

Has the Love of God Done a Work in Your Heart?

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I grew up in a very religious home and my mother made me go to church I got even older and she could put the pressure on She knew how to... you know, put down the thumbscrews to get her son in church And all of a sudden I got an interest in church and I got an interest in religion and I went as so far as to walk an aisle one time, even though I had made numerous professions of faith on this occasion I came forth to acknowledge that God had called me to preach. now that's an entirely different message I don't know what your view of God's call is, but there was always intuitively a sense that God had sat me apart to preach the gospel before I was ever converted. but God saved me and at least I thought he did I'd made numerous professions and here I am going down the aisle and I acknowledge the call to preach

In those days I would do anything to ensure my acceptance among those in the church My mother, my pastor, the church leaders. I did everything. I was in a church where there was a lot of emphasis on the external. External dress. External activity. So I had the right kind of haircut I wore the right kind of clothing and I'd go on visitation. And I knew all the catchwords and the language. You know I was a part of the groupie. But I was unconverted. In those days- now we're looking at passion here, we're looking at motivation for living the life I did. My whole purpose for living was fear of man. I wanted people to affirm me, I wanted to be a part. I'd do everything that I could to merit the commendation of my pastor and church leaders. So I'd come to visitation and I would do all the things that in the eyes of men were exemplary for a fine christian teenager, but friend I'll be honest with you, when I got behind the scenes I lived like a feign. The things that I watched and took pleasure in via television, the things I indulged my flesh in, The conversation I would engage in, it was anything but holy. I was filthy to the core. But oh my, it's amazing when I come back to church I could suck it up I mean parade my spirituality with the best of them. But there was no reality. Always remember that word, there was no reality because because there

was no saving faith.

And so I knew nothing of the love of Christ. It was fear of man, It was self-glory, it was pride. Now ... here's something very important, You gotta understand that there is 10,000 miles difference between knowing about the love of Christ and experiencing the love of Christ. I mean listen you can sing a song like "I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me a sinner condemned unclean." and all these songs about God's love, and you've never experience the love of God. God has never come and infused the love of God in your heart. You have no concept of what Paul is talking about whatsoever, You have to pump yourself up, you get inspired every now and then There's never been any constraining force of the love of God being poured out in your heart by the Holy Ghost. And so this love of God you can grasp academically and you can articulate theologically, and yet not know one shred of the evidence and the effectual working of it in your heart. And you're still dead in trespasses and sin you're having to constantly convince yourself that you're saved.

So important. The love of Christ constrains us. Now I ask you this morning, take the test. Don't just say "Well this is this is an okay message." But you take the test. Do you know anything about the love of Christ in your heart? Listen let me tell you what the difference is: when God saved me, unlike when I was unregenerate as a religious person, I couldn't sin and get away with it. It created such unrest in my spirit. There was a sensitivity there. God would work in my heart and if I grieved him with my conversation, or in my thought life, or I watched something that I should not, I tell you friend it just unnerved me. Want to know why? Because of the love of Christ. With the fear of man I could do those things and get away with them and it didn't bother me in the long run. But the love of Christ, There was a sense of accountability there. I just sensed I grieved the one I loved. I'd hurt the heart of my God. So ask yourself, has the love of God been ever poured in your heart By the Holy Ghost? Or is it just a sham? It's just an academic. You know about theology but you never experienced the life changing reality.

I no longer see Him just from what I gleaned from a story book or what I've heard from the lips of others. Now I have encountered the living Christ myself. And Paul said if you're in Christ, no wonder he could say: new creature. Old things passed, behold all things have become new. Now let us include it with our statement: the great miracle of conversion is not the changes other people see in you, but the changes that you witness in yourself. Can you

look at your life honestly and say: "Only God could have produced that!" "Only God could have changed that perspective." "Only God could have made me go back, and make things right when I hurt people, and offended and wounded them." "Only God." Because I had no ability in and of myself and all of my depraved fiber to constrain me to do such a thing.