

Fervent Love for Christ is the Tree of Life

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, focusing on the significance of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. It highlights the dangers of living by the tree of knowledge of good and evil, relying on self-righteousness and knowledge rather than simple, pure devotion to Christ. The speaker urges listeners to prioritize loving Jesus above all else, understanding God's immense love and forgiveness as the foundation for fervent love for Him.

Scripture: Genesis 2:8, Genesis 3:6, Matthew 22:37, 1 John 4:19, Luke 7:47, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Matthew 10:37

Topics: "Intimacy with Christ", "The Tree of Life vs. Knowledge"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, focusing on the significance of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. It highlights the dangers of living by the tree of knowledge of good and evil, relying on self-righteousness and knowledge rather than simple, pure devotion to Christ. The speaker urges listeners to prioritize loving Jesus above all else, understanding God's immense love and forgiveness as the foundation for fervent love for Him.

Transcript

Let's turn to Genesis in chapter 2. When God made man, it says, this is one of the marks of the goodness of God, He put in a garden, Genesis 2 verse 8, He placed the man in the garden of Eden, and out of the ground, verse 9, the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food, and the tree of life in the middle of the garden. He placed the tree of life in the middle of the garden so that that would be the most prominent thing that Adam and Eve would go for. And we know the story that they bypassed it and went for the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Now, to know good from evil is not a bad thing at all. In fact, from earliest childhood, we teach our children to distinguish between good and evil. But yet, the Lord said that if you eat of this tree of distinguishing between good and evil, you will die.

And we need to understand why. And if you've heard me, you know I've often spoken about it. The difference is, you can either know the difference between good and evil from the knowledge you have within yourself.

That's what happened when Adam took part of that tree. He had that knowledge within himself. I can now discern between good and evil and all of Adam's descendants today in the world, in every religion, they

say, we know how to discern between good and evil.

Even the atheist. He says, I don't do any evil. I don't murder people or hurt.

They discern between good and evil. And everyone who does that, they don't realize they're in spiritual death. And you wonder why.

Because God has ordained that that's not the way to life. And the devil knows that. It says the serpent was very crafty.

And the devil got into the craftiest animal to use his brain to draw man not into evil. Today the devil leads people into many evil things. And we may avoid all those evil things and think we are good people.

But if you live by the knowledge of good and evil, you've already sinned. And you're not fit to be in God's presence. That's what we need to understand.

And that's how the devil knows that you don't have to do evil to break away from God. You just have to choose a way of life where you yourself decide what is good and what is evil. What then is the tree of life? Which God placed in the middle of the garden.

Very important to understand. And that's another thing. 60 years of... I was born again 60 years ago.

And in all these 60 years, I've heard hundreds and virtually thousands of messages. I never heard anyone explain to me what is the tree of life. But all had written about it in scripture.

So I could find out myself. You know the answer of almost everything we need spiritually is in scripture. We don't find the answer in scripture to mathematics and science and history and geography.

But for everything we need for our spiritual life, everything is in scripture. So turn with me to 2 Corinthians in chapter 11. Because we want to make sure, all of us here, I have a responsibility as one who is a shepherd and teacher to ensure not that you live by the tree of life, that I cannot ensure, but to show you how to live by the tree of life and how not to live by the tree of knowledge.

I can only show you the way. I can't force you to go it way. So Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11, verse 3, here is the New Testament Holy Spirit interpretation of what happened in Genesis chapter 3. I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray, and I would say, from the tree of life.

Because that's what the devil led Adam and Eve astray from. So I could paraphrase that as, I'm afraid, just like the serpent deceived Eve away from the tree of life to the tree of knowledge, I'm afraid that he will lead you also astray from the tree of life. And here the tree of life is defined for us.

That's a wonderful thing. Scripture explains scripture. The tree of life is simple, pure, devotion to Jesus Christ himself.

Think of that. Simple, pure, devotion to Jesus Christ. It's not a complicated thing.

It's not an impure thing. It's simple, pure, devotion to Jesus Christ. It is not knowledge of scripture.

You can know scripture and live by the tree of knowledge. The Pharisees knew the Old Testament, which was the scripture in those days, more than anybody else in Israel. So thoroughly that Jesus said in

Matthew 23, do everything the Pharisees tell you to do.

He told his disciples. In other words, their teaching was right. They were not like the Sadducees who didn't believe in the resurrection or didn't believe in angels.

They were not like the Greeks who worshipped other gods and idols. They believed in the Bible. And they studied the Bible.

Some of them went into the seminaries to study the Bible, like Saul of Tarsus. Yet, among all the people on earth, well, it says in one place, the Greeks, John chapter 12, came all the way from Greece to meet Jesus Christ. They respected him.

Those idol worshippers wanted to meet Jesus. But the people who knew the Bible best were the ones who were determined to kill Jesus Christ. Never forget that.

The enemies of Christ were the Bible scholars of his day. You learn something from that? I do. I say, I can be a Bible scholar, knowing the Bible, being able to quote verses from here and there, knowing the doctrines.

And yet, I may not kill Jesus Christ, but I may have the same attitude as the Pharisees have of spiritual pride that rejects Christ inwardly. The Pharisees did not have simple, pure devotion to Christ. They lived by the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which they got by studying Genesis to Malachi.

The Bible of those days, they didn't get it reading by some Greek mythology books. They got the knowledge of the truth from the Bible. And yet, they wanted to kill the one the entire Bible spoke about.

That's a great warning to us. And I will never get tired of warning believers everywhere about this danger. The only way to escape it is by simple, pure devotion to Christ.

Where Jesus Christ himself means more to me than a doctrine. Now, in our church, we speak much about the new covenant. We've understood how the new covenant is different from the old covenant.

And there are a number of brothers in our churches who can explain with charts all the differences between old covenant and new covenant. And we may be able to explain it and imagine that we are living by some of those things, and yet, not have that simple, pure devotion to Jesus Christ. So, knowledge of the new covenant, which many of us have, because we've got good minds and we've been listening to our messages on CFC and YouTube, and heard the messages here.

So, you know it so well that you can even explain it to others. But if simple, pure devotion to Christ is not in your life, someone who has that and who cannot explain things as well as you can, is more acceptable to God than you. Very important to understand that.

The devil has led you astray without your knowing that you were led astray. That's the best form of deception. If a man can give a man a counterfeit hundred dollar note and make that man believe it is the real thing, that's the greatest deception of all.

So, if the devil can make you understand the new covenant so thoroughly, so thoroughly that you can explain it to others, and you've got a fairly upright life, that you don't do evil to others, you don't commit adultery, you're not living an immoral life, you're not even watching pornography, and you come regularly to this church, but you may not be having simple, pure devotion to Jesus Christ in your daily life. I want to

say to you, in Jesus' name, Satan has led you astray, just like he led Eve astray. You're taken up with something other than Jesus himself.

It's like a bride who got married to the bridegroom and then goes into the house and is so taken up with the house that her husband has got for her in the car, that her husband has got for her in the clothes that her husband had got and the wonderful things that the husband has provided and completely misses the husband himself and is very friendly with all the friends of her husband and all that, but misses the husband himself. See, I want to put it like this. If you find you get bored when you're alone, but you always want to be with somebody in the church, some brother on a fellowship, I want to say to you, you have missed devotion to Christ.

It's one of the simple tests because then the people in the church mean more to me than the bridegroom himself. The friends of the bridegroom mean more to me than the bridegroom himself. What type of bride is that who is more interested in the friends of the bridegroom than the bridegroom himself? So what I'm asking you is not how close are you to the friends of the bridegroom, I'm asking you how close are you to the bridegroom himself? When you're all alone, that's the test.

You get bored when you're alone. You can't afford to be alone. You always want to be with some brother or some sister, something to talk about all the time, maybe spiritual things.

But alone, you get bored. My dear brothers, I want to speak the truth to you so that you don't get deceived. One of the great purposes of teaching in the church is to deliver people from deception.

I believe that the great work of Satan in these days is deception. He deceives people. He's called the deceiver of the whole world.

And he deceived Eve and he's deceived people right through till now. You know, I'll give you a simple example from the Old Testament. If you turn to 1 Chronicles.

It's one of the few times in the Bible, in the Old Testament, where Satan is mentioned. Satan appears in the book of Job. Satan appears in Genesis 3. And Satan again appears in Zechariah 3 where he's an accuser.

In almost the entire Old Testament, apart from those two or three chapters, Satan does not even appear. But here he appears in 1 Chronicles 21 verse 1. Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. And David said to Joab, Go number Israel from Beersheba to Dan that I may know their number.

And Joab was not a man after God's own heart like David. He had more discernment than David. And he says to David, My the Lord add hundred times more.

My Lord, my Lord the King, they are your Lord's servants. Why are you doing this? Why should you bring guilt to Israel? What is the guilt in taking a census? The census, they used to take the census of the men. The purpose was to find out how many men do I have in my army? Can I overcome the Syrians? Can I overcome the Ammonites and the Moabites and the Egyptians? I want to know the number of people, able-bodied men in Israel.

Go and take a census. That's what Joab understood. He was the general of the army.

He says, David, let any number of people get added to you. But don't commit this thing. Now does that look like evil? To count the number of men in your army? It says Satan prompted David.

Sometimes I want to say to you from that example, that some of the things we get prompted to do can look so innocent. Joab had more discernment than David. That it doesn't look so evil, but it was.

It was an expression of confidence in the arm of flesh and not in God. Very subtle. The devil doesn't come with open deception.

He won't give you an ordinary piece of paper and say, this is a hundred dollar note. Nobody deceives people like that. He'll deceive you with something that looks like the real thing.

So these are warnings to us to be careful that we don't get led astray from preserving ourselves in a simple devotion to Jesus Christ. It's one of the things in my own life, the Lord has impressed me. I don't know how it was, but from the time I was born again, I think one, I think God arranged my circumstances like that.

You know, I was born into an Orthodox church, baptized as a baby. And though my father was born again, he never sent me to the Orthodox church, sent us to a good Sunday school. But I was never born again till I was 19 and a half.

I would say, Lord Jesus come into my heart but I never knew what it was for Christ to be Lord of my life and central in my affections. And so all that time I was unsure. From the age of 13 to 19, I was up and down, up and down, up and down.

But then I got converted. I was really born again. And then after I took my baptism a year and a half later and I was 21 years old, the Lord put me on a ship.

I was in the Navy. Not in a battleship like I wanted to be. The exciting thing in the Navy is to be in a battleship.

But I was put on what is a survey ship, surveying the coast of India which is the most boring thing you can ever think of. Because most of the big cities are already surveyed. So you go to these uninhabited villages and all the part of the coast which are not surveyed and you spend, I spent a whole year on that.

And nobody wants to join a survey ship in the Navy. But you know what the result was? I could never go ashore anywhere. And I was always on the ship.

And I was converted so I had a Bible. And somehow at that time the Lord allowed me to have one other book with me. An old book of my dad's which was with me.

A commentary, a small commentary on the Song of Solomon of all the books in the Bible. So that's the only, I didn't know how to study the Bible. So I said, okay I've got this one little commentary here with me.

Let me read it. And so my first study of the Bible was Song of Solomon. And if you see my first Bible that Song of Solomon, I wrote so many notes on it you can hardly read the verses in it now.

It's all, every small gap in between is written with my own notes. I was so taken up with this. That, boy, this is Christianity.

To be devoted to Jesus Christ like this bride is to the bridegroom, admires her bridegroom and the bridegroom admires the bride and this wonderful relationship between the bride and the bridegroom. I spent one year on that. And somehow God kept me on that path from that time till today.

I'm very thankful for that. Not that I've never slipped up or fallen. I've fallen many times but that's, I would always come back not to the Bible but to simple devotion to Christ.

So if I went to the Bible it was an honor to find a little more about Jesus there. Not another doctrine. And though I believe in the new covenant and I've understood that fully, that is not central.

I fear that many people think to me the new covenant is the central part of our teaching. It is not. Let me tell you it is not.

It's devotion to Jesus Christ that is central. And there are many dear brothers and sisters I want to tell you who do not belong to our church who belong to other churches who have more devotion to Christ than many of us here. Even though they may not be able to explain the new covenant like we can.

We can explain from the tree of knowledge so well. But remember this brothers and sisters devotion to Christ is central. If you don't realize it now you will realize it when Christ comes back.

And the only thing that matters will be whether we love the Lord with all our heart or not. In fact, even in the Old Testament the great the one great commandment forget the 10 commandments every commandment there were 613 commandments in the Old Testament. But when somebody asked the Lord to sum it up He summed it up with you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind and from that flows love for others.

But it must begin with fervent love for God. It is an old covenant teaching not something special in the new. That's what Adam missed.

I wonder whether we are missing it. I want to ask you what is your personal relationship with the Lord Jesus? It's like my asking a wife how much do you love your husband? Do you love him fervently? Or I can ask a husband how do you how is your relationship with your wife? Do you love her fervently? I know you are loyal to her you are not unfaithful you will never divorce all that I understand. But was your relationship with your husband and wife just a matter of fact thing? Yeah, we live in the same house and she does her job and I do mine and we go out in the morning for work and come back at the end of the day and say hi and we are not fighting with each other but there is not a fervent love for each other.

You can understand that. In many of our Indian village families there is no such thing as a husband and wife fervently loving one another. It's not taught in heathen religions.

It is just you live together if you don't divorce that itself is a great feat. That's not Christian marriage that you don't divorce each other or we go a little higher and say we don't even fight with each other. That's negative man.

Negative. I don't fight. I don't divorce.

What do you do? What about the positive fact? Can you say you really love your wife tenderly care for her you really love your husband concerned about him you express your love to each other you ever tell each other that I love you or is that become old fashioned? I feel sorry for you if that's happened. And that is an

indication but you know the wife may be cooking everything taking care of the house the husband may be going faithfully to work earning money and coming back but you never live in a loving relationship with each other. Never joke with each other never smile with each other.

What type of relationship is this? I don't divorce. That's not true marriage. You know the challenge if you read the Bible the Bible says husbands love your wives not just provide for your wives.

In fact there is no verse which says provide for your wife. Love your wife and because of that we provide for our wife but love your wife and it doesn't stop there as Christ loved the church and it also says that women must love their husbands. Many people don't know that.

That by the way is not in Ephesians 5 in Titus chapter 2. Teach the young women to love their husbands and Ephesians 5 talks about husbands love your wives that is Christian marriage. It's not just providing for your wife or cooking meals for your husband. If you do all that you're not living the way a Christian husband and wife should live and I'm using that as an example to say you may be going to church every Sunday you may be reading the Bible every day you may be avoiding so many sins and you may be able to explain the new covenant to others you even go to the weekly Bible studies wow! But you don't love Jesus Christ.

You don't have a personal devotion to Christ in your daily life. You're bored when you're alone. You always want to be with somebody with some other brother.

I want to say you missed the most essential thing in Christianity. I love to be with the brothers and sisters. I love to fellowship with them.

I love to share with them. But I can be alone if somebody locks me up in a prison in India for preaching the gospel. I'd be quite happy to be there 25 years just with Jesus.

Would you? Or would you get bored? Even without a Bible I'd be very happy because my connection with God is not with the Bible it's with Jesus. There's one mediator between God and man it's not the Bible it's Jesus Christ. So it's so very important.

That's why like you've heard me say what I've said for at least 55 years when I got my first Bible soon after I was baptized. One of the verses the Lord pointed out to me which I wrote in the front of my Bible I still have that Bible with me with these verses written on it in the front white page of the Bible before the printed portion so I drew a little heart and wrote Jesus Christ and Zak Poonen and underneath I wrote Psalm 73 verse 25 and that has been the guideline for my life all these years. To me that is the proof that I'm a worshipper.

Not just one who serves the Lord but who worships the Lord. Psalm 73 verse 25 says it's amazing it's an Old Testament verse Lord whom have I in heaven but you and besides you I desire nothing and no one on earth. If I can live there every single day of my life I'm at the tree of life.

I'm partaking of the tree of life. If I can look up to Jesus and say Lord there is no one on earth I desire beside you. I don't care if I don't have fellowship with my fellow believers I'd love to have it but if a situation arises where I can't I'm in some lonely place where there are no Christians it won't disturb me one bit because I have you I don't desire anyone on earth but you and I don't deserve anything on earth.

You know there are people who say no matter how good a house they have they still want something better. Anybody here like that? God's given almost all of you a house which is 10,000 times better than many houses in India but you're still not satisfied. Covetousness covetous I want more I want more Disobedience to the 10th commandment you shall not covet and they think they are disciples of Jesus not in a million years.

I desire nothing on earth but you Lord I have you that's how these early Christians were you know what their home was? My wife and I had an opportunity when we went to Rome to go to the catacombs underground you go many many steps all the way down to these caves where narrow paths where the Christians persecuted Christians lived and they had little things dug in the side of the rock where they would bury their dead and close it up. Boy I saw there these are my brothers and sisters we went to the coliseum where we saw the place where the lions would come out of the cage to kill my brothers and sisters in the first century second century and I was really moved I said Lord this is the Christianity they had they couldn't explain the new covenant like I can many of them didn't have a Bible Lord but they loved you when the lions came springing at them they would sing praises to you and get eaten up by the lions I said Lord I want that type of devotion to you I don't want to just be a Bible scholar and be able to explain things to others I want to love you fervently I don't care if I don't have anything else and I'll tell you that's the thing that will matter in the day when we stand before the Lord and I want to say to you to prepare you for that day we hope it will come soon when Christ will come back and you'll discover the truth of what I'm saying now I hope you discover it now instead of discovering it in that day I always tell people one of the purposes of the Lord bringing you to our church is so that you don't get any surprises in the day of judgment you don't get you know like I've heard of people who go and sit in an examination in a school and say oh wow I didn't know this was the subject I mean I studied for chemistry and here it is history today can you imagine that type of surprise people getting in the day of judgment oh Lord you're not checking up on my knowledge of the doctrines and how many times I went to church you're not checking up on how much we love you I missed out the subject that's coming up in the final exam I didn't prepare for I desire nothing and no one on earth but you my dear brothers and sisters if that's the only way you can remember it write it in the front of your Bible I would see it every time I open the Bible I desire nothing and no one on earth and I also wrote that Lord I desire nothing for myself everything for you from this day onwards that's what happened to me when I got baptized and the other thing is whom have I in heaven but you Lord I'm not looking forward to go to heaven to get a mansion you know the song which says there's a mansion waiting for me up in heaven I don't sing those songs I don't want a mansion what will I do with a 14 bedroom mansion in heaven you can have it what about these crowns you see you get a crown in heaven what am I going to do with all these crowns on my head I want to be close to Jesus that's all that's all is that what you desire yeah whom have I in heaven but you I'm not saying oh when I go to heaven I won't be sick anymore I have all these aches and pains here but praise God when I go to heaven I won't have any aches and pains I'll tell you this I'm willing to have aches and pains and headaches and stomach aches for eternity if I can be with Jesus I even told the Lord this Lord I'm willing to be in hell if you're there I don't mind the fires can you honestly say that to the Lord is your love for Jesus fervent like that or is it just superficial like we sing in the songs I heard a story of a man who wrote to his girlfriend I will cross mountains and rivers and everything to come and see you I'll see you tomorrow if it doesn't rain it's like that you know fervent words in the Sunday morning service about how how much we love the Lord and then some little practical problem comes and we stand on our rights and fight with our wives and stand on our rights and fight with others and do that little cheating to make a little money where is it can you really say you don't desire anything but the Lord can you really say even in heaven you don't desire anything but Jesus I hope you will take this seriously my brothers and sisters all that you do for the Lord will count for

nothing if you don't love Him now let me show that to you from another passage of scripture in Matthew and chapter 7 Matthew chapter 7 very well known passage verse 22 and 23 this is speaking about the final day the final examination make sure you have studied for the subject that is coming in the final examination and not a subject that is not coming here are the subjects that are not coming in the final examination healing the sick preaching many sermons casting out demons those subjects are not coming in the final examination why are you studying for that but those people thought it is coming Lord we got 100% in casting out demons and 100% in prophecy and 100% in performing miracles and the Lord says go to hell depart from me you who practice lawlessness they did miracles and they missed out on the most important thing they didn't study for the subject that is coming in the final exam what is it I never knew you that was their crime Adam knew his wife and they had a son you read that in the Old Testament you read that the word know is a picture of the most intimate relationship between a man and a wife and they become one flesh it is called knowing the other person and when the Lord says I never knew you he is talking about that type of spiritual oneness with him you know in 1 Corinthians 6 it is compared to the sexual relationship in 1 Corinthians 6 we read 1 Corinthians in chapter 6 where they too shall become one flesh which is originally referring to the husband wife relationship here it is referring to a man and a prostitute a man who is not a woman who is not his wife that is also one flesh don't you know 1 Corinthians 6 16 that if a man joins himself to a prostitute his one body with her the two shall become one flesh you say hey Paul that's referring to husband and wife well it is the same thing you go with some other woman you are married to her you become one flesh with her you have become one flesh with her but see the comparison he who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit he uses the same example that is knowing in a human way and this is knowing the Lord in a spiritual way to be one spirit with the Lord so it is talking about the most intimate relationship that a man has with a woman which he cannot have with his father or mother or children or anybody it is only with his wife and this is speaking about the most intimate relationship that a man can have with Jesus Christ which he cannot have with any other brother that means his relationship with Jesus Christ is superior to anything that he has with any brother on earth or sister on earth in other words I love Jesus more than I love all the people in the church more than my wife more than everybody else in fact Jesus said that is the condition of discipleship he said if you love your father or mother more than me you can't be my disciple if you even love your wife and children more than me you can't be my disciple love that is the main thing is the main thing that Jesus said turn with me to Matthew and chapter 10 Matthew chapter 10 verse 37 is it right to love your father and mother absolutely right but he says here in Matthew 10 verse 37 if you love your father or mother more than me you are not even worthy of me and in Luke 14 it refers to wife and children as well or you love your son or your daughter more than me you are not worthy of me ask yourself my brothers and sisters in the light of this verse is there any human being any human being that you love more than Jesus Christ I have to say to you in Jesus name you are not worthy of Christ you can imagine yourself to be a wonderful brother sister in NCCF but Christ says you are not worthy of him because you love something or someone more than him maybe you love your job more than him maybe you love being in America more than him whatever it is it doesn't matter what it is you cannot say I desire nothing on earth but you you say yes I desire to be in America more than you okay no wonder your life is so shallow I love my wife or I am determined to marry this person that means more to you more to me than you I prophesy you will have a useless marriage right now I'll tell you that the best marriage is where you love Jesus more than anything anyone else every godly missionary who has followed the Lord when they come to marriage would say to their wife I want you to love Jesus more than you love me that's the only foundation that's the basis on which my wife and I got married it's the same today I refuse to love my wife more than I love Jesus Christ it was like that when I got married to her 51 years ago it's just the same today it'll never be otherwise I've got 4 sons I never love

any of them more than I love Christ impossible I am determined to stick to the tree of life and you know what the result is the result is I love my wife better I care for my children better I don't yell I don't get angry with my wife because I love Jesus supremely all these guys who say they love their wife so much they do so many things that hurt their wives that's not the way why does the Lord ask us to love him supremely because he desires the best for us in every relationship that's the way you'll have a wonderful marriage that's the way you'll have a wonderful job and being righteous and upright in your work I remember once when I was many years ago when I was traveling back to India from abroad somewhere and you know those days the customs regulations are very strict in India about what you can bring from abroad and many Indians would cheat and hide stuff underneath here and there in their suitcases coming in through customs and when I was coming in the Lord said put everything on top of the suitcase don't put anything don't hide anything anywhere and show it to them even if they don't open it tell them it's what you have and then the Lord if you have to pay customs duty for it pay it and then I'll never forget what the words the Lord spoke to me after that I have no shortage of money I can give you any amount to pay your customs duty but I have a great shortage of righteous people on earth don't add to that shortage by being unrighteous I said Lord I will never add to that shortage there's a great shortage of righteous people who love Jesus more than anything else on earth my brothers and sisters I say to you in Jesus name don't add to that shortage by being by loving something other than Christ himself there's a great shortage in the world today of people who love Jesus more than everyone and everything else don't add to that shortage and I believe your life will be far better you'll love your husband and wife far better you will do your job better because God always when he tells us to do something is always for our very best so this is the tree of life and I hope you understood what the tree of life is today and how Satan like Paul says I'm afraid that he lead you astray from that turn back to that verse in 2nd Corinthians 11 2nd Corinthians 11 and sorry 2nd Corinthians 11 and I want to read verse 2 now the verse immediately before I'm jealous for you with a godly jealousy I betrothed you to one husband that is Christ being born again is like getting engaged you're not married yet the marriage of the lamb is still to come we read in Revelation 19 we are not the wife yet we are the bride but the bride must be faithful not fool around with the world and other things must be faithful to the bride room but it says here I betrothed you to one person who is to be your husband even Jesus Christ and the day when I present you to him you must be a pure virgin spiritually that means you're not defiled with being taken up with other things other than Jesus himself to me to seek the kingdom of God first and finding all other things added to me means to be devoted to Jesus himself because once Jesus told his Pharisees saying don't say the kingdom of God is here or there it is coming he said the kingdom of God is right here in your midst you remember that verse he said that once and that was him he was the kingdom of God right in their midst he said you don't have to go looking here and there it's right here in your midst and you don't see it so seek the kingdom of God first devotion to Jesus Christ and all the other things will fall into their proper place and I believe this is what the reason why so many Christians their life is a constant up and down I want to say just a couple of things more before I finish and that is see I find that many Christians oscillate between condemning themselves because they're always trying to judge themselves always feeling God is looking at them with a frown and you're not good enough and always feeling oh I'm not good enough I'm not good enough and condemning themselves that's one extreme and the other is yeah I'm so happy God's looking at me He's smiling at me He's rejoicing over me with shouts of joy and always very happy and they're living in sin so why should we have to these two extremes I believe God delights in us our father loves us immensely I don't have to condemn myself a single day if I slip up I come to the father and say dad I'm sorry I slipped up forgiveness is immediate God is a God who wants us to rejoice in his love for us I'll tell you why because when you think of fervent love for Christ it can only come if you're convinced about his love for you see what it says in 1 John and chapter

4 we love him because 1 John 4 19 he first loved us if you're unsure of that you'll never be able to love him it's not we who love first because he loved me I love him and the measure in which I understand his love for me will determine the measure in which I love him so if you think that God's love is like a few drops of water he pours on you my love for him will be also like that but when I see that God's love for me is like a torrent like a waterfall that comes upon me my love for him will also be like that so dear brothers that's why I say we must meditate on the love of Jesus for us that is how we remain in fervent love for Christ love he loves me immensely I don't have to condemn myself never never never I may get discouraged due to circumstances okay but don't condemn yourself say Lord things are not going right now and I don't know why everything I wish things were better but you love me and I love you that's fine it's like a loving married couple who got nothing living in a small shack and say okay we don't have much of the world but we love each other imagine living with Jesus like that that's how I want to live I say Lord I don't care if so many things go wrong in the world but you love me I know that and I love you and I refuse to condemn myself the reason I say that is in the early days of my Christian life I used to think spirituality was judge myself condemn myself oh God is always angry with me how can I make him happy how can I make him happy that's how they lived in the Old Testament it's not like that we don't have to live in this constant feeling God's against me is condemning me no he loves me intensely he surrounds me with his love his banner over me his love he's brought me to his bank wedding house read the song of Solomon and encourage all of you to read and meditate on the song of Solomon picturing Christ's love for you there and your response to Christ think of words like the bride groom says to the bride how beautiful you are my love one look at me and I'm taken up with your love for me I think Jesus saying that to us it's almost unbelievable I'm very thankful that I read song of Solomon as the first book I studied in the Bible and I that's preserved me through the years and in the midst of all the topsy-turvy of Christendom I thank God that I can follow Jesus with loving him you know I'm not here to accomplish great things for him I'm not at all interested to find out what I accomplished for him because a loving husband is not seeing how well his wife can cook something's wrong with you as a husband if your love for your wife is dependent on how well she can cook or how well she can maintain the house you're a downright selfish self-centered husband I'll tell you that God's not like that he's not his love for me is not at all dependent on how well I can cook how well I can preach how well I can do this how well I can not at all he loves me for no other reason than he chose me to be his bride that's all it says that in song of Solomon the first chapter and dark the most men don't like to marry someone who is ugly. Here this bride says, I'm not so attractive but my bridegroom loves me.

What a wonderful verse that is. Song of Solomon chapter 1. Say, Lord apply that spiritually. I may not be so perfect but I sit under the banner of your love for me.

Rejoice in it, rejoice in it. Don't keep condemning yourself. That's the best way to love Jesus fervently.

And the second thing, he who is forgiven much loves much. You remember what Jesus said about the woman who was wiping his feet. He told the Pharisee, you don't love me so much because you don't think you've been forgiven.

You've been forgiven lots Simon, Pharisee, but you don't understand it like this woman has. That's why she spent all her life's earnings to pour out that perfume at my feet. Through the years I've discovered those are the two things that have helped me to preserve me in my love for Christ.

Meditating on his love for me and remembering the pit from which God pulled me out. I'll never forget it. I hope you'll never forget.

I don't condemn myself because I know my sins are all forgiven. I'm declared righteous before God but I'll never forget the pit I was in. A chief of sinners.

God pulled me out. He who is forgiven much, loves much, or let me paraphrase it, he who realizes how much he's been forgiven. We've all been forgiven much.

Has anybody here always been forgiven little? Nobody. We've all been forgiven much but the few who realize how much they've been forgiven, they will love much. Preserve yourself my brothers and sisters in this and even if you don't know the Bible and even if you don't bring souls to Christ, you will be ready for the final examination when Jesus comes.

God bless you.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/wGi-syjNWmw.mp4>

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