

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

What if I told you that the ultimate thing that led Jesus to the cross wasn't about His love for us? Now there is little doubt of His love for us. Jesus Himself said, *No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends*, John 15.13. This statement must not be ignored. However, there was something higher that drove Jesus to the cross. It was Jesus' unflappable commitment to being obedient to the will of the Father. Jesus chose to allow himself to be crucified because of his obedience to God.

Going a little farther, he fell facedown and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will,” Matthew 26.39.

Now, consider Paul's writing:

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross, Philippians 2.5-8.

What pushed Jesus to the cross? It was his complete surrender to the authority of God in his life. In going to the cross, He was not focused on His love for us, as great as it was, instead he was focused on being obedient to the will of the Father. When He went to the cross, we weren't that lovable. In fact, Scripture describes our condition thusly:

- We were *ungodly, sinners, and enemies*, Romans 5.6, 8, 10.
- We were *alienated and hostile* toward God, Colossians 1.21.
- We were *dead* in our trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2.1.
- We were *darkened* in our understanding and *excluded* from the life of God, Ephesians 4.18.
- We lived in *darkness* and needed *mercy*, 1 Peter 2.10.
- We were like *sheep going astray* who were in need of being found and returned, 1 Peter 2.25.

We need to see there was within us no redeeming quality or thing worthy of generating love. We were hopelessly lost, bound up in sin, and trapped in our own filth. (Think of the imagery in Ezekiel 16.) We were completely unlovable. And yet Jesus still went to the cross. It was not easy. Early in his ministry he said:

“I can do nothing on my own. I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me, John 5.30.

For us, Jesus sets the perfect example of what it means to love others when it is not easy. And He also shows us the secret of how to accomplish this. It is the choice to focus on the expectations of the Father ... rather than the *worthiness* or *lovableness* (or lack thereof) of the object of our love.

**and to see good days,
let him keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from speaking deceit,
¹¹ and let him turn away from evil
and do what is good.
Let him seek peace and pursue it,
¹² because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are open to their prayer.
But the face of the Lord is against
those who do what is evil.**

7. What are the basic expectations in marriage when it comes to loving one's spouse? (See 3.1, 7.)
Is marital love always based on *lovableness*? What principle here is a key to a long-lasting sustainable marriage?

8. 1 Peter 3.8-12 applies to the relationships between brethren in the local church. Are brethren always worthy of our love? To what are we called regardless?

Life Application

This week, make some time each day to spend a few moments alone with God. Every day we will consider how we can demonstrate our love even when it doesn't come easy. Take your time with each passage(s) so you can concentrate on what is being said. Use the questions as a springboard for your positive thoughts throughout your day.

Monday

9. Read 2 Samuel 9.1-13. Who was Mephibosheth? Why would it have not come easy for David to love him?

10. What redeeming qualities did Mephibosheth possess in himself that would have made him *worthy* of receiving David's love?

11. How can we use this story as inspiration in loving others in our own life when it doesn't come easy?

Tuesday

12. Read Acts 9.26-28. If you were a Jew, how might you have responded when Saul of Tarsus tried to join up with your congregation?

13. How does Barnabas demonstrate how to love someone else when it isn't easy?

14. What are some practical applications you can apply in your own life from this story?

Wednesday

15. Read Matthew 18.15-22. When people sin against us, what is to be our aim in resolving the problem?

16. When a person repents after wronging us, what is God's expectation?

17. How does Matthew 5.18-23 stress the urgency of making things right when there is a problem in the relationship? Does the principle in Ephesians 4.26-27 fit in here? How?

Thursday

18. Read 2 Corinthians 2.5-11. What sin had the man committed? (See 1 Corinthians 5.1-11.)

19. What was to be the spirit or attitude toward the brother after he repented of his sin?

When someone sins against you and repents, what are some ways you can reaffirm your love for them?

Friday

20. Read Ephesians 2.11-21. Before Christ, how wide was the division between Jew and Gentile?

21. How did Christ bring these two racial/ethnic/religious/cultural groups together?

22. How can this passage fill us with hope as we live out our Christian lives with those of different races, cultural, educational, and religious backgrounds?