

OUR LOVE FOR GOD

So, as Christians we say we love God and believe in Him. But do we ever stop to think about the nature of our love for God, or what that love really means? Let's see what the Bible has to say about our love for God, and how we might test ourselves.

In John, Chapter 14, v. 15, it says, "*If you love me, keep my commandments.*" And in verse 21: "*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, He it is that loveth me. And He that loveth me shall be loved of my father, and I will love Him and manifest myself unto Him.*" When you look at this, Jesus is saying, 'If you truly love Me, you're going to listen to Me and you're going to obey Me.' You can say here that our love for God, and our love for Jesus, is equated to how much we really serve Him. You don't see Him day to day; He doesn't show up physically in your office when you go to work. Our love for Him is really based upon whether we believe He exists, and whether we understand His Word, and whether we walk in His Word.

One of the biggest mistakes we see in the world today is that people make up what God should be: "If He's a truly loving God, there will be no hell," or, "If He's a truly loving God, anybody can get to heaven." Well, if you believe these things, you don't know your Bible. If you read it, you'll find that it talks more about hell than it does about heaven. God judges people who are disobedient to His Word, as your ten-times-removed great-grandfather Adam could attest to. So you just can't make up your own mind as to what God is, or what He wants; you have to learn about Him. Because of that knowledge, we then want to serve Him, and move closer and closer in relationship to Him, thus revealing our love for Him.

It is just a part of life, of course, that we're going to struggle with the world, the flesh, and the Word. But we know that our true affection is founded upon the Word. It is the promises of eternal life, and the other promises we see in scripture that make the difference. As we build an affinity and a love for that, we begin to love the Lord more and more.

One major problem today is that we have distorted the real meaning of love. If you write the general definition of 'love' down, as most people see it, you'll find that it's something quite different than what God intended. Humanity has transformed God's love into a mushy sort of thing designed to make us feel good, rather than truly reflect what His love is. That 'mush' is not God. God sees the end result in your life, and will cause you to suffer and to grow in the things of Him, because that's how He can bless you--and make you a blessing. God wants you to re-work, re-shape, and refine yourself, your life, and your soul to be more fully in accord with His commandments, as well as His wishes for you. By

providing this 'tough love,' He's doing you a greater service; He's going to judge you by His Word. So, He has to take you, mold you, and shape you to His Word, in order to bless you here and in eternity.

Mushy, feel-good, 'if it's ok with you, it's ok with me' love doesn't do that. We see it a lot today in child rearing; we see parents wanting to be friends with their children, not wanting to be parents over them. God's kind of love says that He wants the sort of person who will reflect His love, His ideals, and His personality into their environment. An appropriate analogy would be to see this as God's parental, rather than simply friendly, love for us—His is a love which disciplines when necessary, and guides us towards the realization of eternal goals and eternal happiness.

Second Corinthians, Chapter 6, v. 17 reads, "*Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, sayeth the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; for I will receive you and be a father unto you, and you shall be my sons and my daughters, sayeth the Lord almighty.*" And in chapter 7, v. 1 we learn that God wishes for us to cleanse ourselves, and move in the direction of His Word. To truly understand our love for Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we have to understand that it is a living, dynamic relationship. Our service to Jesus is to see Him as Lord and Savior, and it is our submission to Him that matters. He doesn't want you serving Him grudgingly. He never did. Because you know His Word and keep His Word, to be grudging indicates that you do not truly have affection for His Word. This scripture is saying come out from among the world, come out from among the masses - come to Me. And because you know God's promises of salvation and redemption, the promise of Jesus coming for us and His blood covering our sins, those promises should cause something in us - a cleansing of ourselves from the tainted things of the world and of our flesh, the things that pull us away from God. As we rid ourselves of these things, we prove our love for Him.

This is only fitting, as God was proactive in His love for us. In The First Epistle of John, Chapter 4, v. 8 it says, "*He that loveth not, knoweth not God. God is love.*" In verse 19 it says, "*We loved Him, because He first loved us.*" When God deals with you, He deals with you in love. God is compassionate, God is gracious. Our knowledge and understanding of God's love towards us causes us to love Him back. That's the root of our love for God: Because we understand that it is by His grace that we are saved. It is not our doing good that causes Him to love us back, He *loved us first*. Our understanding and knowledge of that is what causes us to love Him. Ephesians says that even when we were dead in our sins, when we didn't love Him, and when we rejected Him, even in that state He loved us--and He sent Jesus for us, and Jesus accomplished the will of God for all of us, for all who would call upon the name of the Lord.

In Romans, Chapter 12, v. 1, it says, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of a living God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice,*

wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God." Your reasonable service, because of what God has done for you, is that you transform yourself through knowledge to do God's will. This is the basis of our love. Transformation means a total change, as a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. Here, the transformation is that you shed the world, and walk in the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. That is our mission in life. The only way to do that is to take in the Word of God, bringing it into your heart, and consequently changing your lifestyle.

What sort of change is this? In part it is a rejection of what the world values. The First Epistle of John, Chapter 2, v. 15 says, *"Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lusts thereof. But He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."* We have to understand that there is nothing in this world that we are to love more than God and His Word. Nothing stands between us and God. When the Bible says not to love the things of the world, it is talking about the world's system, how the world operates. When the Bible says, 'be not conformed to the world,' it is talking about not being conformed to human systems, which pull us away from God. These are systems which tell us that we can do whatever we want, believe whatever we want to believe, and push God's Word aside. This verse is telling us not to love things which would have us push God aside. Jesus said to set your affections on things above, not things of the earth; we see Him repeat this message many times in scripture--we aren't to look at things here; we are to look at things there.

It is informative to look at Matthew, Chapter 19, v. 16: *"Behold, one came and said unto Him, 'good master, what good things shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' And He said unto him, 'whyest thou call me good? There is but one that is good, and that is God. And if thou wilt enter into eternal life, keep the commandments.'* And he said unto Him, *'thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; all these things I have kept, from my youth up; what lack I yet?'* And Jesus said unto him, *'If thou would be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven, and come and follow me.'* But when the young man heard that, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." This young man came to Jesus with a question that he knows He can answer. And Jesus read him a list of commandments, but he left out the most important one: Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all that you are.

Jesus was basically saying, 'Let's put you to the test, let's see how much of the world you have in you.'" And the Bible says that the man left in great sorrow,

because the things of the world had attached themselves to him so strongly, and he was so condemned in his heart, and he loved the things of the world more than he loved the Lord. The result from this: Sorrow. The more of the world that there is in us, the less of the Word there is in us. The less Word there is, the less joy there is—and the further we are from truly having a relationship with Him.

How “locked in” to the love of worldly things are we? What parts of our lives keep us from truly serving God? Only you and God can answer that. What things in our lives are so attached to us that we would not leave them to go serve God? All of us have to take an inventory: how much Word do we have vs. how much world do we have? If you choose Word, God's love, goodness, and joy are spread through you. We can tell how strong we are in our faith by how much of His love we radiate. That love is obedience to His Word.

A true measure of where you are in your love for Christ is how you look at His Word and how you obey His Word. None of us are perfect, but the object is that from this day on, you walk with more and more of the Word in you - taking the Word in and purging the world out. Psalm 119, v. 47 tells us: *"I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved."* And that's really what this is all about. If you really love God and Jesus Christ, you will love His Word, and you will walk in that Word. The breakdowns that we go through, the backslides that we lapse into - we are to take them to God, and He will cover our sins. Because you set your love on God, He will deliver you.

God Bless

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sebastian Lucido', written in black ink.

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