

# Working Out Your Salvation

## The Wonder and Mystery of Sanctification

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February 12, 2017

### Part 6- Media Gratiae- the "Means" of Our Sanctification, Part 3

#### The Acts 2:37-44

**37** Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

**38** Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**39** "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

**40** And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

**41** So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

**42** They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

**43** Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

**44** And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

To the Glory of God

For many years now, I have pondered just what the Bible means when it says that God saves us. What could possibly motivate an infinitely Holy God to reach down and rescue wicked rebels from His Wrath? Why would a God, Who has no need for anything, want to gather a people who have repeatedly belittled His Glory with their sin?

Now I completely understand what I get out of this amazing Act. I get to completely miss the eternal Damnation that I deserve because of my blatant and willful and repeated sins, and I get to spend eternity

with God in the single most beautiful place in all the Universe. At least that is what I'm told. But what does God get out of this deal?

45 years ago, when I was first saved, I was taught over and over that the reason that God saved me was because He loved me, and that the ultimate *goal* of Salvation, the *end* for which Jesus died, the *entirety* of everything written in the Bible was for me to be forgiven and to be able to go to Heaven. And I believed that then, and I believe that now. I think that statement is true and biblical and right. The only difference between me now and me then is that now I think that while true and right, that statement is woefully incomplete.

Yes, Jesus loves me! Thank God, He loves me! I rejoice that Jesus loves me! Nothing else would matter if Jesus didn't love me. But I have some concerns about that statement, not that I think it isn't true, I don't. But, I have concerns that it sends the wrong message precisely because it is incomplete.

If the only reason that God saved me was because He loved me, then what is this thing called "the Glory of God" that the Bible keeps talking about? And if the main goal of Salvation is me going to Heaven, then why am I still on earth? Why doesn't God take everybody to Heaven as soon as He saves them? Wouldn't that be better, *especially* since that is what the main goal is supposed to be?

And how is it that 45 years after I repented and trusted in Jesus, that I'm still saved? How is it that through many dangers, toils and snares, through an abundance of persecutions, and disappointments, and betrayals, and disillusionments, and many, many examples of weakness and failure, I still love God?

You need to know that the main reason I am trying with all of my heart to be biblical in every aspect of my own personal life, and in every aspect of this Church, is because I think that being loved by the Owner and Creator of the Universe is staggering. It takes my breath away. And I have tried to live my life over the last four decades in such a way that illustrates just how amazed I really am that Jesus loves me. So, nothing that I am about to say is designed, in any way, to minimize that amazing Truth.

But I've changed over the last 45 years. And I've changed because I've been reading and studying the Bible. And I have found out that the Bible teaches things that most people today don't talk about. The Bible teaches that there is something much deeper and far more

important in the way that God *expresses* that amazing Love that He has for me, than what I normally hear from people. In fact, I hardly hear *anybody* talk about this at all these days. And yet when I read the Puritans or Jonathan Edwards or Charles Spurgeon or William Carey or Augustine, they talk about this, a lot.

You see, I honestly believe that many people have bought into the notion that "God loving them" means that He puts them above Himself, that they are more important to Him than anything else. And so, I fear that the catalyst as to why people today are willing to be "God-centered" is because they think that God is "Man-centered". I fear that the reason people are willing to put "God first" in our day is because they think that God is putting them first. And that is why a conscious pursuit of Biblical Holiness among many of the people of the modern Church is paper-thin, if it exists at all.

Because, if you believe that way, then *you* become the focus of God in the Universe. You become the final and the best and the highest and the central and the most important reason why God did all that He did and why Jesus did all that He did and why God the Holy Spirit continues to do all that He does. And that isn't being biblical, dear friends, that is idolatry.

It is inherent in being "fallen" that we always want to be "first" and "best" and "number 1". It is part of our corrupt and rebellious nature that we always crave more and to always want to fly higher and have more stuff and be made much of. That is what it means to be American. But it is also what it means to be sinful.

We want to put things like drugs, alcohol, and sex at the top of our list of really bad sins. But God places things like Human Pride, Arrogance, and Self-Righteousness at the top. We pray and work hard to avoid things like poverty and pain and suffering, while God says to be cautious about money and success and comfort.

And the theology that puts Man at the center feeds these base and corrupting influences. And yet, strangely, this theology is the single most popular teaching of our day. The notion that the sensual motivational speakers, who masquerade as preachers of the Gospel, repeat over and over, is that Jesus died to give us more stuff and to make us happy and more fulfilled on this earth. And that Message is intoxicating. Write a book about how to use the Bible and use the sinless Lamb of God to get a better job or to get a better house or even a

better wife, and you'll have an instant best seller. Get people fired up about how they can have more influence in this world, and you'll have standing room only. But the Apostle John said that anyone who loves the world doesn't have the Love of the Father in him.

I suggest to you that it is precisely because we have traded the inerrant, infallible Truth of the Word of God for spiritual candy and ecclesiastical games and smoke machines and "christian" comedians as to why there is so much resistance to things like Holiness and Righteousness and Obedience and Biblical Purity. It is because we have bought into the lie that says that we are the most important figure in God's Economy that ancient heresies like Lawlessness and Legalism are on the rise. It is because we have believed that *our* well-being is more important than the Glory of God that there is an epidemic of men in the modern Church, who lay claim to being saved, who are addicted to pornography. This is why people are confused about the role of men and women, and why sexual sins and marital discord and divorce and even abortion is rampant among those who say they are the heirs of the Reformation. And this is why we see scandal after scandal among the biggest names in the Evangelical world.

There is a little known, almost never quoted, Passage tucked away in the opening of the Apostle Paul's inspired letter to the Church at Ephesus that I want you to look at. Please turn with me to **Ephesians 1:5-6**. And look at verses 5-6:

**5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,**  
**6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

Here, God the Holy Spirit moved on the Apostle so he would write that God:

**... predestined us to adoption as sons...**

... which means that *before* the foundation of the world, *before* we were born, *before* we did anything good or bad, God decided, in His Wisdom, to bring wicked sinners into His Family. So, *whatever* you think about

the concept of “predestination”, we must agree that it is a biblical term. Now look at what he said next:

**... through Jesus Christ to Himself ...**

So, before God made the sun and the moon and the stars, He determined to redeem lost humanity (that hadn't even been created yet) through the second Person of the Trinity, God the Son (Who hadn't been incarnate yet as Jesus Christ). And then Paul tells us *why* God did this:

**... according to the kind intention of His will**

So, there it is. There is that statement. God saved me because He loved me. But God didn't do this because He was lonely, or because we brought something to the table that God lacked, or that we possessed some quality that made us attractive to God. No, the Bible says here that the only *catalyst* by which God predestined us to adoption was:

**... the kind intention of His will**

And as I told you earlier this is right, it is true, and it is biblical. God saved us because He loved us. Amen and thank You, Jesus! But now look at the first phrase of the very next verse:

**to the praise of the glory of His grace...**

So now we see something else that makes the statement “God saved me because He loved me” *incomplete*. The Scriptures reveal that the one, true, and living God is Holy. And that means that God is “unlike” anything or anyone else. Nothing is like God. God is utterly unique. He is higher and better and more important and more beautiful than everything else in all the Universe. And what makes God so Holy, is His Attributes and Characteristics.

And as one or more of those utterly unique Attributes of God are manifested or displayed or seen or revealed, *that* is God's Glory. That is an example of the radiance of God's Holiness. So, for example, as God shows Mercy to underserving sinners, that display of Mercy is a revealed portion of God's unique and holy Nature. And that is God's

Glory. As God judges unrepentant sinners, that display of God's righteous Judgment, is God's Glory.

And God's Grace is a part of God. It is part of Who God is. So, part of the pristine Holiness of God is the Grace that God has and the Grace that God is. And, like God Himself, God's Grace has a "glory" to it. God's Grace, in and of itself, possesses a *radiance* that transcends time and space, and that "shows" or "displays" or "reveals" another part of the infinite Worth and Importance of God.

And it is God's Will that the Glory of His Grace be seen and admired and enjoyed and experienced by people from every nation and tongue and tribe. And yet, even though God Himself has Grace- He *cannot* display that Grace by Himself. And that is because God- in His tri-unity doesn't *need* Grace. And so, the only way that God can display the Glory of His Grace is by there being unworthy sinners to whom this Grace will come.

And so, by the predestination of God, wicked rebels are redeemed and forgiven and made righteous through what Jesus Christ did for them, so that the Glory of God's Grace will be seen and admired and enjoyed. And *that* is why God saves us.

Before there was light or dark, before there was morning or evening, before there was anything else, God, all by Himself, in His majestic Beauty, issued a Divine Decree to redeem those on whom He set His Love, by what He alone did for them, at great cost to Himself, the Death of His Son, and He did it out of His great unfathomable love that He has for us to one single End, for one single overriding Purpose:

**to the praise of the glory of His grace**

So, God has chosen some of Adam's fallen race to be the ones to whom God can lavishly pour out what they patently do not deserve. And God does this only through the Life and Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and God does this to one single end:

**to the praise of the glory of His grace**

So, I want to proclaim to you this morning that we "got" saved, we *are* saved, and we *stay* saved precisely because, even though it is true that God loves us with an everlasting love, God loves God more than

God loves you or me. God is enamored with *Himself* infinitely more than God could ever be enamored with you or me. And I want to herald to you the very good news that because God and His Glory are at the forefront of God's Mind, because God's Passion to be known and loved and enjoyed overrides everything else about God, and because God is determined, in all His Omnipotent Power and Might, to get for Himself a people, that this is why a weak and vacillating man like me can stand here before you 45 years after being forgiven.

And I thought it good to review the "why" of our Sanctification this morning before we continue with the "how". So, this morning, we are *continuing* our short "vacation" from our "journey" through the Gospel of Luke to begin this new year by examining the Wonder and Mystery of Sanctification. We are examining what the Bible says as to why and how saved people are made holy. And over the last couple of weeks we have been looking specifically at the "tools" or the "ways" or the "means" by which already saved people are made progressively holy.

In His great Mercy, God the Father has given several different "gifts" to the Church that are used by God the Holy Spirit to facilitate our growth in both Knowledge and Grace. And those gifts are listed for us in **The Acts 2:42** that says:

**They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

... four gifts:

1. The Apostle's Teaching
2. Godly Fellowship
3. The Breaking of Bread
4. Prayer

... which the Reformers called "The Means of Grace", and which they put into a Latin phrase:

Media Gratiae

And it is precisely because the people of the early Church availed themselves of these four spiritual gifts or Means as to why Dr. Luke could say this about these early believers:

**The Acts 2:43-44**

**43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.**

**44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;**

Now over the last couple of weeks, I have been introducing you to the first Means of Grace that God has given to the Church to facilitate our progressive Holiness, the Apostle's Teaching, and I want to quickly review this before we move on.

I have tied to show you the importance that God's Word has in our Sanctification, how the Holy Spirit takes the Word and does six different things in our lives:

1. Restores the soul
2. Makes wise the simple
3. Rejoices the heart
4. Enlightens the eyes
5. Brings about Perseverance
6. Produces comprehensive righteousness

... all of which work together to do two things:

- A. Make Jesus irresistible
- B. Make us Holy

**Psalms 19:10-11**

**10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.**

**11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.**

... which is Sanctification. Now this morning I want to begin to look at the second Means of Grace:



## 2. Godly Fellowship

Now we live in a day when almost every facet of Biblical Christianity has either been dramatically *minimized* or outright *eliminated*. And that is also true with the Means of Grace called Godly Fellowship. We are a busy people, working harder than our grandparents, to pay for all the things that people told us would make us happy.

But one of the casualties of this fast-paced life is that we are more alone than ever before. Millions of people, who interact with others all day long on the job in the richest nation in the history of the world, take psychotic medication because they feel all alone. Aloneness and feelings of isolation and that nobody sees or cares is becoming more and more prevalent than ever before. It is common today for people to live next door to others in their neighborhoods for many years and never meet their neighbors, never speak with them, and never get to know their names.

And this phenomenon has spilled over to the modern Church. Many people go to Church with others for many years and never know their names. They worship God together in the Service, but they don't speak, they don't interact, they don't fellowship, and then they walk out the door only to repeat the same thing over and over their entire lives. And whatever else you might call this, it isn't love and it isn't fellowship.

Many Church leaders have tried to attack this phenomenon of "aloneness" by taking time in the middle of the Service for people to shake hands and greet one another, but that effort is woefully ineffective. Beloved this is a cancer than is sapping the life out of Christ's Church that ought not to be and that must be stopped.

Other Churches have reduced the importance and impact of the Means of Grace of Fellowship to really nothing more than casual talk among friends. We just saw last week how that more and more religious organizations are cancelling their Sunday evening Services so lukewarm and unsaved men can gather in the Fellowship Hall to eat chili and watch the Super Bowl, while Jesus sits over in the corner. And they call that "fellowship". But this is *not* what the Holy Spirit had in mind when He gave us this wonderful Means of Grace.

Godly Fellowship is carried out between brothers and sisters in Christ when we care about each other and love each other enough to hold each other accountable to what is True and Absolute. Fellowship is carried out by the members of God's Family when we find out what each person is struggling with, what sins are overcoming us, what fears are paralyzing us, what thoughts and actions are demoralizing us, and what sufferings are affecting us. And Fellowship is also for us to determine what blesses each one, what encourages each one, and what motivates each one to live humbly and joyfully and faithfully in Jesus.

For the people of the modern Church to "sub-out" love and care for the sheep to only a group of professional ecclesiastical leaders is to abdicate our responsibility, our duty, our privilege, and our joy as Christians to obey what the Apostle Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:1-7**, please go there with me:

- 1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,**
- 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,**
- 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**
- 4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;**
- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,**
- 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.**
- 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.**

So, here the great Apostle Paul *begged* the people of the Church of Ephesus, he *implored* them all to engage in the means of Grace called Godly Fellowship. And then in verses 1a-3, Paul told us what this Fellowship looks like:

- 1... walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,**
- 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,**
- 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

... so, Godly Fellowship has four characteristics:

- 1. walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,**
- 2. with all humility and gentleness, with patience,**
- 3. showing tolerance for one another in love,**
- 4. being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

... and we simply cannot do this alone. We do this with each other or we don't do it at all. And we do what verses 1a-3 say because of what verses 4-6 say:

**4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;**

**5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,**

**6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.**

... and the reason we do this together and often is because of what verse 7 says:

**But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.**

... so each believer has been gifted with the gift of grace that the others in the Body needs.

Now it is true that God used individual people under the inferior and partial Revelation of the Old Covenant. But under the superior and completed Revelation of the New Covenant, God moves in the earth through His Body, the Church. There are no more "lone rangers" operating in God's Will today. After the Resurrection of Jesus, we move together.

We must understand that the Church is no more holy than the sin of its most fragile member. And the Church is no stronger than the failure of its weakest member. And so, the ongoing care and concern and love that we should have for each other's well-being is vital for a strong and healthy Church. And anyone who insists on operating under that concept of "singleness" is in violation of the entire concept of the New Testament. All saved people belong to Christ's Church, and, as such, no individual saint is an island to himself.

In Jesus Christ, every single saved soul is under the authority and the guidance and the accountability and the fellowship and the love of other saved souls. Every weak and struggling human who has been born from above is walking in unity with other weak and struggling humans who have also been born from above. No one who has been washed in Christ's Blood operates alone. No one operates apart from Christ's Church. No Christian walks in "aloneness". In the New Covenant there is only the concept of "one another".

Now there is a pseudo-spirituality that masquerades as genuine spirituality that is growing popular in our day. This pseudo-spirituality says, *"I hear directly from God myself. And so, I have no need of any leaders or even of any co-laborers. I am spiritual, and so I am led by God, and I will not submit to the authority of any man. I ask God and He reveals His Word to me and I have no need to be taught by anyone else."*

This is probably one of the most insidious deceptions that exist on earth today because it sounds so spiritual. And it is usually manifested in two main ways:

- A. A refusal to integrate into the Body of believers, the Church.
- B. An attempt to understand Divine Truth by excluding God's Gift.

... Godly Fellowship will destroy both manifestations of this deception.

The first manifestation exists when people say, *"I don't need anyone else. I love God and He loves me and I'm content by myself."* Now that may sound fine, but it isn't. It is simply another manifestation of fallen rebellion because God has required three things from every believer:

### **Hebrews 10:24-25**

**24** and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,  
**25** not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

So, we can see here that we are commanded by the Lord Christ to do three things:

1. We are to think and plan and contemplate just how each believer can stimulate every other believer to love and good works.
2. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.
3. We are to encourage one another.

... and you simply cannot do that by yourself. And notice that the writer of Hebrews put a modifier on these three things:

**... and all the more as you see the day drawing near**

So, we are to engage in these three things *more often* the closer we see the Return of Jesus is.

The second manifestation of this spiritual anarchy is when people attempt to understand Divine Truth alone apart from the Gift that God gave. And the people deceived by this lie will even quote a verse to justify their position:

**1 John 2:27**

**As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.**

The problem with using this verse to justify this kind of “spiritual anarchy” is that the Apostle John was *not* saying what these people are teaching. The correct context of this verse is that the Apostle John was doing battle in the first century with the Gnostic mystics who taught that “Salvation” was nothing more than “receiving” special knowledge (gnosis) that was hidden *within* the Scriptures (and other books) in “codes” and “formulas” and mathematical equations that only the Gnostics understood.

John was condemning the heresy of the Gnostics by teaching here that the proof of genuine Salvation is not understanding codes or formulas or equations, but that God the Holy Spirit would dwell internally in all genuine believers and “guide him into all Truth”.

John was saying that Christians had no need for these false teachers (the Gnostics) to teach them anything. But God the Holy Spirit would teach them what they needed to know.

But it is very important to understand how John was teaching that the Holy Spirit would teach us. The Apostle John was *not* creating another way to learn the Truth than what had already been taught in the entire Body of Revelation of the New Testament. John was fully aware and agreed with the fact that God the Spirit had already revealed how people under the New Covenant would know and learn Truth:

## **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;**

**17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

Here the Apostle Paul says that it is Scripture that is profitable for four things:

1. Teaching
2. Reproof
3. Correction
4. Training in Righteousness

... and that it is through the knowledge of the Scriptures that the man of God may be:

**... adequate, equipped for every good work**

Now most scholars say that **2 Timothy** was written about 25 years before **1 John**. So, John would have known what Paul wrote here *before* he wrote the statement about the anointing teaching us and not needing a teacher. But even more importantly, John knew what Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:11-16**:

**11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,**

**12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;**

**13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

**14** As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

**15** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

**16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Now verse 11 lists what are commonly called "The Five-fold Ministry". Actually, that isn't true. According to the construction of the original Greek the Apostle Paul says that God gave *four* "Ministry Gifts" to the Church:

- 1. Apostles**
- 2. Prophets**
- 3. Evangelists**
- 4. Pastor/Teachers**

... because the last two are joined together. But, in any event, God used the Apostles and Prophets to do three things:

1. Receive the revelation of the New Covenant directly from God.
2. Write that Revelation down.
3. Confirm its Divine Authority through signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Once that Revelation was received, written down, and authenticated, the purpose of the Offices of both the Apostle and Prophet were completed and they ceased to exist after the death of John. But the remaining two Ministry Gifts of Evangelist and Pastor/Teacher are still in function today.

The point here is that God the Holy Spirit would not give the Church the gift of Teachers, and then turn around and tell John to disregard Teachers. What we are to disregard, and what John was

warning the early Church about, are the *false* teachers, most notably the Gnostics. We are never to avoid or exclude godly Teachers from our effort at understanding God's Word. God gave them to us to use.

Efforts to study the Bible alone without availing ourselves of the gift of Teachers is not being spiritual. It is a very arrogant exercise to exclude the very gift that God graciously gave by limiting your exposure to only yourself. And the notion that people can "go it alone" today, because they supposedly hear directly from God, is not only foolish, but it is dangerous.

Every heretic since the Resurrection said they heard directly from God. And they also said that every Teacher that came before them was wrong and they alone had the Truth. Truth lies in no other location than the 66 Books of the Holy Bible, and humble, sincere seekers of Truth always avail themselves of the many, many godly Teachers that God has graciously given throughout history to the Church.

Please remember that no one is a Teacher of Truth by himself. Every single Teacher is also a Student of somebody else. No one on earth has ever or will ever possess all Truth. We are all ignorant of many things and we are all blind to many things.

And, therefore, we need each other. And we need the collective wisdom of 2,000 years of amazing victories, and also horrible defeats. And both the victories and defeats will help us to live for God and honor Jesus Christ. It is just as important to learn what not to do as it is to learn what to do.

If John believed in anything, he believed in the Church. And John believed in spiritual authority and he believed in the accountability of all believers to one another. John also passionately believed in the many "one another" verses that we find in the New Testament, because God used him to write most of them down. For example, John quoted Jesus as saying in **John 13:34**:

**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**

Love is the calling card of the Christian Church. The lost world has never known or seen anything close to the love that genuine believers have for God and for the things of God and for one another.



And all this love that we manifest flows out from the fact that God loved us first.

### **1 John 4:19**

**We love, because He first loved us.**

To the degree that we have been loved by God first, to that same degree we will love. But we must understand that love is not passive. Love is not benign. Love is never neutral. Love is always decidedly “pro-active”. Love acts. Love does. And love simply cannot be manifested alone. True love will love God. And a real love for God will *compel* us to love at least four other things:

1. Love for the things of God
2. Love for Truth
3. Love for one another
4. Love for our enemies

But we must understand that true, genuine, real, deep, and abiding love doesn't come in a vacuum. We don't trip and fall into this kind of love. This kind of deep seated love can only flow out from three things:

1. Admiration
2. Awe
3. Respect

And the reality is that we *cannot* admire and we *will not* admire or be in awe or respect what we do not know or understand. So, to love someone is to admire them, and to admire them is to know them. So, by definition, you simply *cannot* love someone whom you do not know anything about. And if anything is true about Christianity is that we are all known by God and we all know God. And by default that means that believers know one another.

So, on a practical level, if we are to obey the command to love one another, we must get to know one another. And that “getting to know one another” is called “Fellowship”. Now look at the very next verse:

### **John 13:35**

**By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**

Jesus said that it would not be our knowledge of the Bible that would impress the lost world as to our relationship with Jesus. It would not be our massive cathedrals teeming with multiple thousands of members or our ability to transform the culture or outlaw abortion. No, Jesus said that the one thing that would show the lost world that we belong to Jesus is the love that we have one for another.

Now look at how deep this love among believers should be by reading **John 15:12-17**:

**12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.**

**13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.**

**14 "You are My friends if you do what I command you.**

**15 "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.**

**16 "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.**

**17 "This I command you, that you love one another.**

So far, we have seen that the Bible teaches that this love, that is unique to the people of the Church, looks like three things:

1. Assembling together frequently and consistently
2. Stimulating one another to love and to good works
3. Encouraging one another

.. which is Godly Fellowship. So, godly fellowship looks like holding one another accountable to this radical love in Jesus Christ. And that means that allowing a person to be "free" to do his own thing, and to disobey God and to wander alone through life and suffer and struggle by

himself is *not* what God the Holy Spirit moved upon these men to write in His Word. But to do this requires that two things are true:

- ✓ Each individual must obey God and seek to hold one another accountable.
- ✓ Each individual desires to be held accountable.

And then there is one other quality about this Means of Grace called Godly Fellowship that illustrates the radical and unending love that Christ has for us and that we have for one another. Those who have been graciously placed together in Christ's Church walk together and we rejoice together and we weep together and we succeed together and we suffer together. And those who share in the Mystery of Christ also pray together and we pray for one another. Look what James said about this in **James 5:16**:

**Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.**

As I have told you many times, there are only two reasons why we don't see this verse obeyed much in our day:

- ✓ Pride
- ✓ Gossip

... and both of those are bad. People are either too prideful and self-sufficient, or they are terrified that what they confess privately to a fellow-laborer will be spread around town to humble themselves and obey what God's holy Word teaches here. And the result is that Church continues to be disobedient to her Head and the sickness of aloneness continues to grow.

Growing in our love and affection for one another solves both of these concerns. We don't confess our faults to strangers and we shouldn't. So, the first step in obeying *this* inspired text is to first obey all the other texts that we covered this morning. And when there is a trust developed and a deep-seated love and concern manifested one to

another, then confessing faults and praying for one another will be easy, and it will be done frequently.

We simply don't have many living examples in the modern Church as to what this Godly Fellowship looks like. But rather than use that as an excuse not to obey this ourselves, may we begin to blaze a trail ourselves. And may it be a trail of love and concern, a trail of holding each other accountable to this radical Love in Jesus Christ, a trail of weeping and rejoicing, and a trail of confessing and praying to God's Glory and for the sanctifying Good of His people to the end that the lost world will point to us and say, *"We know they belong to Jesus because of the great love they have one to another!"*

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.