

**"THE WORDS OF THE LORD ARE PURE WORDS, LIKE SILVER TRIED IN
A FURNACE OF EARTH, PURIFIED SEVEN TIMES.
YOU SHALL KEEP THEM, O LORD, YOU SHALL PRESERVE THEM FROM
THIS GENERATION FOREVER." (PSALM 12: 6 & 7)**

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“Jesus Christ Our Love” (Part III)

**“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails!” (1 Corinthians 13: 4 -7 & 8a)
*Emphasis Added***

“Hatred stirs up strife, but Love covers all sins.” (Proverbs 10:12) *Emphasis Added*

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8) *Emphasis Added*

Amen! and Amen!

I hear so much talk today among Christians about how terrible the unbelieving pagans are behaving in our country and around the world. We are blaming our moral decline as well as all of our other social ills on the court system, unbelieving politicians, and the mass of all other non-evangelical people. We blame them for ushering in abortion, pornography, gambling, and every other blight that we see on society today. We have become masters at finger pointing and placing the blame somewhere else, other than on ourselves. After all, we have convinced ourselves that we are the good guys. We Christians are the people who love God, obey God and love those around us. We are God’s favored people who represent Him on the earth. We set the example for the entire world to see and follow. To convince one’s self of just how pleased God is with us, one only need to point to all of our charitable works, our missions, our Christian schools, and our church buildings that dot the landscape. Look at our Christian television, radio and bookstores, as well as all of our church services, Bible conferences, and prayer meetings. Surely, we, among all people of the earth, are the favored of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Or, are we?

“These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands: I know, your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And, you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

And you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake, and have not become weary.

Never the less I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember Therefore, from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place ---- unless you repent.

(Revelation 2:1 – 5) Emphasis Added

Repent or else! Repent - - - or Else! Who was Jesus speaking to? Pagans? The unbelieving mass of people? Corrupt government or judicial officials? No! He was speaking to the Church! He was speaking to those who were heavily involved in good works. Those who were patient in their efforts and who hated evil. He was speaking to those who had persevered in the faith, had labored for His name's sake, and had not become weary. He was speaking to believers just like you and just like me. Make no mistake about it, my brothers, and sisters; Jesus was speaking to the church. And, He had a problem with the Church that was so serious that He warned them to "Repent or Else" He would remove their lampstand and leave them in the dark. Whatever this warning means in its fullness, I can promise you that it is not good news.

The one thing that Jesus held against the Church at Ephesus was their lack of Love. Their first love had faded away. No longer did they focus on Him and make Him the center of their affections. Rather they had become devoted to their practice of religion. They had turned their hearts desire away from Him and centered it on their works. They had become "body worshipers" and of course that leads to the worship of "self". I am sure that without realizing it, they had slowly drifted into the bondage of religion and lost their freedom in Christ. They still believed in Him. They still followed much of His teaching and they used His name in all that they did. Make no mistake about it; they were the equivalent of a modern day evangelical --- Bible believing church. There was only one problem --- They had left their First love. He was no longer First – their church was. He was no longer First – their programs were. I can easily imagine that they had become a people more devoted to their leadership and to their own church than to Christ. Who would have ever dreamed that they were in danger of being cast into spiritual darkness? They had clearly failed to obey God's first and great commandment. Let's review that commandment again ----

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:5 – 9 and Matthew 22: 37-38)

Dear saints, I plead with you to take seriously Father's Commandment here. Do not trust in your own heart. Self-confidence leads to "self deception". Self-deception leads to spiritual darkness. What appears to be light and righteousness is in many cases darkness and death. We may sincerely love our church, our pastor, and our fellow believers that we sit with each week. We may sincerely, from the depths of our own heart, love all of these things – and make no mistake about it – they are all good things. As long as they flow from the First and Great Commandment being manifested in our life, otherwise, all is for naught! What many call light and righteousness is darkness.

“And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness - - .” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15a) *Emphasis Added*

Our problem today is that we do not know the difference between “love” and “Love”. One is the fruit of man’s flesh or self, while the other is the fruit of God expressing Himself through us. One comes naturally, according to man’s affections (2 Corinthians 6:12), while the other is totally supernatural and only comes from God Himself. How can you tell the difference? In the flesh or natural mind you cannot tell the difference. The only way to differentiate between the love of man and the Love of God in man, is by the Spirit of God. Without God confirming Himself in you and in me, we are guaranteed deception. Listen to Jesus --- “for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5b)

Today we equate the Love of God to our love for family members and close friends. We equate the Love of God to our commitment to the local church of which we are apart. We equate the Love of God to our charitable works including everything from taking a covered dish to a sick friend, to taking baskets of food to the poor at Thanksgiving. Now all of these examples and much more, may in fact be God’s Love expressing Himself through us. However, these activities may be nothing more than good intentions expressed through our flesh. After all, even the unbelievers do the same. (Matthew 5:46 & 47)

I must confess that until recently I never gave any thought, much less prayer, to this subject of Love. I knew that I loved my family, my close friends, my church, and my country. If I were asked if I loved Jesus Christ, my answer would be an emphatic “of course I do”! As far as I was concerned the issue of Love, as it relates to my good standing with Father was settled. A spirit of deception had entered in, clouded my spiritual eyes, and deafened my spiritual ears. Left in that state, I was certain to be counted among those who our Lord spoke to at the Church at Ephesus. But thanks be to God He had not given up on me and He has not given up on you, dear reader:

“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;” (Philippians 1:6)

If we will just listen, our Father will speak to us. However, there comes a time when He will give us up to our deception (2 Thessalonians 2:11 & 12), if we continually refuse His counsel. I pray that none who are reading this message are counted among those who’s hearts no longer have a love of the Truth. Now, please allow me to share another personal example of Father’s dealings with me on this subject.

Several years ago, Father began to call me out of the institutional church. In the beginning, I was not at all aware of what He was doing with me. I find it more than interesting that as He called me out, He did so by addressing the issue of Love.

One Sunday morning I was on my way to church early, ahead of my wife Judy, to spend some time in prayer prior to the service. As I pulled out of our front gate, I was led to count every church between our farm gate and our church, which was about 7 or 8 miles away. I pulled into our church parking lot, turned off the engine and immediately I heard in my spirit the following; How many churches did you count? Five! How many of the Pastors or leaders of those churches have you taken the time to get to know? None! How many of the parishioners of those churches, many being your neighbors, have you taken the time to get to know? None! I then heard these words in my spirit: The reason that you

have not gotten to know your fellow believers is that you do not care about them. You are as cold as ice toward them. You have no love in your heart except for your own. You are void of My Love!

These words shook me, but I got out of the car, went on into the church, and practiced my religion. I heard the words, but at that time they had little impact on me. I was a hard case. But not too hard for God. He had already set a time for another encounter and it was fast approaching.

Over the years my Dad would occasionally ask Judy and I to join he and my mother on Sunday to go to church with them. I would always politely decline by explaining that I was actively involved in my own church and already committed for the Sunday in question. The truth was, I was part of a full gospel church that I believed was alive, and where God just might manifest Himself at any time, and if He did, I wanted to be there. Not only that, but I felt that Dad and Mother were part of an average main-line church that had nothing to offer me. After all, I was far more spiritually mature now and I certainly did not want to waste my time. When I think about how spiritually arrogant I was and how totally unaware of my condition that I was – it frightens me. I was in a spiritual prison, surrounded by religious spirits and loving every minute of it. Thank God for His mercy!

Sometime later, Dad called and during our conversation, he again asked if Judy and I would like to join he and Mother Sunday and visit Lexington Avenue Baptist Church, my childhood church. For some reason (I now know why) I did not immediately decline, but told him that I would let him know in a day or so. I later called and told him that we would join them on Sunday. I must confess, I was not looking forward to Sunday and I was already feeling withdrawal pain thinking about missing my own church and getting my spiritual fix for the upcoming week. Little did I know---

On Sunday, Judy and I picked up Mother and Dad and drove to the church. As we walked in, Dad asked if I would like to sit in the same pew that we sat in during my childhood years. I said that would be nice. Dad sat next to the aisle, I was next, then Mother and Judy – just like it was when my brother and I were growing up. Dad separated my brother and me so that we would not act up. Judy was sitting where my brother Drake sat. I was separated.

After taking our seat, an elderly lady in her 90's sat down behind us. Her name was Mrs. Gordon. She had taught me in Sunday School. Then in walked a man who had been my Boy Scout leader. Then another and another familiar face from 50+ years ago sat down around me. I cannot tell you one word that was spoken in the sermon. I cannot tell you what songs were sung. But what I can tell you is what happened in that pew was a God thing. I will attempt to describe what happened as best I can.

As the service started, my thoughts turned to my Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Gordon – old – in her 90's – sitting right behind me. Then, all of a sudden, I was unaware of the sounds around me. It was as if God parted a veil and came to me and allowed me to physically and emotionally “feel” His love for Mrs. Gordon. I placed both hands on the pew seat and held on as hard as I could. I fought back an overwhelming urge to wail out and release my sense of shame and unworthiness as I felt Father's Love for His daughter and at the same time saw my spiritual pride and absolute lack of His love in me. This went on for nearly an hour as Father directed me to one familiar face after another. When we left the church, I was spiritually drained and no one but Father and I knew what had happened that Sunday morning on a pew at Lexington Avenue Baptist Church in Danville, Kentucky. A very spiritual event had taken place. I was in a religious prison, being held captive by religious spirits of control, manipulation and domination. I was becoming just like them ---- until ---- my Father came to me, and unlocked my

prison door. My shackles dropped off and I stepped out into the freedom of my King – Jesus Christ. As I walked away from my boyhood church, where I had made a confession of faith and was baptized at 11 years of age, Martin Luther King’s famous words rang out in my spirit: Free at Last! Free at Last! Thank God Almighty, I am free at last!

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” (John 8:36) *Emphasis Added*

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2)

Dear saints, our God and Father has a problem with the people of the earth. And contrary to popular belief, His main problem is with His people. Those who claim to be His children -- Those who use the name of Jesus Christ. That includes you and that includes me. Father has no problem with the pagans. They are being true to their nature. He will deal with them in due time, and that time draws near. But first He must deal with His people, who, for the most part, are not being true to Who they claim to represent. He will judge us first!

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God.” (1 Peter 4:17)

Dear reader, God is not pleased with the overall behavior of His people. Yes, He will forgive us as He has promised to do (1John 1: 9 & 2 Chronicles 7:14), but He will not excuse our sin apart from repentance. What He has been doing in me personally is a form of loving judgment. He does not want me or you to end up in spiritual darkness. I believe He desires that after He deals with us, that we lovingly warn those around us. Our Father is no respecter of persons. He wants all of His people prepared to stand before Him with no shame in their heart.

God has an issue with His people, and that number One issue is LOVE!

“Let love be without hypocrisy.” (Romans 12:9)

“Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,” (1 Timothy 1:5 & 6).

When I continue, some very specific examples of our unloving behavior will be detailed. In the meantime, ask Father to lead and guide you into all Truth. Expect Him to do so.

God Bless,

Tom

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