



Scriptures and Doctrine :: The Test of Love

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Thoughts for the Week

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THE TEST OF LOVE

(1 John 3:11-24)

WHY DID JESUS DIE?

As humans we do not perceive the spiritual realm and its realities well at all. So that presented God with a "problem" -- how to reveal to us the love He has always had for us. His solution was to *do* something. Since doing and living are inseparable, we could also say that God's solution was to *live* His love for us.

Because Jesus wanted me to see clearly His love for me, He died for me. Notice what 1 John 3:16 says -- "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Imagine that! Had He not put our lives ahead of His own, we could not have known His love for us.

Furthermore, He gave His life so that we might have an example to follow in our relationships with others. The conclusion of that verse tells us how to make our own love perceptible to others. To show my love for others I must live it by putting their best ahead of my own.

That meshes so well with Ephesians 5:2 -- "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us." Jesus valued me enough to put my best interests ahead of His own life. And that's how He wants His people to live on this planet: revealing love through sacrificial living.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). God demonstrated His love by paying a high price for the purpose of blessing us. Without that demonstration, we could not even know about His love. To show my love for others I must live for *their* blessing, not my own.

MEASURING LOVE FOR GOD

Ruby (she's my wife!) was sewing a dress a day or so ago . . . and used a tape measure to measure the fabric. A few weeks ago she made Christmas treats . . . and poked a candy thermometer in the gooey stuff to keep track of its temperature. Several weeks ago I wanted to know my weight . . . so I stood on the bathroom scales. We, like you, use other types of instruments to determine various kinds of measurements. But how shall we measure a

commodity such as love?

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Jesus communicates with us using such directness and simplicity, doesn't He! He leaves no ambiguity in His message: Measuring love is as simple as measuring obedience. The extent of my obedience determines the extent of my love. The process is no more complicated than that.

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21). To seek out, treasure, and obey His commandments -- that reveals and proves love. This verse brings out an additional vital dimension to obedience and love. Those who love God do not rest in their present understanding and obedience. No! They have the disposition and drive of an explorer, of a learner. They strive to deepen and expand their knowledge of God's will because they wish to extend the scope of their obedience. In other words, they want to know more so they can obey more . . . because they want to love more. They read and listen, study and meditate, search and research -- not to acquire knowledge for its own sake, but to acquire knowledge for the sake of obedience.

"If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23). After giving the teaching He did, Jesus could guide His audience to that obvious conclusion. Those who love Him, obey Him. The length and depth of the one measures the length and depth of the other.

"And this is love, that we walk after his commandments" (2 John 6). OK. I think I've got the message now. That is, I do intellectually. My life and actual obedience will show whether I've truly gotten the message.

ANOTHER LOVE-MEASURING TOOL

"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). The obvious answer to this rhetorical question is, "He can't!" We can measure our love for God by our love for our fellowman. To put it another way, I love God no more than I love the person I love the least. The next verse goes beyond a rhetorical question to an outright order: "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:21). Now we have made a full circuit back to the first tool for measuring our love for God. Will we obey, or not?

LOVE: PROOF OF LIFE

We humans require proof and tangible reality before we can experience assurance. That is true in many areas of our lives, but let's focus particularly on the issue of salvation. "How can I *know for sure* that I am saved?" has got to be one of the key recurring questions in the church. Something as tangible and experiential as baptism doesn't prove it. And if the experience doesn't prove it, then a baptismal certificate certainly won't do it either.

So how then *can* we know we are saved?

Today's lesson reveals one very practical evidence of regeneration: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). Forgiveness frees us to love others. Redemption cleanses us from self and sin, turning our focus from ourselves and thus enabling us to think of and love others. Grace empowers us to love others. The Spirit within us fills us with God's own love.

Our love for others give us the certainty that we are saved!

His Love to All

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