

Title:    **“THOU HAST LOVED THEM**  
                  **AS**  
                  **THOU HAST LOVED ME”**

Text:       John 17:23

Subject:   *God's Everlasting Love for His Elect*

Date:       Sunday Morning — April 3, 2011

Tape:       John #115

Reading:   *1 John 4:7-21*

Introduction:

Turn with me to John 17:23. I want to talk to you about the love of God for us. As you know, John 17 contains our Lord's prayer for us as our great High Priest. It not only records His desires for His people, which cannot and will not be denied (What Christ desires, Christ shall have!), but this great, intercessory prayer is a very instructive portion of Holy Scripture, filled with Gospel truth. A verse 23 teaches us something about God's love for His elect that is simply astounding. Let's read it together.

(John 17:23) “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

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This verse is full of mysteries I will never be able to comprehend or explain. It is itself a profound volume of theology.

**“I IN THEM”** — The Lord Jesus Christ is in us in a distinctive, unique, saving way. Obviously, as the omnipresent God, Christ is in all the world. As the Creator of all men, He is in all men, giving all the light of conscience by which all are found guilty and condemned from within themselves. As the incarnate God, as a man, our Lord Jesus was once here, dwelling among men. — *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us!”* These things John tells us in chapter one.

(John 1:1-5) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In Him was life; and the life was the

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light of men. (5) And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

(John 1:9-11) “*That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (10) He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. (11) He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

(John 1:14) “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

But when our Lord says, “*I in them,*” He is telling us that He is in every believing sinner in a special, gracious manner. — **IN REGENERATION**, the new birth, He is revealed in us and to us. Christ is formed in us when we are born of God. He enters into the chosen, redeemed soul, taking possession of His

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ransomed one by almighty grace, establishes His throne in the heart, communicates His grace, and grants fellowship with Himself, and dwells in the heart. He is to every heaven born soul, — “*Christ in you, the hope of glory!*” He is in us by His Spirit, yes. But our text says more. He is personally in us! He is in us as...

- The King in His kingdom.
- The Head in His members.
- The Master in His house.

What wondrous, condescending grace! Christ is in us! Therefore, **because He who is Holiness** dwells in us, we have Holiness within, that Holy Thing which is born of God and cannot sin. **Because He who is Light** dwells within, we have Light and shall never walk in darkness. **Because He who is Life** dwells within, we have Life, Eternal Life, within and shall never perish. Because Christ dwells within us now in grace, He shall dwell in us forever in glory!

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**“I IN THEM AND THOU IN ME”** — God the Father is in Christ, not only as one with Him in the Holy Trinity, but also as our God-man Mediator. The Father is in the Son communicating all grace to us through Him. **The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in Christ the Mediator in all the fulness of the eternal Godhead.** — *“In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily.”* The Father is in the Son graciously now and will show Himself in and through Him and Him alone forever. The Father will show Himself glorious in the Son throughout the endless ages of eternity!

*“I in them and thou in Me **THAT THEY MAY BE MADE PERFECT IN ONE.**”* — All this fulness of God in Christ and of Christ in His people is designed for this purpose and shall accomplish it.

- Because God was in Christ, all His people were made perfect **in justification** when that man who is God died as our Substitute at Calvary!

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- Because this Christ, in whom all the fulness of God dwells, dwells in us we are made perfect **in sanctification**. He has made us holy, and righteous, — *“meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”*
- Because Christ is both in the Father and in us, because He is in glory, because He is within the veil, because His blood speaks there for us, we shall soon drop this robe of flesh and be made perfect **in glory!** Then we shall be perfect in knowledge, in holiness, in peace, joy and love.
- Because this great, glorious, gracious, omnipotent Christ is in us and all God’s elect are in Him, **the number of the saved in glory shall be perfect**, complete. Not one shall be missing. And we shall be perfectly one!

*“I in them and thou in Me that they may be made perfect in one **AND THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW THAT THOU HAST SENT ME.**”* — We

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sometimes sing, “Everybody ought to know, Everybody ought to know, Everybody ought to know, who Jesus is!” Let me tell you something, when He gets done, everybody will know who He is!

Now, watch this...

*“I in them and thou in Me that they may be made perfect in one and that the world may know that thou hast sent Me **AND HAST LOVED THEM, AS THOU HAST LOVED ME.**” — “Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” **Imagine that! What an astounding word this is from our God and Savior!** — “Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.”*

That is what I want to talk to you about today. “*Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.*”

- The Father loved Christ as His own Son, and loved Him **as our Mediator** from everlasting.
- He loved Him **when He assumed our humanity.**

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- The Father loved Him while He walked on this earth as His obedient Son, fulfilling all righteousness for us!
- Oh, how the Father loved the Son, even when He was made to be sin for us, especially when He was made to be sin for us, though justice demanded that He both slaughter Him and abandon Him, pouring out all the horror of His holy wrath and fury upon Him!

The instances and demonstrations of the Father’s love to the Son are marvelous to behold. **Because the Father loves the Son as our Mediator He has put all things into His hands, trusting Him with all His glory and all the people of His love!** He has made Him head over all things, put all things under His feet, and determined that in all things He shall have the preeminence!

**The Father’s love for the Son is an eternal, immutable, indestructible love of complacency and delight.** It will last forever! That I have no



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difficulty understanding. But what our Lord tells us here is infinitely gracious and glorious beyond my highest imagination...

**Proposition:** Our Lord Jesus here declares that God the Father loves us, His people, in exactly the same way as He loves Him!

He loves us not merely as His creatures (like a man loves his dog), not merely as the descendants of Adam (as a man loves a man), and certainly not as considered in ourselves (as a man despises and hates his most implacable, obnoxious enemy). But **God loves us in His Son, for the sake of His Son, as He loves His Son!**

Do you ask, “How God does God display such love for us?” Behold how He loved us! — **“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!”** — Does He indeed love us as He loves His own darling Son?

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- Did He choose Christ as our Mediator (Isaiah 42:1-4)? — So He chose us (Ephesians 1:3-6).
- Did the Father make a covenant with the Son before the world began (Psalm 89:28)? — So He made a covenant with us (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:38-40).
- Did the Father raise the Son from the dead, making Him free from sin (1 Peter 4:1-2)? — So He has raised us up from the dead, making us free from sin (Romans 8:1-4).
- Did the Father supply the Son with all things in daily providence while He walked on earth? — So He supplies us!
- Did the Father send His Spirit and His angels to minister to His Son when He was tempted? — So He delivers us out of all our temptations.
- Does the Father perform all things for the Son? — So our God performs all things for us!
- Does the Father love the Son from everlasting? — So He loves us!

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- Does the Father accept the Son? — So He accepts us!
- Does the Father love the Son with utmost pleasure, satisfaction, and delight? — So He loves me! — *“Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me!”*

Near, so very near to God, nearer I cannot be.  
For in the person of His Son, I am as near as He!  
Dear, so very dear to God, dearer I cannot be,  
For in the person of His Son, I am as dear as He!

Let my heart be forever humbled, ravished, inspired,  
and filled with praise to my God for His great love to  
me. Let my soul be forever exultant, joyful, and at  
peace! Let my life be forever and alone His!

**What a great, glorious Gospel truth we have here.**  
It is something that could never be known except by  
divine revelation. **How honoring to our God!** It is  
just like Him. **How comforting to our souls!** To the

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extent that we are able to believe God’s Revelation, our souls shall be comforted.

Our great all-glorious Savior says, — *“Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”* Thus, He tells us that **God our Father loves His elect in Christ as He loves Christ Himself!** That is such an amazing, stupendous thing that were it not written in Holy Scripture, I would not dare to think it, much less speak it. But there it stands. And, oh, how my soul rejoices in it. **It is our Savior’s desire and purpose is that the whole world shall know that God loves us as He loves Him; and so it shall be!** A. W. Pink wrote...

“When God’s elect have all been gathered together in one (John 11:52), when the glory which Christ received from the Father has been imparted to them, when they shall have been made perfect in one, then shall the world have such a clear demonstration of God’s power, grace and love toward His people, that they shall

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*know that the One who died to make this glorious union possible was the sent One of the Father, and that they had been loved by the Father as had the Son, for ‘When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory’ (Colossians 3:4); then ‘he shall come to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe...in that day’ (2 Thessalonians 1:10).”*

**“AS”**

That little word, “*as*,” means “just as,” “even as,” in proportion as,” “to the same degree as.” When our Lord says, “*Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me*,” this great, little word “*as*” implies at least these three things.

**SAME REASON**

*First*, there is **a similarity of cause** between God’s love for Christ and His love for us. — “*Thou hast*

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*loved them, as thou hast loved me.*”The Lord God loves us for the same reason He loves His dear Son.

**God loves us in Christ.** — God’s love is not a universal sentiment for all men. God’s love is in Christ. Apart from Christ, God is a consuming fire. This needs to be understood. These days, men everywhere are taught and universally presume that God loves them. Nothing could be further from the truth. **Until you are united to Christ by faith, you have no reason to imagine that God loves you.** Our faith in Christ does not cause God to love us. Our faith is the fruit and result of God’s eternal love for us. But, until a sinner trusts Christ, only the wrath of God is revealed and known to him; and the wrath of God is upon him. Did you hear that? — Until you take refuge in Christ, God’s wrath is upon you!

(John 3:36) “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on Him.”

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(Ephesians 2:3) “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

**God loves us for Christ’s sake.**

**Thomas Manton** wrote, “The elect are made lovely, and fit to be accepted by God, only by Jesus Christ...The ground of all that love God beareth to us is in Christ.”

We are “**accepted in the beloved.**” God accepts our faith, our worship, our works, and our persons only because of Christ, because we are in Christ and because of what Christ has done for us.

**And God the Father loves us for the same reason that He loves His Son as our Mediator.** — Be sure you get this. It will help you. God the Father does not

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love us for the same reason that He loves His Son as His Son. He loves His Son as His Son necessarily because His Son is one with Him in perfection and praise. He cannot but love Christ as God. Else He would cease to love Himself. But **God’s love for Christ as our Mediator is based upon His perfect obedience unto God as our Mediator** (John 10:14-17).

(John 10:14-17) “I am the good shepherd, and know My *sheep*, and am known of mine. (15) As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. (16) And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. (17) Therefore doth My Father love me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again.”

Do you understand what our Lord is teaching us here? **God’s love for us is free and, at the same,**



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**time fully deserved!** He said, “*I will love them freely*” (Hosea 14:4). Yet, His love, mercy, grace, and salvation flow to us upon the grounds of Christ’s obedience as our Substitute. He is merciful and gracious to us, forgiving us of all sin, and loves us “*for Christ’s sake*” (Ephesians 4:32-5:2). God the Father looked upon His Son from eternity as our perfect, obedient Mediator, and for the sake of His Son loved us with an everlasting love.

“God could not love us with honor to Himself, if His wisdom had not found out this way of loving us in Christ...God was resolved to manifest an infinite love to man, but He would still manifest an infinite hatred against sin; which could not be more fully manifested than by making Christ the ground of our reconciliation...**How could the holy God, the just God...love such vile and unworthy creatures as we are? The question is answered — He loveth us in Christ, and for Christ’s sake.**”

**Thomas Manton**

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**SAME WAY**

*Second*, this word “*as*” suggests **a similarity of love**. **The Lord God loves His people in the same way as He loves His Son**. Again, let me stress the fact that our Savior is here comparing the Father’s love for Him as our Mediator to His love for His elect. Christ, as our Mediator, is the first object of God’s love. He loved Christ as the Head of His mystical Body, the Church, and us as members. He loved Christ for His own sake. He loves us for Christ’s sake.

**God the Father loved Christ the God-man as “the express image of His person”** (Hebrews 1:3). So He loves His people who in Christ have been (and those who yet must be) renewed “*after the image of Him*” (Colossians 3:10; 2 Peter 1:4). He loves Christ as His only begotten Son; and He loves us in Christ as His adopted sons (1 John 3:1). **Because the Savior says, “Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me,” we are assured that...**

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1. **God loves His elect freely.** — As we have already seen, the Lord Jesus Christ earned His Father’s love as a man by His mediatorial obedience. Yet, when our Savior came into the world, the Lord God loved the Child freely, delighting in Him even before He had fulfilled His will (Isaiah 42:1). — He is that One of whom the Father says, “*In Whom My soul delighteth!*” Even so, He loves us freely (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Hosea 14:4).

(Deuteronomy 7:7-8) “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: (8) But because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

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(Hosea 14:4) “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from Him.”

2. **God loves us tenderly and affectionately.** — As the Father’s love for His Son is a tender, indescribably affectionate love, so is His love for us (Isaiah 62:5; Zechariah 2:8).

(Isaiah 62:5) “For *as* a young man marrieth a virgin, *so* shall thy sons marry thee: and *as* the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, *so* shall thy God rejoice over thee.”

(Zechariah 2:8) “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath He sent Me unto the nations which spoiled you: for He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.”

3. **God’s love for His elect is immutable.** — The Lord willing, I will say more about this later. For now, let me simply remind you that there is no

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possibility of change in our God (Malachi 3:6, James 1:17). God’s love does not change. It cannot be taken from us; and it cannot be destroyed, neither by us nor by hell itself (Romans 8:35-39).

**TOZER’S BLASPHEMY**

The famous Arminian preacher, founder of the Christian Missionary Alliance denomination, **A.W. Tozer**, made these statements about the love of God. They are shocking, but they accurately express what the whole religious world believes. — “God must love and will love man until hell has erased the last trace of the remaining image (of God in Him). Men are lost now. But they are still loved of God...I believe that God now loves all lost men...(But) the day will come when lost man will no longer be loved by God Almighty...I believe the time will come when God will no longer love lost human beings.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Tozer Pulpit, Volume 8, pp 23-25

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Such fickle, useless love may be worthy of fickle, useless man, but not of our great and glorious Lord God. **Our God does not love today and hate tomorrow!** His love is unchangeable!

**SAME RESULTS**

*Thirdly*, our Lord intends for us to understand that there is **a similarity of results**, that the effects and fruits, the consequences of God’s love to Him and His elect are alike.

- Love that has no effect and bears no fruit is lip-love; and lip-love is useless love.
- Love that is never known by the one loved is a frustrated passion that destroys one’s own peace and happiness.
- Love that never sees benefit and blessing upon its object, but only misery and woe, is a tormenting love.

But that does not describe the love of God. Oh, no, a thousand times no! God’s love toward us, like His love toward His Son as our Mediator, is an effectual,

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fruitful, beneficial love. Here are five things mutually enjoyed by Christ and His people as the fruit and effect of God’s love.

1. **THE REVELATION OF SECRETS** — All things are open, common knowledge between people who love one another. As all things are manifest and made known to the Son as our Mediator by the Father (John 1:18; 5:20), so all things are manifest and made known to God’s elect by the Son (John 14:21; 15:15).

(John 1:18) “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

(John 5:20) “For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will show Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.”

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(John 14:21) “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 will manifest myself to him.”

(John 15:15) “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.”

2. **THE BESTOWMENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

— God’s love is a bounteous love. He has given all things to the Son (John 3:34-35; 17:2; Ephesians 4:8); and He has given all His people all spiritual, heavenly gifts in His Son (Ephesians 1:3).

(John 3:34-35) “For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto Him*. (35) The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand.”



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(John 17:2) “As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him.”

(Ephesians 4:8) “Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

(Ephesians 1:3) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ.”

3. **STRENGTH AND PROTECTION IN LIFE** —  
As the Lord Jesus was upheld, strengthened, and protected throughout the days of His obedience to do His Father’s will (Isaiah 42:1), so the Lord God upholds, strengthens, and protects us, the objects of His love, throughout our days of obedience in this world (2 Corinthians 12:9).

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(Isaiah 42:1) “Behold My servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom My soul delighteth*; I have put My spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”

(2 Corinthians 12:9) “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

4. **ACCEPTANCE OF ALL WE DO FOR HIM** — Everything that Christ did for God was accepted and well-pleasing to Him because He loved Him (Ephesians 5:2). And everything we do for God is accepted and well-pleasing to God through the merits of Christ because He loves us as He loved Him (1 Peter 2:5). **God our Father accepts our paltry efforts at serving and pleasing Him for two reasons.**

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(Ephesians 5:2) “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

(1 Peter 2:5) “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

- He accepts our poor, sin stained obedience upon the merit of Christ’s perfect obedience.
- He accepts our efforts at pleasing Him because of His fatherly love for us in Christ.

**Illustration:** *Faith’s Dandelions*

5. **HONOR AND EXALTATION** — The Lord Jesus was honored and highly exalted by God the Father as the object of His love. He was given preeminence in, possession of, and power over all things (Psalm 2:7-8; Hebrews 1:8). The Lord God,

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our heavenly Father, will do the same for us (John 12:26; Revelation 3:21).

(Psalms 2:7-8) “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art My* Son; this day have I begotten thee. (8) Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.”

(John 12:26) “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve me, him will My Father honour.”

(Hebrews 1:8) “But unto the Son He *saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom.”

(Revelation 3:21) “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also

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overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.”

**Hear the Son of God, my brothers and sisters in this world, and rejoice!** — *“Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me!”* — What a pillow upon which to rest our heads! — What a comfort for our poor, aching hearts! — What a glorious theme for daily meditation! — What a cause for adoration, praise, and worship!

We may be despised, misunderstood, abused, and hated of men, but we are loved of God! God our Father loves us even as He loves His darling Son; and He has so loved us from eternity!

(Romans 12:1-2) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.* (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that

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ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

**What would you give, what would you do to have the enjoyment and assurance of such love from God?** Perhaps, you are thinking, “Pastor, I would do anything to know the love of God like that.” Let Me ask you this — Would you do nothing to have it? That is what you must do, nothing. If you would rest in His love, simply trust the Son of God.

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(Romans 5:1-11) “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the

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love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (11) And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

(Ephesians 3:14-21) “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be

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**AS**  
**THOU HAST LOVED ME.”**

strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; (17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. (20) Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, (21) Unto Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

(Jude 1:21) “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

Amen.