

For the Love of God

We have all heard the phrase “for the love of God” and may have uttered it ourselves over the years. It is an idiom commonly used to express astonishment, amazement, or exclamation when simple words are not enough to convey our emotions.

If we witness something incredible, amazing, or even exceptionally stupid, the phrase just might fit to magnify our awe or surprise at what we see. A parallel saying would be, “can you believe this?!” When we use this phrase, it can be a call for compassion, to be kind for goodness sake.

John 13:34-35- “A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you, that is how you are to love one another. By this shall everyone know that you are My disciples—if you love one another.”

For the love of God in the biblical context reminds us to display kindness, forgiveness, and empathy towards one another...and more.

1 John 4:19-21- “We love Him because He loved us first. If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar. For if he does not love his brother whom he has seen, how is he able to love God Whom he has not seen? And this *is* the commandment *that* we have from Him: that the one who loves God should also love his brother.”

This is an extension of the Greatest Commandment in Matthew 22.

Matthew 22:36-39- “Master, which commandment *is the* great commandment in the Law?” And Jesus said to him,” ‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and greatest commandment; **And the second one is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’**”

For school students, this is the time of year most look forward to, the end of the school year. “No more pencils, no more books, no more teacher’s dirty looks...” was a song we used to sing in elementary school with summer vacation just around the corner.

The anticipation of the last day of school also came with concern, for some more than others, and that was the report card being sent home to your parents.

Hopefully, your grades were good enough and you would not need to go to summer school or worse, fail the grade. They actually failed students back then.

I was fortunate and never had any worries, at least in elementary school. I did not go astray until middle or “junior high” (as it was before the wheel was invented). I had all A’s and B’s from first grade through grade six when I got my first “C.” I did have friends who did not make the cut and had a few weeks of summer school. They did not give out “participation trophies” or passing grades just for showing up. You received what you earned.

As we have recently completed our seventh year as a fellowship, it may be time God is giving us a report card. We may not have received one during that seven-year stretch, although there may have been a trip or two to the **Principal’s Office**.

The difficulties that life has thrown our way in the past few years are all tests of faith and character. Conditioning, training, learning, and growing spiritually...preparation for what is coming.

Compassion for one another in God's family and for those *seeking* to be, is a display of God's love *in us*. If we truly know and seek God, we will have a personal relationship with Him. It will be reflected in our outward demeanor and character in the way we treat others, both members and non-members alike. Kindness and compassion will be clearly demonstrated. Remember, "God is no respecter of persons." He does not play favorites, pitting one against another nor will He ignore something that is against His commandments. **Period.**

James 2:1-10- "My brethren, **do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.** Now then, if a man comes into your synagogue wearing gold rings and *dressed* in splendid apparel, and *there* comes in also a poor man in lowly apparel, And you give preference to the one who is wearing the splendid apparel, and say to him, "Seat yourself here in the best place"; and you say to the poor man, "Stand over there," or, "Sit here under my footstool"; Then have you not passed judgment among yourselves, and have made yourselves judges *with* evil opinions? My beloved brethren, listen. Did not God Himself choose the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which He has promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor *man*. Do not the rich oppress you, and do they *not* drag you into *the* courts? Do they not blaspheme the worthy name by which you are called? If you are truly

keeping *the* Royal Law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. But if you have respect of persons, you are practicing sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors; For *if* anyone keeps the whole law, but sins in one aspect, he becomes guilty of all.”

It does not get any plainer than that. Our conduct is governed by the word of God. His standards are incredibly detailed and specific of whether we know Him and have His love within us...*or not*.

1 John 3:16-17- “By this *very act* we have known the love of *God* because He laid down His life for us: and we ourselves are to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his feelings of compassion from him, how can the love of God be dwelling in him?”

1 John 4:6-11- “We are of God; the one who knows God listens to us; the one who is not of God does not listen to us. By this *means* we know the Spirit of the truth and the spirit of the deception. Beloved, we should love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God because God is love. In this way the love of God was manifested toward us: that God sent His only begotten Son

into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this *act* is the love—not that we loved God; rather, that He loved us and sent His Son *to be the* propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another.”

1 John 5:2-3- “By this *standard* we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”

Knowing God and knowing “*of*” God are two completely different directions. So many church going people “think” they know God, His scriptures, and His ways but they are clueless. They have never been broken before Him, completely and totally repented of “the old self” or are so self-absorbed they cannot see beyond their nose.

James 2:19-20- “Do you believe that God is one? You do well *to believe this*. Even the demons believe—and tremble in fear. But are you willing to understand, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”

Knowing God will require work, effort, devotion, and loving Him first. There can be no compromise of God's word or private interpretation. Believing is never enough.

Matthew 23:23-28- “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, but you have abandoned the more important *matters* of the law—judgment, and mercy and faith. These *you* were obligated to do, and not to leave the others undone. Blind guides, who filter out a gnat, but swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but within you are full of extortion and excess. Blind Pharisees! First cleanse the inside of the cup and the dish, so that the outside may also become clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful *on the* outside, but within are full of the bones of the dead, and of all uncleanness. Likewise, you also outwardly appear to men *to be* righteous, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

Luke 11:34-35- “The light of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is without guile, your whole body is light; but when your eye is evil, your body also is dark. Therefore, beware that the light that is in you is not darkness.”

So many times, we have discussed that God knows the hearts and intents of men (and women). He knows who has the humble and contrite spirit that genuinely seeks Him, to glorify Him by living a life that He has called them to.

Psalm 44:21- “Shall not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.”

A hardened heart will never yield a relationship with God that He desires of us. He will not be dwelling within us unless we humble ourselves before Him.

John 5:36-42- “But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works that the Father gave Me to complete, the very works that I am doing, themselves bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father Himself, Who sent Me, has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice nor seen His form at any time. And you do not have His word dwelling in you, for you do not believe Him Whom He has sent. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think that you have eternal life; and they are the ones that testify of Me. But you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; But I have known you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.”

What an empty shell we can become, *presuming* to have the love of God in us. The shock will come without repentance when He tells us, “I never knew you, depart from Me...(Matthew 7:23). If we truly have God dwelling in us, we will be bearing good fruit of the spirit.

Matthew 7:16-20- “You shall know them by their fruits. They do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree *that is* not producing good fruit is cut down and is cast into the fire. Therefore, you shall assuredly know them by their fruits.

What grade would you receive on your report card for producing spiritual fruit?

Repentance toward God is a change of attitude toward Him and His law. It represents eliminating any rebellion or disobedience toward Him and turning to His Word and complete *willful* obedience and submission.

Trials and tests are the effects God will allow to get us in line with His will. They are the “fruits” of disobedience and our own misconduct, no matter how much we

want to blame someone else for the tempest that surrounds us. The lessons may not always be so clear, but the progression will become apparent. Misconduct and disobedience will bring about disruption and disharmony. Lack of repentance will lead to more severe consequences.

Jeremiah 6:19- “Hear, O earth; behold, I will bring evil on this people, even the fruit of their thoughts because they have not hearkened to My words, nor to My law, but have rejected it.”

2 Thessalonians 3:4-6- “Now concerning you, we trust in *the* Lord that you both practice and will be practicing the things that we command you. And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into *the* endurance of Christ. Now we command you, brethren, in *the* name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that* you withdraw from every brother who is walking irresponsibly and not according to the ordinance that he received from us.”

Titus 3:9-11- “But avoid foolish questions and genealogies, and debates and quarrels about law, for they are unprofitable and vain. After the first and second

admonition, reject a man who is teaching heresy, Knowing that such a person has been subverted and is sinning, being condemned by his own words.”

Overcoming this obstruction and ensuring God is dwelling within us, we simply need to remember what was done on our behalf and Who paid the price.

Romans 5:8- “But God commends His own love to us because, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

It is the love of God that will bring us through and deliver us from trials and calamity *if* we are in right standing with Him. **Nothing** can separate us from His love...except our own free will and it will be the sin He hates.

Romans 8:35-39- “What shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Accordingly, it is written, “For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are reckoned as sheep for *the* slaughter.” But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to

come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which *is* in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We are blessed to worship a God a mercy.

Titus 3:2-5- “Not to speak evil of anyone, not to be contentious, *but* gentle, showing all meekness toward all men. For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving all kinds of lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful *and* hating one another. But when the graciousness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we practiced, but according to His mercy He saved us, through *the* washing of regeneration and *the* renewing of *the* Holy Spirit,”

We are blessed to worship a God of love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-6- “Love is patient *and* is kind; love envies not, does not brag about itself, is not puffed up. *Love* does not behave disgracefully, does not seek its own things, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.”

2 Corinthians 13:11- “In conclusion, brethren, rejoice! Be perfected; be encouraged; be of the same mind; be at peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

But never forget, God is also a God of wrath to the disobedient who profess to know Him and do not.

Psalm 78:31- “The wrath of God came upon them and killed the strongest of them, and struck down the chosen men of Israel.”

1 John 2:3-6- “And by this *standard* we know that we know Him: if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. On the other hand, *if* anyone is keeping His Word, truly in this one the love of God is being perfected. By this *means* we know that we are in Him. Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked.”

1 Corinthians 16:13-14- “Be watchful; stand fast in the faith; conduct yourselves with courage. Be strong *in the Lord*. Let everything you do be done in love.”

For the love of God is our hope. It is our peace. For the love of God is our strength, it is our wisdom and understanding. For the love of God is a reminder of just how much He loves us in giving the life of His only Son (**John 3:16**).

Psalm 118:28-29- “You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.”

If God is giving us individual report cards on seven years, how would you fare?
Would you make the Honor Roll, go to summer school, or did you flunk?

For the love of God, may He open your eyes and hearts to His perfect truth and way of life and lead you all on the path of righteousness to His Kingdom. Amen.