

Motivated by Love

by Zac Poonen

The New Covenant is a call to love and serve God from the innermost being, and without love, service has no value before God.

Duration: 53:38

Scripture: John 7:37, 2 Corinthians 3:5, Hebrews 8:13

Topics: "New Covenant", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon delves into the profound understanding of being a servant of the New Covenant, emphasizing the inadequacy of human efforts and the sufficiency found in God. It explores the contrast between the Old and New Covenants, highlighting the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant. The importance of preserving love for Jesus is underscored, drawing from the depth of Christ's love and the awareness of personal forgiveness to fuel genuine service and ministry.

Transcript

What's on My Heart is from 2 Corinthians 3. It was many years after I was born again, many years after I was baptized, and many years after I was baptized in the Spirit, and many years after I came into full-time Christian work, that I understood what it was to be a servant of the New Covenant. Now, one would have thought that's almost the first thing that one should learn as soon as, particularly if you're going into full-time Christian work. But, I never knew.

I never had a spiritual father to guide me. So, it took me more than 16 years after I was born again to really understand, and to begin to understand, what it is to be a servant of the New Covenant. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3, that, verse 5, We are not adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves.

2 Corinthians 3, verse 5. But our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a New Covenant. Not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

So, there is such a thing as being a servant of a New Covenant. And the opposite of that would be being a servant of the Old Covenant. And, it never dawned on me in those early years of my Christian life, that the Old Covenant had been abolished in Christ.

It had become obsolete. I just want to show you a couple of verses in that connection. In Hebrews chapter 8, and verse 13, When He said, A New Covenant, He has made the first obsolete.

Well, whatever is becoming obsolete is ready to disappear. And earlier on in chapter 7, if that first covenant, the Old Covenant, had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. So, there was something defective about the Old Covenant.

That's what it says here. It was faulty. Can God give a covenant which is faulty? It's not because there was any fault in God.

It's not like some new model of a car that people make after rectifying the defects in the previous model. The Old Covenant and the law was given with a particular purpose. Man was not ready to live and serve God the way he is supposed to.

No one in the Old Covenant could serve God in the way God really wanted. It was impossible. Till the Holy Spirit came to dwell within man on the day of Pentecost.

And the Holy Spirit could not dwell within man in all those Old Testament years. Because the heart of man could not be cleansed in Old Testament times. You never read of anyone whose heart was cleansed.

Sin was not cleansed in the Old Testament. It was forgiven. Three thousand years ago, David could sing, Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your sins.

He could also write, Blessed is the man whose sin is covered. It was covered, forgiven, but not cleansed. The heart was never cleansed.

And the Spirit of God could not dwell within a heart that was not cleansed. He could come upon people, like Samson, Gideon, but he couldn't change their inner life. The great thing about the New Covenant is, you're familiar with that verse, Jesus said, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me.

He who believes in me from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. Now very often people speak about the rivers of living water. It's a picture of service.

A river serves millions of people. It flows and flows and flows endlessly. Think of the rivers that God has created in every continent.

And if you look at the old civilizations, they all gathered around a river because they needed water. And Jesus said that everyone who believes in him, that's you and me. He who believes in me out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

And this he spoke about, this is John 7, 37-39. This he spoke about the Holy Spirit, which those who believe in him would receive. For the Spirit was not yet given.

That's John 7, 39. Because Jesus was not yet glorified. Until Jesus died and shed his blood, and went before the Father, purchasing our redemption, nobody could have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him.

The first human being that walked on this earth, with the Spirit of God dwelling within, was Jesus Christ. When he came to earth as a man. And so, in Christ, we see the way God wanted Adam to live.

It's not, most Christians think of Christ dying on the cross. That's great. That's why we begin our Christian life.

But God allowed him to live on earth for 33 years, to show us how God wanted all his children to live. There are Old Testament prophecies in Isaiah, particularly after chapter 40, where you find this expression, Behold my servant. You see it in chapter 42, chapter 52.

Behold my servant. Those are prophetic references to Christ. There was the first servant of the New Covenant.

Jesus is called the mediator of the New Covenant. You are all, you would all say that you are serving God. Are you serving as an Old Covenant servant? Or a New Covenant servant? It makes all the difference.

Let's turn to Deuteronomy 28. Deuteronomy 28. It's a wonderful chapter.

It teaches us how people served under the Old Covenant. The Lord told them, If you obey all my commandments, 28 verse 1, I'll bring all these blessings upon you, verse 2 onwards. Right up to verse 14.

If you obey me, I'll bless you. And verse 15 onwards, If you don't obey me, then you have all those verses all the way to the end of the chapter, of all the curses and the sicknesses and the poverty, all types of things that would come upon them, if they did not obey. God treated people in the Old Testament exactly like we treat our children, in bringing up our children.

He loved them like we love our children. But a dad, a father and mother, they don't say to that child, If you love me, obey me. Because most children won't respond to that.

It's the threat of punishment and the hope of reward that makes little children obey. And that's what we see here. The promise of reward, if you obey, like parents would say, Well, if you do this, I'll give you something.

I'll take you somewhere or buy something for you. I'll get you a bicycle or give you a chocolate or something. A reward by which we get their obedience.

Or, discipline. If you don't obey me, well, I'll give you a spanking. That's the rest of Deuteronomy 28.

That is basically the way Old Covenant servants obeyed. If they obeyed, they looked forward to a reward from God. And they were afraid that if they didn't obey, they'd be punished.

Whereas when you come to the New Covenant, Jesus said in John 14, and verse 12, sorry, verse 15, John 14, verse 15, If you love me, keep my commandments. It's an altogether different basis. It's not, if you want a reward, keep my commandments.

Or, if you don't want to be punished, keep my commandments. If you love me, keep my commandments. And when the Lord wanted to recommission Peter, after Peter had failed the Lord and denied Him three times, there was only one question that He asked him.

Peter had caught this tremendous catch of fish with the Lord's help in John 21. And he'd never had such a big catch in all his life. And the Lord looked at Peter and said, Do you love me more than all this? More than all the fish you caught, all the money you can make from fish, etc.

etc. Do you love me more than everything else on earth? If so, you shepherd my sheep. And three times He asked him that question.

His ministry was to be based on, I mean, if you stop loving me, forget it. I don't want you to serve me. I wonder whether we recognize that the moment we stop loving the Lord, our service has no more value for the Lord.

Zero. Now that was not true in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, you could not have love and still serve faithfully.

A lot of people did. God accepted it. For example, when they gave their tithes to God, there was no law in the Old Testament that said, You must give your 10% cheerfully.

A man could come with a long face to the temple and say, I don't feel like giving this, but here it is, the 10%. It kept the law. Because it was a letter that he had to keep.

This is what he had to do. And he did it. Whereas when you come to the New Testament, it's not how much we give.

There is no commandment in the New Testament about paying a tithe. And some people say, well, if grace is greater than law, so if they gave 10% under the law, you must give 20% under the New Covenant. These are all human ideas.

In the Old Covenant, it was how much you gave that determined whether you were accepted. In the New Covenant, it is how you give, not how much. 2 Corinthians 9, verse 7 says, God loves a cheerful giver.

So, if I don't give and serve out of love, it has no value before God. If there is an inner complaint in my heart about something I am asked to do for the Lord, either by the Lord Himself, or by someone whom the Lord has placed over me, from that moment onwards, my service has no value before God. I can do it.

And I can do it perfectly according to the letter. Its value before God is zero. That's what it means to be a servant of the New Covenant.

And you see that when the Lord evaluates the Church in Ephesus. I always call this the second letter to the Ephesians, Revelation chapter 2. We know the first letter to Ephesians was written by Paul. Revelation chapter 2, the second letter to the Ephesians, was written by John.

And here, it's a very brief letter. Revelation chapter 2, verse 1 to 7. And think of all the good qualities. This leader, this messenger.

When you read angel, it means messenger. The messenger of the Church. He, think of the good qualities he has.

You read in verse 2. I know your deeds. He's working for the Lord. Toil.

Toil means he's perspiring in his work for the Lord. And perseverance. He's gritting his teeth and holding on in tough times.

And he cannot endure evil men. He works only with godly people. I mean, when you look at that, you say, hey, I've got all these qualities.

And you put to the test those who claim to be apostles, and you found them to be false. You're very particular about doctrinal purity. You don't allow any false teachers to come along and teach you heresy.

And again, you have perseverance. Repeated a second time. That means, there was something outstanding about, he was a servant of God.

Who was working, toiling, persevering, and refusing to associate with ungodly people in his work. And very strict about doctrine, that he would not allow any false teachers to come into that church. And again, persevering and enduring in the midst of all the trials.

For Jesus' name. Verse 3. And you have not grown weary. Actually, if you meet a servant of God like that, you say, boy, that guy is really wholehearted.

Think what he's gone through. And he's wholehearted, radical. And yet, the Lord says to him, but I've got something against you.

And it's not a small thing. You have left your first love. You don't love me as you did at first.

You're still doing these things, but years ago, you remember, you did it because you loved me fervently. But that's gone. The letter is still there, the work continues.

But that love is gone. Is this a small failure? No. Verse 5, it says, remember from where you have fallen.

You have fallen. Would you consider a person who is persevering and toiling and keeping doctrinal purity and refusing to work with ungodly people and enduring for the Lord's sake, would you say such a person has fallen? If you see a Christian worker like that, would you say he's fallen? I doubt. God does not see as man sees.

Man looks in the outward appearance. God looks at the heart. It's true in the Old Testament where it's written.

It's even more true today. We will discover when the Lord comes and we stand before him that a lot of things that we thought were wonderful were not so wonderful in God's eyes. See, in the Old Testament, they had evil works and good works.

That's all. Only two types of works. Like the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

But in the New Covenant, you have evil works, good works, and dead works. It's a New Covenant phrase. Something that occurs only in the New Testament.

And most Christians don't know what dead works are. Dead works are good works done without love for the Lord. Very good works.

It could be very sacrificial works. But it is not originated in a heart of love. You know, it's like what happens in marriage with many people.

The first day they are married. The first year or so. They really devoted to each other.

Look forward to the husband coming back from work. And want to sit together and have their meals and all that. You go into that same home ten years later.

Well, the wife is still cooking the food and doing everything. But it's not the same. There is no delight in her face when she sees her husband come back.

She still does the work. No complaint about anything she does. But it's not the same.

And I've seen this in so many, many, many Christian workers, missionaries in India. In all these 52 years that I've been a believer. I've looked at, I've seen believers who have been believers 45 years.

And they are old now. And I see them grumpy and sour. Critical and unhappy.

And I said, Lord, don't let me ever grow to become an old man like that. I never want to be like that. Why is that? They've kept the letter.

You can't find anything wrong with the letter or what they are doing. Doctrinally, they are totally uncompromising. They refuse to work with unconverted people.

They will only have born-again people with whom they work. Everything is good, but you have left your first love. And it's a fall.

It's such a great fall. That the Lord tells this messenger in Ephesus. This is so serious.

That I'm going to, let me paraphrase those words in Revelation 2.5. I'm going to remove the lampstand. It means the lampstand is the church. It's a picture of the church as we read in the previous chapter.

I'm going to de-recognize you as a church. You can still continue there in Ephesus with your 1,000 members. And the fundamental in doctrine.

Regular meetings and conferences. Wonderful praise and worship and everything else. Great speakers from the pulpit.

And everybody in Ephesus thinks you are a wonderful church of Jesus Christ. But the Lord says, I've de-recognized you. Will the Lord de-recognize a church and its leader? Just because the guy lost his love for Jesus.

Even though he's doing everything else faithfully. Can't complain about anything that he does. His doctrine is right.

His activity is right. He's zealous. He's perspiring.

He's enduring. We need to take that seriously. I fear that many Christians do not read the Bible carefully.

They don't read it slowly. Do you know that we have no understanding of God outside the Bible? Outside of these 66 books. Any idea or concept we have of God is totally wrong.

It may sound very logical and wise, but it is wrong. And if you want to know what God is like, you can only find it in this book. If you want to know what Christ thinks about your life and your work, you can find the answer only here.

Nowhere else. And I've sought to live by this. Many years ago I went through a crisis in my life where I said, This was about 35 years ago.

I decided that I would never, never speak what was not real in my life inwardly. Never. Before that I must confess that I was speaking a lot of things that were not true in my inner life, like a lot of preachers do.

But I got so tired of it. About 37 years ago I said, Lord, I will not continue in the ministry. I will quit.

I have gift, I have ability, I can preach. And I can move people emotionally. But I have one big disqualification.

My inner life does not correspond with what I am speaking. The way I live at home with my wife, losing my temper, etc., does not correspond with what I am preaching. And therefore, I do not want to continue as a hypocrite.

I said that to the Lord 37 years ago. Unless you do one thing for me, that's the only thing I ask for. Make my inner life correspond with what I speak.

And with the external impression I give to people by what I say. That's all I ask for. I am not asking for any supernatural gifts or any such thing.

And I want to say, I sought the Lord for a long time. I said, Lord, I will not, if you don't do this for me, I am not going to quit being a Christian. I will still be a Christian.

I will go and sit on the back bench in some church and be a good Christian. But I will not speak. Because I see in your word how you hated hypocrites.

How you denounced those who preached things which they did not do. And I don't want to be in that category. And I will tell you, my brothers and sisters, the Christian world is full of such preachers.

I have moved closely with many, many preachers, certainly in India. And I tell you, it's true, unfortunately. And why does it happen? Because we care for the approval of men more than the approval of God.

There is only one way God can approve you and me. And that is if we love Jesus. And then even if a little that we do out of love for the Lord means a lot more to him than a lot that we do so wonderfully if we have lost our love for him.

That's what we read here in Revelation 2. And that's why Jesus told Peter, Do you love me? He didn't ask him, Do you know the scriptures? And how well do you know the scriptures? I mean, have you read through Genesis to Malachi? No such questions. It doesn't matter if you haven't read through Genesis to Malachi, which was the only Bible those days. Do you love me? If you love me, you're qualified to shepherd my sheep, tend my lambs, take care of my sheep.

So, love for Christ is the fundamental thing. If you love me, keep my commandments. Don't do it for any other reason.

God has made us servants of a new covenant. Out of the innermost being, the rivers of living water must flow, which means that the springs of that service come from within. Whereas the Old Testament service, we could say, was like water being poured over a person.

You know, if someone were to pour something over me, it would flow out from my body, but it wouldn't come from inside me. All Old Covenant service was like that. The Spirit came upon people.

And a lot of Christian work is like that. There's a lot of activity. But it doesn't come from within.

Whereas Jesus said in the New Covenant, from your innermost being, more than the phrase, the rivers of living water, we need to think of the previous phrase, from the innermost being. That's the thing that's going to distinguish the New Covenant. But it's very often when I've heard people quote John 7, verse 38, the emphasis is on the rivers of living water.

Rivers of living water will flow out from you. Rivers of living water. But the emphasis I saw after many years was, where is it going to come from? Is it going to be flowing over me and flowing out, or is it coming from within? Is it just a lot of activity? Or is it springing out from love? Is that important? That's the first question.

Well, you read the second letter to the Ephesians and see if it's important. It's fundamental. Absolutely important.

In fact, the Lord would say, if you don't love me, forget it. I don't want your service. God doesn't love one who doesn't give cheerfully.

Even when he gives, he's not just talking about money. Any service is also what I give. God loves one who serves cheerfully.

If I serve with complaints and critical attitudes in my heart, it has no value before God. I can impress men, but there's no value before God. And that's why it's so important for us to preserve that love.

Jesus said in the last days, Matthew 24, Because iniquity will abound, lawlessness will increase, Matthew 24, 12. Most people's love will grow cold. Now that's not talking about unbelievers, because unbelievers have no love for the Lord.

There's no question of their love growing cold, because unbelievers don't have any love at all for Christ. Who are these people whose love was once hot and has now become cold? It must be referring to believers. It must be referring to people who were fervent in love for Jesus once, but a lot of other things come up in the last days.

Particularly speaking about the last days. In those days, most people's love will grow cold. Now when I read a word like that, how do I react to it? Lord, I'm living in those last days.

And you say most people's love will grow cold. How am I so sure that I'm not in that category of the most people? Am I so sure that I'm in this category of the very few whose love will not grow cold? Let me have a sober estimate of myself. So when we think about loving the Lord, I mean, this is the area where I've tried to, through these years, sort of preserve myself.

Many times, I've sought to examine my own heart in the light of what I read in Revelation 2. Constantly, I say, Lord, I never, never want to live one single day beyond my love for Thee. You know that song, O Sacred Heart, now wounded with grief and shame. There's one line that keeps ringing in my mind.

Lord, let me never, never outlive my love for Thee. That means, let me never live to any day beyond my having love for You. If I've lost my love, I don't want to live beyond that.

Let me never, never outlive my love for Thee. So then I have thought, how can I preserve my love for Jesus Christ? I think many of us, if you were to look back to the first time you surrendered your life to

Christ, you would possibly say that you were so devoted to the Lord in those days. It wasn't a burden to read the Scriptures or to serve.

It was a joy. But over a period of time, the work of the Lord has become routine. This is what I'm scared of.

I say, Lord, it must never be like that in my life. I want to be fervent in love for You even more today than I was when I was converted 52 years ago. It doesn't matter if I don't do so many things.

The little that's done out of love is what the Lord values. That is gold, silver, and precious stones. I think this is one of the things that's going to determine whether our work is going to be wood, hay, and straw or gold, silver, and precious stones.

You know that verse, 1 Corinthians 3, where it says that every man's work will become evident in the final day. 1 Corinthians 3, verse 12. The foundation is Christ.

Verse 11, we can't change that. He's talking about born again people who have been saved. Their foundation is Christ.

On that foundation, now they're seeking to serve the Lord. And their service can be with gold, silver, and precious stones. Verse 12, or with wood, hay, and straw.

What is the thing that makes the difference between these two? In the day, we'll declare it. Each man's work will become manifest because it will be revealed by fire. And it speaks here of the possibility in verse 14, that a man's work may remain.

Or, verse 15, that a man's work will be burnt up. Two possibilities. The foundation is not affected.

You're saved. You're going to spend eternity in heaven. But I'll tell you honestly, I don't want to just spend eternity in heaven.

I want to get there having expressed my love for Christ in a lifetime of service. That's the best way I can put it. Having expressed my love for Christ, not just in words on Sunday mornings, but in a lifetime of service.

And when I get there, I don't want to see my Lord burning up everything I did and say, it was all worthless. I said, Lord, worthless? Do you know how much I sacrificed to do all that for you? Is it possible that a person who has gone through a lot of inconvenience is going to find his work burnt up in the final day, wood, hay and straw? I mean, this is scripture. But he's saved.

It says very clearly in verse 15. The guy is saved. He's saved, but his entire life's work is destroyed.

What is the reason? I think the reason could be that he didn't do it out of love. He lost his first love. When you come to the last church in Revelation, that's the church in Laodicea, you're familiar with that church, where the Lord says to that church in chapter 3, you're neither hot nor cold, but you're lukewarm.

I think it's again referring to the same love that he spoke to the Ephesian elder about. There was a time when you were fervently in love for me. You didn't know the Bible so much those days when you were converted, but you really loved me.

Today, many years later, you're well-versed in the scriptures. You can preach. You couldn't preach the day you were converted.

You hardly knew anything. You've done so much, but your love is gone. What's the use of all that Bible knowledge? You've got a name for yourself now because you've done so much of Christian work.

The day you were converted, nobody knew your name. But you know you were better then because you loved me. Men may think you're very important and great today because you know the scriptures and you're doing so many things for God, but it doesn't have any value for me.

I wish you were hot or cold. That means if you don't love me, forget it. Go right out in the world and live the way you want to.

It's amazing that the Lord says to that church in Revelation 3.15, I wish you were cold. I wish you were just a worldly person with no interest in the things of the Lord. If you want to live for God, live wholeheartedly in love for Him.

So thinking about that, how can I increase in love for Jesus? 1 John 4 says in verse 19, We love Him because He first loved us. The more I understand Christ's love for me, the more I will love Him. And the more I meditate on that, the more I think of how much He loved me.

I'll tell you my honest testimony before God. It's a thing I started doing when I was 50, when I was first born again 52 years ago, which I still do today. Meditate on how much Jesus loved me on the cross, what He gave up for me.

And I find spontaneously, love for Him comes. Service for Him is never a drudgery. I may not be able to do as much as others, it doesn't matter.

God has given me certain limitations, it's all I can really do within those limitations. I'm not in competition with anyone. I want to preserve myself in love to the end, and I find the one way is to meditate on His love for me, especially His love on the cross.

I've spent years meditating on the love for Jesus He had for me on the cross, which I wonder whether everyone has understood fully. I remember the time where the Lord showed me that what Jesus experienced on Calvary was the hell that I was to experience for all eternity. If I had died in my sins.

I hadn't seen it like that for many years. I mean, Christ died for my sins, I only thought of the physical aspect of that death, you know. And that's the thing that moves most Christians, the whipping, and the crown of thorns, and nailing, and we shed tears, and we think of the blood that was shed, etc.

But I tell you, that was nothing compared to what He really went through. Because the punishment for my sin is not physical death. If the punishment for my sin were physical death, when I died, I paid the punishment for sin myself.

So if Jesus only physically died for me, is that the punishment for sin? I used to think of that, you know, in India, when I passed away, I'm witnessing to an intelligent non-Christian who knew the Bible. And I told him that, listen, your sins can be forgiven, because Christ died for you. And if he were intelligent, and he knew the Bible, and he asked me this question, he'd say, well, is physical death the punishment for my sin? You say that Jesus died physically on the cross for my sin.

Is that the punishment for my sin? And if I say yes, he'd say, well, then when I die physically, I pay the price. I should go to heaven. What do you answer to that? And I say, no.

The punishment for your sin is eternal hell. Then he will ask, did Jesus take my punishment? Did he really suffer eternally hell? Otherwise, how can he deliver me? Very logical, sensible, right question. And that's what Jesus endured.

When he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me for those three hours? He endured in three hours what I was supposed to endure for eternity in hell. Because eternal hell concentrated into three hours on the cross. And he could do that because he was an infinite being.

Because he's infinite, we are finite. He was infinite, and so he could endure in three hours what I would endure for eternity, what billions of human beings would endure for eternity. It was concentrated into three hours, and he was forsaken by the Father.

See, we don't understand what an agony it is to be forsaken by the Father. Because so often our fellowship with the Father is broken, and we take it lightly. You know, you have a tension with a brother, or a tension with your husband or wife, and you don't set it right immediately.

You wait for a few hours before you set it right. During those hours, your fellowship with the Father is broken, whether you know it or not. But it doesn't disturb you so much, or me.

Because we haven't valued fellowship with the Father. For Jesus, it was the most precious thing of all. And that's the cup which he said in Gethsemane, Father, I don't want to drink it.

I mean, he would have gone to a million Calvaries for you and me, the physical aspect of it, any day. But when he thought of, Father, you and I had fellowship for eternal ages, and I'm going to lose it for three hours? Isn't there any other way? I remember many years ago meditating on this, and it really opened my eyes to something. I saw the love of Jesus in Gethsemane.

A lot of people think of the love of Jesus in Calvary. The Lord showed me his love in Gethsemane, where he was struggling, and I can imagine a conversation between the Father and Jesus. It's imaginary, but I think something went on like this.

The Father says, You don't have to go to the cross. You never sinned. You can come up to heaven straight from Gethsemane.

But Zach will go to hell. Then the Lord says, Okay, Father. For his sake, I'll go.

The day I saw that, it really broke me. I saw how much Jesus loved me in Gethsemane. And what he underwent on the cross.

The physical agony and suffering and all was a drop in the ocean compared to what he went through on the cross. It was love that held him there. And it produced such love in my heart.

We love him because he first loved us. If you think he loved you a little, you love him a little. If you understand the depth of his love, you can never lose your love for him.

Ministry will flow out of your love. It will not be the primary thing for you. I've often said that to the Lord.

Lord, you've given me a ministry. But that's not the most important thing for me. You are more important. You know, think of Isaac. Isaac was God's gift to Abraham. And God told Abraham to send away Ishmael. We can understand that. Because Ishmael was not God's promised seed. But Isaac.

Why in the world would God ask Abraham to give up Isaac? Because even that which God gives can become an idol. And it's very easy for a ministry to become an idol. A God-given ministry like Isaac to become an idol.

And I used to sometimes say, Lord, I don't want any idol in my life. I don't want money to be an idol. I don't want the approval of men to be an idol.

Those things I can see that are dangers. But ministry, can that be an idol? Yes. So I would use my imagination and say, supposing the Lord were to paralyze me.

Or take away my voice and I can't speak anymore. I'm paralyzed and lying in bed. Helpless.

I say, Lord, that's quite okay. I have no lust for ministry. I lie in that bed and love you.

Or if I'm locked up in a prison for preaching the gospel. Fine. I can sit in that prison and love you.

Ministry is not the most important thing. Though I love it and I long to serve him, it is not an idol for me. Christ himself is the one I love.

That must be like that for all of us, brothers and sisters. We love him because he first loved us. I think of that expression in Song of Solomon.

It says, Who is this? The bride leaning upon her beloved coming out of the wilderness. This is a picture I always have in my mind of me and Jesus. And all our service comes out of that.

The second thing. I just want to say two things. One is, we love him because he first loved us.

The second reason why we love the Lord is what Jesus said in Luke 7. You remember that sinful woman came and washed his feet. I mean, not washed his feet. Anointed his feet with an expensive bottle of perfume.

Now, it's very obvious that that woman was a prostitute. When it says there was a woman in the city who was a sinner. I mean, everybody is a sinner.

But when it says this woman was a sinner, it's referring to someone who was an immoral woman. And she was obviously forgiven. She met the Lord somewhere and been forgiven.

And she was so delighted. She didn't know how to express her love to the Lord. If she was a Israelite, and she was, I'm sure.

And if she had known anything about the law, she would have known there's an Old Testament law. Deuteronomy 23, verse 18, which says you cannot bring the earnings that you get as a prostitute into the house of the Lord. It is forbidden in Deuteronomy 23 to bring the earnings of a prostitute into the house of the Lord.

But she said, what else do I have? All the money I have, I've earned as a prostitute. I want to show my love for Jesus. And I don't know about the law, but I'll take this.

If the Lord rejects me, well and good. But I want to show my love for him. And she went and spent all that money, bought a perfume, and poured it at the feet of Jesus.

Did Jesus accept her? Of course. Jesus wasn't a legalist going by the letter of the law. When he saw that woman caught in adultery, the law said clearly that such women should be stoned.

The only condition Jesus said was that let the one who is without sin throw the first stone. That's all he said. He didn't say don't stone her.

That would have been against the law. And when all the Pharisees left, there was still one man left who was without sin, who could throw a stone. And that was Jesus.

But Jesus doesn't throw stones. He's got no stones in his pockets. Preachers have stones when they stand in the pulpit, but not Jesus.

He doesn't throw stones at anybody. He didn't come here to throw stones. And when this woman brought something in complete violation of scripture, Jesus accepted it.

The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind. We make all kinds of rules which God will never accept. When you look into the heart of God, you'll find a heart full of compassion, not one that is going to speak false with people for some little thing here or some little thing there.

That's human nature. But Simon the Pharisee was not like that. He knew the worse in Deuteronomy.

Some people think they're very spiritual because they know all the verses in scripture. They may be good Pharisees. He said, if this man were a prophet, he'd know this woman's a sinner.

How in the world is he accepting this? And then Jesus said, there was a man who owed a certain money lender and two people owed him money. Let's say one man owed him \$500,000, another man owed him \$50. And when they couldn't pay, he forgave them both.

Who will love him more? This is the question. Who will love Jesus more? Who will love him more? And Simon said, the one who is forgiven more. He said, that's right.

This woman's been forgiven so much. Luke 7, 47, the one who is forgiven little loves little. The one who is forgiven much loves much.

So that's the second thing I learned. First of all, to love Jesus, I must know how much he loved me. Secondly, I must always remember how much I've been forgiven.

It's not that we are forgiven little. How did the Apostle Paul consider himself the chiefest of sinners? As he said in 1 Timothy 1, when he said in another place, that, I've lived all my life with a good conscience. Acts 23.

How could you live all your life with a good conscience and still be the chiefest of sinners? Because the closer you get to God, you discover all types of things which you never thought were sin when you lived far away from God. And so, when a man lives close to God, he really feels he's the worst sinner of all

because he sees things in his life which most people don't even consider as sin. There's nobody who's been forgiven little.

We can think we've been forgiven little. But we've been forgiven much. It's been my own experience as I've sought to come closer in my walk with God.

Many a time, I've spontaneously felt, Lord, I'm the chiefest of sinners. Nobody as bad as me. Because, it's not at all difficult for me to know that I've been forgiven much.

What about you? Do you feel you've been forgiven much? If so, you'll love much. And your service for the Lord will constantly spring out of love. So, I do something consciously many times.

I try to remember every sin that I've committed in my life. Way back to as far back to my younger days as I can remember. I try to recollect.

You say, is that a good thing? Not if it brings guilt. No. I'm absolutely convinced that every sin of mine has been cleansed in the blood of Jesus.

Gone. Completely. I've no doubt about it.

Having known that, I mean, if you're not sure of that, don't do what I'm saying. But if you're absolutely sure that you've been justified, redeemed by the blood of Christ, every sin in your past life has been blotted out completely, you're not guilty before God, then I would recommend that you remember your past sins. Because that's how we love the Lord.

2 Peter 1. And verse 9 says, if you forget your past sins, you will become spiritually blind. That's what it says there. It's one of the easiest ways to be spiritually blind.

Forget what God forgave you. I've seen sometimes Christians who are very hard on some other person for doing some small mistake. And I say, this guy doesn't realize what a sinner he himself is.

It's so easy for him to judge this other person. The more I've seen my own sin in God's eyes, it's very difficult for me to judge other people. Almost impossible.

I say, Lord, I'm the chiefest of sinners. What do I got to say about him? We become extremely merciful. You don't have to struggle to be merciful.

You don't have complaints against people who you feel are not efficient. I remember once, in one of our conferences in India, I felt some brothers were not doing things very efficiently. And the Lord said to me, fellowship is more important than efficiency.

I said, OK. Forget about efficiency. I want fellowship with this brother.

Maybe he's not as smart as me. Let me be compassionate. So many wonderful things happen when we preserve our love for Jesus by recognizing how much He loves me and by remembering our own sins.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us each one. Help these dear brothers and sisters and each one of us to serve you to the end.

Fervently in love for you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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