with, or companionship, or association. It indicates people having things in common and doing things together because of the things they have in common. This particular verse is interesting because it is written in a way so that the phrase, which says "the fellowship of His Son," can be translated using other prepositions. Besides the preposition "of," it could be translated "with" or "in." These prepositions indicate slightly different applications.

The preposition "of" indicates ownership. Christ owns us. "With" indicates a sharing. We are part of the same body. "In" indicates intimacy. So our fellowship is *in* Christ, it is *with* Christ, and it is *of* Christ. This includes a fellowship relationship with the others who are also "in Christ"—more commonly called "the church."

Let us go back to I John to pick up one thing.

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

John has added the Father to the mix. We are not just fellowshiping with the Son, we are also fellowshiping with the Father as well. This brings us to an eclectic mix—eclectic, because this association is made up of a very diverse racial, ethnic,

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cultural, and language mixture. This fellowship exists and is promoted to produce a spiritual family unity none of us ever had before.

Now physically, we may not have a great deal in common, but spiritually we do have the Father and the Son in common. This in no way automatically removes the reality of our differences with one another, but because there is a specific agreement on the most important things of life, we can walk together because we love Christ and desire to please Him.

Therefore, those who truly believe Christ will sacrifice themselves to do what pleases Him, and the result is going to be family unity in, with, and of Jesus Christ. This is one of the major thoughts behind God's command that we are to come out of the world, and that the focus of our time, energies, attentions, and services is toward and in behalf of the brethren, as well as the Father and Son.

If two are engaged to marry, should they not turn their efforts to submit their relationship, rather than with others who are not of the same spirit and mind? This is why we are warned not to marry an outsider, because it will not contribute to the oneness.

Point 6: If we love a person, we are jealous about that person's name and honor.

Therefore we do not like to hear that one's name ill-spoken of or used in a profane manner. We feel bound to maintain that person's interest and reputation in our life, and thus we will defend that person's name, reputation, words, and church—the church of the one we love against all those who disparage him before any, regardless of their station in life.

Proverbs 22:1 says, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches; loving favor rather than silver and gold." This proverb is saying that a good reputation, or integrity, based upon what a person is in his dealings with others, is certainly of greater worth in God's eyes than material wealth. He backs this up in regard to His own name.

Ezekiel 39:25 Therefore thus says the Lord God; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name.

What God is saying here is that He will make His name to shine, to be magnified by being faithful to the promises that He has made regarding Israel. That is why He said, "I

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will bring again the captivity." He is actually going to bring Israel into a punishing tribulation in order to back up what He prophesied of. He wants to show the whole world, and especially to us at this time, that He is faithful to what He is and to what He says He will do. It will occur.

Paul says essentially the same thing in II Corinthians 11.

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

Jealousy is an intense drive, and it has a well-deserved reputation—a bad reputation. This is because humanly it is essentially self-centered. However, there can be a positive component to it when the affection and passion it contains is directed in upholding the well-deserved reputation of the one who is loved, which is Christ. The Third Commandment bears directly on this subject. It is a commandment that is easily and carelessly broken unless we are continually conscious of our responsibility to bring honor upon the name of God. We will defend His name if we love Him.

I have a couple more scriptures here on this point. The apostle John recorded this about the 144,000 who stand on the sea of glass.

Revelation 15:3-4 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, you King of saints. Who shall not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you only are holy; for all nations shall come and worship before you; for your judgments are made manifest.

To "glorify" means to "honor, to magnify, to enhance by making bigger, brighter, clearer." This is done to bring out detail. It means to "embellish, to make shine, to build up." In John 17, in His prayer to the Father, He said, "I have glorified You on earth." He always did what pleased the Father. And then He asked to be glorified with the glory that He shared with the Father in heaven.

John 17 is a chapter telling us how Christ glorified the Father. I can summarize it because that chapter summarizes it. He did this by carrying out the responsibility assigned to Him. He finished His work.

Let us turn to the final scripture.

I Corinthians 6:19-20 What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

This is a heavy-duty command from God. The reason it is, is because it involves a literal and visible expression of our love for the Father and the Son in the attitude and the conduct of our lives. Why? Because the body is the temple of His Spirit. He is ours, and we are His, and a spiritual unity exists, and thus the necessity of the fellowship with Him and the conduct that honors Him in upholding His name.

If we love Him, evaluate Him in your reaction to Him in this way:

If we love Him, we like to think about Him.

If we love Him, we like to hear about Him.

If we love Him, we like to read about Him.

If we love Him, we want to please Him.

If we love Him, we love His friends.

If we love Him, we are jealous about His name, and bring honor and glory to Him.