

(The Supreme Priorities) 3. One Thing Have I Desired

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the supreme priority of love for God as the foundation of faith and the motive for our service.

Scripture: 1 John 4:19

Topics: "Divine Love", "Spiritual Consecration"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the importance of love for the Lord as the ultimate test of spirituality, drawing insights from the story of David's desire to dwell in the house of the Lord and behold His beauty. He emphasizes that God's love is the foundation of all His dealings with mankind, seeking a relationship based on love rather than compulsion. Poonen highlights that love should be the motive behind our consecration, urging believers to serve God out of pure love rather than selfish gain or legalistic duty.

Transcript

"The Lord is my light and my salvation:

whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the strength of my life;

of whom shall I be afraid?

When the wicked,

even mine enemies and my foes,

Came upon me to eat up my flesh,

they stumbled and fell.

Though an host should encamp against me,

my heart shall not fear:

Though wars should rise against me,
in this will I be confident.
One thing have I desired of the Lord,
that will I seek after;
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life.
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to enquire in his temple."

(Psalm 27:1-4)

This splendid psalm was written by one who had attained to the throne of Israel. Yet David tells us in verse 4 that there was only one thing in all the world that he desired from the Lord. Kings in those days had two desires chiefly: One was to extend their territory and the other was to accumulate riches. Israel was not yet a very big nation, neither was David himself a very wealthy king. Yet his prayer was not for extension in either of these realms. Even if he were hedged in by enemies, he states that his primary desire would be to dwell in the Lord's presence and to behold His beauty (verses 3, 4). And he further adds that he would seek after this all his life. It is the picture of a lover sitting in the presence of her beloved, beholding his beauty, and desiring nothing else in the whole world. There is no need even for conversion - so great is their love for one another. Those who have experienced such love will know how true a picture this is.

I believe that here we have one reason why David is referred to, in the Bible, as a man after God's own heart. He was not a perfect man. He fell very deeply into sin at one time in his life, committing both adultery and murder. Yet when he repented God forgave him, cleansed him and lifted him up from those depths of failure, and still called him a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). One reason for this, as we have just said, was that, deep down in David's heart was an intense love for his Lord. In 1 Samuel 16:7 God clearly states that He looks at man's heart, and it is not without significance that these words were in fact spoken in reference to David. Love for the Lord is thus another of the supreme priorities in the Christian life.

So love is our subject and again we shall consider it under three heads. Firstly, we shall see that Love is the basis of all of God's dealings with man. Then we shall see that Love is to be the motive of our consecration. Finally, we shall look at Love as the real test of our spirituality.

Love - The Basis of All God's Dealings with Man

Just as, in our first chapter, we started by considering the foundation of our faith, so here too it must be plain that we need a solid foundation for our love for the Lord. That foundation is, and can be nothing other than, His own unchanging love for us. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Many Christians experience difficulties later on in their lives, because they were never clear on this point initially. Right at the start of our Christian life we need to get this foundation strongly laid. Only so can we proceed further.

When God created this earth, and put man upon it, His intention was that everything in it should live and move in an atmosphere of love. Even the obedience that He sought from man was not the obedience of slavery but of love. Since there can be no love in the true sense of that word where there is no freedom of choice, God endowed Adam with a will that was free to choose, even though it involved the great risk of a wrong choice - of man disobeying Him. At any cost God would have a relationship with man that was free. He never wanted slavish service from man. He did not want it then, and He does not want it today.

Right through the Bible we see this picture of love governing all God's dealings with mankind. In this connection, let us look at the first two references to the word "love" in the Bible. The first mention of any subject in the Bible is always a great help in studying that that subject, and we may expect therefore to find much profit as we look into these two passages.

The first mention of love is in Genesis 22:2 where Isaac is called Abraham's only son whom he loves. The offering of Isaac on the altar that follows later on in the chapter is a clear picture of Calvary where God the Father gave His only Son as an offering for our sins. Accordingly the love referred to in verse 2 is a picture of God the Father's love for Christ. The second mention of the word "love" in the Bible is in Genesis 24:67 which tells of Isaac's love for Rebekah - a husband's love for his wife. Here we have a clear picture, as the rest of the chapter also beautifully shows, of the love of Christ for His church. In the New Testament these two concepts are brought together by the Lord in John 15:9 - "As the Father hath loved me (with the love of a father for a son depicted in Genesis 22:2) so have I loved you" (with the love of Christ for the sinner that finds its parallel in the love of a bridegroom for a bride illustrated in Genesis 24:67). Thus even in the typology in the Old Testament, this thought of God's intense love for man is reflected.

Let us therefore look at Genesis 24 and, in this faint picture provided by the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah, see some of the characteristics of the Lord's great love for us. When God seeks to show us how greatly He loves us, it is very significant that He uses the husband-wife relationship as an example. The union between husband and wife is the most intimate of all earthly relationships. While it would be unwise to carry the parallel too far, the Divine choice of this illustration, confirmed as it is by such New Testament passages as Ephesians 5:21-23, serves clearly to underline the very personal intimacy that the Lord desires to have with each one of us, and that He desires that we should have with Him. In Genesis 24, we may see a kind of allegory of the Divine search for such a relationship with man. There Abraham may be seen as a figure or type of God the Father, Abraham's servant as a type of the Holy Spirit and Isaac as a type of God the Son, while Rebekah takes her place as a type of alien, unredeemed man in the far country whom the Holy Spirit seeks to win to Christ. In the attitude of Abraham's servant (who on this mission was representing both Abraham and Isaac) and the attitude of Isaac towards Rebekah, we may discern characteristics of the love of Christ for us.

First of all, we see in verses 22 & 53 that Abraham's servant gives gifts to Rebekah out of the riches of his master. This gives us an insight into the heart of God. When He comes to us, He does not come demanding, but giving. As a good husband will want to share all he has with his wife, so does the Lord desire to share all He has with us. Many of us have the idea that if we surrender ourselves fully to the Lord, He will make so many demands upon us that our lives will become miserable. Even though we may not say so in as many words, yet this is the reason why we shrink from an unconditional surrender to the Lord. Yet Jesus has clearly told us that the real thief who comes to take away what we have is the Devil (John 10:10). But how few believe this. If we really believed that the Lord Jesus has come to give us all that He has, there would be no reserve at all in the surrender of our lives to Him.

A story is told of a pastor who once went to visit a poor old lady in order to bring her a gift with which to pay her rent. He went to her house and knocked at the door, and waited, and knocked again. But there was no response, and so at length he went away. A few days later he met her on the street. "I called on you the other day with a present," he told her, "but found the door bolted and could get no answer." "Oh," said the old lady, "I am sorry. I was inside, but I thought it was the landlord who had come to collect the rent. So I didn't open the door." Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus has not come to collect the rent! He has come to give us all that He possesses. He wants to bring us wealth unimaginable. How foolish it is not to open the door to Him. How foolish it is not to surrender our lives to Him utterly.

Look again at Abraham's servant. Another feature of the story is that, even knowing she was God's choice for Isaac, this man did not compel Rebekah to go with him. He respected her free will, and only when she herself was willing did he take her (verses 54-59). That too is characteristic of the love of Christ for us, as we saw briefly at the outset of this chapter. God respects man's freedom of choice. The love of God is without compulsion. He will never force you to do anything. Men in the world - yes, and even Christian leaders - may exert pressure upon you to do many things against your will, but God - never. (And in passing, may I say that any man who seeks to be like God will follow Him in this.) The Lord will never force you to read your Bible, or to pray, or to witness for Him. God never forces any sinner to turn to Him, neither will he force any believer to obey Him. In His instructions to Moses about the Tabernacle, God told him to receive offerings only from those who gave them willingly (Exodus 25:2), and this principle recurs in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 9:7). Indeed it runs through the entire Bible. God does command obedience to Him, but He never forces anyone to obey. He will always respect the free will that He Himself has given to man. What need is there, then, for you and me to be afraid of a love like this?

When Rebekah finally arrived at Isaac's home, Isaac himself was out in the fields praying (verse 63 - margin) The journey that Abraham's servant had made to fetch Rebekah had been a long one, about 600 miles each way, and he must have been away for around two months. As the time drew near for his return, Isaac would have been waiting with rising expectancy, wondering when his bride would arrive. Each day he would have looked eagerly out through the tent door for the awaited caravan; each day he would have gone out into the fields and prayed to God that she might come soon. Then one day he saw the camels coming. What joy must have filled his heart! Ah, but this is only a faint picture of the eagerness with which our beloved Lord now awaits us in heaven. This is an amazing fact but a true one, that even though we are so sinful and defiled and often rebellious too, yet so great is the love of the Lord, that in heaven He is waiting for us with longing expectation. There may be eager desire in our hearts to meet Him, but far, far greater is His desire to receive us and to share with us His glory. Even though God is completely self-sufficient, yet His self-chosen longing to dwell with mankind is another theme that runs right through the Bible. How grieved He must be when men doubt His love, in spite of all the proofs He has given of its reality and its greatness.

Right through the history of the nation of Israel God sought to impress upon them the enduring nature of His love. He loved them with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3; Deuteronomy 4:37). He told them that the response that He sought was their love in return (Deuteronomy 6:5). But they were just like us. They constantly doubted His love. And yet God kept on loving them. When they complained that He had forgotten them, He replied in those tender words of Isaiah 49:15: "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget yet will I not forget thee." A mother may not think of her grown-up children all the time; but if she has a child on her breast, there is hardly a moment of her waking hours when her thoughts will not be upon that child. When she

goes to sleep at night, her last thought is about that baby sleeping beside her. If she wakes in the middle of the night she looks at her child again, to see if all is well. When she finally wakes up in the morning, her first thought is again about her sucking child. Such is a mother's care for her little one. Even so, God says, does He care for His own.

The book of Hosea also stresses this. The painful experience that Hosea went through in his own personal life was a parable of God's attitude to Israel. His love, it tells us, endures as does that of a faithful husband to an unfaithful wife. The Lord has also placed the Song of Solomon in the Bible to picture this great truth of the faithfulness of the divine Lover to His wayward bride.

Our faith needs to be founded firmly upon this fact - that all of God's dealings with us are based upon His love. The words "He will rest in his love" in Zephaniah 3:17, have been translated: "He is silently planning for you in love." Do we realize that every single thing that God allows to enter into our lives comes from a heart that is planning for us in love? Every trial and problem that has come into your life and mine has been planned for our ultimate good. When He ruins our plans, it is in order to save us from missing His best. We may not be able to understand it all fully on earth. But if we recognize that there are no second causes, and that everything comes from the hands of a loving God, it would take away all the worries and fears and hard thoughts that normally plague us. It is because believers are not firmly established upon this truth that these anxieties and cares arise in their minds, and they remain strangers to the "peace of God that passeth understanding" and the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" of which the Bible speaks.

The ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was very often a corrective to the false conceptions that even religious people of His day, well read in the Old Testament scriptures, nevertheless had about their God. Everything about Jesus, His healing the sick, His comforting words to the sorrowing, His loving invitation to those burdened with sin, His patience with His disciples and finally His death on the Cross, all showed the loving nature of the heart of God. How often He impressed upon His disciples that their heavenly Father loved them and cared for their every need. How often Jesus rebuked them for doubting their Father. If earthly fathers knew how to provide for their children, how much more would their loving heavenly Father provide for them (Matthew 7:9-11). The parable of the prodigal son was also intended to show them God's great forgiving love towards his wayward, rebellious children. By irresistible logic, by parable and by personal example Jesus sought to correct the erroneous views that His generation had about God. In His final prayer before He went to the cross, He prayed that the world may know of God's love (John 17:23). May God imprint deeply and eternally upon our hearts these assurances from His Word of the truth of His infinite and unchanging love for us, for faith in God can grow on no other soil but this.

Love - The Motive of Our Consecration

In all our service for the Lord it is the motive underlying that service that matters. At the judgement seat of Christ the important question will not be "What did you do?" so much as "Why did you do it?" It is not the number of hours that we spend in reading our Bibles or in prayer, or the number of tracts we distribute, or the number of souls that we witness to, that are first in importance, but the motive with which all these are done. It is possible to be keenly engaged in all these spiritual activities and yet to do them all with a motive that is wholly selfish, or on the other hand that is merely legalistic. Examples of these two ways of serving the Lord can be seen in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). The younger son had motives that were selfish; the elder son had a legalistic spirit. Let us consider them briefly.

One day the younger son came to his father and asked for his share of the property. And just as we have been seeing that God's nature is to give lavishly, even so the father in this parable readily gave to the son. But as soon as the younger son had received all that he wanted, he left his father and set out for a far country, thus clearly showing that he was motivated not by love for his father at all but solely by what he could get out of him. Many Christian believers are like that. They come to God only for what they can get. Personal gain and blessing are the driving motives of their religion. In heathen religions generally these are of course the motives. It does not surprise us that the heathen give alms, or go on long pilgrimages, in order to get some personal benefit from their god. But alas this attitude is found among Christians too. It is possibly true that ninety percent of all believers have accepted Christ, if no longer for material gain (as was once the case here in India), then from a desire to exchange the horrors of hell for the comforts of heaven. This may not be altogether a bad thing, but it suggests that from the very beginning of our Christian lives, we come to God impelled by the selfish motive of personal profit. Search your own heart, my brother, my sister, and see if this is not true.

Now as I have said, this would not be so bad if only, in the process of maturing spiritually, we came to recognise our selfish motives in coming to the Lord, and corrected our attitude accordingly. But unfortunately this is not often so, and many believers live their entire lives on this plane of personal profit. It is because they are always seeking to get from God instead of seeking to give to Him, that they have so many problems in their lives and so little joy in their service. Why do we read our Bibles? Very often we do so solely in order to get a blessing for ourselves. Sometimes, perhaps to gain a reputation as a Bible scholar. How very seldom do we read it in order to know the will of God and to do it, so that God may be glorified through our lives. Why do we pray? So often, it is just to secure some special blessing for ourselves. How seldom do believers pray in order that the Lord's work may progress on earth for His glory. We may even fast and pray. But have we ever stopped to consider the motive with which we do it? Often it could be to obtain something that we desire greatly. Ah yes, it may be something spiritual that we desire - perhaps that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit. But the motive could still be selfish - that we may be greatly used of God, and not that His work may prosper, no matter whom He uses. Selfishness is still selfishness, even when it is a good thing that we are seeking.

Do you sing? There are musically gifted believers who perform solos. But how many of them can honestly say that it is the Lord's glory alone that they seek, and not some glory for themselves as well.

Or, let us consider meetings where the Word of God is expounded. Have we not often heard believers saying, "We got a blessing there?" "We" - the emphasis is still on their having received something from God at that meeting. Whether God was glorified or not becomes of relatively lesser importance. By and large, most believers only go where they can receive something. Thus they remain spiritual babes, nay spiritual beggars, all their lives, for even what they consider to be their most spiritual activities are leavened by the sin of selfishness. The tragedy depicted in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 of having all our work for God burnt up will be the direct consequence of having done that work with selfish motives. True repentance involves turning from a self-centred existence to a God-centred one.

The elder son in the parable is generally considered the better of the two. Examine his attitude however and we will find that he was just as much at fault as his brother. When the younger son returned, the father rejoiced along with his whole household. The elder son however proved unable, out of sheer jealousy, to share in that joy. He was so angry at such honour being bestowed on his wastrel brother that he would not even enter the house. His reply to his father's entreaties exposes the spirit in which he had been serving him hitherto. "All these years I have served you and not once have I disobeyed. Yet you

have never given me anything like this." His service for his father, instead of being joyful and loving, was calculating and legalistic, like that of a servant who serves his master for wages. Thus, as so many of us do, he compared his lot with that of others and discovered plenty of ground for complaint. They were being blessed more than they deserved, while he who deserved the blessings received none.

Do you serve the Lord like that? Do you read your Bible and pray as a legal duty imposed upon you and one that you dare not transgress? If it is just to satisfy your conscience that you have a daily quiet time with the Bible, then that quiet time is a ritual. No wonder so many believers experience no joy in their Bible reading or praying or witnessing! No wonder their service for the Lord soon becomes a strain and a burden, if having been saved through the grace of God they voluntarily put themselves under the law once again.

Through the death of Christ we are dead to the law, in order that we might be wedded to the risen Christ. This is the teaching of Romans 7:1-6. Paul's rather strange expression there simply means that instead of serving the Lord as a servant serves his master, legalistically, we are henceforth to serve Him "in newness of spirit" as a wife serves her husband, out of love. There is a vast difference between the two. Take a look at the servant first. He works under rules and regulations, having fixed hours of work and fixed wages. In the modern world he goes on strike if he considers himself over-worked or under-paid. Many a child of God unfortunately is serving the Lord like that today. He goes faithfully through his prescribed rituals. He has a brief daily quiet time, followed by "intercessions," when he mentions parrot-like before God the names of a few people in need. In addition to this he attends one or two, or maybe even three, meetings or services a week. By these means he hopes to please God enough to ensure that no calamity befalls him or his home, that all his children pass their examinations and that he gets regular promotions in his job. He may go further and pride himself on his evangelical convictions as well. And when, contrary to his expectations, something unexpected befalls him, he is quick to spell out his complaints before God and men.

Oh, I agree, it is better to serve God out of fear than not to serve Him at all. But, brothers and sisters, there is a higher, a more excellent way - the way of love (1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:1). God does not want you and me to carry on our religious activities out of fear that He may punish us if we neglect them. God wants us to serve Him as a good wife serves her husband, out of love. She does not serve him for wages, or only during fixed hours. She does not work according to a code of rules, nor for reward at all. If her husband is a life-long invalid, she will still continue to serve and care for him joyfully, at tremendous sacrifice to herself and without recompense for her labour, just because she loves him. This is the service God wants from us, because that is the service He has given us in His Son. Service for God which is motivated by anything less than pure love for Him is valueless in His sight.

Moreover serving God for selfish ends or in a legalistic spirit is sheer drudgery. It is like driving a car with sand in the bearings. How it groans and complains, protesting vigorously at every least move forward! Yet that, unfortunately, is a fair description of the lives and service of many of us. But clean out the sand and lubricate the machinery. How smoothly, noiselessly and quickly the car moves now! And God wants your Bible-reading and your times spent in prayer to be like that. He desires that your worship and your witnessing, and every Christian activity that you carry out, shall spring freely and joyously out of love for Him.

The attitude of that great Old Testament saint, Job, affords a striking contrast to that of the two sons that we have just been considering. In Job we are shown a picture of the type of service that is acceptable to

God. Satan accused Job of serving God for what he got out of it. Had not God blessed Job and enriched him beyond measure? Would not any man work to obtain such rewards?

To establish the true facts therefore God allowed Satan to test Job, stripping him in one blow of all his material possessions, then of his children, and finally even of his health. Yet in the face of these catastrophes, Job continued to praise God. The pressure of the trials did make him doubt God's care at times. But let us recall some of his words:

"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord....What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?....Though he slay me, yet will I trust in himhe also shall be my salvationI know that my Redeemer liveththough worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see GodWhen he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

(Job 1:21; 2:10; 13:15, 16; 19:25-27; 23:10).

Having proved that Job's motive in serving Him was a pure one, God finally blessed him with double what He had given him before. Those who manifest such a spirit of submission are the ones who get God's best. And remember, Job was an Old Testament saint. If he could rise to such heights, how much more should a New Testament one!

A little over 200 years ago, the Moravian missionary movement, a remarkable work of the Spirit of God, sprang up in what is now Czechoslovakia. It produced some of the finest Christian missionaries of all time, men of such exceptional devotion to the Lord as are rarely seen today. Some of these Moravian believers ventured into Africa with the gospel, and there they came upon a leper colony. They longed to preach the good news of Christ to those lepers, but were forbidden to go among them lest coming out they spread the contagion of the disease elsewhere. So great however was their desire to win those souls for their Lord, that they thereupon decided to enter the colony for life, willing for His sake to live and die there. In another instance Moravian brethren heard of an island in the West Indies which was occupied by a community composed entirely of slaves. Nobody but a slave was permitted to enter there. The burden to win these slaves for Christ was nevertheless intense. Casting away their freedom therefore, they offered themselves as slaves to the master of that island, in order that they might preach the glorious gospel to those slaves.

Why were these men willing to make such a sacrifice? Was it conceivably out of any selfish motive? Was it done to build up their reputation, as seems to be the purpose of so much Christian work today? Or was it a legalistic service done to curry favour with God? No, not at all. Nothing but pure love for Christ led these men to forsake everything that this world hold dear, in order that from among those lepers and slaves, they might "win for the Lamb that was slain the reward of His sufferings." Those who have accomplished anything of eternal value on earth are invariably those who served their Lord out of love. It was love alone that carried Jacob through the fourteen years of service to win Rachel (Genesis 29:20). His love for her made him forget the strain of toil. Love for Christ will take you and me also through the hardest service joyfully.

Love - The Real Test of Our Spirituality

For our final consideration in this chapter, we shall look at our Lord's resurrection appearance in John 21:15-17. Before the crucifixion Peter had denied the Lord three times. This was the culmination of three and a half disappointing years that he had been with the Lord, during which he had proved himself proud, self-assertive and, prayerless. Yet the Lord, when about to entrust Peter with the feeding of His sheep,

made no reference to any of these weaknesses. He did not even challenge him to be humble and prayerful in the future and to witness boldly, facing persecution if need be for the sake of his Lord. No, He did not ask any such questions, although these are indeed the qualifications we should look for in a spiritual man, and especially in one who is to be a leader among God's people. The Lord Jesus knew that one simple question would be sufficient. If that question found a true response, everything else would automatically follow. "Lovest thou Me more than everything and everyone else?" Love for Christ is the real test of any man's spirituality. If a man has attained to high rank in the church, even maybe that of a bishop we naturally assume that he must be a spiritual man. It need not necessarily be so. It is the new birth and a consequent love for Christ that makes a man spiritual. It is possible today that a bishop of the church may not even have been born again. Possession of a theological degree - or several - is no guarantee of this either. No, not even passage through a soundly evangelical seminary will make a man spiritual! You may be a full-time Christian worker or the pastor of a congregation, but that does not make you a man of God. All too readily you and I can mistake regular attendance at meetings, or profound Bible-knowledge, or unabated zeal for evangelism as the marks of spirituality.

Distinctive dress and a pious look can deceive us too. But none of them is of any account. The test of genuine spirituality in God's sight is one thing and one only: the extent of your love for Him. Ultimately that is something between you and your Lord alone. He puts the question: "Lovest thou me?" and it is for you to find the answer.

When Isaac loved Rebekah, what he looked for in return was not her service but her love. In just the same way, what the Lord is expecting from us primarily is not our service but our love. Where there is true love, service will flow spontaneously.

In company with Abraham's servant Rebekah made a 600 mile journey from Mesopotamia to Canaan. What do you suppose they talked about together during that journey? If she really loved Isaac, surely Rebekah would have been enquiring about him all along the way. She would have put endless questions concerning Isaac to her companion and guide. With just such a hunger a believer who really loves the Lord Jesus will read the Bible. Day by day he will invite the Holy Spirit to reveal to him more and yet more of the beauty of his Lord. This as we saw was the one thing desired by David (Psalm 27:4).

Down through the ages there have been men who have followed David in this. Samuel Rutherford, lying in a dungeon in Aberdeen, cried out, "Oh my Lord, if there were a broad Hell betwixt me and Thee, if I could not get at Thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice but I would plunge through it all, if I might embrace Thee and call Thee mine." Ah, but unfortunately, how few there are who have such hunger and thirst. May the Lord show us afresh that the measure of our love for Him is the real measure of our spirituality. And lest we deceive ourselves, let us remember the yardstick that He Himself provided. The proof of our love is simply our obedience (John 14:15, 21, 23, 24).

In the last book of Bible this solemn truth is confirmed. There the Lord rebukes the church at Ephesus because it had lost sight of the first things (Revelation 2:1-5). In other respects it was a remarkable church. The Christians there had laboured with patience, they had hated evil, they had exposed false apostles, they had persevered and endured for the sake of the Name. Heart and soul they were in the Lord's work and nothing had made them give up. Yet, in spite of all this the Lord had something against them. It constituted so serious a lack as to threaten their very existence as a testimony for Him. They had fallen, He told them, and if they did not repent, He would withdraw from them His anointing, the sign of His approval of their testimony. What was this serious lack? It was just this, that they had grown cold in their

love for their Lord. They had not lost their first love for Him, they had just left it behind and moved elsewhere. They had become so busy with their meetings and retreats and conventions (if we may so speak) and other forms of Christian activity that they had lost sight of the One for whom all these other things existed. Clearly this shows that the Lord cares more for the devotion of our hearts towards Him than for all our activity. The Devil, knowing this, will do his utmost to get us so involved in Christian engagement of one kind and another that we find no time to spend with our blessed Lord and thus let slip our personal devotedness to Him.

Jesus warned us that in the last days sin would so abound in the world that many would become cold in their love to Him (Matthew 24:12). We are living in those days now. Among the vast majority of the professed followers of the Lord the spiritual temperature is below freezing point. Unless we ourselves are constantly watchful, we shall find that frigid atmosphere penetrating inside us as well. My brothers and sisters in Christ, even if you lose everything else, do not let go this one thing - your love for your Lord. Like David, preserve it as the one thing that you desire with all your hearts and that you will seek all the days of your life.

"The greatest....is love. Follow after love."

(1 Corinthians 13:13, 14:1).

"What language shall I borrow

To thank Thee dearest Friend,

For this Thy dying sorrow

Thy pity without end?

O make me Thine forever,

And should I fainting be,

Lord, let me never, never

Outlive my love for Thee."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-supreme-priorities-3-one-thing-have-i-desired/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net