

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

February, 1998

Dear Readers,

“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” (2 John 3) I pray that this finds you in good health and in a close relationship with the Lord. Please examine this study carefully, for it is of vital importance to our relationship with God. Thank you so much for your time.

THE LOVE OF GOD

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” (1 John 3:1) God asks us to behold what manner, or what degree, of love that God the Father has for us. The focus of the entire Bible is on how much God the Father loves each one of us. Disbelieving God’s love for us hinders our relationship with God.

It was a disbelief of God’s great love that started Satan on his downward path. (See Ezekiel 28:14-17.) It was a disbelief of God’s great love that convinced Eve to sin. (See Genesis 3:1-6.) It is a disbelief of God’s great love that keeps us in sin. It is only through a revelation of God’s infinite love that we will be brought into a loving relationship with God that surpasses any that we have yet had.

It has been Satan’s goal to deceive men as to the true character of God. Satan would have us believe that God is not as loving as He claims to be, and he knows that if he can convince us on this issue, we will never love God with all our heart. It is only with a true picture of God’s love that we can ever love Him enough to fulfill the commandment Jesus called “*the first and great commandment*,” which is to love God with all our heart. (See Matthew 22:37, 38.)

How do we attain that love?

Jesus said, “If ye love me, **keep** ⁵⁰⁸³ [Greek τηρέω] my commandments.” (John 14:15) (The small Strong’s numbers used after a word represent a Greek word that was translated into English. Whenever you see the number ⁵⁰⁸³ in this study, it represents the same Greek

word no matter what English word was chosen by the translators.)

The same Greek word is used in verse 23. “If a man love me, he **will keep** ⁵⁰⁸³ [τηρέω] my words.” (John 14:23) In the Greek Bible, verse 14 is translated like this: “If you love me, you **will keep** ⁵⁰⁸³ [τηρέω] my commandments.” (Jay P. Green’s *Greek Interlinear*)

This verse is a statement about a cause and effect relationship, rather than a command. Jesus said that if we love Him, the natural result of that love is that we will keep His commandments. If we do not love God, we cannot, and will not, keep His commandments.

Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

If we love God with all our heart, we will not have any other gods before Him. We will not worship any graven image, break the Sabbath, or take His name in vain. If we love our neighbor as ourselves, we won’t murder them, bear false witness against them, covet their goods, commit adultery, or dishonor our parents.

For this reason Paul could say, with certainty, these words: “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. ... Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:8-10)

To love God with all our heart is the first and great commandment. Obviously you cannot break this one and think that you are keeping the commandments of God. As we can clearly see, if we are striving to keep God’s

commandments, our first and highest goal is to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

“We love Him, because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) The only reason given for man loving God is; because He first loved us. If we desire to love God, we must first see His love for us. In proportion to how much we understand and appreciate God’s love for us, so will be our love for God. If you see that God loves you a little bit, then your love for Him will be very little. If you see that God loves you even enough to yield up that which was most precious to Him, His only begotten Son, then your love for Him will be great.

How can we know God’s love?

“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. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9, 10) God has revealed His great love by yielding up His only begotten Son.

“And we **have known** ¹⁰⁹⁷ and believed [that God sent His only begotten Son—Verse 9] *the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect.*” (1 John 4:16, 17) Our love for God is made perfect, by knowing, believing, and dwelling on His love for us in that He gave His only begotten Son.

We must first understand how we can know the love of God, so that we can believe it, and dwell upon it, which will perfect our love for Him. “Hereby **perceive** ¹⁰⁹⁷ [know] *we the love of God, because He laid down His [Jesus’] life for us.*” (1 John 3:16) To know God’s love for us, we must look at how He gave His Son to lay down His life for us.

“And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be **sore amazed** ¹⁵⁶⁸ [ἐκθαμβέω], and to be **very heavy** ⁸⁵ [ἀδημονέω]; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and **watch** [give strict attention to]. And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.” (Mark 14:32-35) Jesus asked His disciples to watch what was going on, because He wanted them to know and believe the love God has for them, so that their love for God might become perfected.

Let’s take a look at what happened in the garden of Gethsemane. Let’s first look at the definition of ἐκθαμβέω ¹⁵⁶⁸ which means, “to be struck with terror.” (Thayer’s *Greek Lexicon*) Something happened to Jesus

which caused Him to be terrified, so much that He prayed three times that the hour might pass from Him.

The next word used to describe the condition of Jesus is the word ἀδημονέω which means “to be in distress (of mind); (To be sated to loathing).” (Strong’s *Greek Dictionary*) Sated to loathing means, “To satisfy totally (the appetite or a desire) so fully as to cause a sudden violent hostility or disgust of feelings, to the point of abhorring them.” (Grolier’s, *New Webster’s Dictionary*) Something was happening to Jesus that caused Him to be disgusted with His feelings, and those feelings terrified Him. What were those feelings?

“The LORD laid on Him the iniquity [guilt] of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6) Jesus experienced the shame that we feel when we sin, only magnified many times. This caused a separation between God and Himself. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2)

God truly loves us enough to give up His only begotten Son, and He wants us to behold, or to dwell on, that precious truth. “For the love of Christ **constraineth** ⁴⁹¹² [compels or **preoccupies**] us.” (2 Corinthians 5:14) We are to be preoccupied with the wonderful truth that God so loved the world that He allowed His only begotten Son to experience our guilt, and to suffer the consequences of having that guilt laid upon Him.

“Now the **end** ⁵⁰⁵⁶ [point aimed at, or goal] of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved [not aiming at] have turned aside unto vain jangling.” (1 Timothy 1:5, 6) Some who have not focused on love have swerved from the faith. This tells us that we must focus on our goal, which is to love God, by knowing His love for us.

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 3:5) “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” (Isaiah 26:3) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” (1 John 3:1) God knows that if we dwell upon the wonderful love that He has for us, it will mold and shape us like nothing else can. If we will constantly have a conscious realization of the love God has for us, and appreciate that love, we will finally be so disgusted with sin that we will refuse to allow it to dwell in us any longer. We can overcome sin with God’s help.

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John

5:4, 5) There is something about believing that Jesus is the Son of God that enables us to overcome the world.

Since believing that Jesus is the Son of God enables us to overcome sin, do you think Satan would try to distort the fact that Jesus is the Son of God? Certainly he would. If we expect to overcome the world, we must believe that Jesus really is the only begotten (born) Son of God, and that God gave Him up for us.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.” (1 John 5:10) *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.”* (Matthew 17:5) God says that Jesus Christ is His only born Son, don’t let anyone tell you differently.

Jesus, speaking of Himself, says, *“When there were no depths, I was brought forth²³⁴² [born]; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.”* (Proverbs 8:24, 25) The Hebrew word that was translated here as **brought forth** is in the Pulal form of the verb, and can only carry the definition of this form of the verb, which means “to be born” (Gesenius’ *Hebrew Lexicon*). Jesus is the literal Son of God, born in heaven before the world was.

It is only by knowing and believing that God so loved the world that He actually gave up His only born Son, that we can truly have our love for God perfected. Therefore, only by knowing and believing that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, can we keep His commandments.

There will be a group of people in the last days who will love God with all their heart. They will know the love of God that passes knowledge. They will understand that God loves us so much that He gave up His only begotten Son. This group of people are known as the 144,000. They are the ones who receive the seal of God. (See Revelation 7:1-4) They will be without fault. *“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. ... And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”* (Revelation 14:1, 5) They will not submit to the mark of the beast, and will be saved from all the plagues that come upon the earth.

These people will understand God’s love to such a degree that they will not sin. *“The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”* (Zephaniah 3:13) These are a testimony for God that man can overcome sin. I want to be part of that number.

There will be another group in the last days; a group who will receive the mark of the beast. There will be only two groups. There will be no middle group. Either you will receive the mark of the beast, or the seal of God. The group that receives the mark of the beast will not overcome sin. They will continue living in the sins that they have chosen. What will be their final outcome? *“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.”* (Isaiah 13:9) Sinners will be destroyed when the Lord comes. They will cry out for the rocks to fall on them to hide them from the presence of the Lord. Any cherished sin that is not repented of and forsaken will bring us down at that day, and cause us to be destroyed. *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”* (Proverbs 28:13) Please get ready.

There will be a proclamation that will go forth just prior to the return of the Lord, and all cases will be decided, whether for good or for evil. *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”* (Revelation 22:11, 12) This is a solemn warning. Please be ready.

Is Jesus the Son of God?

Jesus declared of Himself, *“For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out¹⁸³¹ [ἐξέρχομαι “to come forth from physically, arise from, to be born of” Thayer’s Greek Lexicon] from God. I came forth¹⁸³¹ from the Father, and am come²⁰⁶⁴ [έρχομαι “to come from one place to another” *ibid.*] into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”* (John 16:27, 28) Jesus was born of the Father before the world was, and it was very hard for God to see His only begotten Son die for the sins of us all. Thank God for such love that does not hold back anything for the benefit of the objects of that love. *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32)

Would it be harder for a man to yield up his own life, or to yield up his first and only Son? I know that it is much harder to allow your own son to die than to be willing to die yourself. God’s love for us is much greater than we have yet realized.

There is no way we can love God perfectly if we do not believe that Jesus is the literal Son of God, born before the world was. There are some who distort the

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character of God by saying that Jesus was not born, or merely a friend, or some kind of an acquaintance, instead of realizing the wonderful sacrifice that God made by yielding up that which was most dear to Him—His only begotten Son—whom He brought up, and grew to love more and more, even as a man grows to love a child of his own offspring. “*Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.*” (Proverbs 8:30)

Those who deny that Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God cannot understand the benevolence of God, in that it was a struggle for the King of the universe to yield up His only begotten Son; thus they cast a false light on the character of God, limiting their own love for their Creator. Therefore they make it impossible for them-

brought forth of the Father. Asserting that He was selves to love God perfectly, or keep His commandments perfectly, thus excluding themselves from the “*remnant of Israel*” who “*shall not do iniquity.*” (Zephaniah 3:13)

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May God Bless You Richly!

“To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”
(1 Corinthians 8:6)

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