

Spiritual Growth Lessons

LESSON 5 of 32

♥ THE LOVE OF GOD DEMONSTRATED ♥

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us . . ." (I John 3:16).

Not everyone who is quick to say, "I love you," really possess what they profess. That is why John the beloved exhorts us:

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18).

When God was ready to demonstrate His love for mankind, he did not just speak pretty words, which came floating down from heaven out of the clouds. He took action. God was manifest in the flesh (I Timothy 3:16).

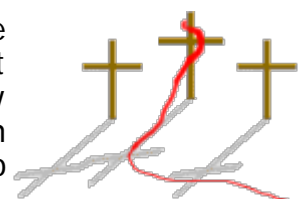
Since God is love, the very nature of God was revealed to mankind in a hundred thousand ways during the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. Every healing was an act of love. Every person set free from demonic spirits was a testimony of the compassion of our loving Lord. The turning of water into wine, the multiplying of the fishes and bread, the calming of stormy seas--all were miracles that not only exhibited the power of God, but also displayed to us the love of God.

Throughout the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, this love was made known. Yet it was by His death that the greatest expression of God's love was given--love that would draw men from the grips of Satan to the crucified Christ:

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die" (John 12:31-33).

There is an awful misrepresentation of these verses of Scripture that is being used by people today. It is partly because of some choruses that exhort, "Lift Him up, lift Him up, He said if I be lifted up I will draw all men to me." The connotations are that if we praise Jesus, our praise and worship will draw men to Him.

Although it is true that our exuberant worship does draw some people to our churches, let us not use these verses out of context and take anything away from the power of the cross. As is plainly understood by verse 33, Jesus was referring to the demonstration of His love at Calvary as the power that would draw men unto Himself!



It is interesting to note that although the apostles expected the second coming of Jesus Christ to take place at any time, this was never the major theme of their preaching to sinners. The second coming of Jesus Christ is the hope of the church, and the apostles freely used this theme in an effort to challenge the church to walk closer to Jesus Christ. See II Peter 3:1-14, and I John 3:2-3.

The theme the apostles always presented to a lost world was "the crucified Christ." As a missionary, I have preached to people from many countries of Africa, Asia, and Europe. I have preached "hellfire and brimstone" messages, and preached concerning the coming judgment of God upon this world. But I have never seen any message touch the hearts of men more powerfully than the message of the cross!

It causes people to respond with: "I'll live for Him, who died for me, I'll live for Him,

who set me free. His name is Jesus, what a Saviour is He, I'll live for Him, who died for me."

I do not wish to take anything away from the great "prophecy revivals" that are taking place in America. Perhaps the Americans have become so hardened to the message of the cross that it no longer touches them. If this is true, this is a sad state of affairs!

What took place on an old rugged cross at Calvary was designed by God to bring us to Himself. That beautiful demonstration of His love toward us, if truly understood, should cause us to love Him in return.

"We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19).

Paul summed up his own evangelistic preaching when he wrote to the church at Corinth: *"For Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Corinthians 1:17-18, 23-24).* ds

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