

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE LOVE WE OWE CHRIST

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VALUE OF TIME

There are many important decisions in life that shape a person's direction, character, and future. Each day we are faced with choices that are based upon time constraints. They do not just limit what we choose, but also influence how, when, and why we choose.

Time reveals our priorities and we choose what matters most to us.

- ❖ We spend time on what we value.
- ❖ Limited time forces us to choose what needs to be done now.
- ❖ Neglected priorities expose misplaced values.

Time also creates urgency before the proverbial window closes.

- ❖ Opportunities don't stay open forever.
- ❖ Relationships can cool/heal/grow depending upon timely action.
- ❖ "Not now" easily turns into "never."

Time reveals consequences because the impact of a decision is not always immediate.

- ❖ Seeds take time to grow.
- ❖ Consequences take time to unfold.
- ❖ Faithfulness takes time to bear fruit.

Time is both a gift and a test. It pressures and shapes us. It forces every person to determine what they truly love, what they value, and whom they truly serve.

A lot of people do not have a close relationship with Jesus. Sure, they are born again, but they are so busy with the things of life that there is no time for Jesus. Most Christians do not have a regular prayer time; some pray before they eat their meals and they often pray when they have a need, but there is no relationship with their Savior and Creator.

Over the years I've had family members and friends who only call me when they want something from me. Once I realize their mode of operation, I respond to their calls by asking them: "What do you want?" I want to use this message to examine your relationship with Jesus and whether it can be better.

LOVE IN ACTION

I believe that many Christians come to salvation in Christ because they are scared of hell and the Lake of Fire. They are not necessarily interested in heaven, but the



prospect of hell is even worse. Jesus becomes the means of salvation, but there is no desire for a relationship with Jesus.

Love is a sincere, self-giving commitment to the good of another person. It is not merely emotion, attraction, or sentiment – though these things may accompany it – but love chooses to act for someone's benefit even when it is inconvenient. This is what Jesus meant when He stated the following:

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)

Prior to the crucifixion, the apostles did not really love Jesus. They saw Him as the Messiah that was going to restore Israel to its former glory days under David and Solomon.

One day a woman came and poured very costly ointment on Jesus' head as an act of her deep love and devotion. Some of the disciples were upset with the action, believing it could have been sold and the proceeds donated to the poor. Jesus rebuked them, emphasizing the poor would always be present, but the woman had done a good work for Him. She unknowingly had anointed Him for burial, and wherever the gospel would be preached in the world, her act of devotion would be remembered.

“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.” (Matthew 26:6-13)

Jesus visited Bethany where Lazarus lived before the Passover. Martha served the meal while Lazarus sat with the God-man. Everyone was surprised when Mary took a pound of spikenard and anointed Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair, and the fragrance filled the house. Judas Iscariot criticized her, claiming it could have been sold and given to the poor. Jesus defended Mary's action, saying she had anointed Him for His burial, that the poor would always be present, but He would not always be with them.

“Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a

supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. (John 12:1-8)

In both instances, the apostles showed hostility and rebuked the women for wasting the oil on Jesus. The words of Jesus reveal that His handpicked men did not really care for Him. They only loved the God-man for what He did and could do for them. Few people truly loved Jesus simply as a person.

Jesus revealed the motives of the people following Him. They sought the supernatural physical benefits He provided, but were not interested in the spiritual truths supplied.

“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.” (John 6:26)

Most Christians treat Jesus as a commodity. They do not want to go to hell, and receive salvation by making Jesus Lord and Savior. When sick, they ask Jesus to heal them; when there is a financial need, they go to Jesus. The Son of God has effectively become an ATM machine.

MY LIFE

I decided that I wanted to be heaven at the age of three. A year later, a Sunday school teacher talked about my sins, the need for salvation, and how I needed to ask God to forgive me in order to receive Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Then at the age of thirteen, I walked away from Jesus to embrace a life filled with sin. The Holy Spirit convicted me of my sins when I was twenty-six years old and I rededicated my life to Christ.

I come from a Swedish background and I never heard my father tell my mother that he loved her. I do not recall being told that I was loved. The family dynamics was that we put up with each other in order to get what we each wanted. I had to rub someone's back to receive something reciprocal. We cared for one another – which wasn't the same as love – worked together, went on vacations together, but we never expressed those three thrilling and delightful words that everyone longs to hear.

I love you.

Thus, I was never able to develop a deep love for Jesus. I was happy and thankful for being rescued from hell, but I never felt any personal affection for the Son of God.

HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

It was not until 1970 when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit that love began welling up in me for Jesus. I began to view God the Father as my daddy and felt that He personally loved and cared for me as a person. I felt like His child. I had value. My frozen emotions began to thaw. This embarrassed me since I was raised in a family that showed no emotions except for anger. I was shy, and when I felt tears welling up, I always walked away feeling ashamed.

The more I preached about Jesus, His suffering on the cross, and how poorly He was treated in order to save the human race, my stiffness cracked and I began to see Jesus' love for humanity – including me.

I began to desire worshiping the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. My motive was not to get something from them, but just to be in their presence and bask in their love.

I have walked with the Lord for 60 years now and heaven is getting more and more real each day. I think about the moment that God calls me home and I walk into the Lord's presence.

I have come to the point that I love God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit for who they are, not what they can do for me. This concept is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

LEARN TO LOVE JESUS

The soul of a man is contaminated with sin, even after he has been saved. Here is how the apostle Paul described it:

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” (Romans 7:14-20)

I do not believe that the soul can produce unconditional love on its own. What exists instead is a pseudo form of love. Let's examine the following example:

A handsome unsaved man looks at an attractive unsaved woman and desires to have sexual encounters with her. The same is true in reverse. Eventually, he declares his romantic feelings for her. Their sexual encounters produce children and they decide to make a life together. Her companionship serves to meet his needs. In return, he works to provide security for the family and meet their needs. Since both of them are not saved, their spirits are dead and the love they possess is mechanical. Their affection is based on infatuation, touch, smell, emotions, and performance.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Only the born again spirit in a person has the capability to reflect the sincere, self-giving commitment to the good of another person. Love chooses to act for someone's benefit even when it is inconvenient. When a husband/wife chooses to love their spouse for who they are, not for what they can produce, that is when love is firmly cemented.

Paul teaches that no matter how gifted a person may be – whether in speech, prophecy, knowledge, or sacrificial giving – it is all worthless without love. The nature of true love is that it is patient and kind; it does not envy or boast; it is not proud, rude, selfish, or easily provoked. It certainly does not keep a record of wrongs, nor does it delight in sin, but rejoices in the truth. Paul said that love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things. In other words, love is relentless, resilient, and rooted in God's own nature.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (1 Corinthians 13:1-7)

The KJV translators used the word "charity" in 1 Corinthians 13 because in 1611, charity carried a meaning much closer to what Paul intended than the modern word charity does today. At that time, charity meant the highest form of Christian love – a selfless, Christlike love that seeks the good of others.

Paul was describing a love that acts, a love that costs, a love that pours itself out for the good of another. This meaning closely mirrors the love described in John 3:16, where God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Thus, the “charity” of 1 Corinthians 13 is the same divine love revealed at Calvary. It is a love that bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things; a love expressed not in words only, but in the ultimate gift – Jesus Christ crucified for the sins of humanity! This is the self-giving love that God the Father demonstrated when He gave God the Son for a fallen world.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

God’s agape love is not performance based; it is a divine love that is unconditional, and when you were deeply rooted in sin, God the Father loved you enough to send God the Son as a ransom to redeem mankind. It was the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus that made salvation possible.

THE CHANGE

The apostles were saved before Jesus died on the cross. This took place by repenting and believing that Jesus was the Messiah. But when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, there was a huge change in their lives from that moment forward. They changed from selfish, argumentative, and angry men as the Holy Spirit took over their born-again spirits.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4)

The divine love that I have mentioned can only come to a Christian through the Holy Spirit. Natural love like caring for a person, sexual attraction, sympathy, and loyalty can never match the unconditional love produced by the Holy Spirit which manifests through our born-again spirit. This is the kind of love that kept Jesus on the cross and why He didn’t give up and throw in the towel.

*“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”
(John 15:13)*

When I met Aina in 1960, I liked her so much that I pursued her and asked her to marry me. But when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit in 1970, I was given a deeper love for her. Since she was also baptized in the Holy Spirit, she also loved me in return with an agape love. Our marriage lasted 62 years, but the last 10 years saw her struck with Alzheimer’s. I fought hard for her in prayer and trying alternative treatments. As I saw her mind and body deteriorate, my unconditional love for her never wavered and I stood

by her side until the day Jesus called her home. There was never a thought of leaving her; the agape love helped me to stay with her even though I was a stranger to her during the last two years.

She told me early on in our marriage that she never wanted to be cremated and I honored this last wish when she was buried in a coffin. My love was relentless, resilient, and rooted in God's own nature.

SUMMARY

Do you unconditionally love God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit because of who they are or do you love them because of what they do for you?

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?