

Session 6 Jesus Christ: To Him Who Loved Us

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

We're continuing with session six in this course called "Jesus Our Magnificent Obsession, Part Two." Whenever we have a conference, which is about every other week, I pause, but I'm ready to jump right back in the week after.

Tonight we're looking at this description of the thirty descriptions of Jesus. One of the most striking statements in the Bible is when we understand who it is that loves us and the measure to which He has committed His love to us. Because of love, He has committed Himself to the most extreme manifestations of His love—costly love for Him, and then love that exalts us to a measure that's really impossible for us to grasp in this age: how highly we've been exalted and how fully we've been cleansed.

FEEDING ON THE REVELATION OF JESUS WILL STRENGTHEN YOUR HEART

Paragraph A. Quick review. In Revelation 1-3, John shares a vision, highlighting thirty descriptions of Jesus and eighteen eternal rewards. Each one of these thirty descriptions and eighteen rewards communicates a very specific insight about Jesus. I mean, it doesn't get any better than Jesus revealing Jesus. These insights are necessary to equip us to overcome compromise. People struggle with compromise. I tell them, "Feed on the revelation of Jesus. It will strengthen your heart."

It equips us to endure persecution without quitting. Because it makes sense to endure when we see more clearly who He is, and it equips us to engage in partnership in a deeper way. We have more confidence to engage with Him because we know how deeply He wants to be a part of what He's doing. We take all this guilt, shame, and accusations of the enemy and we say no. We take our own lethargy, fatigue, or laziness and we say no. He really wants us involved in partnership, saying no to shame and no to lethargy. We'll rise up and be engaged with Him because He cares so deeply about us being engaged with Him.

"TO HIM WHO LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD"

Revelation 1:5-6. In our last session we looked at the three titles in verse 5. We looked at it briefly in one short session. Each one deserves a lot more time, which we will get by the grace of God. The good thing about these Friday nights is that they keep going year after year after year. We'll camp here in Revelation 1-3 here for maybe a year or two. These three titles summarize in a most glorious way Jesus' human destiny as the Son of Man. They don't talk about who He is as God. They talk about who He is in His humanity, His perfect humanity and His glorified humanity as the Son of Man.

He's the faithful witness, He's the firstborn from the dead, the ruler over the kings of the earth. These three descriptions or titles of who He is in His perfect, glorified humanity are actually the qualifiers to understand the next phrase: "To Him who loved us" (Rev. 1:5).

How far does love go? Verses 5-6 give us insight. Number one: He cleanses us. There are extremes. On the one extreme, He cleanses us. He removes everything that disqualifies us to have perfect communion with God. Every possible disqualifier has been removed out of the way forever. He cleanses us. How clean? We're as clean as He is by the gift of His righteousness.

Beloved, that's extreme. We don't ever want to get too familiar with that expression of His love. He cleansed us. He removed everything that disqualifies us and He gave us a position of purity and righteousness that's equal to His own, because it's His own righteousness that He gave us. It can't be improved upon.

The second extreme: He exalts us. We're priests and kings. He not only removes everything that disqualifies; He imparts everything necessary to govern with Him forever. Beloved, we're a part of the ruling class in the New Jerusalem forever, the aristocracy of the New Jerusalem. We, believers, are the ruling class forever.

WE WILL FOREVER DECLARE THE WORTH OF THE LAMB WHO SHED HIS BLOOD

We see in these two statements the two extremes. He did it by His own blood—at the most dramatic, personal cost to Him. It cost Him so much to exalt us so high and to make us so clean. This cost of love by His own blood is beyond our comprehension. I'll say it this way: it's beyond exaggeration how dynamic this is, that God became human. Not only did He become human, but He became human forever. When Jesus rose from the dead, He couldn't take the robes of humanity and lay them aside and say, "Father, that was intense. Away with this humanity!"

Beloved, He will be human forever. That's so intense when You're the uncreated God who never had a beginning or an end. This story will never grow old. It grows old to believers now because we don't grasp it. In the resurrection with a supernatural capacity to understand, the story will never grow old—ever. It will never become familiar to us forever and ever. With freshness we will declare the worth of the Lamb who shed His blood. We will see clearly how clean and how dramatic being cleansed really is and how highly we have been exalted, and at the personal cost to Jesus to bring this manifestation of love to us.

One other point I want to make is, who is the "Him who loved us"? It's "the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5b). In other words, this striking statement with these three titles is qualifying the measure of love. We're not talking about the love of a broken, needy man who is hoping by investing his love that someone would finally love him back. We're not talking about that. We're not talking about a broken, needy man hoping that someone would finally love him. We're talking about the most powerful, most awesome Man that has ever walked the earth and who will ever live. He's the One who cleanses us and exalts us at His own personal, dramatic cost. That's what John is saying here in Revelation 1.

Paragraph B. There are so many facets to the diamond of His love. It's not just the extreme that He washed us and exalted us. Those are two extremes. I like to place, not a contrast, but a different emphasis: He's a king with power, but He's also a bridegroom with desire. Beloved, He's a king with power, but He's also a bridegroom with desire. Meaning, because He's a bridegroom with desire, He uses His power to bring us near to Himself so that He can share His power with us forever. We will rule with Him forever and it was His idea, not our idea. We didn't convince Him; He convinced us. I mean, no king freely gives his power away. If that King with power is also a bridegroom with desire, then He gives His power away to the one that He loves. He anoints us to do His work. He also anoints us to receive His love and to return His love.

THE FIERCENESS OF A LION AND THE TENDERNESS OF A LAMB

That's another example of the extremity of His love. First, He cleanses us and then exalts us. That's one extreme tension. Second, He's a bridegroom and a king. They're very different. He loves like a lion and like a lamb. His love has the fierceness of a lion and the tenderness of the lamb. Those are two extremes and there's

no contradiction. He's the only Man who is as bold and as fierce as a lion, as tender as a lamb, with no contradiction, and He never, ever suspends one attribute while He's exercising another. He's the lion and the lamb at the same time. I find that really hard, to be intense and tender in the same sixty seconds.

Paragraph B. There's no area of Jesus' supremacy that we more experience than when His love is manifest. The great glory of God's plan is that He could make Jesus supreme above all—openly declared for all to see. Every demon in hell will see His full supremacy over all things. I want to say this: there's no area of His supremacy that more greatly expresses or allows us to experience that supremacy than when love is manifest.

Again the description we're looking at tonight is this: “. . . to Him who loved us.” What a striking statement. That truth is a goldmine that we will still be mining in the age to come, millions of years from now.

GOD LOVES US THE WAY THAT GOD LOVES GOD

Paragraph C. This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. I'm sure it's yours too, even if you don't know it yet. It's one of your favorite verses, I assure you. The clearest and the strongest statement that elaborates on what it means that He's the One who loves us was given by the very lips of Jesus before He died. There's no statement that surpasses the quality and the intensity of His own love than His own words. It's most dramatic when we understand who is saying it: the faithful witness Himself.

The statement is this: that God loves us in the way that God loves God (Jn. 15:9). Beloved, think about that. I've been saying that sentence for several decades. I barely even understand the beginning of the beginning of the implications of that statement.

Jesus said it in John 15:9. “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you” (Jn. 15:9)—in the same way. He's declaring the most dramatic truth I can imagine. He's essentially saying, “The same quality, the same intensity, the same measure, that is how I feel about you.” These twelve disciples around the table couldn't even have begun to grasp the weight of what that sentence means in its fullness.

Beloved, how much does the Father love the Son? Think about it. How much does the Father delight in the Son? How does God feel about the Son? I have good news: that's the way Jesus feels about you.

Then He gave them an exhortation at the end of that dramatic declaration. The declaration is, “I love you like the Father loves Me.” Then He exhorts them, “Abide in that love” (Jn. 15:9b, paraphrased). Which means, “Stay focused on this. Don't get distracted from this truth.” To abide in it means to dwell in it. Live in it. Be saturated with this truth. Beloved, I include myself. We're too easily distracted and we're too easily made familiar with the truth that God loves you. Jesus said, “I charge you, abide in this. Dwell in it. Don't ever graduate from this focus. Live in the awareness of this. Study it out. Say it back to God. Ask the Spirit to teach you more. Never, ever graduate from this truth.” That's what He's saying.

Then He goes on in verse 11: “I told you these two statements: one, the declaration about how I feel about you, and secondly, the exhortation never to lose sight of it, to stay focused on it in your spiritual life. I told you these things for this reason—that My joy would be released in you.” The joy of the Holy Spirit is not just a momentary experience for twenty minutes where we feel that extra, heightened sense of joy. I certainly appreciate that; but the joy of the Spirit is far beyond that. It's anchored in two things. There are a few more

things in the passage if we really broke it down. It's anchored in the declaration of how Jesus feels about us and in our commitment to stay focused on that truth—to abide in it.

I'm not putting anyone down when I say this. It's really common. I've experienced it. A lot of believers have a dull spirit. They feel disconnected from the love of God. A lot of believers live mostly depressed, hanging on for heaven. Jesus said, "I told you this declaration and I urge you to live in it, to abide in it, to not lose sight of it. Think on it, study it, pray it, talk about it, write on it, sing it, say it over and over to Me" (Jn. 15:11, paraphrased).

Say, "Lord, thank You that You love me." Say simple things like that. Jesus said, "If you'll do that, there's a supernatural power that's stronger than dullness, stronger than lethargy and stronger than depression. It's called *joy*."

Again, this is to keep you focused in the right place. I'm not talking about the joy that you only get if someone lays hands on you. I'm talking about the joy that awakened in our hearts because of these things that were spoken, and we buy them, we go after them, and we refuse to move on and leave them behind in our focus. Again, I like it when someone lays hands on me and I get an impartation of God. You have to know, whatever impartation you receive from the Lord when someone lays hands on you is a catalyst, a jumpstart, that you would be focused on maintaining what you experienced for a short moment of time.

Someone says, "I received joy in that prayer time."

I say, "You might have it for twenty minutes. You might have it for two days. I assure you that if you don't participate in that in an active way in your own life, that joy will be gone in a few hours or a few days."

It's only to jumpstart you; it's only to get your attention. It's only a catalyst that you would change the way you live—that you would drink from the well, from the Word, on a regular basis.

Beloved, this is the ultimate statement of our worth. I'll make it personal. Jesus likes me as much as the Father likes Him. Beloved, I have it made by that one statement. Things may get really bad from now until I meet the Lord, but I have it made no matter what. No matter what happens with money, physical problems, relational difficulties: for billions of years, I'll enjoy in a greater fullness than I ever will in this age the fact that He likes me as much as God likes God. I have it made. And I have good news for you: so do you.

We'll see in a few moments that John took this verse and built his life on it. Now, I don't know what the story is, but the other guys didn't emphasize this truth like John did. I can picture John. He heard that truth. He said, "I'm going with this thing." You find in the gospel of John that five times John calls himself the disciple that God loves (Jn. 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20). I mean, it was so dear and real to him that he said, "Peter and the disciple whom God loves was running to the tomb." Just so you know, there's still a little touch of his boyhood there: he said, "And the one whom God loves outran Peter!"

I say, "Why did you put that in there? John, you're ninety years old. Settle it. What is that about? You outran him?" He snuck that in somewhere. It might not be about his athletic ability; it might be because of his zeal to see Jesus. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. I've always said, "John? Come on."

Five times John takes this truth and talks about himself. He'll talk about the women and the one whom God loves. "Who might that be?"

"Oh, me!"

"Are you the only one He loves?"

"Oh no, but some of the others, they're not 'running' with it. I'm running with it, man. This is who I am. I'm the one God loves!"

Settle the question. The issue is over. Beloved, every single believer has the right because of the blood of Jesus to see themselves as the disciple God loves. I like to put the phrase here, "You're God's favorite." Because of His infinite love, He can have a billion favorites and not have any diminished love or attention for any one of them. So John is His favorite, and so are all the others.

I'm going to walk in this thing. I remember when this first touched me some years ago. I began to regularly confess in my personal prayer time—it became a joke with people, but I do it very, very seriously. It became like a high-five joke, a bumper sticker, and a t-shirt. That's probably OK. It's not a joke. It's real. I would present myself to the Lord. I would say, "Here I am, Lord, the one that You love; it's me again."

I've made that statement multitudes of times over the last twenty years, "Lord, it's me again, the one You really love. It's me."

The idea is that He would smile. I picture Him smiling: "Ooh, it's Mike again. It's Mike. He's back. Good; good."

Again, that's cute, but it's not a game. I mean it. "Here I am, Lord, the one You love. It's me again."

I picture the Lord saying, "Good, good. Next time, come even sooner in your attention to Me."

Tonight when we respond to the Lord, I'm going to urge you to declare to the Lord, maybe for the first time ever. Some of you can hardly say it. Some people are raised in such a twisted view of what humility is. They say, "I'm the low one." Well, you're the low one, but you're also the one who is His favorite. You can be low in the service of men and still be His favorite one. You know what humility is: it's agreement with God. That's what humility is. If He says He loves me as much as the Father loves Him, that good enough for me. I'm going with it.

EVEN WHEN HE KNEW THEY WOULD DENY HIM, HE AFFIRMED HIS LOVE

The remarkable thing is that Jesus spoke this at the Last Supper. Within several hours, all of them are going to deny Him and He knows it. He told them right after this, "You're all going to deny Me—every single one of you" (Mt. 26:31, paraphrased). Jesus didn't make this statement with some false illusion of how mature they were. He said, "I love you the way the Father loves Me." A little while later He said, "You'll all deny Me tonight. That doesn't change what I told you. As a matter of fact, what I told you about loving you will be your recovery if you have enough understanding to take it. That's what will cause you to recover."

ABIDING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD WILL TRANSFORM OUR HEARTS

Paragraph one. To abide means to stay focused on it. Not just for this weekend; not just for a seminar on the Bride of Christ; not just for one class on the love God. I'm talking about living in it, decade after decade. Live in this. Go deeply in it. Don't ever graduate from this truth.

John says it differently in 1 John 3: "Behold the quality of love God has for you" (1 Jn. 3:1). Behold it. Focus on it; experience it; meditate on it. It doesn't mean just underline it in yellow in your Bible and move on, or buy a Christmas card that says it. He means, "Experience this thing. Behold it."

Jude 21 says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). God can love you and me and it never diminishes how He feels about us, but our inability to experience it has something to do with us. He loves us. He says, "On My end, the love is consistent. On your end, you have to keep yourself in the love of God."

There are several things involved in that. One of them is keep focused on it, study on it, pray it, ask the Spirit to teach you, and thank Jesus for the truth of it. Surrender to it. Here's what I mean. When God says, "I love you," don't get into that religious humility, which is false humility, that says, "No, God, I'm so bad. My sin is even greater than Your love." What arrogance! Honestly, that's arrogance—to think that my sin could actually be more powerful than His being is. Settle it. It's not. Your sin isn't even close to the power of who He is. Just repent of your religious pride, throw your pride out the window, and say, "Thank You Lord, I take it."

Don't negotiate. "Lord I tell you what, if You forgive me this one more time, I know this is a big one, but I promise..." The reason I know this is because I did it a bunch of times in my early years. "If You forgive me this one more time, here's what I'll do."

The Lord's answer is, "I don't want any of your bargains. I want you to come with nothing to offer Me, and Me with everything to offer you. That's the relationship forever. You just say yes to Me. All I want is your yes."

Don't negotiate. Don't resist it. Surrender to it. Don't live under some false delusion that you can place yourself for three weeks or three months in some kind of self-initiated spiritual probation, where if you suffer for three weeks, you pay the debt, so now you can have confidence with God. There is no probation. Repent of your sin. Declare war on it. Receive forgiveness. Push delete. Stand before God within the hour: "Lord, here I am: Your beloved one; Your favorite one. It's me again."

Within the hour, be back in the confidence that you're a first-class citizen, with confidence before God. No probation; no kind of dragging your head around for three or four months, proving to God that you really do deserve forgiveness. "I'm so sad, that ought to mean something."

The Lord says, "I appreciate that you're sad about your sin. Don't draw back on your confidence. Your confidence before Me is based on who I am and what I did; not on who you are and what you did."

ABIDING IN THESE TRUTHS WILL TRANSFORM YOUR HEART

Paragraph two. Jesus said, "... that My joy may remain in you" (Jn. 15:11). Beloved, if we stay with this, it will change the way we feel emotionally. So many believers want to feel satisfied and they want emotional transformation outside of abiding in these truths. They'll buy the postcard, the poster, underline it in the Bible, say it three times, and move on. That's not going to transform you. You have to abide in it.

Practically speaking, we may not get very far on this handout, but I want to give you paragraph D which is really practical. Why would you abide in this truth? I mean fight for it, search it out, read books on it, sing songs about it, ask the Spirit to teach you, declare it to Jesus, speak it to your friends, journal it, think on it often.

Why? Number one, because He said to. He said, “Abide in it.” That’s enough right there. He said to do it and He’s really smart. Honestly, He’s really smart. He said to do that. It will transform you emotionally if you abide in it—if you stay with it. Not for a week, not for a month. Stay with it.

Here are some of the specifics. Paragraph D. It gives us confidence with God. Beloved, I can’t think of anything more important than confidence in our spirit before God: that we have confidence that even in our weakness, we can stand with the confidence of a first-class citizen—if you’ll allow me to use that term. We can stand with confidence that He likes us. He’s receiving us. We’re not guarding our heart in fear, kind of thinking, “Oh God, just one more time. Just let me finish my argument.”

That’s what the prodigal son said: “Dad, I’ll do this. I’ll do that. I’ll serve. I won’t ask for anything.”

The Lord says, “Be quiet. I don’t want your negotiation. I want your confidence. I want you to believe in who I am and what I did for you.”

Beloved, when I find a believer with confidence in their spirit, and that confidence grows over time—you have it and it grows in measures. It increases over weeks, months, and years. If you have confidence, you run to Him instead of from Him when you fail. If you don’t have confidence, you run from Him. If you have confidence, you run to Him. He’s the One who likes you the most, even when you fail. It will change your life. When I look back over my forty years of walking with the Lord, I’m fifty-six. I was sixteen and seventeen years old. We had a youth group on fire for God. We were reading the biographies on the missionaries. We were going to go do the stuff, all of us—hundreds of us. When I look back over the forty years, the ones that stayed consistent had confidence in the love of God when they failed. The ones who lost their way are the ones who didn’t have confidence. It came down, not only to this, but this was the critical issue. There are several other things. This is the big one. The ones who had confidence when they failed, they ran to Him. The ones who didn’t have this clarity, even in the beginning days of our youth, ran and hid.

That’s what Adam did. He ran, hid, and made a fig leaf. Don’t go make a religious fig leaf to hide under: some arrangement where God will give you a little time out so you can kind of pay the debt.

THE SHOCK OF OUR LIVES AWAITS US WHEN WE SEE OUR DIGNITY BEFORE HIM

This truth reveals our value and dignity in God’s eyes. We’ll get the shock of our lives. When we stand before the Lord in the age to come, we’ll be consumed with His supremacy and His worth. “Worthy is the Lamb.” We will be so captured by His supremacy and His worth. We’ll get the shock of our life when He tells us how much we’re worth to Him.

“You’re worth everything, Jesus.”

He will say, “Yes, I receive it. Do you know how much you’re worth to Me?”

“No, no, it’s not about me, Lord; it’s about You.”

Jesus will say, “You have to understand, when you said yes to Me, we’re in it together forever.” We’re in deep. I mean, there’s no mistake. He’s the only worthy Lamb. What will shock us is the value and the dignity that He gives us that we have in His eyes, and how much we’re actually worth to Him is beyond anything we can imagine. That’s what this truth gives us. It empowers us to walk in partnership. When we understand the truth of the love of God, it not only gives us the confidence to press into partnership, but it gives us the zeal to do it.

In other words, it’s not just, “I know He loves me, so I’ll work together with Him.” It’s more than that. He wants me working together with Him. When I’m tired, distracted, fatigued, I’m still going to do it. He really wants me in partnership with Him.

Beloved, it’s not just that He enables you to work with Him; He wants you to. There are times to rest. I believe in rest. I believe that’s an important part of the cycle of God’s wisdom. Sometimes when I just don’t feel like it, it’s the truth that touches my heart: “But Mike, I want you partnering with Me in this. I will touch that guy. I want you to be there with Me because I want you there.”

“Well, Lord, I was thinking maybe in a week I’ll go help that guy.” The Lord says, “No, no, I’ll do it with another, but I want you with Me in it.”

THE SECRET IMPULSE OF YOUR HEART TO PLEASE HIM MOVES HIS HEART

Beloved, it changes our life. It gives us a sense of relevance. We may not do anything in ministry that anyone ever notices. You may never impact anyone in a way that other people notice. You may never be recognized. I want to tell you this: when you understand the love of God, your obedience, even if it’s unnoticed by everyone and it’s in secret, moves His heart. When I know what I’m doing alone moves Him, it moves me. It makes everything relevant. Every hour of every day has meaning, because if I say yes to Him, it moves Him, because of the way He feels about me. He isn’t just stamping our passport. He’s in a dynamic relationship forever. So this truth motivates us in a deep way.

LOVE ISN’T JUST SOMETHING HE DOES, BUT WHO HE IS FOREVER

Page two. I’m almost out of time, but again, that’s the point of the notes. One of the most profound, yet simple statements in the Bible: “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:16). Beloved, this is profound. It’s His personality. It’s what He’s like. Love isn’t something He does. He does acts of love. It’s who He is. It’s effortless. The reason He loves so intensely is because He is love. The reason He so values partnership with us is because He is love.

Love wants to share love. I enjoy one of the songs we sing: “Love loves to love.” I thought, “That’s profound.” Jesus loves love. He really loves love. He loves loving and He loves being loved. That’s who He is. He has no other option. He would deny Himself if He wasn’t this way.

The reason this matters is because this changes our whole view of how we see our relationship and how we see the work of the kingdom. We’re not gritting our teeth, paying a price, and then one day He’ll anoint us and we’ll be famous. I’ve heard preachers say that: “Pay the price. That brother paid the price in prayer and fasting, and look, he’s so anointed!”

It's not about paying the price and then one day you're famous. No. Eww! I hate that concept. It's about entering into the love dynamic. We pray and fast and we want to experience Him more and be vessels that enable others to experience Him more. It's not about paying the price so that we can have big meetings with healings where everyone can come and talk about us. It's not about that at all. I want to pay the price to resist the things in my flesh that keep me from experiencing more love.

LOVE THAT'S REALLY LOVE DEMANDS THAT OTHERS ENTER INTO LOVE

It's about love. I love love. I want to do things that make me experience it more. It's who we're made to be. Our spirit is made in His image. God is love. He has deep desires. He's a God filled with desire. Now desire implies want, but it's not lack. God lacks nothing, but He still wants something. He wants what He can't have by His own decree. He can't have your love until you give it to Him voluntarily. He won't take it. He said, "By the very definition of love, I will not take your love from you."

So He desires and He wants. He doesn't lack. He's fully satisfied in the fullness of the fellowship of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He's completely satisfied. There's not a need. There's not a lack, but there's a desire. Love that's really love demands that others enter into the glory of that triune love. The Father, Son, and Spirit enjoy love in such perfection and fullness, by the very fact of being love, that They said, "Others must enter into the enjoyment of what We have."

That's what love does. God is not stoic filled with power at a safe distance wanting everyone just to admire His power. We will admire His power forever, but that doesn't satisfy Him. He wants more than to be admired for His power. He wants deep interaction with us forever. He isn't a stoic God. He isn't at a safe distance so we don't disturb Him. His love is so condescending. He bowed so low. He came so far. He took us and brought us so near and then exalted us so high that we would be with Him governing the earth forever.

That's what love is. Yes, we will admire His power forever. We will be awestruck with it. He says, "There's more. I love that you're awestruck by My power. I want more from you than that. I want deep, confident, affectionate, grateful love with Me forever and forever and forever. That's what satisfies My heart in My relationship with you."

HIS LOVE IS INFINITE IN MEASURE AND ETERNAL IN DURATION

Beloved, a million years from now, we will discover more about the love of God. The good news is that it won't be new to God. It will just be new to our experience. He loves me as much now as He will a million years from now. I'll just experience it more then. It doesn't change. He doesn't increase His love. Why? Because His love is infinite in measure and eternal in duration. Meaning, His love is infinite in measure. It's an infinite measure and it lasts forever. In other words, He loves effortlessly. It's who He is. He doesn't think, "OK, I'm going to meet with that one group tomorrow. I have to get really focused. They're tough ones! I need to put My best foot forward with patience."

No, He doesn't gird Himself to rise up in love. No. Love is what He does effortlessly. He does it eternally in full intensity. It never increases, ever. Because if love increased, that means that God grew in love. He has infinite love. It can't increase. It can't decrease. A million years from now, I'll have new discoveries. The love won't be new. My experience of it will be new. I don't want to wait until I have a resurrected body to begin to be excited by this truth. I want the confidence now. I want the exhilaration of that now in the little I can have of it. A little of this goes a long way. The key is to abide in it, to study it, to speak it, to ask the Spirit to guide you into it. He

will guide you into all truth, especially love. He loves love. He may say, “You never asked Me to. I’m waiting on you to make it the priority of your life, to enter into this in a greater way.”

WHEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF LOVE MATURES, IT WILL DRIVE OUT FEAR

Paragraph H. It’s impossible for God not to love in fullness. He can’t ever suspend one part of His character to exercise another part. He’s fully love, 100 percent love, 100 percent of the time. Even His judgment is an expression of love. His anger and His judgment never, ever diminish His love. He doesn’t have anger instead of love. He has anger as an expression of love. Why? Because in His anger He’s removing everything that hinders love. He can’t change moods; it’s impossible. He is love. That’s why He has anger: because He’s love.

“THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE, BUT PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR”

Let’s look at paragraph J. John gives us insight—I’ll say it this way—into how God’s love impacts our emotions. Let’s read the same verse we looked at a moment ago. God is love. Now John applies it to our emotional life. He says, “Let me explain how it works. There’s no fear.” The idea is fear of God rejecting you. That’s the idea. “There’s no fear in perfect love” (1 Jn. 4:18b, paraphrased). Perfect love means mature understanding of love. That’s what he’s talking about here. He says, “When your understanding of love matures, it will drive fear out of the relationship and replace it with confidence. You’ll have confidence instead of insecurity with God when you grow in love.”

Here’s why. He says, “Fear has to do with torment” (1 Jn. 4:18a, paraphrased). It’s the torment of being rejected by God. Beloved, there’s nothing more horrifying than the fear that God is about to write us off: we’ve gone too far, there’s no hope, it’s over. That’s torment. What John is saying is that fear involves torment, meaning that the fear of being rejected by God involves torment. What he wants us to know is that as we mature in love through abiding, through staying with it, fear is driven out of the relationship.

Can you imagine our walk with God with no fear in it at all? No presumption at all. I know some people who are presumptuous: they’re really casual about their life of obedience towards the Lord. They take the love of God verses and they throw away the obedience verses and they end up with a presumptuous view of love. This message of the love of God is given in the context of people who aren’t fully walking in obedience, but who are seeking to. That’s the issue: they’re seeking to.

When we fail, which we all do, we call it failure. We don’t blame it on someone else: “My friends made me do it.” We don’t explain it away, “It wasn’t really sin. Everyone is doing that today in the grace of God. All the other groups are doing it.”

No, we don’t explain it away. We don’t blame shift it. We say, “Father we sinned. Jesus, we sinned. That’s it. I’m declaring war on it. I’m receiving forgiveness.” We’re right back into a place of confidence within the hour, within minutes.

“WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US”

Paragraph K. Let’s go back to the verse in paragraph J. We love God because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). That’s the principle right there. We love Him for one reason: we discovered that He loved us first. When God wants to awaken love in you and me, He reveals His love to us. When God wants to awaken love, I say, “Lord, I want to love You with all of my heart.”

He says, “OK, then study My love for you.”

You can put a number of words there. “We love God because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19, paraphrased). In other words, we understood His love: therefore, it awakened love back to God. You could put another word in here. We pursue God because we understand that He pursues us. When I study God’s pursuit of me, it causes me to pursue Him. You could put the word *dedication* in there. We’re dedicated to God because we first understood that He’s dedicated to us. When I want my dedication to increase, I study His dedication to me. It makes me grateful. It touches my spirit.

I say, “Lord, You pursue me, You want me, You desire me.” You desire God because you know He first desired you. “I love this. This is who I am. What am I doing wandering around in compromise? You love me. You pursue me. You’re dedicated to me. I want to respond in those ways to You.”

WE CAN ONLY LOVE HIM IN RESPONSE TO THE REVELATION OF HIS LOVE FOR US

Paragraph K. Jesus commanded us to love God with all our heart, soul, and strength (Mt. 22:37-38). Do you know why you love God with all your heart, soul, and strength? He loves you with all of His heart, soul and strength. With all of His heart He loves you. When I look at this great commandment, the way I seek to love Him with all my heart is to study and understand more how He loves me with all of His heart. I’ll only love Him in response to the revelation of His love for me.

“I want to love God with all my mind.”

Well the answer is, study out how God loves you with all of *His* mind. Can you imagine Jesus loving you with all of His mind? Look at the stars, look at the sky, and say, “You’re so smart. You love me with the force of all Your mind?”

“Yes, I do.”

“What am I doing compromising, living in confusion, spinning in circles, living in darkness? The God of Genesis 1 loves me with all of His mind. What am I doing buying all these lies from the devil? ‘No one loves me, my life isn’t worth anything, I don’t know where I’m going.’”

THE CENTRAL REALITY OF OUR LIFE IS THAT WE’RE LOVED BY GOD

You may not know where your ministry is, but beloved, I can tell you the central reality of your life. You’re loved by Him. He wants you to respond back. You land that and everything else will be secondary to that issue. The dream of my heart is entering into this. My dream isn’t ministry; it’s not IHOPKC, as I’ve told you before. My dream isn’t my ministry. My dream is the anointing to enter in to knowing His love with all of His heart for me and then me responding back. That’s the dream of my heart. If IHOPKC goes away, my dream doesn’t go away. If IHOPKC gets really big, my dream isn’t helped at all. If IHOPKC gets really little, my dream isn’t hurt at all. My ministry can’t touch my dream. My dream is to search out that He loves me with all of His mind and strength and return it back to Him. That’s the dream of my heart.

Beloved, anyone can do that. You don’t need an education. You don’t need gifting. You don’t need money. You don’t need to be beautiful. You don’t need to be popular. You don’t need any kind of status in society. Any

human heart can grow in the knowledge that He loves you with all His mind, and then you love Him with all your mind. Any human can succeed at the highest level of success. That's the definition of success. It's true.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN THE TYRANNY OF BEING LIKED BY THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Let's look at page three. Paragraph M. You know that one guy or gal says, "If I ever finally got married, if I was only beautiful, if I ever had money, if I ever had an opportunity, then..." Then what? "Then I would. . ." Fill in the blanks, but it's not going to make you more successful. Your success is rooted in you receiving love and returning it to Him. Don't wait until you get more of something before you start that.

When I figured that out some years ago, it liberated my life. I didn't have to live in the tyranny of having a big famous, ministry or the right people liking me. I could be free from that. I say, "You know what? I'm already winning. I'm winning big time. I'm winning huge. He loves me with all of His mind. I'm trying to respond back. I'm caught in that vortex, that swirl, that dynamic. That's where I'm living on the inside. That's where I want to go. If I end up with a big or a little ministry or no ministry, that's Your business, God. I want to be lost in that swirl, captured in that vortex."

THE LENGTH, WIDTH, BREADTH, AND HEIGHT OF THE LOVE OF GOD

Paragraph M. Paul talked about the vastness. He said, "It's wide, it's long, it's high" (Eph. 3:18, paraphrased). You can just look a little on those notes there. It's wide. Every person, every personality, He wants you. Every status of life, every rank in society, the poorest of the poor, He says, "You're the one I want. My love is wide. It's really wide. It encompasses you." It's long. I've sinned some big ones. God says, "My love outreaches your sin. I can go beyond it and My love will stay steady. It lasts forever. My love is long."

It's deep. "I went so low because of love and I brought you with Me and you're going so high. Do you know who you are to Me?"

"MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED"

Roman numeral II. We're just going to race through this. I'll make two or three points so that you can make sense of the notes. Roman numeral II. Jesus is the Father's Beloved. He tells Him twice. Both times are very strategic. The first time He bends over the balcony of heaven, if you'll let me use that illustration. He says, "My beloved Son" (Mt. 3:17). Jesus was about to go into the temptation of the wilderness to face Satan face to face as a man. The Father bent over the balcony of heaven and said, "Jesus, You're My Boy. I love You."

Jesus said, "Thank You, Father." He walked into the temptation with an energized heart. Three and a half years later, right before the cross, in the second great testing of His life, the Father said, "Jesus, You're Mine. You're My Boy. You're the One I love. You know You're the One I love" (Mt. 17:5, paraphrased).

"Thank You, Father. I know that." It energized Him. He went to the garden of Gethsemane and He went to the cross. Beloved, if Jesus was strengthened by those two statements of the love He knew so well, how will you and I be strengthened by the revelation of our belovedness to God?

Top of page four. Every believer is God's beloved. I could write twenty or thirty verses, yea, forty verses. Look up *beloved* in the New Testament. It's everywhere. We're called "the beloved." The Father calls you His beloved. We have to settle it. This is the place where the power of disillusionment is broken in our lives. "I'm the beloved of God."

Paragraph C. To live in this reality will change our emotions.

Paragraph D. I already mentioned this. Five times John said, “I’m applying John 15:9: God loves me like God loves God. I’m the one He loves. I don’t know if the other guys are running with it, but I’m running with it. This is who I am. This is how I see myself.” Beloved, this will change your life.

“YEA, I HAVE LOVED YOU WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE”

Paragraph E. The Lord appeared to Jeremiah. Look at Jeremiah 31:3. The Lord appeared to Jeremiah. The ancient God appeared, the God of old. He said, “Yes, Jeremiah.” This young, single man was prophesying. The whole nation was mad at him. He had no friends, no support, he was all by himself. God said, “Yes,” which means Jeremiah was asking questions like, “Where are You? Am I doing right? I can’t feel Your presence. What are You doing?”

He says, “Yes to those ten questions. Yes, Jeremiah. I’ve loved you with eternal love, Jeremiah. I’m drawing you. You’re the one I love” (Jer. 31:3, paraphrased).

“But no one is with me.”

Jeremiah had no support in the nation—very, very little support. The whole nation turned on him. The Lord said, “I love you with an eternal love.” This isn’t just a New Testament truth like some people say. Beloved, this is the Old Testament.

Paragraph F. An angel appeared to Daniel. He was eighty-one or eighty-two years old. Gabriel comes and gives him the shock of his life. “Daniel, you’re beloved by God” (Dan. 9:23, paraphrased). This isn’t just a New Testament truth.

Daniel 10 is two years after Daniel 9. Now He’s like eighty-four. Not Gabriel, but another angel heard the same message from God. “Daniel, you’re greatly beloved” (Dan. 10:11, 18, paraphrased). “How do you know?”

“I heard it when God told Gabriel. He told me to tell it to you twice. He said, ‘Say it twice to him this time.’”

“God really thinks about me this way?”

“Yes, He told me to say it twice.” Of course David, David had greater revelation of this than anyone.

“HE DELIVERED ME BECAUSE HE DELIGHTED IN ME”

You have to know the context in which Psalm 18 was written. “He delivered me because He delighted in me” (Ps. 18:19). This happened right after David escaped with victory out of the city of Ziklag (1 Sam. 30). David was thirty years old. The amazing thing is that for sixteen months, from 1 Samuel 27 to 30, David was living in Ziklag, in disobedience to the Lord.

The Lord said, “I don’t want you in Ziklag.”

It was compromise, because David was afraid of King Saul. So he was hiding over in Ziklag in the enemy territory. That was a Philistine city. He said, “Get over to Saul and to your own nation, Israel. Cross the state line.

Get over there and let Me protect you.”

“I’m too afraid.”

“Stay in Israel.”

David went over to the Philistines in Ziklag and hid there.

God said, “I’m telling you, get back over there.”

David sinned a number of times in Ziklag. I’ve preached on it a few times because it encouraged me. Sixteen months later, he finally left Ziklag. He got victory right off the bat. Someone interviewed him. You know, the CNN lady came and said, “Why did God deliver you? They tell me you were over there for sixteen months, afraid. That’s why you were living on the other side of the state line. You were afraid to live in your own country. The jealous king was trying to kill you, your own king.”

David says, “I’ll tell you why I got victory: because God likes me.”

I can imagine David’s key guys thinking, “We watched you for sixteen months. You haven’t been doing that well...”

David said, “Yes, I know, and I repented. He delivered me. He likes me. That’s why He delivered me. End of statement.”

The lady says, “OK, you want me to write this?” He likes me.

“CALL THEM HEPHZIBAH, FOR HE DELIGHTS IN THEM!”

Final statement. The end time prayer movement. Most of you know the testimony I have from November 1995 where I heard in a dream the audible voice of God. I was in a massive auditorium—the Kansas City convention center This is four years before IHOPKC started. There were thousands of young people in that big auditorium.

I hear the audible voice of God speak. He says, “Call them Hephzibah. Tell them I delight in them.” I heard this thunderous voice coming from the right side of the building, on the microphone. There were 30,000 or 40,000 people. It was bigger than any onething we’ve had. I mean, that building was jammed.

I said to all these young people, “Hephzibah, He delights in you! He delights in you!” Their emotions changed. I was so captured in this prophetic dream that they were transformed under this revelation. They were jammed in there from broken backgrounds. They were living in compromise. They couldn’t connect to God. Some were sincere. Some had just given up. I said, “Hephzibah! God delights in you!” Their whole being was energized by the power of God, by this revelation.

I picture the Lord like Adam was in the Garden of Eden after he sinned. He said, “Adam, where art thou? Adam” (Gen. 3:9, paraphrased)? Of course the Lord knew where Adam was. The issue was that Adam didn’t know where Adam was.

That’s true. I picture the Lord crying out over this generation, “Hephzibah! Where are you My young people? Do you know who you are to Me? You don’t have to run that way. Run towards Me. Hephzibah come back to Me.”

That’s the picture I have in my mind. When God looks at this whole generation of the Body of Christ—I mean across the world—He’s crying out with that tender wooing, “Hephzibah, return with all your heart! Don’t be half-hearted. Come to Me. Do you know who you are to Me? I like you. Come to Me.”

MINISTRY TIME

Amen. Beloved, He likes you—even you, in your weakness. He likes you. Hephzibah. Just focus on the throne of God right now: that Revelation 4 scene. By the way, there’s a rainbow around the throne filled with mercy.

A rainbow of mercy is there. That’s where we come every time we come before the Lord. Hephzibah: He likes you. Hephzibah. He likes you. You don’t need shame. You don’t need pornography. You don’t need those other things. He wants you. He likes you. Hephzibah. I break the power of lies and accusation by that decree, Hephzibah. I want to lead you in prayer just as the worship is getting ready to lead us.

I want you to take your arguments with the Lord: “Lord I’ve sinned a lot. Maybe You’re mad. Maybe I’ve gone too far.” I want you to put those arguments in your mind, so to speak. I want you to say, “Lord, I break my agreement with these lies. They’re lies. They’re lies. You want me. I’ve not gone too far. It’s not too far. You want me now, tonight, as a first-class citizen. Not on probation. You want me first-class. I break my agreement with lies that make me draw back. I break my agreement with these lies. I believe Your Word. I believe what David said. You delight in me and You’ll deliver. I believe what Jeremiah said: I’m not alone, for You love me with everlasting love. I believe what John said: I’m the disciple God loves.”

I want you to say this. This will be hard for some of you. Whisper it in your own way. “It’s me you love. It’s me again. It’s the one You really like. It’s the one You love. Here I am, Lord, Your favorite one. It’s me.”

See the smile. Picture Him smiling: “Yes, Hephzibah. I wondered where you went.” Not that God wonders; you know what I mean. “Hephzibah. I wanted you to come sooner.”

“It’s me. It’s the one You loved.”

If you would like prayer and you say, “There’s something resisting me. I know this is true. It bounces right off of me. I need a breakthrough. I’m desperate.” We all need breakthrough but you’re saying, “I’m hurting about this.”

Beloved, I’ve had this; I’ve lost it, and found it, and lost it again. The key is to abide. Stay focused on it. Live in it. I forget. I get involved in other subjects, which is good, but I get too involved. I have to get back to this. I always have to keep this one burning on the oven, so to speak.