

GROWING IN LOVE FOR GOD – PART 2 OF 2

2 Peter 1:5-7

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2 Peter 1:5-7 “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with... love.”

Last week we began a study on loving God, and so today we’re going to finish that up.

This will also be the last sermon on the list of virtues found in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Last week we talked about the three-fold definition of loving God, and we looked at seventeen ways to express your love to God.

This week we are going answer three questions: 1) Why should we love God? 2) What are the evidences of love for God? 3) How do we grow in love for God? But first, let’s begin with a quick review of last week.

THE THREE-FOLD DEFINITION OF LOVING GOD

Loving God is delighting in Him, desiring Him, and treasuring Him above all else.

Loving God is a **delighting** in Him; to be fully pleased with God; to esteem Him higher than anything else; to adore everything about Him, all of His ways, all of His decisions, all of His commands, all of His attributes. There is nothing about God that you don’t like. You are fully pleased with Him.

Loving God is **desiring** Him more than anything else; to want Him more than anything else; to desire to be close to Him; to know Him more; to be more pleasing to Him; to be more like Him. Without God, nothing else matters. You want God more than food and water. You want God more than wealth, luxury, success, pleasure, fun. You want God more than a nice car, or a nice home. You

want God more than season tickets. You want God more than good health. More than freedom. More than life.

Loving God is **treasuring** Him above all else. God is more important to you than anything else. He is your portion; your treasure; your prize; your priority; your center; your life. Everything else in life must fit around God. Nothing interferes with your walk with God. Nothing competes with your relationship with God. God comes first, and there's no close second.

That's what it means to love God. Now let's talk about why we should love God. What is our motivation for loving God?

WHY LOVE GOD?

1. It is a command.

Joshua 22:11 "So diligently watch yourselves! Love the Lord your God!"

2. It is the greatest command.

Loving God is not just a command. It is the greatest command. It is the most important command.

The Jews believed that there were 613 commands in the Torah, and when a scribe asked Jesus to pick the most important of all the commands, Jesus said loving God.

Mark 12:29-30 "The most important is Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."

3. It is the fulfillment of all the commands.

This is why it is the most important of all the commands. If you love God then you will keep all of the rest of the commands.

If you love God, then you will love your neighbor. If you love God, then you will hate sin. If you love God, then you will honor your parents; you will not commit adultery; you will not kill; you will not steal; you will not lie; you will not covet.

Not only is love the fulfillment of all the commands, but without love you cannot fulfill any of the commands. If you obey God, but do not do it out of love for God, then it is sin.

4. It leads to more obedience.

John 14:15 “If you love me, you will keep my commands.”

As your love for God increases, your obedience will increase. As your love for God decreases, sin will increase.

If you have an obedience problem, the real problem is not self-control, it is love.

The more you love, the more energy you have to do God’s will.

5. Because of God’s love for us.

1 John 4:19 “We love because he first loved us.”

He created us. He gives us life, and breath, and heartbeats. Every heartbeat and every breath are gifts from God. He gives us people to love, and people to love us. He provides for our needs. He sent His Son to die for our sins, and He sent someone to tell us how to be saved. He has prepared an eternal home for us. He has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit. He watches over us constantly.

And what is most amazing about God’s love is that it is totally undeserved. We deserve punishment, but He gives us love.

Thomas Watson said, “What a miracle of love is it, that God should love us, when there was nothing lovely in us.”

6. Because of answered prayer.

Psalm 116:1 “I love the Lord because he has heard my appeal for mercy.”

Most of our answered prayers go unnoticed.

How often have we prayed, “Please give us safe travels; please help us pass this test; please heal me of this sickness; please provide for our needs; please let me get that promotion; please give me strength for this job”; and God has answered our prayers without our even acknowledging it?

Just recently we traveled to Alabama for a short vacation, and we prayed before we left for safety, both traveling and at the beach, and God answered our prayers. But when we got home we didn’t even think about it. We forgot to stop and take the time to thank the Lord for answering our prayers.

We tend to notice the unanswered prayers much more than the answered prayers. But God says “Yes” far more than He says “No.”

7. Because of God’s attributes.

If we truly love God, then we won’t just love God because He has loved us; we won’t just love God because of His many blessings; we will love God because of who He is.

God knows everything. God sees everything. God hears everything. God can do anything. God controls everything. God is everywhere. God created everything. God is completely sinless. God is totally good. God is slow to anger, and compassionate, and patient with sinners. God wants none to perish, but all to come to repentance.

8. Because of the rewards of loving God.

Thomas Watson wrote, “There is nothing lost by love to God.” There is no downside to loving God. It is all good.

What are some of the rewards for loving God? Let me give you **seven**.

Life. Deuteronomy 30:16 “For I am commanding you today to love the Lord your God... so that you may live...” If you want to be truly alive, to live life to its fullest, to get the most out of life, then love God.

Blessings. Deuteronomy 30:16 “For I am commanding you today to love the Lord your God... and the Lord your God may bless you....” Blessedness consists of receiving God’s best for your life. Thomas Watson said that blessedness consists in intimacy with God.

Long life. Deuteronomy 30:20 “Love the Lord your God, obey Him, and remain faithful to Him. For He is your life, and he will prolong your days....”

God’s protection. Psalm 145:20 “The Lord guards all those who love Him, but He destroys the wicked.” God doesn’t promise to protect everyone; just those who love Him.

God will turn to you and be gracious to you. Psalm 119:132 “Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your practice toward those who love your name.”

God will work all things together for your good. Romans 8:28 “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

Thomas Watson said, “If we love God, we have all winds blowing for us, everything in the world shall conspire for our good. We know not what fiery trials we may meet with—but to those who love God all things shall work for good. Those things which work against them, shall work for them; their cross shall make way for a crown; every crosswind shall blow them to the heavenly port!”

Unimaginable blessings for you in heaven. 1 Corinthians 2:9 “But as it is written, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived—God has prepared these things for those who love him.”

10 SIGNS OF LOVE FOR GOD

1. You give gifts to God.

Genesis 37:3 “Now Israel loved Joseph more than his other sons because Joseph was a son born to him in his old age, and he made a robe of many colors for him.”

Jacob loved Joseph by giving a gift to Him.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave....” God loved us by giving.

Love gives. When you love God, you will give of yourself to Him; your money, your time, your talents, your intellect, your resources.

Thomas Watson says that the person who loves God “has love tokens to bestow.” He said, “Love has not only a smooth tongue, but a kind heart.... He who loves Christ will be liberal to His members. He will be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame.”

2. You worship God with passion and energy.

Thomas Watson said that a sign that your love for God is decaying is when you “make little reckoning of God’s worship. Duties of religion are performed in a dead, formal manner; if they are not left undone—yet they are ill done.”

If you truly love God, then your worship will resemble David’s. As the Jews were transporting the ark of the Lord to the city of Jerusalem, “David was dancing with all his might before the Lord... (2 Sam 6:14).”

Psalm 100 expresses the worship of the person who loves God. **Psalm 100:1-5** “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come

before Him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.”

3. You do not enjoy evil.

You do not entertain yourself with sin. You do not get enjoyment from sinning, or from watching others sin. Instead, sin grieves and angers you. In fact you hate sin.

1 Corinthians 13:6 “Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth.”

Romans 12:9 “Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good.”

Psalms 97:10 “You who love the Lord, hate evil!”

When you can entertain yourself with books, and movies, and shows, and video games in which the people are committing acts that are grossly offensive to God, then it shows that your love has grown cold indeed.

4. A strong desire for holiness.

Ephesians 1:4 “For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him.”

True love for God is holy and blameless. A man who loves His wife has a strong desire to please her. A son that loves his father has a strong desire to please him. And a person who loves God has a strong desire to please Him.

Arthur W. Pink said, “God is truly loved, when we make it our principal concern to please Him, rather than gratify the flesh or promote our worldly interests.”

Matthew 5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” The person who loves God wants righteousness more than food and water.

This is evident by a person’s commitment to spiritual disciplines. The person who truly wants to be holy does practices those disciplines that lead to holiness: Sunday worship; private prayer; private Bible study; reading Christian books, etc.

5. A mourning for sin.

Matthew 26:75 “and Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken, Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly.”

The person who loves God mourns for their sin. When they sin against God, they grieve. They hurt.

They don’t mourn because of the consequences of sin. They don’t mourn because of God’s discipline. They don’t mourn at the loss of God’s blessings.

They mourn because they have offended their first love.

The person who loves God mourns more for their sin than for earthly troubles and losses.

Matthew 5:4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

James 4:9 “Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.”

6. A boldness for God.

2 Timothy 1:7 “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.”

The more a person loves God, the more boldness and courage they have for God. They become fearless in their service to God, in their defense of God, in their convictions about God.

Thomas Watson said, “Love is valorous—it turns cowardice into courage. Love will make one venture upon the greatest difficulties and hazards. The fearful hen will fly upon a dog or serpent—to defend her young ones. Just so, love infuses a spirit of gallantry and fortitude into a Christian. He who loves God will stand up in His cause, and be an advocate for Him.”

7. A strong desire for God.

Psalm 42:1 “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for you, God.”

Psalm 73:25 “Who do I have in heaven by you? And I desire nothing on earth but you.”

This strong desire for God is seen in **four ways**.

Your mind is often on God. **Thomas Watson** said, “He who is in love—his thoughts are ever upon the object of his love. He who loves God is ravished and transported with the contemplation of God. By this we may test our love to God. What are our thoughts most upon?”

You converse often with God. **Thomas Watson** said, “Love desires familiarity and fellowship. By this let us examine our love to God. Do we desire intimacy of communion with God? Lovers cannot be long away from each other. Such as love God have a holy affection for Him—and desire to be with Him. They can bear the lack of anything—but God's presence. They can do without health and friends, they can be happy without a full table—but they cannot be happy without God.”

You talk often of God. Since your mind is constantly upon God, your conversation naturally gravitates to the things of God, regardless of the topic, regardless of the audience.

You are not much in love with anything else. **Thomas Watson** said that one sign of love for God is crucifixion to the world. He quoted Paul in **Galatians 6:14** “The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world.” **Watson** said, “He who is a lover of God—is dead to the world... that is, dead to the honors and pleasures of the world. He who is love with God is not much in love with anything else. The love of God, and ardent love of the world—are incompatible.” **Plutarch** said, “When the love of God bears sway in the heart – all other love is as nothing in comparison of this love.”

In other words, the person who loves God desires Him so much that he lives a life that is God-saturated, God-filled, God obsessed, God-dominated.

8. A delight to do God’s will.

The person who loves God obeys God. **John 14:21** “The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.”

Thomas Watson said, “It is a vain thing to say we love Christ—if we slight His commands.... If we love God, we shall obey Him in those things which cross flesh and blood. (1.) In things difficult, and (2.) In things dangerous.”

But if you love God, not only do you obey Him, but you delight to obey Him. You desire to obey God. You love to obey God. You take great pleasure in obeying Him.

You love His commands, because you know they are good for you. They are commanded out of love.

JC Ryle wrote, “Love is the grand secret of true obedience to GOD. When we feel towards Him as children feel towards a dear father, we shall delight to do His will. We shall not find His commandments grievous, and work for Him like slaves under fear of the lash. We shall take pleasure in trying to keep His laws, and mourn when we transgress them.”

9. A willingness to suffer for God.

And the willingness is only known by the act.

Arthur W. Pink said, “God is truly loved when we gladly incur and endure the displeasure and frowns of our fellows rather than offend against Him.”

John 15:13 “No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.”

Thomas Watson said that the person who loves God is willing to stoop to the lowest offices for God. “Love is a humble grace... it will stoop and submit to anything whereby it may be serviceable to Christ. If we love God, we shall not think any work too low for us, by which we may be helpful to Christ's members. Love is not squeamish; it will visit the sick, relieve the poor, wash the saints' wounds. The mother who loves her child is not squeamish; she will do those things for her child which others would scorn to do. He who loves God will humble himself to the lowest office of love to Christ and His members.”

10.A desire for God’s good.

A desire for God to succeed; for God to get what He wants; for God’s will to be done; for God’s kingdom to come; for God’s mission to succeed.

Thomas Watson calls this “a love of benevolence, which is a wishing well to the cause of God. He who is endeared in affection to his friend, wishes all happiness to him. This is to love God—when we are well-wishers. We desire that His interest may prevail. Our desire and prayer is that His name may be had in honor; that His gospel... may blossom and bring forth fruit!”

HOW TO INCREASE YOUR LOVE FOR GOD

1. Study the Bible.

Thomas Watson said, “Did we study Him more, we would love Him more. Take a view of His superlative excellencies, His holiness, His incomprehensible goodness.”

This will help you know more of God, which will stir up more love. It will also help you to know how to love God.

An old writer named **Samuel Davies** wrote about those who love God by mistake. They love God as they think He is but not as He is. If they really know who God was, they would not love Him. Therefore they don't love God, but an idea of God.

There are others who intend to love God, but because of their ignorance they do more harm than good. They lack the knowledge of how to love God; of what God loves, and what He hates. This is why you must study God's word to learn how to touch His heart.

2. Don't love the world.

1 Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

1 John 2:15 "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

There are many things in life that are not sinful, but the love of them is sinful, because it decreases our love for God. Money, pleasure, power, recognition and rewards, luxury, sleep.

It is wrong to love the world, but it is not sinful to enjoy the world. How can we enjoy the world without loving it?

Hannah More (a Christian author in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) said, "There are three requirements to our proper enjoyment of every earthly blessing which God bestows on us -- a thankful reflection on the goodness of the giver, a deep sense of the unworthiness of the receiver, and a sober recollection of the precarious tenure by which we hold it. The first would make us grateful, the second humble, the last moderate."

You were created to love. If you don't love God, then you will love the world. You will love sin. And that will not lead to happiness. That will not lead to satisfaction and contentment. That will not lead to a good life. Momentary pleasure, but lasting pain. We were created not just to love, but to love God. Only when we love God will hearts be truly happy.

3. Seek encouragement at church.

Hebrews 10:24-25 "24 And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, 25 not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

4. Avoid close friendships with those who don't love God.

Nehemiah 13:26 "Didn't King Solomon of Israel sin in matters like this? There was not a king like him among many nations. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, yet foreign women drew him into sin."

King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. God gave him a special helping of wisdom never before or since given to a man, other than Jesus Christ. But even with all of his wisdom, he was not able to withstand the downward pull of worldly friends.

It would be foolish to think that you are wiser than Solomon.

5. Meditate on God's love.

1 John 4:19 "We love because he first loved us."

The Lord's Supper can be especially helpful. As you take communion, meditate on God's love poured out for you through the sacrifice and suffering of Christ. A deeper understanding of God's love will lead to a higher elevation of your love.

6. Pray for the love of God.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 (NET) “Now may the Lord direct your hearts toward the love of God and the endurance of Christ.”

Thomas Watson said, “Make it your earnest request to God, that He will give you a heart to love him. This is an acceptable request, surely God will not deny it. When king Solomon asked for wisdom from God, (1 Kings 3:9), "the request pleased the Lord" (verse 10). So when you cry to God, "Lord, give me a heart to love You. It is my grief, I can love You no more. Oh, kindle this fire from heaven upon the altar of my heart!" Surely this prayer pleases the Lord, and He will pour of His Spirit upon you—whose golden oil shall make the lamp of your love burn bright!”

CONCLUSION

As we think about what it really means to love God, we should be humbled because we realize that we all fall miserably short. None of us love God as we should. Our love for God is often weak. Our love for the world and for sin is often strong. The signs of love for God are often absent.

That is the bad news. But there is good news. God loves us in spite of our sin, and He sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins. And when we turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, God not only forgives our sins, but He gives us a new heart – a heart that loves Him.

As Christians, we don't love God so He will save us, but because He has saved us and put His love in our hearts.

Today, let us make a new commitment to grow in our love for God. Nothing is more important. Nothing is more urgent. Nothing is more rewarding.