

I. THE PURSUIT: LOVING JESUS AS HE DESIRES TO BE LOVED

- A. We can only love Jesus on His terms. He defined it as being rooted in a spirit of obedience. There is no such thing as loving God without sincerely seeking to obey His Word. Loving God is more than having sentimental feelings about God.

¹⁵ If you love Me, keep My commandments ... ²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me ... ²³ If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. (Jn. 14:15-23)

- B. Part of our expression of love for God involves resisting the enemy and denying lustful desires. Each of us has a different struggle according to our personality and circumstances. Thus, we each have a different **assignment** from which we offer our gift of love to God. Saying “no” to sin expresses love to Jesus.

³ This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. (1 Jn. 5:3)

- C. Jesus called us to live **perfectly** by **seeking to walk in all the light the Spirit gives us**. We do this by **reaching** from our heart to live in full obedience in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

⁴⁸ You shall be perfect / complete - “teleios”], just as your Father is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)

- D. To **reach** for 100 percent obedience is different than attaining it in life. When we sin, we repent and renew our resolve to fully obey with confidence that God enjoys us.

- E. When we obey the Spirit’s light, then He gives us more light to walk in.

In Your light we see [more] light. (Ps. 36:9)

- F. Enoch received the testimony that he pleased God by a lifestyle of complete obedience. At the end of our natural lives, each of us will stand before Jesus to receive His testimony about our life. He will reveal to us the truth about the quality of our obedience and love. On that day, everyone will long to hear Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mt. 25:21).

By faith Enoch...before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Heb. 11:5)

II. THE PRIZE: OUR TESTIMONY OF BEING COMPLETE IN LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

- A. The prize which Paul sought was to receive God’s testimony about his life—that he walked in complete obedience. Paul’s highest goal was to win the prize of presenting the testimony to Jesus on the last day that his obedience was complete and his love for Jesus was perfected.

Those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it ... ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty... ²⁷ I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest ... I should become disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

- B. The prize is the testimony of a life of complete obedience and then receiving His response including eternal rewards. These rewards express how He feels about us loving Him in affectionate obedience.
- C. Paul wrote towards the end of his life that he had not yet attained the prize of the testimony of perfect obedience. Our testimony of complete obedience “prize of the upward call” is one that is sustained through the end of our lives.
¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected ... ¹³ I do not count myself to have apprehended ... ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God. (Phil. 3:12-14)
- D. Paul was assured of the prize of the crown of righteousness as his race was nearing completion.
⁸ There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness ... on that Day. (2 Tim. 4:8)
- E. We’ve been given a measure of years in this life to bring every area under the Holy Spirit’s leadership as our way of demonstrating our love to God. Wholehearted lovers of God will make this their greatest single goal for which they will gladly sacrifice pleasure, money, and even honor in ministry.
- F. The pursuit of affectionate obedience includes bridling our speech (Jas 3:2), making a covenant with our eyes and refusing to look on anything that stirs up lust (Job 31:1), disciplining our physical appetites, and managing our time (for service and prayer) and our money (to increase the kingdom beyond personal comfort).
² If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the ... body. (Jas 3:2)
² I will behave wisely in a perfect way ... I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. ³ I will set nothing wicked before my eyes. (Ps. 101:2-3)
- G. Power in our life is found in pursuing complete obedience. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we soberly seek to walk in full obedience. The 98 percent pursuit of obedience has a limited blessing. The last 2 percent positions us to live with a vibrant heart.
⁵ Every thought into captivity ... when your obedience is fulfilled [complete, NIV]. (2 Cor. 10:5-6)

III. THE REACH & THE WRESTLE: A STEADFAST PURSUIT THAT MOVES GOD

- A. Maintaining a sustained reach for full obedience for decades is the definition of living radically before God. We are not radical because we do something unusual for a few weeks or months. When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our life, we are not loved less by God, but we do suffer loss in minimizing the full gift of our love from this life to Jesus on the last day. God loves the reach in our hearts for Him!

- B. Ask the Lord for wisdom into areas you lack complete obedience (v. 5). It is wisdom to ask the Lord to shock us now with insight into our lack of obedience instead of at the judgment seat.

³ The testing of your faith produces patience [perseverance]. ⁴ Let patience have its perfect work [mature impact in us], that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing [in our obedience]... ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask...and it will be given to him. (Jas 1:3-5)

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; ²⁴ and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps. 139:23-24)

- C. We are called to live in this tension... to wrestle and resist the pull of the world and to continually course correct, keeping our eyes fixed on the Author and the Perfecter of our faith. He Loves our reach for Him!

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. (Heb 12:2)

I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! (1 Cor 15:31)