

The Recipients of Christian Invincibility

Romans 8:28

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We are looking at this matter of Christian invincibility in our study of the Word of God tonight and I want you to open your Bible to Romans Chapter 8. Not any particular hurry to go through this great truth, we'll just take it as it unfolds for us in the passage here, Romans Chapter 8. One of the great passages in all of Holy Scripture verses 28-39 and we are looking at this passage at least in some sense if not considering every detail of it, and as we look at this section the title Christian Invincibility really works because it is all about that. It is all about our security in an insecure world.

The key to this great confidence is verse 31. And the statement in verse 31, "If God is for us who is against us." Or better since God for us, statement of absolute fact, who against us? This rhetorical question can only be answered one way, no one. Since God is for us no one can successfully be against us. And that expresses the reality of what we're calling Christian invincibility. The Almighty God, the Creator, the Redeemer who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, unchanging, who alone is God and has no equal is for us. He is the savior of his people and no one can successfully thwart his saving purpose.

It would be helpful to us to understand the greatness of this reality that God is for us to go back into the prophet Isaiah for a moment. Turn in your Bible to the 40th Chapter of Isaiah and I want to show you several passages that I'm sure you've read in the times of reading through Isaiah. They're really unforgettable passages, flowing from Isaiah 40 all the way over to Chapter 45, and if we pick up the account of Isaiah in verse 10 of Chapter 40, we read, "Behold the Lord God will come with power or might with his arm ruling for him, behold his reward is with him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd he will tend his flock, in his arm he will gather the lambs and carry them in his bosom, he will gently lead the nursing ewes."

Here is God coming like a shepherd, but a shepherd with power. His arm rules, his reward is with him, that is to say he is the one who determines the end, his recompense is before him, he gathers his own into his arms carrying them as if were in a very protected place. And who is this powerful shepherd? "He is the one" in verse 12, "who measured the waters in the hollow of his hand. He is the one who marked off the heavens by the span, calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills on a pair of scales.

That is to say he is the creator of the universe. And who has directed the Spirit of the Lord or as his counselor has informed him? With whom did he consult and who gave him understanding? And who taught him in the path of justice and taught him knowledge and informed him of the way of understanding?" And the answer to all of that is what? No one, no one! God has no informant. God goes to no one for knowledge, information, wisdom. He is self-directed, self-counseled and he has an infinite and perfect eternal understanding of everything. He learns nothing. No one teaches him anything. He is the source of justice and knowledge. "Compared to him the nations are like a drop

from a bucket, like a speck of dust on the scales. Behold he lifts up the islands like fine dust. Even Lebanon is not enough to burn." Lebanon was a densely forested place in ancient times. "Nor it's beast enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before him. They are regarded by him as less than nothing and meaningless." You could take all of humanity, all of the powers of all the peoples of the earth and they amount to absolutely nothing.

"To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with him? Some idol? As for the idol a craftsman cast it, a goldsmith plates it with gold, a silversmith fashions chains of silver," that's the way people made idols. "He who is too impoverished for such an offering selects a tree that doesn't rot, seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman to prepare an idol that will not totter." If you don't have the money for gold you use silver. If you don't have the money for silver you make your idol out of wood.

Verse 21: "Do you not know, have you not heard, has it not been declared to you from the beginning, have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the vault of the earth and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He is it who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless, scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, but he merely blows on them and they wither and the storm carries them away like stubble.

"To whom then will you liken me that I should be his equal says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the one who leads forth his host by number. He calls them all by name, because of the greatness of his might and the strength of his power not one of them is missing." And all of this is to say there is no other God. There is no one who can contend with God. All created by God are as nothing before him.

Turn to the 43rd chapter of Isaiah's prophecy and Isaiah still on this theme writes in verse one: "But now thus says the Lord, your creator O Jacob, and he who formed you O Israel, do not fear for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine." And God is saying you don't have to be afraid of anything. You belong to me and I am the creator. "I formed you and I redeemed you. When you passed through the waters I will be with you, through the rivers they will not overflow you, when you walk through fire you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I have given Egypt as your ransom. Cush and Seba in your place. Since you are precious in my sight, since you are honored and I love you. I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life. Do not fear for I am with you. I will bring your offspring from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, give them up and to the south do not hold them back. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Everyone who is called by my name and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

Everyone who belongs to him he will gather together. That is the testimony of this Scripture. Dropping down into verse 10: "You are my witnesses declares the Lord and my servant whom I chosen in order that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me there was no God formed and there will be none after me. I, even I, am the Lord and there is no Savior besides me. It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed and there was no strange god among you so you are my witnesses declares the Lord and I am God. Even from eternity I am he and there is none who can deliver out of my hand. I act and who can reverse it?"

Boy that is powerful language isn't it? Powerful language! In the 44th Chapter of Isaiah, as if that's not enough. Verse 6: "Thus says the Lord, the king of Israel and his redeemer and the Lord of Host. I am the first and I am the last and there is no God beside me. And who is like me? Let him proclaim and declare it. Yes, let him recount it to me in order from the time that I established the ancient nation and let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place." If there is anybody else that's equal to me let them step forward and let them tell me about the creation and let them predict the future and know it as I know it.

Obviously there are no takers. "So do not tremble, he says. Do not be afraid. Have I not long since announced to you and declared it? You are my witnesses. Is there any God beside me? Is there any other rock?" I love this statement. "I know of none."

45th Chapter of Isaiah. In verse 5, well we can start in verse 4: "For the sake of Jacob, my servant Israel, my chosen one, I have also called by your name. I have given you a title of honor, though you have not known me. I am the Lord. There is no other beside me there is no God. I will gird you though you have not known me that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides me. I am the Lord and there is no other. The one forming light and creating darkness causing well being and creating calamity, I am the Lord who does all these." And then in verse 21, "Declare and set forth your case. Indeed let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I the Lord? And there is no other God besides me. A righteous God and a Savior, there is none except me. Turn to me and be saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other."

God is affirming to us that he alone is God and that when he determines to choose a people to make them his own that cannot be reversed, that cannot be changed. Since God is for us who can be against us? Answer? No one. Not even Satan himself and that's the story of the book of Job, which is an amazing amazing story.

To just briefly remind you that one day trouble came into Job's life, trouble in the most complete fashion. One day all his children died, and he had a large family. He was living in the patriarchal time, perhaps around the time of Abraham, and all his children were killed in a terrible disaster. It took the life of every child of his. And then all of his animals were killed. To compound all of that he himself was stricken with some very ugly and painful sores all over his body. He had to sit in a pile of dirt and scrape off the scabs. The only thing he had left was a nagging wife. He lost everything. And he didn't know why. He didn't know what was going on, so he just said, "Lord, why is this happening," because he was the most righteous man in all the earth and he couldn't figure out why this was happening.

But you see the reason he didn't know what was happening was because he couldn't read the book of Job. It wasn't written. We know what happened. One day, according to Chapters 1 and 2, Satan went into the presence of God. Apparently he has access as the accuser of the brethren, and he went into the presence of God and he said to God, "You know the people who are faithful to you are only faithful to you because you bless them. If you didn't bless them they would turn on you. If life was really difficult for them they would turn on you, they would abandon you. God said, "That's not true." In effect God said they are faithful to be because they are mine, and I sustain that faithfulness. And the faith that I give them is an eternal faith, an everlasting faith. You can even test it. Go do to Job anything you want, just can't kill him. Down Satan came and just devastated Job's entire world.

And he had some friends who came over and for seven days they sat and said nothing. They just sat and felt bad with him, moaned and groaned and shook their head. And it was good. It was just sympathy, someone to cry with somebody to share the pain.

At the end of seven days they opened their mouth and all wisdom left immediately. And then they started in this string of ridiculous speeches about the fact that the reason things were so bad with Job was because he was so sinful. They were wrong. They were wrong. It's a good lesson. Be careful about diagnosing why people have trouble, 'cause you can't. There are some people who are sinful and they don't have as much trouble as people who are holy. Don't be quick to diagnose, be quick to comfort. And in the end after having to endure the loss of his children, the loss of everything he possessed, physical suffering at a very severe level and the stupid speeches of well-intentioned friends, which poured salt in his wounds, after having endured all of that and after having endured a silent heaven and when finally God does answer, God says, "It's none of your business why it happened, who are you to ask me? Were you there when I created the universe? Do I have an obligation to you?" After all of that Job's response was, "Though he slay me yet will I what? Trust him."

And what was the point of the book of Job? The point of the book of Job is to show that when a man has a relationship with God it can't be broken no matter what you do to the man. Because the faith that he has is a gift from God and God gives an everlasting faith, it's an unbreakable relationship. And in fact, even the worst that Job suffered God intended for good because when Job came to the end of himself and he had nothing to turn to but God, he had a vision of God the likes of which he'd never had before. And he said, "I had heard about you in the past, now I see you and I repent in dust and ashes," and this good godly righteous man became even more godly. And then what did the Lord do for him? Opened up the floodgates and gave him a new family, new children, and all kinds of blessings.

What Satan meant for evil God used for good and Job was a better man, a better worshipper, and an even more blessed man because God took the worst possible scenario, satanic assault, and worked it for Job's good and God's glory.

With that in mind let's go back to the text then of Romans 8. Some people have suggested that we might go through the book of Job and maybe some day we'll do that. I'm not reluctant to go through it completely, but just a little bit, because I hate to have to spend a couple of years listening to bad speeches by well-intentioned friends who have no idea what's going on.

But in Romans 8 we come to verse 28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose." This is an immense statement about our invincibility, about our security and it's not because of us, it's because of him as we remember what we were hearing when I was reading in Isaiah. It's not a matter of look we're going to have this eternal relationship because you're who you are. It's we're going to have this eternal relationship because I'm who I am, right? Who is like me? Who is going to break it? I made it. I established it and who is powerful enough to change that?

The answer, of course, is no one. God says I don't know anyone. We looked last time at the extent of our security and the extent of it is this: we know that God causes all things to work together for good. God synergizes, that's the causes word, everything, good things, we talked about good things, bad things, everything. In Job's case God used the worst of things, the death of all your children, the loss

of everything that you own, physical illness, bad advice, nagging friends who don't know what they're talking about, banging on your ears. God uses those bad things and God uses good things: the disclosure of himself in the time of trial, his nature being revealed, his goodness, his promises, his word, etc. etc. God takes all of it and works it together for our good. And we mentioned at the end of the message last week that the good that he's talking about is not just temporal good, but rather it may include temporal good, but its main idea is eternal good.

God is working everything together for our eternal good. To borrow the last little bit of verse 30 to bring us to the point of being glorified. Every experience, good, bad, indifferent everything that comes into our lives, God works together for our eternal glory. That is a precious promise. It doesn't matter what comes into your life, it doesn't matter whether it's a physical illness or whether it's a loss such as in the case of Job, it doesn't matter what it is can be suffering, it can be temptation even sin, God overrules to bring about that which works to our eternal glory. Everything! This is our invincibility; there is nothing then that can separate us from God's saving love. And that becomes the theme of verses 32 to 39, as we will see.

Verse 28 to 30 is the positive side, all things God works for good. Verses 32 to 39, the negative side: nothing works to our harm. Nothing undoes God's good purpose. There is no power equal to God. God is the absolute sovereign. Now this is a wonderful statement of our security, the extent of it. It is comprehensive it is complete.

But we have to talk for a moment about the recipients of this. I'm glad as we did last week to encourage you, and I think it's a very encouraging message last week. Many of you told me that. To know that no matter what comes into our lives God is working it together for our eternal good. That is a tremendous tremendous promise.

But you don't want to be too presumptive about who has a right to claim that promise, okay? So we need to talk not only about the extent of security but the recipients of that security. Who does it belong to? Let's go back to verse 28 again. "God causes all things to work together for good to those who," what? "who love God." Those who love God. Further, "Those who love God, those who are called according to his purpose." Two statements here limit this promise. This is promise that God is working everything together for eternal good is limited to people who are classified as those who love God and those who are called according to God's purpose. Very important statements!

First of all let's talk about those who love God. If you turned to the New Testament or even for that matter the Old Testament, you would find a number of different terms used to describe believers. Sometime we are called children of God. Sometimes we are called sons of God. Sometimes we're called saints. Sometimes we're called worshippers. Sometimes we're called believers. Sometimes we're called Christians. But I think it's important to note here that Paul identifies us as those that love God. Very very important! Lovers of God! Nothing is more indicative of being a Christian than that you love God. The people who love God are the people who enjoy the pledge of invincibility, who enjoy the pledge of security, who enjoy the promise that God is causing everything to work together for their eternal good.

Now this is not a designation of the Christian that's isolated here and I think it's something worthy to be talked about and I want to talk about it. It's easy for people to say, "Well I'm going to heaven and I can claim Romans 8:28 because sometime in the past I prayed a prayer, or I quote made a decision, or I went forward or I go to church or I feel like I believe the gospel. Here's a better way to identify a

person's true relationship. They are lovers of God. If you go back into the book of Exodus 20:6, Deuteronomy 7:9, you will read that God shows mercy to those who love him and demonstrate that love by keeping his commandments. And Jesus reiterated the same thing, "If you love me keep my commandments." The lovers of God then are those who demonstrate that love in obedience.

Nehemiah again says essentially the same thing. I think it's if I can find it quickly. It's in the first chapter, verse 5, "And I said I beseech you O God, Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who preserves the covenant and loving kindness," listen to this, "For those who love him and keep his commandments." So Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 7, Nehemiah 1:5, it's loving God is demonstrated in keeping his commandments. It's that kind of love. It's not some silly kind of sentiment. And that issue of loving God with an obedient attitude it's easy for us to understand. I mean if you, as a child, love your parents truly, you submit, you obey them. That's part of the expression of a genuine and honest love.

Psalm 69:36, the descendants of his servants will inherit it and those, he's talking about the eternal city as well as the earthly Jerusalem, "and those who love his name will dwell in it." It's the lovers of God that are designated as the recipients of God's blessing.

Psalm 1:16, and again I'm emphasizing this because I don't hear this emphasized. Psalm 116:1, "I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my supplications." So says the Psalmist that he loves the Lord. David says in Psalm 97:10, "O how I love thy law." Loving God is loving his word, which is tantamount to loving obedience to that word.

In Psalm 145, "The Lord keeps all who love him, all who love him." And it goes on and on like that. You can read Isaiah 56. It talks about those who love the Lord. You can read I Corinthians 2:9 where it talks about what God has prepared for them that love him. Now this is a very important phrase to define who is a true believer, who is a true believer. Because what happens when God does his mighty work in someone is that he produces a lover. In fact John designates a Christian this way: "We love him because he first loved us." So because God loved us redemptively and transformed us we now love him. We are lovers of God. That love manifests itself, not in some smarmy sentiment but in obedience. It's not just believing something. "The devils believe and tremble," James 2:19 says. It's about loving God. Romans 5:5 says, "The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts." II Corinthians 5:15 says, "The love of Christ is what controls us, it's what constrains us, it's what compels us." At the end of Ephesians in the benediction, a beautiful benediction Paul says, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible." What a great statement. An unbreakable love, incorruptible love!

Somebody asked how do you know if somebody is a Christian? This is a good place to go. How do you know someone is a son of God, a child of God, a true believer? Answer. Because they love God. We don't love the Lord as much as we should. That's not, as I've often said, that perfection of our life, but it's certainly the consuming direction of our life. You remember the sinful woman and we're going to learn about her later on in Luke 7, because she was forgiven much she what? She loved much. And what does Jesus say to Peter when he wants to affirm Peter? He says, "Peter do you love me?" Three times. And what does Peter say? In spite of my disobedience, in spite of my failures I love you. "Do you really love me?" Jesus says. And again Peter responds, I love you.

Finally he has to say Lord you know my heart, you know everything, you know I love you. We don't love the way we should and that's why in Philippians 1:9 we read that, "Paul says, I long for you all

with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is what I pray, that your love may abound still more and more." I love the Lord. I love God. I love the Lord Jesus Christ, but I want to love him more. Like Psalm 42 is the dear pants after the water brook so pants my soul after Thee, O God. If anyone doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ, I Corinthians 16:22 says, "let him do, what? Let him be an anathema, let him be damned. The true believer can be identified as one who loves the Lord. It's not a question of a past event; it's a question of a present love. "And we love," I John 4:19 "because he loved us first." Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and whoever loves the Father loves the one born of him. It's about love.

Now as we talk about this love what is it essentially we're talking about? I mean how do we describe this kind of love? Let me see if I can't just kind of, I'm not going to dig into all these passages. You can do that for yourself, but I'll just make some suggestions. Let me see if I can't give us a big understanding of what it means to love him. To love God means to be, choose my words carefully, to be thrilled with his majestic glory. I don't know that there's a greater joy in all Christian experience than to contemplate the glory of God. It's why we love to worship, why we love to sing, just as we were singing tonight, just carries your soul to lofty heights of joy to contemplate God' majestic glory. That's an indicator that you love God. It's not that you're caught up in the emotion of the tune, it's not that you're moved emotionally initially, it's that your emotions respond to the wonder of the truth.

Psalm 18, "I love Thee O Lord, my strength, my rock my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold, the one worthy to be praised, the one who saves me." That's what the Psalmist said. Now all the contemplation of the majestic glory of God, all that brought so much joy that it just burst out of the psalmist. That's what it means to love. It is no question about it; it is the emotional response to meditating on the wondrous majesty of God.

If you can hear things about the glory of God, hear things about the majesty of God, or for that matter the wonder and majesty of Jesus Christ and remain unmoved then there's reason to wonder whether or not you love God and love Christ. Songs that express love to God, songs that express love to Christ, songs that celebrate the glory of God and the majesty of God, psalms in Scripture that do that, any portion of Scripture for me that unfolds for me something of the glory of God and the wonder of Christ elicits out of my heart strong emotions of affection for God.

That's an indicator of love, being thrilled when meditating on God's majestic glory. Loving God also involves a strong desire to know him through his revelation. I can remember as a young person, before I ever went into ministry, God had put into my heart this desire to know the truth about God. I wanted to know God and so I started at a very young age really just in my college years, in fact I think it was just as I was creeping into seminary and I was still very immature in many ways, coming out of an athletic life trying to become a scholastic was a bridge I had a hard time crossing, but I remember what I wanted to do was know God. And so I found this book written by Stephen Charnak called The Existence and Attributes of God. It's an old puritan classic that goes on and on for a thousand pages about God. And I just started to read it and devour it because I wanted to know God. That's what does. Love pursues its object.

Love pursues the knowledge of its object I mean on a human level. When I fell in love with Patricia I wanted to be with her all the time. Everything about her charmed me and fascinated me, excited me, thrilled me, encouraged me, blessed me and I decided that I want to be with this woman for the rest of my life. And as life goes on and all the issues of life that wonderful experience of getting to know

someone is richer and richer and richer. It's what love does. It seeks to know the object. Psalm 63 the psalmist says, O God you're my God so I'm going to seek you earnestly. I know you're my God and I'm your child, but that's not enough. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh yearns for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I'm like a starving thirsting man crawling across the desert looking for an oasis. I want to know you. That's love.

That reminds me of that old story about the guy who wrote a letter to his girlfriend and said, "I'd cross the burning sands to be by your side, I'd swim the deepest ocean to be near you. If it doesn't rain I'll be over tonight." You know there are a lot of Christians who if it doesn't rain they might show up here, huh?

Loving God is all about a longing for communion and it says in verse 2 of Psalm 63, "I want to see you in your sanctuary. I want to see your power. I want to see your glory, because your loving kindness is better than life." We know that on a human level.

When I fell in love with my wife there was no human on the planet whose loving kindness I sought more than hers. And so the Psalmist says, I feel that way about you. I want to bless you as long as I live. I want to lift up my hands in your name. My soul is satisfied with you. My mouth offers praise with joyful lips. I remember you when I lie down on my bed. I meditate on you in the night watches. Some of us can remember that kind of romantic love and I'm not diminishing the love of God to that level, but I am saying that with the psalmist this becomes a consuming thing. That's why still for me the highest joy is to be in solitude in the word of God and to be contemplating the glory and the wonder of God.

You have been my help, he says, in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to you. My right hand, thy right hand upholds me. That's what it is to love God. It's to long for that fellowship, it's to long for that knowledge of God, that communion that comes when we understand God.

Psalm 84, "My soul longs and even yearned for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. The bird also found a house and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young. Even thine altars O Lord of Hosts, my king and my God how blessed are those who dwell in your house. They are ever praising you." I can't wait to get to your house, I just want to be there, I want to hear your word, I want to praise you. That's loving God.

And I think loving God, thirdly, is again and completely differently loving God is feeling pain when he is dishonored. Loving God is being hurt when God is mistreated. Psalm 69:9 is a verse that I have drawn on often in my life where the psalmist says, "The reproaches that fall on you are fallen on me. Zeal for your house is eaten me up." In other words, what he means is that when you're dishonored I feel the pain. When your name is dishonored I feel the hurt. When your truth is dishonored I feel the wound.

Sometimes people wonder why I get so upset at people who misrepresent the truth of God. Well I hope it's a Psalm 69:9 attitude. I hope it's something like Jesus who in John 2 you remember made a whip and cleansed out the temple. In other words, Jesus was saying, "I can't stand to see you dishonored."

So loving God then is this passion for the truth because it's the truth that honors God. If God is

exalted as word to his name, Psalm 138:2, if I really love God then I want to see God rightly represented. I don't like it when God is dishonored. I fight on this front a lot, folks. You don't know about it all the time. Some reporter called me a few months ago, we were talking about this this morning, a reporter called me a few months ago and said, "There's a new study, a new survey that indicated that divorce among Christians is the same as divorce among non-Christians. This survey has been done, this poll has been taken and it has been determined that Christians are divorced at the same rate that non-Christians are divorced in America. What do you think of that?"

I said, "I don't believe it. I do not believe that." "But this is what the survey says." "I don't care what the survey says I don't believe that. I don't believe it. In fact I think that's to dishonor the Lord to say that the power of Christ is zero in a marriage, the power of the Holy Spirit in a marriage. I don't believe that. I do not believe that true Christians get divorced at the same rate that non-Christians do." Well it showed up in a newspaper and the guy who took the poll wasn't happy, cause he thought I was questioning his integrity so he wrote me a very very strong letter. I have a large strong letter file. This was one. "How dare you question me. How dare you question the integrity of this poll." Well I said, "I'll question it on this basis. Who did you ask that question to? If you just surveyed the people who claim to be Christians that doesn't count. And I might suggest to you that you don't know who the true Christians are."

So I didn't buy it at all. And what irritated me about it is that this is a dishonor to God because it denigrates the power of God in the life of a believer with regard to the marriage. It wasn't a question whether you get your statistics right, it's a question of dishonoring God. You can't say that the power of God has no effect on marriages. And I said you don't do that. Well now it's become an evangelical legend every time I turn around. I heard a secular news reporter on the television the other day, "Well now it's been proven that divorce among evangelical Christians or among Christians is the same as non-Christians."

Now we're just another statistic. This is to say that God has no power in a marriage? When divorces occur in our church, they occur occasionally here. Very often it's because somebody in the marriage who professed Christ didn't know him. If you go out and survey people in churches across the spectrum, from Catholic to Protestant and denominations, who knows what you're going to get? The same company that does the surveys is the company that surveyed the people who said we don't want Bible teaching anymore in the pulpit. What does that tell you about that crowd? They don't love the word of God.

Well anyway.... So now since it keeps showing up I'm going to have to write another letter because I think here are people who are buying into this and it's a dishonor to the Lord. That's just something, I'm not at the point of making whips and things, but I just feel like occasionally whipping out a letter. To me this is a matter, I mean I'm a small voice but just coming to the defense of the character of our God. I think that's what Psalm 69:9 means. Zeal for your house is eating me up. I'm really consumed by my zeal for the glory of your name and the reproaches that fall on you all on me. When you're dishonored I feel the pain. That's how you know you love God. That's how you know that you love Christ. When Christ is dishonored it bothers you.

I stopped to play a few holes of golf a couple of days ago. After visiting with a gentleman it was a beautiful day and I thought I'll just go out by myself and played a couple of holes and ran into some gentlemen and the air was blue with profanity. And after about three holes of this this guy, one guy said to me, he said, "You know we do have a limited vocabulary. Have you noticed?" I said, "Yes,

I've noticed." He said, "Well we probably ought to apologize." He could tell I wasn't using the words they used. There were only a couple of them, but they used them all the time and he said to me, "What do you do?" I said, "I'm a preacher." "Oh no." His worst fear had come true and he then shouted to the other guys who were walking off the green, "Guys, John is a preacher." And then all the apologies started and I said, "Well look, at least up to this point you haven't taken my Lord's name in vain," Well one could only have wished that that had continued for the rest of the round. I don't expect a non-Christian to act like a Christian or even talk like one, but it does distress me. Doesn't it you?

That's what loving God is all about. There are other things and I'm going to give you maybe a couple. Loving God means loving what he loves. If I love God I love what God loves. And what does he love? He loves his people. He loves his word. He loves righteousness. He loves goodness. He loves kindness. I mean you can make the list yourself. If you love you love what God loves and I John 5:1, I read it to you. "Whoever loves God loves whoever is begotten by God." That would be Jesus Christ and all other believers. Don't say you love God and then hate your brother, right?

I John 2:9-11: If you love God you love believers. I'll tell you I'm happy to be with non-believers. I'm happy to be a witness and to tell them that God is a God who will forgive all their sins, even their bad vocabulary, but I prefer to spend my time with God's people. Don't you? I mean I confess that. I love the people God loves. I love the truth God loves. I love the righteous things that God loves and I want to love them even more.

Loving God also means hating what he hates. I mean loving God can't mean anything other than hating what he hates. Whatever it is that God loves is pure, righteous, holy, those are the kinds of things I want to love. Whatever it is that isn't that is the very thing that I desire to hate. Listen to Psalm 95:10, "Hate evil, you who love the Lord." Isn't that good? If you love the Lord, hate evil. That's the way it is if you love the Lord.

We don't long for his majestic glory the way we should, but if you love him you do long for his glory. We don't seek to know him and commune with him. We don't hunger and thirst after him as much as we should, but we do. We don't feel the pain of his dishonor the way we should, but we do feel it. We ought to feel it more and that's what Paul meant when he said, "I want your love to abound more and more." We don't love what he loves and hate what he hates as much as we should, but we do. Loving the Lord means rejecting the world too, doesn't it?

I John 2:15, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not what?" So to make a choice, if you love God you don't love the world. The world is the system, the satanically energized system of evil, not just blatant crime, but the godless worldview its economics, its social structure, its psychology, its philosophy, its morality. You don't love the world. The love for God means that the world is literally, as Paul put it, out of the picture. Paul says that when he was crucified he was crucified to the world. Remember that at the end of Galatians? Literally dead to the system. It offers us nothing, it provides nothing, it is against God, and when we love God it has no place for us.

One other thing and there are more, but I'll quit here. One other thing, loving God means longing for Christ's coming. I've done a lot of funerals lately. I guess the people that I've known through the years are starting to die and these are dear people that have been a part of our church and doing all these funerals I'm continually reminding everybody and myself how wonderful it is to go to heaven.

That's a hard sell for people in our world. It's not for people in some parts of the world.

When I was over in Kazakhstan years ago preaching for an entire week over there and people basically had nothing, I told you about that, and I was teaching them for all these days about the church and they said, "When are you going to get to the good part?" And I said, "What's the good part?" They said, "Heaven. When are you going to tell us about heaven?" They're ready to go. There's nothing to hold them here. We have so much clutter to hold us here, don't we?

But if you love Christ you're ready to go anytime. I would love to see the Lord Jesus return. I would love to get caught up in the air, wouldn't you? I would rather do that than die of cancer. I'd rather be raptured than have a heart attack. I told the Lord that and I think we would all agree. I would love to see the Lord return because I want to see him vindicated. I want to see the glorious manifestation of the children of God. I want the world to see the glory of the redeemer. He came once; they didn't see it. I want him to come back in all his glory and reigns King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Loving him is loving his appearing. Loving his coming and all the eternal reward that comes with it.

But finally, and this is kind of where we started, loving him, loving the Lord means obeying him. It means obeying him. If I love him that's what I do and it's not a matter of gritting my teeth and doing it because I have to. John 14:21, "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me." Wow! Whoever has my commandments and keep them he loves me, he loves me. It's about knowing the word and obeying it. I John 2:3, "By this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments." The one who says I've come to know him, hey I've made my decision but doesn't keep his commandments is a liar, truth isn't in him, but whoever keeps his word, obeys his word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know we are in him.

How do you know you are a Christian? You love him. How do you know you love him? You what, obey him. So true Christians are lovers of God, lovers of Christ who heart desire is to glorify God, to know him and to obey him. Can you generate that kind of love on your own? No. No. Right. It's not natural. In order to do it you have to be, and that's the next phrase, called according to his purpose and we'll find out about that next time.

We love you Lord as we have sung so many times expressing our affection, our longing, our hearts desires. We love you only because you first loved us. We would have never been able to love you. We were dead in trespasses and sin. We were blinded by the God of this world. We had no ability to know you, to love you, to comprehend you, but one day you called us with an effectual and saving call that awakened our dead hearts, opened our blind eyes, and you planted in us love, this deep and growing affection for you, and thereby do we know that we are yours. We are invincible, we are secure forever, we have absolutely nothing to fear and no one to fear because you are causing all things whether they are good, bad, or indifferent, all things to be working together under your power for our eternal good because we are the ones who love you. This is our great security for which we express our deepest thanks. For when we were dead in trespasses and sins you made us alive. When we were your enemies you made us your children. When we were slaves to sin you made us servants of righteousness and you did this all by your grace. When we hated you, you transformed us into those who love you and we give you all the praise. And now you ask us to be faithful and allow that love to abound more and more being increasingly more obedient, more desirous of your glory, your honor, communion with you, more desire of separation from the world around us that we might love you even more. And make us to be obedient with joy to all that you've commanded knowing therein lies the expression of our love and the source of our own blessing and your glory.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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