

LOVING GOD



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*I'll love Jesus Christ forevermore
I'll love Jesus Christ forevermore
Even when life storms and tempests strike my life so frequently
I'll still love Jesus forevermore*

Reff.

*Yes Abba, Father, here I am, Your redeemed child,
Sanctify my whole life through
Yes Abba, Father, here I am, Your redeemed child,
Use me as You think it proper to Your plans.*

I am sure the song above is quite familiar to us and we often sing it. The song is an expression of our longing to love Jesus Christ our Lord.

As redeemed children of the Lord Jesus, we certainly are very grateful in our present state. Hence we should love the Lord deeply, for if we are not redeemed by Him, we definitely would be sent to hell hereafter. But, through Christ Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, not only are we saved and would not be sent to hell, we would enter into heaven and be accepted as God's children instead.

VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS IN LOVING GOD

When we observe closely, we can see people trying to express their love to God or to the Lord Jesus. Some people hang plaques in their houses on which we can read themes of loving the Lord, for example "*I Love You, My Lord*". Some others put stickers written on them "*I Love You, Jesus*" at the back of their cars, or wear T-shirts where people can read similar phrases or captions.

There are people who express their love to God by kissing statues of the crucified Lord Jesus, or statues of the Baby Jesus, or paintings of Him. Some express it by lighting candles in front of the statues of the Lord. At Easter some communities even express it in quite an extreme way, by trying to feel the sufferings of the Lord Jesus at His crucifixion, so they attempt to carry a cross. Even by more extreme ways and not just pro forma they want to experience the agonies the Lord Jesus had experienced. They actually wear a crown of thorns, carry a heavy cross, then some also nail their hands and feet, all in all just in the attempt to express their love to Jesus as Lord, or their love to God.

There are also some who express their love to God by kissing the Bible, believing what is written in the Gospel of John that the Lord Jesus is the incarnate Word whilst the Bible is the Word of God. So as a manifestation of their love to the Lord Jesus, and/or to the LORD God they kiss the Bible. Then others show it by praising, worshipping, and glorifying God's name, and some others by attending church or the worship service as frequent as possible, almost every day in various churches. Some of the congregation become church activists, ushers, choir members, singers, musicians, sound system operators, clerks and many more, while quite a few work out a very occupied schedules every day in church ministries.

Now truthfully, how can we love God?

LOVING GOD ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD

What does the Bible say about loving God? What is written in the Scriptures about this? The Lord Jesus explains to us how to love Him as recorded in John 14:21,23, and 24a.

14:21 *“He that **hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:** and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”*
(KJV)

Or *“Whoever **has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.**”* (NIV)

This is repeated in verse 23 as Jesus answer to the people’s question, *“**If a man love me, he will keep my words:** and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”* (KJV)

Or *“**If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.**”* (NIV)

And again, reconfirmed in verse 24a, “***He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.***” (KJV)

Or “***He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.***” (NIV)

From the above verses, it is clear that they who love the Lord Jesus will keep God’s commandments; they will obey His Word in their lives.

The phrase “*hath my commandments and keepeth them*” in the King James Version is in the New International Version phrased “*has my commands and obeys.*” Both versions emphasize that they who love God must “*have*” or hold God’s commandments and “*keepeth*” or “*obey*” them, which means “to do” or “to apply” them.

So, loving God involves two things: to have God's commandments and to obey or to do them. We will discuss the two requirements, one by one.

To have or to hold God's Word

To have or to hold God's commandments is at the start, or before the obedience to do them. Why? I'll begin with an illustration. There was a young man who fell in love with a girl. Every time this young man went to see his sweetheart, he always gave her a rose as an expression of his love to her. After some time, the girl seemed unhappy receiving the rose the young man brought her. He wondered in his heart, *"Why is my sweetheart not happy to receive the rose I give her? Is not a rose a symbol of love?"* One of his friends said, *"Perhaps you need to give her more roses."* So the next time he visited her, he brought her a bouquet of roses, not just one shaft. But to his astonishment, the girl was not only unhappy, she even refused them firmly and asked to break up their relationship. This young man was very shocked for he really loved the girl. He asked his friends for their opinions about his case. Some said, *"Your girl might be materialistic and you gave her only flowers. Try to give her other things."* Some others gave different opinions, but

because he felt he did not get a proper or satisfactory answer, he finally went to see a counselor.

The counselor asked the young man to tell him the whole story from the beginning to the end. Then he said, "*May I borrow your handphone to see how you two communicate with each other?*" After reading through the communications done in the past, the counselor understood why the girl broke off their relationship. Actually, it was clear from their communications that the girl did not like flowers, because she was allergic to dust or to pollen, which would make her sick with fever easily, like getting the *hay fever*. This girl has explained; at first she used subtle notices and later on told him frankly so. But apparently this young man never read the messages; he only sent news when he would come for a date, "*Hi, I will come to see you at ... o' clock, okay?*" Yes, that's it. All the notifications this girl sent either through short messages or articles were never read by him.

We might laugh at this young man's ignorance whereas we ourselves might have the same indifference towards our relationship with God. God speaks to us all the time through sermons, devotions, reflections, Bible verses, events, experiences, and many other means to reveal who He is, what He wants, what He hates, and about all His blessings and laws in the Bible. Are we ready and prepared to focus our minds each time we listen to the word of God? Or do we become drowsy, or are we thinking of some other things when the sermon is being delivered?

Do we regularly read the Bible? Or would we never have read the entire Bible yet from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, even once throughout our entire lives? If we do not listen to God's Word solemnly and read the Bible regularly, it is certainly difficult for us to be able to have or to hold, moreover to understand God's commandments.

Obeying God's Commandments

I remember a few years ago when my son was still in the US. We went to Canada for a vacation, because my son wanted to go snow-boarding. At that time we rented a car. Since only my son who was to go snow-boarding, he suggested that we should not wait there at the locality, because it would be cold and boring. Instead, he encouraged us to wait in a village called Whistler at the foot of the mountain. Hence he took us to the place where he was to go snow-boarding, then we rode down to Whistler so I would know the route. Thereafter we returned upwards. After he got off I drove the car myself to Whistler. Arriving in the village, I found the place to be really beautiful with many cafes, restaurants, hotels and shops. Then I tried to find a parking space and saw a place where many cars were parked there. Thus there I parked my car too. In the afternoon when my son finished his sports, he went down to join us. Later when we were about to go home, we saw that our car got a ticket. I was astonished why I got a ticket. My son took the paper and laughed, then said, "*Papa park in the wrong place.*" I argued, "*The others also park here.*" My son replied,

"Others park for no more than 2 hours. Look at the sign board at the other end. It reads, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, maximum parking 2 hours." Well, I did not know the regulation. So in conclusion, although I did not intend to break any law, yet due to my ignorance I did infringe on that regulation.

Likewise would be the case if we do not understand, never read the Bible, never listen well to the Word; it would definitely be hard for us to become a doer of the Word. Why so? Inasmuch as we do not understand what God wants, thus we would not know which laws to obey.

Once I brought up a different material in a fellowship, but touched on the importance of listening well to God's Word and of reading the Bible to understand God's will. After the worship service, as people shook hands with me, one activist said, *"Well, Sir, as for me to serve is most important and I am serious in serving God."* At that moment I had no chance to explain since people already dispersed and it was quite late at night.

But actually, if I had the opportunity I would have said, "*Serving God in any ministry, whatsoever it could be, if you do not understand, you can not serve God according to His will.*"

Let me give an example: Suppose we had a new housekeeper and she was happy to work at our place, so she decided to do her very best. That's why the next day she woke up at 4 a.m. and started to work. She took the vacuum cleaner and sucked the dust in every room. "*Zoom . . . zoom. . . zoom. . .*" And when she saw the dusty door of our sleeping room, she enthusiastically directed the vacuum cleaner to it and to the window of our room.

Then she went into our office, looked at the tables and the walls around and thought, *Wow, what a mess! I must tidy this room!* She saw many postings, *post it* reminders patched everywhere, several newspaper clippings glued at random on the wall, and on the tables she saw manuscripts filled with streaks or underlined. Then she took all the *post it* reminders and the newspaper clippings, tore them to pieces, and

disposed them into the trash can. Likewise she did with the underlined manuscripts. She threw them all away and replaced them with new clean papers. She also closed the open books, cleaned and piled them up neatly at the corner of the table.

The question is: if we had a maid working like that, would we be happy? I am sure we would become very angry, even fire her that very day, because all the *post it* reminders and the newspaper clippings we stuck there were not just some patchwork. They were meant as a collection of important things we need to remember, even to work on. Also the manuscripts with the streaks or underlined were not used papers but important documents we were correcting and still working on. And all the open books; there were important things on those pages. Thereby what the maid had done caused a huge loss to us that eventually could not be restored just by dismissing her.

If we honestly observe the case thoroughly, the maid did not have the slightest intention to harm us, instead she did so to show her best, didn't she?

Likewise, if we serve God without knowing Him we might do similar things as what that maid had done. We might think that we are pleasing and glorifying God while in fact we are grieving and insulting Him. We expect blessings and praise from God, yet we would get the opposite instead.

So if the maid wanted to work well, what must she do? She should first listen to her master's instructions and ask him several necessary questions, such as *"Sir, may I use the vacuum cleaner early in the morning?"* Because the sound of the apparatus may annoy or disturb the master's sleep. Or, *"May I clean up your workroom, Sir? How would you have it done? Can the sticking papers be removed or discarded?"*

Likewise we can only serve God well when we know His personality, His attributes, His will and all His laws and commandments.

THE REWARD OF LOVING GOD

John 14:21 *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: **and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.**”* (KJV)

Or *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. **He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.**”*
(NIV)

This verse above explains that the reward of loving the Lord Jesus is so remarkable: when we love Him, God the Father and also the Lord Jesus Christ will love us, even the Lord will reveal Himself to us.

The phrase *“**will manifest myself to him**”* or *“**show myself to him**”* is explained in verse 23.

*“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.**” (KJV)*

Or *“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, **and we will come to him and make our home with him.**” (NIV)*

So the reward for them who love the Lord Jesus is to be loved by God the Father, and the Lord Jesus even God the Father will dwell with them, with us who love Him. When the Lord dwells with us we will have an intimate relationship with Him and He will watch over us and direct every step of our lives. Indeed this does not mean that everything will run smoothly as we wish, that we will always be wealthy, healthy and successful in our lives, without problems or struggles. No, we still have to carry the cross, but the Lord will always watch over us and give us strength.

Loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength

Since such a great reward would be received by those who love God, the Lord Jesus wants us all to wholeheartedly love God. Therefore, in Mark 12:30 He said, *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”* (KJV)

Or *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”* (NIV)

With All Our Heart

“With all your heart” means that our hearts desire is not ambiguous, that we really love the Lord Jesus solely. We do not love anyone else but the Lord Jesus, no Mammon nor other gods. Yet loving the Lord Jesus also means loving the LORD God, since Jesus said, *“I and my Father are one.”* (John 10:30) We do not belong to them whom with their lips confess to love

God while truthfully they love their treasures more, and their behaviours and policies are based on money.

The Lord Jesus said, “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. **Ye cannot serve God and mammon.***” (Matthew 6:24) Please read again the author's book entitled “**Jesus Versus Mammon**”.

With All Our Soul

And what does it mean “*with all your soul*”? Man consists of body, spirit, and soul. When a person dies, there is no breath of life anymore in his body, his spirit and soul which will depart from his body. Thus the soul is in our body as long as we live on earth. Thereby *with all your soul* means our whole life through. But loving *with all your soul* is concerned not only with time from one's birth to his death, but under any circumstances. When all runs well or not, blessed or not, when our prayers are answered or not, we still love God. Loving God with all our soul

means to love God under any circumstances, even in times of persecution for the name of the Lord.

With All Our Mind

Loving God “*with all your mind*” means loving God with our full understanding, not just doing what we think is right or what we like to do, but earnestly learn to understand God's will. In this regard, 2 Peter 1:5 says, “*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to **your faith virtue**, and to virtue **knowledge**,*” (KJV). Or “*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith **goodness**; and to goodness, **knowledge**,*” (NIV).

So we have to apply our faith practically in our virtues or good deeds. Yet it is still not enough, because we also have to love God with understanding. We have to understand the meaning of God's Word by reading the Bible frequently and praying continuously to God that His Holy Spirit would give us the understanding.

With All Your Strength

Then the last is *with all thy strength*, which means with all we own, our body, our time, our possessions, our relations, our knowledge, our skills, whatever we have.

The Application of Mark 12:30 in Our Daily Life

When we listen to God's Word

Listening to God's Word with all our heart means that we should pay full attention or concentrate completely in listening. We should not listen to the Word while busy using our mobiles, gadgets, or taking pictures here and there, chatting, and so on. We have to really focus on what is being said by the preacher.

Listening to God's Word with all our soul means that we faithfully attend church to worship God and listen to His Word for as long as we live, under any circumstances. Not only when it is safe and everything goes well, but even in a state of

chaos and facing many problems we still should try to be able to attend church to worship God and listen to His Word.

Listening to God's Word with all our mind means with understanding. We try to really understand, not just hear the Word, but do our very best to comprehend, and if necessary we make time to dig deeper into what has been preached.

Listening to God's Word with all our strength means that we try our best to resist distractions, such as drowsiness, lack of concentration and other kinds of disturbance so we can stay focused on listening to the Word. We must not use sickness, heavy traffic, weather or anything whatsoever as an excuse for not listening to the Word. If we use all our strength we surely can find a way to go to the house of God on time and listen to His Word.

Read the Bible

Reading the Bible with all our heart means we set aside a special time to read the Bible, not just some remainder of the time or only when the time suits or is convenient. No, not that!

In addition, we also should read the Bible at the best time, in our most fresh condition to the most effective concentration, not at the end of the day before going to bed, to lull us to sleep.

Reading the Bible with all our soul means that we need to read the Bible for the rest of our lives under any circumstances, either we are in a good or a bad condition.

Reading the Bible with all our mind means not just reading casually but also trying to understand it. Therefore, before we read the Bible, we must pray to God that His Holy Spirit would help, lead, guide, and give us the right perception of the meaning of the Word we are reading.

Reading the Bible with all our strength means that if the condition of our eyes is still good, we can read. If our eye-sight becomes poor but our ears are still good, we can hear. If our eye-sight and our hearing are weak, we can still read the Bible using the Braille system, or ask someone to explain the meaning. Whatever we still can do, we do it to keep on seeking to know God and all His laws.

PUTTING THE WORD INTO PRACTICE OR OBEYING THE WORD

Putting the Word into practice with all our heart means that we obey or do the Word because we love God not for any other reasons, not for obtaining praise, or to be considered good, but merely because of our love to God.

Putting the Word into practice with all our soul means that we will obey or do the Word for the rest of our lives, whether we are in a good or a bad condition.

Putting the Word into practice with all our mind means that we obey or do the Word rightly according to God's will, not based on our own feelings.

Putting the Word into practice with all our strength means that we obey or do the Word with everything we have.

Some Examples of Putting the Word into Practice

Honour our father and mother

Matthew 19:19 ***“Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”***

Perhaps our parents are not ideal parents, they might disappoint us or lacking in their responsibilities and often hurt us, yet we still have to honour or respect them. Why? Because this is God's commandment and we obey or do it as a manifestation of our love to God.

Hence also with loving our neighbours. Perhaps the people in our neighbourhood are not kind even very unkind; they often steal our belongings, love to insult us, or extort money from us. However as a form of our love to God, we are to love them.

Husbands should love their wives

Ephesians 5:33 says, ***“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”*** (KJV)

Or *“However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (NIV)*

Perhaps our wives are not ideal ones, they are fussy, lacking skills, not wise, troublemakers, and have other bad characters. Yet we love our wives because we love God. God wants us to love our wives, so we obey.

Wives should respect their husbands

Perhaps our husbands are not worthy of our respect, they are irresponsible, abusive, often unfaithful, drinking, gambling, and have many other bad habits. Yet wives should respect their husbands as a manifestation of their love to God.

Do not provoke our children

Colossians 3:21 says, *“Fathers, **provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.**” (KJV)*

Or *“Fathers, **do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged,**” (NIV)*

Perhaps our children do not meet our expectations, they do not obtain any achievements, often cause trouble, their behaviours are annoying. Yet we still have to educate them wisely and lovingly so as not to hurt their hearts, because this is God's commandment for fathers or parents.

Providing for our relatives

1 Timothy 5:8, *“But if any **provide not for his own**, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”* (KJV)

Or *“If anyone does not **provide for his relatives**, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”* (NIV)

Perhaps our financial condition is not well established yet, but if any of our relatives are in dire need, we should make efforts within our capacities to provide for them. We help them not to make ourselves look great nor to gain their love and respect; we do it merely because of our love to God.

Kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving one another

Ephesians 4:32: “And be ye **kind** one to another, **tenderhearted, forgiving one another**, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (KJV)

Or “Be **kind and compassionate** to one another, **forgiving each other**, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (NIV)

We have to be kind, we should have an affectionate and compassionate love, and be ready to forgive as we have been loved and forgiven by God.

Loving our enemies

Luke 6:27 “But I say unto you which hear, **Love your enemies**, do good to them which hate you.”

The Lord Jesus knew that His followers would contend with animosity or hostility of many people, who will hate, excommunicate, criticize and reject them for following Christ. We should not make enemies by harming people or irritating

them due to our misbehaviour or insensitivity towards others. But even though we live righteously and hold fast to God's righteousness, we will always have enemies in this evil world. Our righteous living either directly or indirectly would bring reproach on their sins and they will try to discredit us so as to justify their own sins. Although we are vilified and even persecuted for doing right, we should not retaliate, but love them instead, because this is God's commandment.

By loving our enemies we actually are loving God, because we obey or do God's commandment.

Loving God, but hating their brothers

1 John 4:20 says, ***“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”***

Loving our brothers is a manifestation of loving God, and on the other hand not loving our brothers is a manifestation of

not loving God, and hating our brothers is a manifestation of hating God.

In Matthew 25:31 we read, *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.*

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 *Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?*

38 *When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?*

39 *Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*

40 *And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

41 *Then shall he say also unto them on the left them, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:*

42 *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:*

43 *I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.*

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."