

Do I Love the Lord?

by Alan Cairns

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a personal passion for loving the Lord, and provides reasons for loving Him, including His glorious perfections, our actual experience of His goodness and power, and the law of God that commands us to love Him.

Duration: 55:12

Scripture: Psalm 116:1-3, Psalm 116:9, Psalm 116:14-19

Topics: "Love For God", "Personal Testimony"

Description

This sermon delves into Psalms 116, emphasizing the psalmist's deep love for the Lord due to God's attentive ear, deliverance from death and hell, and preservation from falling. The psalmist's personal testimony of love leads to a commitment to call upon the Lord for life. The sermon highlights the importance of genuine love for God, expressing passion and commitment beyond mere duty or formality.

Transcript

116, or as I was taught by people in Greenville, it's not psalms, it's psalms, well, it's the book before Proverbs, and it's 116. I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications, because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me.

I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord, O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous, yea, our God is merciful.

The Lord preserveth the simple. I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken.

I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste, all men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, truly I am thy servant.

I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call upon the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem, praise ye the Lord. Amen.

The Lord will add his own blessing to this reading from his own inspired and infallible word for his name's sake. This evening I want to direct your attention to the very first line of Psalm 116, where the psalmist says, I love the Lord. I love the Lord.

I don't want to stray from the line that I want to take through this text this evening right at the very beginning, but before we get into the text, I want you to keep in mind this is a statement, but it is a statement that automatically forces us to ask a question. David said, I love the Lord. Something very personal.

When I read that, it raises in my mind the question, am I merely reading the words of someone else, or am I using his words, inspired of God, as an expression of my own personal testimony? I love the Lord. So keep in mind this evening as we consider this text that behind the statement there is a question that every one of us must answer, do I love the Lord? Because if any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, we read in 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 22, let him be anathema, cursed of God. I love the Lord.

In those words, there's passion, real passion. This is not some clinical statement made with a cold heart. It's something that is bursting like a mighty stream from the inmost being of the psalmist, and he's saying with all the passion of which he's capable, I love the Lord.

Now that's something that the world, I and even many professing Christians, something the world doesn't like believers to show, passion. In the old days, people who showed a passion for Christ were called enthusiasts. Today they're called fanatics, or they're called extremists.

Somehow or other, we are so afraid of that terminology that we back off from anything that may bring down upon our heads the opprobrium of being fanatical for Christ. It's all right to be fanatical for a football team. Remember, I suppose I scandalized all the sports lovers, and by the way, I am not a sports hater, but I scandalized them when there were churches that were suspending their Sabbath evening services.

Indeed, there were churches that brought in giant screens, and they had the morning service, then they had lunch, then they had the pregame show, then they had the Super Bowl, and during halftime they had their Sunday evening church service, abbreviated, of course. And I said, all that, and all the eulogizing of these great people because they can throw or kick a pigskin full of hot air for so many yards, and here we are in the edge of eternity. People can get all fanatical about those things, but don't get fanatical about Christ.

There's one thing that's missing in the modern pulpit. It is a passion for what the preacher is preaching. I always told my students when they were preaching in class, I want you to preach, and what you're preaching has to move you, and if it doesn't move you, there's no reason in the world why it should move me or anybody else.

When you look around today, and I understand what Mr. Wagner is saying about surfing the web, et cetera, when there are sermons on, I've done that many a time, because I honestly can't stick this thing where a preacher gets up and his only job is conveying information. Now, it is my job to convey

information. The information that's given to us by divine revelation.

But I see preachers up there, and you talk about dead sticks. What they're saying may be orthodox, may be right, may be true, but they say it with all the involvement of their own soul, all the emotion, all the passion of somebody reading the weather forecast. In fact, they probably show more passion.

That certainly wasn't the case with David. When you're reading the Psalms, just see how much he emphasizes that his religion was a religion of the whole heart. When he waited on God, it was with all his heart.

When he loved the Lord, it was with all his heart. It was no mere half-hearted religious exercise. It is a passion in the words.

Now, this text is the testimony of every Christian, and I trust we bring to it the same whole-hearted passion that David did. We love the Lord with very good reason, and the reasons are clearly given to us in this 116th Psalm. When you take these words, they are first of all, obviously, a personal declaration of love.

David says, I love the Lord. Now, David had been tried. David's road to glory was no easy road.

Just read his life, and you'll see here was a man who was tried, he was tested, he was afflicted, he was buffeted by many a foe. He had to suffer from his own failures. He often had to stare death in the face.

And after all these things, and indeed through all these things, not just after them, but and this is the secret, by the way, it's the secret to the whole Christian life. I know we live by faith, but faith and love are very closely aligned. You can't have faith in Christ without loving him.

You can't love him without having faith in him. So this is the secret of victorious Christian living. We will all face our buffetings.

We will all face our trials. We will all be brought to the place of deep affliction sooner or later, and you may say sooner than later, every one of us will be brought into the deep waters where God does business with our souls. And it's not just after the affliction we say, well, looking back at that, I love the Lord.

It's during the affliction when the waves are buffeting us and when the winds would tempt us to give up all hope, we lift our eyes heavenward, and in the midst of all, whether it's physical or mental or emotional or spiritual suffering, I love the Lord. That's what David was saying. You remember the words of the apostle Peter? When the Lord Jesus challenged him, Peter, lovest thou me? And Peter could say, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

What a statement. I know that I've heard people expounding that 21st chapter of John, and they have done Peter I think a great disservice, and they try to say Peter was trying to weasel out of a strong declaration of love. I don't believe that for a minute.

In fact, I believe the very opposite. Peter, very, very much aware of his recent failure, was coming to the Lord, and there are two Greek words in play there, and the usual way of dealing with them is Christ used the strong word, Peter used the weaker word. I think that misses the point.

Christ was using a wonderful word that really is very much a New Testament word, but it's a word that speaks of will. It's a word that speaks of purpose, unflinching purpose that's set upon its object. Now, Peter knew well how much he had failed, so he uses the word that gives us the city named Philadelphia.

It was, it's a word of emotion. It's a word that expresses a heart love. It's a word that speaks of a deep fondness, and I think maybe Peter a little afraid since he had already made something of an idiot of himself saying, Lord, I have the purpose, I could go to death for you.

He says, Lord, you know I love you for all my failures, and I realize them. Lord, you know I love you. Come back to what I said at the beginning, a statement that raises a question.

Can you really look the Lord in the face tonight and say, O thou who searchest the rains, who knowest every heart, can you really say, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee? Every true believer feels his weakness, but every true believer can honestly say, Lord, you know I love you. We may mourn that our love is far short of what it ought to be. It's far less than the perfections of our God and Savior would deserve, but nevertheless, we confess we love him.

You see, to a believer, his religion is not a matter of form. His religion is not a necessity to quell the uprisings and the demands of his conscience. It's not a burden to be borne grudgingly.

It's not a duty to be performed reluctantly. That's the religion of the man who truly doesn't know God. The religion of the unsaved man is always a religion that, I'm doing this to quell my guilty conscience.

I'm doing this to try to gain the favor of God. I'm doing this because there's a burden, and I don't really like it, but I'm trying my best to bear it. There's a duty, and I don't like this duty.

Everything in me rebels against it, but I'm going to perform it however reluctantly. That's the religion of a man who doesn't know Christ. But the mark of every true believer is that he honestly can say, I love the Lord, because if a man doesn't love the Lord, he's lost.

Here's a personal declaration. Move on. And you'll see that it expresses a personal experience of grace.

You see, David didn't simply say, I love the Lord, but he said, I love the Lord because. In other words, he's saying, I have good reason to love the Lord. And certainly like David, we must confess we have many, many, many reasons.

For saying, we love the Lord. For example, we could say, we love the Lord because of his glorious perfections. I don't want to turn you back to this passage because, as I said this morning about the other message, I'm supposed to stop the same day I start it.

Now, that's a bigger challenge when I'm only starting at six o'clock at night. But in the Song of Solomon, the bride, that's the church. And if you want to individualize it, that's the believer.

The Shulamite is a wonderful picture of a true believer. And her bridegroom is a glorious picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And she gives this description of the beauties and the glories of her beloved.

And as she gives the full statement of his glorious beauties, she says, yea, he is altogether the loveliness of Christ. Now, there's a theme that could keep a preacher preaching forever. There's a theme that will engage our minds eternally, and we will never exhaust it.

Think of this. Think of the perfections of the Savior in his person. Think of all the works of the Savior.

Think of all the goodness of the Savior. And I tell you this, the more you think of the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more he's worthy to be loved and the more you love him. You know, the reason why so

many professing Christians' hearts are cold is because they spend so little time actually thinking.

You almost think that was a swear word in the modern church, think. People go to church to be entertained. They go to be rubbed up the right way.

They go to have their emotions stirred by a little story here or there. Or they may go to have the preacher rake them over the coals because of their guilt and what they should have done and haven't done, and it makes them feel good that he has somehow dealt with that. Of course, that hasn't been dealt with at all.

But when you ask people to think, I used to tell the folk in Greenville, when you come to church, don't park your brain when you park your car. I want you to think. I want you to get your eyes on Christ.

Look away beyond this preacher. Look away beyond this church. Look away beyond all the things that are around you.

Get your eyes on Christ and think. Think of him. As I say, the tragedy is that so many professing Christians, they spend their times thinking about other things.

They may even spend much time thinking about theological things, but not in Christ. I remember a student from a major Orthodox conservative seminary saying that in all the classes, the academic standards were sky high. He said, we never needed a Bible.

I didn't need a Bible. Never once would our eyes turn to Christ. I'm very much aware of the danger of that in educating men for the ministry.

Just last year, I had a class in Greenville in the seminary on pastoral theology. It's not my favorite subject to lecture on, but it's very important, and so I agreed to do it. As we started, I said, brethren, we're going to do something here.

We're going to read a passage day by day from the Apostle Paul, and you'll learn more pastoral theology as you read Paul than you'll get from me or from any book. We just took the time at the beginning of every class where I gave what I call a prayer talk. We just talked through, applying to our own hearts the things that Paul was teaching.

We did see Christ. One of the young men went home literally in tears. This is why I came to Greenville.

This is why I'm in this seminary. We saw Christ. Men and women, I tell you tonight, the perfections of the Savior will cause your love to grow.

But the most immediate reason for our love is our actual experience of the goodness and the power of God in Christ toward us. Didn't the Apostle John say, we love him because he first loved us? Now, in Psalm 116, we have a particular manifestation of that love. The psalmist says, I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.

He hath heard my cry. Now, let me make this very clear to you. The law of God commands us to love him.

What's the first and great commandment of the law? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. That's the first and great commandment. That spells out our duty.

But here's the thing. The law in itself can do absolutely nothing to engender that love. This is where preachers so often go wrong.

They're telling people, you must love the Lord. Well, yes, that's your duty. But my telling you that that's your duty does not enable you to love the Lord.

And so the psalmist here goes beyond the mere duty, and he says, I love the Lord, and here's the reason why. You see, the only thing that will lead a man to a genuine love for the Lord is a personal experience of his goodness and of his grace. Behind these words you have a man that's brought to an end of himself.

That's why he's crying to the Lord. You see, we're such fools by nature. We never apply to God until we're brought to the end of our own resources.

I've often quoted the words of a Methodist historian whose name I happily or unhappily forget, but I never forget what he said. He said, there's never been a revival in the church in a time of great prosperity. Never.

And the more you look at church history, the more you find that. In fact, I used to warn our folk in Greenville when they got the burden to pray for a revival, I said, remember what you're praying for. Because we all, and I'm not saying this disparagingly, by the way, we all know about the American dream.

We all know we're brought up and we're surrounded by influence to fortify this. We're brought up to look for great prosperity. And so many preachers have even cottoned on to this, and they preach a prosperity gospel.

This is the proof that God loves you. In many ways, we can say you look at the multitude of God's gifts to this nation has been the indication of his kindness. But you know, we're like a man.

I knew his daughter. Thankfully, God changed his mind. He had made it big in this world.

He had all the money a man could want. He had all the success in business a man could dream of. When his daughter was saved and she spoke to him about her soul, sought to bring him under the sound of the gospel, he simply said, I've made it this far without God.

Why would I need him now? Why would I need him now? David was brought to an end of his own resources. He lifts his voice to God, and he cries, and God gives him a personal experience of God's goodness and God's love. I love the Lord because he has heard my voice.

Here's the overflow of gratitude to the God of glory who heard us at the end of our hoarded resources. He heard our distressed cry. He heard my voice, my cry, my supplications.

You remember in the 34th Psalm, David said, This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him. That's a marvelous statement. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and he saved him out of all his troubles.

Now, that's true of the particular cry of a soul that's deeply distressed about its sin, convicted of sin. A man cries in the poverty of his soul, and God hears him. What a joy it is to hear sinners crying to God.

Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. And the Lord hears him and saves him out of all his trouble, all the sin and the wickedness and the guilt. Saves him out of it.

But you know, that's not the only cry. David is speaking here as a man of God, and he's saying God hears the cry from troubled hearts. Christians do face troubles.

Troubles of body. Troubles of family. Troubles of business.

Troubles of finance. Every sort of trouble. Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.

And so we're not immune from that. But whatever the trouble, he comes to the Lord, and the Lord hears his cry. Now, sometimes the Lord changes the circumstances and, as it were, lifts you right out of them.

Sometimes he does that. Sometimes he doesn't. There's a verse of Scripture that is usually only half quoted, and that's always dangerous when you only half quote a verse.

You know the text that Paul told the Corinthians, there's no trouble taking you, no temptation taking you, no trial taking you, but such as is common to men. And God will, with the trial, make a way of escape, and that's usually where the quotation ends. But that's not where Paul ended.

He makes a way of escape, and this seems to us a contradiction, but it's not. He makes a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it. There are times when you cry to the Lord and he takes the burden completely off your shoulders.

There are times when you cry to the Lord and he simply strengthens your shoulders to bear the burden, and he's all wise, but he hears the cry of the distressed saint. He goes on to say that he delivered us from death, from the pains of death. The sorrows of death compassed me, we read in verse 3. The pains of hell got hold upon me.

The sorrows of death. But then you go down to verse 8, and you read, he hath delivered my soul from death. He delivered us from the pains of death.

Now, again, that has the immediate physical context, as many a time when a Christian is brought face to face with the awful reality that death is possible. You remember Hezekiah, and the Lord heard him. This was a great trial of Hezekiah's faith.

It was not the Lord's will, his sovereign eternal purpose for Hezekiah to die at that time. But Hezekiah didn't know that. You see, we don't know the secret things of God.

So the prophet came to Hezekiah and he says, you get your house in order or you're going to die. In other words, what is wrong with you physically is such a malady as to take your life. Now, Hezekiah was just in his late 30s.

He was in the direct line of descent to Christ, and he had no offspring. Now, Hezekiah couldn't see all that. And so he cried to the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and he added the 15 years to his life.

There are times the Lord does that. I remember one of my colleagues back in Northern Ireland, the Reverend John Wiley. John took a very serious heart attack, and really it, you might well say, it should have been the end of him as far as this life's concerned.

But as he lay there in the hospital hovering between life and death, he said he met with the Lord. And John was quite willing and happy indeed to die to go and be with Christ. But he said, I met with the Lord, and the Lord sealed that promise to my heart that He would deliver me and He would live to serve the Lord,

and He'd add 15 years to His life.

That's exactly what He did. When John died, it was 15 years later. So He can do that.

But there's a sense in which all believers have to say this. He has delivered me from the pains of death. By His dying and by His rising again from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ destroyed Him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

You remember the words of Hosea the prophet speaking of the Lord and the Lord Jesus Christ? The Savior says, I have delivered them from the power of the grave. I redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues.

O grave, I will be thy destruction. Delivered us from the fear and the pain of death. You know, I remember Dr. Bob Jones telling me, he said only young people live, talking about Christians, he said only young people live with the fear of death.

He said when you get to where I am, you realize you're going to die and you're going to be with Christ. I've often said this. You know, when you stop and think what it is to be a Christian, as far as the world's concerned, the worst thing that can happen to you is you be smitten and you die.

So what it's saying, the worst thing that can happen to a Christian is you go to heaven. Now if that's the worst thing can happen, that you go to heaven, there's no more sorrow or anything else that would upset the soul. Isn't it good to be able to say it's well with my soul? He has delivered me from the pains and from the fear of death.

But more than that, he has delivered me from the pains of hell. This is what we read in verse 3, the pains of hell got hold upon me. Now the Hebrew word that's translated hell can refer to the grave, the state of the dead.

When it's used in connection with the eternity, the afterlife of the wicked, it always means hell with every dark and terrible thing that we associate with that term as the judicial punishment of a holy God bringing His wrath to bear upon the ungodly. We all deserve that punishment. Not a man here, not a woman here that didn't deserve it.

Many and many a time when I'm in my study alone with God and bowing with, I always like to pray, start by praying with an open Bible. Many and many a time as I go through God's Word, I have to confess, Lord, there is not a single soul in hell that more deserves to be there than I do. But He has delivered my soul from hell, saved me by grace, washed me in blood, reconciled me to God by the death of Christ, justified me freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

He has saved me from death and hell. Is it any wonder the psalmist said, I love the Lord? Don't we have good cause to love Him? Had He not loved me, I would have perished already. If He had left me as the just object of the wrath of God, I would already be among the damned.

But bless God, I can love Him because He heard my distressed cry. He has delivered me from the pains of death and hell. And, of course, we can say He has dried her tears.

Verse 3, I find trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord, O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul. Then verse 8 again, Thou hast delivered mine eyes from tears, the cries of the damned.

Christ has delivered us from them forever. We'll never cry those cries. From eternal weeping and eternal wailing, the Lord Jesus Christ has saved us.

And soon that great text will be brought to pass. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. Many a time down here you weep.

And, well, may you weep. Would to God we would learn to weep for the fallen and the erring, the lost souls of men and women. That's something I don't want to get off on a tangent here, but I've got to say that's something that's missing in our churches today.

And I'm talking about free churches. I know other churches that don't even have a real prayer meeting. I know of ministers who went to their churches.

There's one indeed who visited our church in Greenville and sat through a prayer meeting and was awestruck. He said, I'm going to have a prayer meeting when I go back to my church, an Orthodox church. Nobody would attend it.

But I'm not talking about those churches. I'm talking about our own churches. I remember it was my privilege as young Christians to be brought up in a small free Presbyterian church where we were struggling.

We were in a very, very hard area. In the post-war years in the United Kingdom where vast new housing projects sprang up, government housing in Britain has a different connotation than it has here because after the destruction of the United Kingdom through World War II, there was no agency in the country other than central government who could build the houses that were necessary. And as these vast conurbations, you would call them now, were built up, people were displaced from the social setting that they had always known, there came an awful price.

They were very hard for the gospel, very, very hard for the gospel. We were there seeking to build the church, seeking to preach Christ by all means available. I remember we had our prayer meetings and all the passion in prayer, the tears in prayer, weeping before God with hearts that were melted for loved ones and for a neighborhood that was sunk in sin.

It's mostly forgotten now. People think they're praying when they give God a little theological lecture. He doesn't need it.

He knows it all. Now I realize when we pray, God knows everything, so we're saying things that he already knows. I understand that.

But get my meaning. We don't come to pray to show how much we know. We don't come to pray simply to make a little speech that others may be impressed.

We come as dying men and women pleading for souls that are going to live for all of God's eternity in heaven or in hell, some of them our own loved ones, our own kith and kin, all for a passion to pray. There are tears that we will feel down here. There are other tears of disappointment.

There are tears of physical and mental pain and anguish. There are tears at the thought of our own failure, many kinds of tears. There's a day coming when he wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Let us not reach the place where we can't weep down here. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. You know, that's the real holy water.

Dr. Paisley always talked about the tears of the penitent. That's the real holy water. There's a young man went to preach in the pulpit in Dundee of the great and godly Robert Murray McSheehan, and he asked the elder to show him where Mr. McSheehan knelt to pray before he went into the pulpit.

The young man knelt there to pray before he went into the pulpit. The old elder, when he got up, the old elder said, But when Mr. McSheehan got up, there was a pool of water there where he wept for the souls in his congregation to whom he was about to give the gospel. There are tears that we have to embrace here, tears we have to endure here, but there's a day coming when, thank God, he'll wipe them all away.

And even now, the tears that hurt, he will dry them. He will dry them. We love the Lord because he has given us stability amidst all the changing circumstances of life.

I can't go down the whole psalm, but he says, Thou hast delivered my feet from falling. How often we would have stumbled. How often, losing our way, we would have fallen, and we would have brought great dishonor to the Lord and great hurt to ourselves.

But the Lord had his eye upon us. Now I look back over my life and see at how many points I could have gone altogether wrong. I look back and, even as a young fellow, you know, when you're, and if you're young, don't take this too personally, but yet do take it personally, because we're all much of a muchness.

But I look back and, you know, you get to the place you think you're in charge, and really you don't have enough brains to know you're stupid. And things that I set out to do, and they could have ruined my life forever. The company that I was starting to keep could have ruined my life forever.

The Lord had his eye, and he kept my feet from falling. Oh, we're not sinless. Now, would to God we were.

But as you think of all the follies into which you could have fallen and would have fallen, all the pitfalls that not only you would have fallen into, but you'd have rushed into them. He kept you back. Why are you what you are today? By the grace of God.

Not because you were any better than anybody else. Not because your character was so much superior to anybody else's. He delivered my feet from falling.

He gives stability. Now, put all this together. The psalmist says, I love the Lord.

First, because he is the Lord. He deserves it. His perfections call for it.

I love the Lord because I have this personal experience of grace. But that leads to the end, to the idea of a personal commitment. You see, if you have the personal experience of grace, and you have a love for the Lord, it's going to express itself not only in words.

It'll go far beyond the words. The man who can make this text, I love the Lord, his personal testimony, will go on to say with the psalmist, in the second verse, because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore,

notice the force of the therefore, because of what he's done, there has to be a result in my life. And that result is, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

The love of God for me leads to praise, it leads to prayer, it leads to worship, and it leads to fellowship. That's the result. You see, it's the most natural thing in the world for love to make such vows.

People who say, I love, but they don't make any vow of commitment, they don't know what love means. That's why people today live together, they don't get married, because there's not the commitment. That's not love, that's lust.

That's all it is, not love. Mary Schleser, the great Scottish missionary to West Africa, she made the very insightful comment, you can give without loving, but you can't love without giving. This is what the psalmist is saying here, I love the Lord, therefore there is a vow of utter, absolute, unchanging, and unchangeable commitment.

And where there's no commitment, there's no love. So in this Psalm 116, the psalmist speaks, verse 18, of paying his vows. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his people.

In other words, the love that a believer has for the Lord doesn't merely yield a passing promise, a loyalty that's spoken of, but soon forgotten. No. It leads to that deep, abiding, personal commitment to Christ.

A commitment that cannot stop one step short of progressing into an ever deeper experience of the grace of God and the love that that grace engenders. I love the Lord. I have every cause to love him.

I don't always understand what he does and why he does it. But then it's not my business to understand. It's my business to know that he understands.

Whether I understand or whether I don't, whether I'm disappointed in his people, whether I've been failed by my friends, whether I'm called to walk a dark, dark passageway through life, listen, I love the Lord. I have a personal testimony and a declaration of love. I have a personal experience of his grace.

And I can do nothing else but say, Lord, I am thine. I belong to thee. My life belongs to thee.

Here am I. I love the Lord. Back to the beginning. The statement asks a question.

Can you honestly say, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Thou knowest. This is my testimony.

Make sure it is. Do not leave God's house until you know that this testimony is as truly yours as it ever was David's. Let's bow together in prayer.

Let's all seek the Lord's face as we come to the end of our Sabbath evening service. Our gracious God and our Father in heaven, we do thank thee for thy word. We thank thee for loving us.

Lord, we confess that Christ's perfections and beauties, all the glory of eternal deity expressed and revealed in the person of Christ. Lord, this deserves our love. But when we think of ourselves, there's nothing in us that could ever be thought to deserve God's love.

Lord, thou has depicted our natural state in that great 16th chapter of Ezekiel. There we are, wallowing in our own blood and filthiness. But God loved us when there was nothing lovely or lovable about us.

Lord, we thank thee for thy love for us. We praise thee that because thou hast loved us, we love thee. We love thee for every good reason.

Lord, deepen our love for Christ. Bless thy word to every child of God. And God, grant that we may leave this place more deeply in love with the Savior than ever before.

If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, it's now. And if there are those without Christ, young or old, O God, we pray, bring them to the Savior. Grant that some who perhaps have religion but no redemption will come tonight to pass from death unto life by a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hear our prayer. Part us with thy blessing and keep us in thy fear. Grant that the beauty of the Lord our God will be upon us, that thy grace, mercy, and peace will be the abiding portion of all thy blood-bought people this Sabbath evening and until our Lord Jesus Christ either calls us home or comes again in all his glory.

We pray, giving thee our thanks. In our Savior's name, amen. ■■

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