

## LOVE'S INTENSE INVOLVEMENT

We cannot say that we love God and not become deeply involved. When we refer to our walk with God, we are really talking about the love of God. Nothing else would cause people to do what they do when they come into it. It is without any other motivation than our love for the Lord

*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."*  
John 21:15

The Greek often takes a past event and voices it in the present tense to make it alive for us. Jesus is saying, "Are you loving Me more than these?"—bringing it into a present action so that it becomes real to us.

He is saying to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, are you loving Me?" "Yes, Lord, you know that I am loving You." Then He is saying to him, "Shepherd My sheep." Again, Jesus is saying to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter is grieved because He says to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he says, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus is saying to him, "Tend My sheep" (John 21:16–17).

Two Greek words are used here for love: one speaking more of divine love and another speaking more of brotherly love or human affection at a high peak. When Jesus says, "Do you love me?" He is speaking of a high divine love and Peter is answering back, "Yes, Lord,

You know I am just as fond of you as I can be.” And that is why there is a repetition.

The third time Jesus lowers it to the same word *phileo*, used by Peter in his response, instead of the word *agapao*. He says, “Peter, are you really affectionate? Do you think you are really deeply affectionate for me?” It grieves him when the third time Jesus says, “Are you really affectionate for me?” Peter thought that was assured. But the Lord is trying to show that no matter what kind or what degree of love we have it still means an involvement with God. Whether our love is perfected, or whether we are just starting out in love, we are going to become involved with the Kingdom of God. Whatever we do, however we respond, we are going to go out and feed sheep.

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God (this, again, is mystical language). And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!” Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” Peter therefore seeing him is saying to Jesus (the Greek tense is making it live again), “Lord, and what about this man?” Jesus is saying to him, “If I want him to remain (or stay around) until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!”*

*This saying therefore went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not*

*die; but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" This is the disciple who bears witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written. John 21:18–25.*

Tradition says that one time the Apostle John was put in boiling oil and came out without a blister. Repeated efforts to kill him had left the persecutors fearful. He had been banished to the Isle of Patmos before this Gospel was written. We would assume that the book of Revelation was written after the Isle of Patmos, but it is still among the first of his writings. The epistles were probably second and the Gospel probably last.

The Gospel is the deepest of all John's writings. That might be open for question. You may think, "The Gospel seems so simple." But the deeper you look under the surface, the deeper that word becomes. There is no end to the symbolic picture in the book of John.

John goes so far as to say something very difficult to understand, "God is love" (I John 4:8). Then we begin to wonder about it. We can understand John 1:1: *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.* We understand God projecting Himself in everything that He says. That is so different from what a man would speak; man speaks a word, and it conveys a thought to the hearer. But when Jesus speaks a word, He conveys Himself to the hearer. "My words are spirit and they are life," Jesus said (John 6:63b). We can understand that. But how can we understand that when God sends His love, He actually projects Himself in that love? He also reveals

Himself in His emotions. This is difficult for us to grasp because individuals do not do that. When they love, they still retain their own identity. But when God loves, He distributes Himself in His emotions, so that anyone who opens up to the love of God literally receives God. And if you say, "I have received God," and you do not love, you are a liar (I John 4:20), because God projects Himself in His love. He cannot divorce Himself from His feelings, from His great plan, from His purpose, or from His Word. When God says, "I love you," that means He is filling those words He speaks to our heart with Himself.

That is why, when we say, "O God, I want more love," we are saying, "I want more of the Lord," because He is all wrapped up in that. God is love, and the one who loves is made perfect in God (I John 4:16–17).

Peter had gone fishing and had not really felt himself obligated any longer to discipleship, and the other disciples had gone with him. Jesus encountered Peter and had a nice breakfast of fish on the fire for them that morning. Then He started dealing with Peter. Three times Peter had denied the Lord on the night of the crucifixion. Now three times on the resurrection morning, he had to confess his love for the Lord and accept a recommission to feed the lambs, to feed the flock of God.

Jesus said, "Peter, when you were young, you clothed yourself, and you went wherever you wanted to go. But as you become older you will reach out your hands, and another will gird you and take you where you do not want to go." He said this speaking of the manner of death he was to die (John 21:18–19a).

He was talking about the death that comes with spiritual maturity. There is a deep meaning here. When we are younger and less mature in Christ we have more independence in action than we will have later.

The commissioning of Christ does not bring liberty; it brings the bondservant principle into action.

In the ministry, in the leading of the Lord, and in the very love with which God is filling our heart, He is saying, "Do you love me," just as He said to Peter, who answered, "Yes, I am very fond of you." And so the Lord said, "But Peter, when you get beyond that point and have this love which is a wholly engulfing love, then you are going to feed the sheep, and then you will take care of the lambs."

Love has to become the motivating drive, because it lifts a person completely out of their self-life and lifts them right into something else. We need to look upon love as the motivation in a walk with God. Several things happen when the love of God fills our heart. First is the deep involvement. Three times it comes in John 21: "If you love Me you are going to feed My sheep. When you love Me, you will do what I want you to do, not what you want to do. You will become addicted to this ministry God has for you." That is what God was saying to Peter. Not only that, but Peter voiced it again from his own epistle. It had to be a fervent love. He was not just feeding the sheep as a hireling, but he became so deeply involved, that out of that sincere love he loved the brethren fervently (I Peter 1:22).

We must grasp this, for in a walk with God, the more we love God, the more intense the meetings become.

Peter said, "Let's love one another with a pure heart fervently. See that you be fervent in your love with one another." That is exactly what the Lord wants.

People want a relationship, but they do not want it that intense. We are going to love your God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our strength (Mark 12:30).

When God speaks to us, it will be involvement, but it will be an intense involvement. It cannot be anything less. How will we walk with God through these coming days except there be an intensity of love? We vibrate with it, and we begin to feel the intensity of it.

Every life needs to be channeled. As long as we can direct our own course very selfishly and personally we are not mature in our love, and we will have difficulties with it.

The channeling of our life by the love of God is the most precious thing that can happen to us. Love will divert us from our independent, selfish course and will lead us into the perfect will of the Lord.

As we open up to the love of God and just love Him, we will find ourselves walking in the perfect will of the Lord. The revelation of it will come perfectly. Love becomes the key to revelation.

Love is the sustaining emotion. Joy comes up, and then it goes down. People have times when they are disturbed in their emotions, one way or another, but the sustaining emotion is love. If we want the consistency in our life, we need to open our heart up to the love of God.

Love will bring emotions that are more intense than we are capable of otherwise. The human capacity for love diminishes, but in the grace of God that capacity is restored by the love of God, and we are able to arise to emotions more intense than we ever dreamed possible.

A real divine love, an intercessor's love, will lead to intensity and consistency. When God brings forth certain ministries He has to bestow His love upon them, but if He brings forth an intense ministry of intercession, He has to bestow a double portion of love upon that person. We cannot even be an intercessor with any consistency unless God puts His love in us and calls us to it.