

God Loves You
Things That Matter Most
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You may have heard that the journals of the late Madalyn Murray O'Hare have been released. And several times in those journals there was found the following entry.

“Will somebody somewhere please love me? Will somebody somewhere please love me?”

Mrs. O'Hare evidently never believed it, but somebody somewhere did love her. The Bible makes a number of amazing, startling declarations, but not is more amazing and startling than this, that the God of infinite wisdom, infinite power who created all that we see and all the uncharted solar systems that we can't see is a personal being who knows you, who understands and, yes, who loves you. That God should condescend to set his love upon Adam and Eve, mere creatures, is truly wonderful. That he could continue to love them after he rebelled against him, that is simply incomprehensible. It is certainly not what we would have imagined.

This is highlighted by the fact that in most of the religions concocted by men the gods are anything but loving. They may be distant and unknowable. In Hinduism, for example, the ultimate reality Brahmin is described as nerguna which means without attributes, without attributes.

In Buddhism the ultimate reality is a void or emptiness. In the Sanskrits you can read, “Why is there no obtaining of nirvana? Because nirvana is the realm of no thingness. If he is to realize nirvana he must pass beyond consciousness.”

Or the gods may not be simply distant, the gods that we have created in our own imaginations may be frightening. I know some missionaries to Japan, Ken and Doris Sunday are their names. They tell me that fear of the gods dominates the lives of many Shinto adherents and their whole religion is an attempt to appease these gods and whenever anything goes wrong in their life he was telling me.... Ken was telling me a story of a woman who went out to a well and the bucket had rusted through and she was so distressed and she went in and made sacrifices to her god and gods and sought to appease the gods who were angry with her. And ken tried to convince her that buckets just rust out after a time. It doesn't mean God is angry with you.

This is true of Anamis, as well. Galen van Reenan is an expert in animistic religion. He estimates that at least 40 percent of the world's population is animistic, that is describing characteristics living or human characteristics to in animate objects or to trees or, you know, animate objects, but not objects with personality.

And there is also a great fear in Animism of the gods when things go wrong or someone dies or someone is sick. It is assumed that the gods are angry.

Even those religions which believe God to be personal, religions such as Islam or Zoroastrianism, Parsi religion, that is the religion of my father, those religions do not conceive of God as a God of love, a God who knows us, who loves us, who desires our communion with him.

But God's Word declares God is a God of love. God is love the Scripture says. And we have heard this for so long that it loses its impact for us.

Perhaps you heard the story of missionaries in a village in Korea where the gospel had never been preached. It was noised abroad that they had come and practically the whole population gathered. The interest of the people was so great that the meeting continued until a late hour. Finally the missionaries closed the meeting and were shown into an adjoining room for the night, but the people didn't go away and the murmuring of their voices kept the missionaries from sleeping. Along about two o'clock one of them went back and said to the people, "Why don't you go home and go to sleep? It is very late and we are all tired."

The head man of the village answered in substance, "How can we sleep? You have told us that the supreme power is not an evil spirit trying to injure us, but a loving God who gave his only Son for our salvation and that if we turn away from our sins and trust him we have deliverance from fear, guidance in perplexities, comfort in our sorrow. How can we sleep after a message like this?"

Not only is it old news for us, but over time, as we are Christians for many years, I think it sometimes becomes suspect in our minds as we struggle with sick children, financial strain, marital problems, job stress, loneliness, besetting sins.

Christians can actually begin to doubt that God really does love them.

"If God loves me," we ask, "Why don't I get well? If God loves me, why am I lonely? If God loves me, why am I so tired? If God loves me, why am I so ineffective?"

So it is very good for us from time to time to back to the basics and to have our faith in God's love renewed and restored.

Listen to just some of the Scriptures on the love of God.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”¹

We read it in Psalm 103 today. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”²

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.”³ 1 John 3:1. What manner of love, what incredible love the Father has bestowed upon us.

The apostle Paul calls the Christians in Rome, “Beloved of God, called to be saints.”⁴ Romans 1:7.

“The God of love and peace shall be with you.”⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:11.

“God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,”⁶ 2 Thessalonians 2:16.

“What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?”⁷ Job 7:17.

But that is, in fact, what God has done. He has set his heart upon us.

A W Pink outlines the love of God this way. It is, first of all, uninfluenced.

“The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you.”⁸ Deuteronomy 7:7-8.

God’s love was spontaneous. He loved us before we had a particle of love for him.

What was there in me that could merit esteem or give the Creator delight?
‘Twas even so, Father, I ever must sing because it seemed good in thy sight.

Spontaneous. It is eternal.

“I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”⁹

¹ Psalm 103:13.

² Ibid.

³ 1 John 3:1.

⁴ Romans 1:17.

⁵ 2 Corinthians 13:11.

⁶ 2 Thessalonians 2:16.

⁷ Job 7:17.

⁸ Deuteronomy 7:7-8.

⁹ Jeremiah 31:3.

It is a sovereign love. Ephesians says it is according to the good pleasure of his will. It is an infinite love. Paul prayed that the saints might know the love of God which passes knowledge. It is beyond their comprehension. It passes knowledge.

The Puritan John Bryan wrote in 1743, “No tongue can fully express the infinitude of God’s love or any mind comprehend it. It passes knowledge,” Ephesians 3:19.

The most extensive ideas that a finite mind can frame about divine love are infinitely below its true nature. The heaven is not so far above the earth as the goodness of God is beyond the most raised conception which we are able to form of it. It is an ocean which swells higher than all the mountains of opposition in such as are the objects of it. It is a fountain from which flows all necessary good to all those who have an interest in it. It is infinite.

It is immutable, that is unchangeable. John 13, “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”¹⁰

That verse we quoted last week. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”¹¹

“Nay,” Paul says:

...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹²

It is an immutable, unchangeable love. It is a holy love. His love never conflicts with his holiness. God is light just as surely as God is love. 1 John 1:5. God is light just as surely as 1 John 4:8 God is love.

It is gracious. God so loved that he gave. It is a gracious love. It is a giving love.

J I Packer summarizes God’s love this way. “He knows me as a friend, one who loved me and there is no moment when his eye is off me or his attention is distracted from me. And no moment, therefore, when his care falters.”

This is momentous knowledge. This is unspeakable comfort. Or there is unspeakable comfort, the sort of comfort that energizes in knowing that God is constantly taking knowledge of me in love and watching over me for my good.

¹⁰ John 13:1.

¹¹ Romans 8:35.

¹² Romans 8:37-39.

There is tremendous relief in knowing that his love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me so that no discovery now can disillusion him about me.

And when we speak of God's love we must say, of course, that God's love was incarnated in Jesus Christ.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”¹³

He is the express image of his person.

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”¹⁴

“I and the Father are one,”¹⁵ Jesus said.

If you ever begin to doubt God's love for you, Christian, listen. If you ever begin to doubt God's love for you, you go back to the gospels and you read about the love of Christ. Look at, for example, Matthew chapter nine verse 35.

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."¹⁶

He was moved with compassion and he urged his disciples to pray that the Lord would send laborers into his harvest. Have a part in this great work. Interceded that laborers might go forth.

Look at Matthew 14. Or listen as I read Matthew 14 verse 13.

“When Jesus heard it [that is heard about the death of John the Baptist] He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.”¹⁷

¹³ John 1:18.

¹⁴ John 14:9.

¹⁵ John 8:16.

¹⁶ Matthew 9:35-38.

¹⁷ Matthew 14:13-14.

And then chapter 15 verse 32. “Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, ‘I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.’”¹⁸

[?] with their spiritual condition, not with their spiritual need alone, he was concerned with their physical needs that they not faint on the way. They had been with him so long these three days and hadn’t had food.

When I think of Christ’s compassion my mind always goes back to the incident with Jairus and his daughter. You know the story Jairus is ruler of the synagogue and is a leader amongst his people. His daughter was very sick and near death and he went to find Jesus and sought him out and he found him and he said, “My daughter is dying. Come and touch her that you may heal her.”

And remember what happened. On the way there a woman came to Jesus, a woman who had had an issue of blood for years and had had a problem, has not been able to... and she spent all her living on physicians and no one had been able to cure this. And she thought to her self, well, if I could just touch the hem of his garment. She knew in her heart, if I could just get close enough to touch the hem of his garment, I know that I will be healed.

And so Jairus is coming with Jesus and there is Jesus’ disciples around him and there is a ruckus and suddenly this woman comes up and touches Jesus’ garment and she feels immediately that she has been healed. And Jesus stops and turns around and says, “Who touched me?”

And the disciples are, “Who touched you? What do you mean? Everybody is mobbing you?”

“No, no. I perceive that power has gone out of me. I perceive that virtue or power has gone out of me.”

And he sees the woman and he says, “Woman, what have you done? Tell me your story?”

And she falls down before him and tells what has happened.

All this takes time.

And here is Jairus sitting there thinking, my daughter is dying.

And, sure enough, in that process someone comes from Jairus’ home and says, “Don’t trouble the master anymore. Your daughter is dead.”

¹⁸ Matthew 15:32.

And the Scripture says immediately Jesus turned to him and said, “Be not afraid, only believe.”

He knew what that news meant to Jairus. Be not afraid, only believe.

And then he goes to the house. Do you remember what happened? The people were wailing there at the door because the girl had died. And he said, “Don’t be afraid or don’t...” he said, “Don’t weep. The damsel is not dead. She sleeps.” And they laughed him to scorn.

He sent everyone out. He went in with, I think, Peter, James and John and the woman, the mother and her... and the husband and he took the girl by the hand and he said to her, “Talitha cumi.” That is Aramaic. It is, “Young girl, arise.”

And this 12 year old girl who had died gets up. And the family is overjoyed, of course. And then here it is again. Jesus turns to the parent and says, “Get her something to eat. Get her something to eat.”

He knew that she needed sustenance and that probably was the last thing they would think of.

But what an indication of the compassion of Christ, the love of Christ? He knows our frame. He knows our need. And he cares about us individually.

A few things reveal a man’s heart as well as what brings him to tears. Jesus wept as he entered into the grief of Mary and Martha over the death of their brother Lazarus. He wept as he entered into their grief. He knew he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. He wept out of empathy with them. He knew what they were suffering. He wept as he looked at the city of Jerusalem.

Now as he drew near he saw the city and wept over it saying, “If you had known even you especially in your day the things that make for your peace. But now they are hidden from your eyes,” Luke 19:41-42.

He wept over the city. Why? Because they rejected him and he saw what was coming.

Notice that God’s love extends to all mankind. God’s love extends to all mankind. Jesus loved the rich young ruler even though the rich young ruler rejected Jesus and was not willing to come and take up his cross and follow him. The Scripture says, “Jesus, beholding him loved him.”¹⁹

Presbyterian theologian W G T Shedd puts it this way. “Every human being, whatever his moral character is an object of benevolence and paternal concern to his maker. Even when he is transgressing the divine law, the divine hand that made him holds him in existence, crowns his life with blessing, makes the sun to shine upon him and the rain to

¹⁹ Mark 10:21.

fall upon his broad acres as if he were a child in the high and tender meaning of the word. The feeling of displeasure with which God regards sin belongs to his pure and perfect nature and it is impossible for him to exist without it. It is no more optional with him to abhor iniquity than it is to be omnipotent or omnipresent. God must from his very nature be all powerful and in every place. And for the same reason he must react against evil wherever it exists. But at the same time he has no malice in his nature. He wishes well to every creature whom he has made. He cherishes a benevolence and in this sense a paternal feeling towards every rational spirit. The Creator can feel a natural and necessary abhorrence of the sinner's sin while yet he feels an infinite compassion for the sinner's soul."

Do you see it? See, what the world doesn't understand about Christian love. We can say murder is wicked and people who murder should be put to death. Capital punishment is biblical. But that doesn't mean we don't care about these people. That doesn't mean our heart doesn't go out to them.

And just as a wise judge is a good judge who must sentence a man to death or to imprisonment, he doesn't take pleasure in it. He doesn't enjoy it. He wishes he didn't have to do it, but because of justice he has to.

Parents, you think you parents... Children, you think your parents don't love you when they spank you, when they discipline you? It is because they love you that they do that.

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Why will you die? He reasons with us. Why will you die?

But God's love is particularly great for his sheep. Yes, he has a general love for all his creatures, but his love is particularly great for his sheep.

I heard Piper, John Piper speak at PCA general assembly this year and Piper said in his sermon that in conveying the difference between God's general love and his particular love for his saints, he explains to his congregation to the women of his congregation he says, "But you know that I love you as your pastor. I have a general love for you. But you also understand that my love for you is not like my love for my wife. And you are grateful that it isn't. I have a particular love for her."

And that is the way God's love is with his sheep. Of course he has a general love for mankind. He tells us to love our enemies and he wouldn't ask us to do what he himself would not do. [?] right and just. But he has a particular love for his sheep. He gave his life for his bride, for his Church.

Jesus prayed, John 17, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."²⁰

²⁰ John 17:9.

The clearest manifestation of God's love for us was when Christ his Son lay down his life for his sheep. What a great love for his sheep must that be that it overcame even the desire for self preservation, the desire to be free of pain.

Frederick Ferarr in his book *The Life of Christ* writes about crucifixion. A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of horrible and ghastly... of what is horrible and ghastly, dizziness, cramps, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds, all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all. But all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness.

And he goes on to describe the pain of the cross. But you understand that the physical agony was not the worst part of the crucifixion. I hope you understand, the physical agony was not the worst part of the crucifixion. For the sinless, spotless Lamb who had never known his Father's displeasure, who had been with him from all eternity, who had always known the Father's face shining upon him, for him now to be despised and rejected and to have the Father turn away his face and leave him there alone without sustaining him and encouraging him and comforting him and walking through that valley of the shadow of death with him. That was the greatest pain.

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"²¹

He said that that we might get an insight into what he was feeling. He was, indeed, feeling forsaken of his Father.

To be made sin, God made him to be sin for us, he who knew no sin. Can you imagine?

Close your eyes just for a second. Close your eyes for a few seconds. Try to imagine for a moment the unimaginable. Imagine that you have perished without Christ. Imagine that you have left this earth without Christ and you are now to suffer the wrath of a holy God. You are under God's wrath and curse. You are no longer in fellowship with him.

You may open your eyes. If you who have never been with the Father, you who are not holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, if you shrink in horror from the thought of being separated from God and under his wrath and curse, with what horror must the Son of God have contemplated and even endured that?

How could he do it? How could he possibly do it? What could possibly induce him to accept that wrath of his Father and to not call for those angels to deliver him from the cross? What could possibly induce him to endure voluntarily such anguish of soul? You know then answer? Love for you. That is it. That is it. Love for you. Love for me. Love for his sheep.

²¹ Matthew 27:46.

See there, such love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crown.

“Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”²²

The Scripture speaks of the love of Christ which passes knowledge. And what of the Father’s love? If it was hard for Isaac to be led to the altar and bound, what of Abraham? Do you think it was a light thing, painless? You parents, do you not think that your son’s cry would read the innermost depths of your heart?

What possible motivation, again? God’s love for you. His love for you is so great he was willing to endure that.

Oh, love God, how strong and true,
Eternal and yet ever new,
Uncomprehended and unbought,
Beyond all knowledge and all thought.
Oh, wide embracing, wondrous love.
We read thee in the sky above.
We read thee in the earth below
And see the swells and streams that flow.
We read thee best in him who came
To bear for us the cross of shame.
Sent by the Father from on high,
Our life to live, or death to die.

Now, quickly the implications of such love. Think for a few moment about the implications of such love. If God loves you so much then think about it. He must also care about your daily problems and heart aches. And he... the Scripture says he does.

1 Peter 5:7, “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”²³

The Greek word there, μελει (me’-lay)to be concerned about. He is concerned about. God, you are concerned about me?

“Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”²⁴

Many of you have email access. Do you have things going on in your life? You have kids who live across the country or family members, you might drop them an email, let them know what is going on, so and so is sick, so and so... husband lost his job. Please pray. You are in touch.

We have a high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmity. And

²² 2 Corinthians 8:9.

²³ 1 Peter 5:7.

²⁴ Ibid.

everything that happens in your life is filtered through his hand of love which is our next one, an implication.

If, indeed, he loves us this much, then everything that happens must be for our good.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”²⁵

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”²⁶

In other words, the greater includes the lesser.

Ladies, everything that comes your way comes in love, for your welfare and his glory because he filters it.

Of course, Satan means it for evil, perhaps, but God takes it and filters and it means it for good. Paul’s thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. What did God say?

“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”²⁷

It was a message from God, lest he should be exalted above measure. God took Satan’s evil and turned it for good.

Everything that comes your way comes through the hands of a loving God. That sickness, that tragedy, that burden, a chef mixes together those distasteful ingredient and brings out something wonderful, he loves doing that in your life.

Spurgeon visited a man who had a weather vane that said, “God is love.”

Spurgeon took issue with it and Spurgeon, you know, the great Baptist preacher of the 19th century. Spurgeon said, “What are you saying? God’s love is variable like the wind?”

And he said, “Oh, no. What I mean is whichever way the wind blows God is love.”

He who loved you when he sent his Son to die for you loves you still. I don’t know why that trial has come to pass in your life, but I know that you will know one day. When you love somebody deeply you don’t want harm to come to him or to her. Right? When you love someone deeply you don’t want harm to come to him or her.

Now imagine if you had unbounded love and unbounded power. See, our problem is our love is not unbounded. Our power is limited. God does not.

²⁵ Romans 8:28.

²⁶ Romans 8:32.

²⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:9.

And then the affect of such love upon us. First of all, it is a reminder and consolation. When you begin to wonder if God really cares, remember the cross. When the circumstances of your life seem to be shouting that God does not care about you, that he doesn't love you, that he doesn't even know about your problem. Are you going to believe the accuser, the father of lies? Or are you going to believe God?

God loved Joseph when he was in that Egyptian jail. God loved David in that cave of Adullam. God loved Job on that dung heap. God loved Paul in that dungeon.

“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”²⁸

It is faith that glorifies God.

“Without faith it is impossible to please him.”²⁹

It is faith that glorifies him. When you are in that fiery furnace, that is when you need to trust him.

“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”³⁰

And it is an example to us. The effect of such love upon us, it is a reminder and a consolation and it is an example.

This, then, is what Jesus means when he says, “Love one another as I have loved you.”³¹

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”³²

It means sacrifice. It means unconditionally. It means not just when the object of my affection is lovable. Unconditional love, agape love.

And, thirdly, here is a motivation to reach the lost. Listen once again to shed. He says, “It is possible to cherish a religiousness that is so selfish, so destitute of warm and disinterested love for human welfare as to deserve condemnation. This is the weak side. This is the great defect in some very interesting phases of religious character.

“Look at the medieval monk and his severe spiritual experiences. He is constantly occupied with a salvation of his soul. He thinks of nothing else and he lives for nothing else. And yet in finding his life he loses it. All these experiences are a refined form of

²⁸ Romans 8:18.

²⁹ Hebrews 11:6.

³⁰ Job 13:15. 4

³¹ John 13:34; 15:12.

³² Ephesians 5:25.

self love. He has merely transferred his self seeking from time to eternity. What he needs is to love others as he loves himself, to break out from his seclusion and preach the gospel to his fellow men. Having freely received he should freely give.”

Hudson Taylor examining young volunteers for the mission field, they came and they gave him all these reasons why they wanted to go on the mission field and he stopped them and he said, “Listen, none of these things are going to keep you there once you get there and all this troubles start to come, none of the reasons you have given me. There is only one. The love of Christ constrains us. The love of Christ constrains us. That is what is going to keep you there through the hard times. The love of Christ constrains.”

I am afraid that many modern Christians have become as ineffective in evangelism as the ascetic sheltered in a cave or monastery. Without adopting their piety we have embraced their separateness, not separation from the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of live, no, the world is too much with us. But we have effectively sheltered ourselves from personal interaction with the lost.

Think about it. Unsaved people rarely set foot in our homes nor we in theirs. How far have we come from our master who came to seek and save the lost who spent so much time with the lost, so much time with the sinners that he was maligned? He is a friend of prostitutes and thieves and drunkards.

Are you in danger of being accused of spending too much time with prostitutes, thieves and drunkards, with the ungodly, with the sinners of this world?

The love of God should motivate us not only to love the lost, the love of God should motivate us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

1 John 4:11, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”³³

“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”³⁴ 1 John 3:16.

You say, “Well, I would lay down my life for my brethren.”

All right, if you would do the great thing, will you do the small? The call, the card, the visit, the helping hand?

“Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”³⁵

The love of God should motivate you to go to a brother who has offended you. You say you love God? The love of God should motivate you to go to a brother who has offended you and say, “Brother, you offended me. Here is how. Let’s get right.”

³³ 1 John 4:11.

³⁴ 1 John 3:16.

³⁵ Matthew 25:40.

The love of God should motivate you to go to a brother that you think has been offended by you.

The sacrificial love of God as expressed at Calvary should motivate us to willingly give up anything for him, anything for him.

Whatsoever I thankfully receive as a token of God's love to me, I part with contentedly as a token of my love to him, said Theophilus Gail. Whatsoever I thankfully receive as a token of God's love to me, I part with contentedly as a token of my love to him.

And this, by the way, should include family members and dear friends called to the mission field, for example.

Sixth, it should cause us to want to please the one who loved us so much. The implications of all this, it should cause us to want to please the one who loves us so much. We love him. Why? Because he first loved us.

If you love me, Jesus said, if you really love what? Keep my commandments.

Religion says do right to merit life. Christ says be holy because you love me. I don't want my bride involved in sin. I want her to be chaste and holy, set apart. There should be a difference between us and the world.

If you truly love him, you won't want to sin, for his sake.

Martin Luther, you know, as he preached salvation by grace and faith alone people objected.

"Dr. Luther, if what you are saying is true, then we may live as we want."

Luther said, "That's right. Now what do you want?"

Be holy as your father in heaven is holy.

I want to be like Christ. That is what I want.

How about it? How about you? Do you really believe that God loves you? Do you really believe it?

I know you may intellectually accept it. You heard that from the time you were a toddler, a baby. But do you really believe?

D L Moody in one of his trips to England met a young boy preacher, they called him the boy preacher of England, Henry Moorehouse. Moorehouse said to Moody, "Some time if I ever make it to Chicago, could I preach in your church there?"

And Moody said, “Well, ok,” not thinking Moorehouse would ever make it there.

And then he showed up. And the leaders of the church gave him permission to speak one night midweek, during the week. He preached on John 3:16. People wanted to hear more. They came back the next night. He preached on John 3:16. They came back the next night. He preached on John 3:16.

Moody’s wife said to him, “It is this Moorehouse. It is this Henry Moorehouse.”

He said, “Well, what is so special? What is he saying?”

She said, “Well, the God he is preaching is a God I can love. Your God, I don’t know.”

And so Moody went to hear Moorehouse. Moorehouse had taken the people from Genesis to Revelation showing in every place the love of God, the love of God, how he had bestowed his love upon the people, how he showed his love by sending prophet after prophet. And he brought them all the way through the Bible. And on the final night, Moorehouse said, “My friends, for a whole week I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you. But I cannot do it with this poor stammering tongue. If I could borrow Jacob’s ladder and climb up into heaven and ask Gabriel who stands in the presence of the almighty to tell me how much the Father loves this world, how much love the Father has for the world, all that Gabriel would be able to say to me is, ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’”³⁶

Moody there sitting in the congregation said, “I never knew up to that time that God loved us so much. This heart of mine began to thaw out. I could not keep back the tears. I just drank it in.”

And years later Moody’s advice to his successor was Dr. Eerdmann, give they people the importance of love. If they are right here, they will be right 95 percent of the time.

Do you know it in your heart?

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”³⁷

Let’s pray.

Oh Father, drive it home to us, Lord. Our hearts are so hard. We are so callous. We question and doubt. And there are circumstances in our life which suggest that you are not with us, that you don’t care, you have departed. Oh Father, drive it home. Put your

³⁶ John 3:16.

³⁷ Isaiah 41:10.

truth deep in our hearts. Let us know the love of God that passes knowledge. Give us a taste of it. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Our closing hymn...