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STRIVING TO DO  
GOD'S WORK, GOD'S WAY, FOR GOD'S GLORY

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Dear Friends in Christ,

After my return from the "Pastor's Teaching Conference" in Nicaragua; and a week of outreach at the drug and rehab mission called The City of Refuge; Dianne and I enjoyed a week of rest and relaxation, which we both desperately needed. Upon our return home, I have not only been preaching at the Mission of Hope; I have also been preparing sermons and studies for the upcoming fall. This fall is literally packed full of wonderful opportunities to serve the Lord. Dianne and I have also had the precious joy of discipling men and women in our home. We have both been teaching from my latest workbook, which is entitled, "Christ-Centered Discipleship; Living a life, in which the Gospel is your driving force". In the first session of this discipleship study, there is a particular verse that I have been recently contemplating. I believe it is one of the most astounding verses in the New Testament. The truth found within it has greatly encouraged my soul.

My heart's desire in this "thank you" letter is that you too would be encouraged, with a taste of some of the truths which I have been mining out of the vast treasures, buried within this verse! It is found in the midst of Jesus' teaching on the Vine and the branches in John 15. In verse 9, the Lord Jesus absolutely astonishes us with this precious reality, as He proclaims, "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you, **abide in My love**". Now, it is certainly true that each of us know in our souls, that the root reason why we love the Lord Jesus is because He **first** loved us! When we love our Lord and Savior, with an authentic and biblical love, we need to remind ourselves that this love **did not** originate with us. This love came from the eternal fountain of God the Son, through the mighty application of His Gospel to our lives. Moreover, it came to us, while we were still enemies of Jesus and blatant rebels against God! Friends, just as there is no light from the moon, which does not directly flow from the sun; in the same way, there is no genuine love for Jesus and for others within your heart, which does not flow from this Divine fountain of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus has already said to us in verse 8, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will prove to be one of my authentic disciples". But what is the secret of bearing much fruit and glorifying our God? Jesus tells us that the key to this "fruit-bearing" is found in this reality of "**abiding in the Lord Jesus**". He declares in verse 5, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who **abides** in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. This word 'abide' actually has a dual meaning. It certainly means to continue in Jesus; to remain in Christ; or to persevere in the Lord. But it also literally means, "to make your home in a personal intimacy and a living connectivity with the Lord Jesus". Therefore, our Lord and Savior is telling us that the key to being a "fruitful disciple for the glory of God", is to continue to make our home in a personal intimacy and living connectivity to the Vine! Think for a moment about the activity of a fish in the ocean. Just as a fish abides in the ocean, a true authentic child of God, is to abide in the Lord Jesus. A fish does not seek to abide on the shore or in the sky; because it cannot live or flourish there.

## HIS LOVE FOR ME

Likewise, we are not to seek to abide in the world, the flesh or sin; for the genuine disciple cannot live and flourish in these things. Our life is hid with Christ in God, so we are called to continue to daily make our home in this intimate, living and vital union with Jesus Christ!

If you will notice verse 9, the Lord Jesus makes this picture of “abiding in Him” even more intimate, personal and precious. He says, “As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in my love ” Please notice that when Jesus calls on you to “**abide in His love**”, He is not speaking about your love for Jesus. He is speaking about Jesus’ supernatural and sacrificial love for you, which was revealed in the Cross! Of course, we know that every disciple of Jesus glories in the objective fact that God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The Bible also tells us that at the moment of our conversion, the subjective reality of the love of God for us, which was manifested at the Cross, is abundantly poured into our hearts, by the Holy Spirit. Well, I am attempting to say to you is that this astounding love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts, so that this “river of love” might be continually experienced and expressed in our heart and lives, as disciples of Jesus Christ! When Jesus calls on us to, “abide in His love”, He is saying that it is His overwhelming love for us, that we are to continue to remain in; to rest in; to rejoice in; and to rely on!

Oh, but there is more that I hope that you will see and treasure in this verse! Notice that Jesus says, “As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you”. Our Lord and Savior is saying, that He loves us in the same manner and to the same degree that the Father loves Him! This is absolutely incredible! Oh, that each one of us would dive into the reality of this verse and meditate on this wondrous reality. The precious promise that He encourages us with, is that Jesus loves every member of His Bride in the same fashion, and with the same fervency as the Father loves Him! This magnificent affirmation, straight from the lips of Jesus, should absolutely blow our minds. You must remember that this glorious assertion is not written to perfectly obedient angelic beings, who have never rebelled against any command of the Lord Jesus Christ. This amazing declaration is written to former rebels, who were once living in wicked sinfulness and willful selfishness; but who have now been graciously transformed into disciples of Jesus!

Think with me for a moment about the immutability of His love for us. The Father’s intimate and infinite love for the Lord Jesus never changes or fluctuates! It never wavers or waffles; for it is immutable! We recall when the Lord Jesus was hanging on the cross, during those 3 hours of supernatural darkness; that He willingly paid the price and suffered the just wrath and righteous indignation of the Father against sin. Even at that time, the Father’s infinite love for His Son, never wavered. And the King of Love says to your heart today, “As the Father loved me, I also have loved you”. The Savior’s love for you never vacillates. It’s not like the stock market, for it does not ebb and flow! He cannot love you more; and He will not love you less! You may be walking through a fiery trial today, as you read this letter. Do not forget that the Savior is sovereign over your storm. He has allowed it; He has a limit on it; and He has a purpose in it! He is working this storm together for the good; and that good is to conform you, into His image. He is using these trials, troubles and tribulations to grow you in Christlikeness, so that you would be more fruitful for His glory. Additionally, so that your soul might be enlarged and enabled to contain more glory and delight in Him, throughout all of the eternities in Heaven! These light afflictions, as the apostle Paul calls them, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! He does not love you less, in the storm. He is expressing His love to you, by using the storm to make you more like Him!

But there is still more! Think with me for a moment about the immeasurability of His love for us. The Holy Spirit pens these words, through the apostle Paul, in Ephesians 3:17-19, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded **in love**, may be able to comprehend with all of the saints, what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”.

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## ABIDE IN MY LOVE

You cannot place any type of measured boundary or a limit on the love of God. The love of the Father for the Son is like a universe, which knows no borders. In the same way, Jesus' love for you has no limits to its width, length, depth and height! Glory to His Holy Name!

Oh friends, we could go on forever, thinking about this incredible love. But I want you to be reminded of another side to this precious diamond. Consider with me, the **intimacy** of His love for you. Jesus Christ loves you personally, with this astounding love. The love of the Father for the Son is an intimate and personal love. Jesus said in John 10:30, "I and the Father are One". There could not be a more personal and intimate love than this perfect oneness! Notice what the Lord Jesus says to you in John 14:20, "At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you". This is the same oneness; the same personal intimacy, which the Father has with the Son! All of the infinitely perfect love of Jesus goes out to each one of us; as much, as if you were the only one who was included in the "love gift" that the Father has given to Him! There may be millions of born again believers on the earth at this moment and far more who are already in Heaven; but the two personal pronouns in this verse "I" and "you", are written with nothing but the word "love" between them! Jesus loves you with the same intimacy as the Father loves Jesus! No wonder Charles Wesley penned the words to the song, **Amazing Love! How can it be?**

Oh, but think about the **eternality** of the Father's love for the Son! John 17:24 expresses to us that God the Father has loved the Lord Jesus, from before the foundation of the world. There was never a time in eternity past, when God the Father did not perfectly and divinely love God the Son. Jesus says to you today, "As the Father has loved me, I also have loved **you**". The Lamb of God has loved you with the same eternality of love! Friends, I can easily recall that for the first 29 years of life, I did not love the Lord Jesus Christ. I can look back on my conversion to Christ in New Orleans, when an agnostic drummer was given a spiritual heart transplant, so that I could now began to love Jesus as my Lord and Savior. But this can never be said about His eternal love for me! He loved His Bride from before the foundation of the world; for He is the Lamb of God, Who was slain from before the foundation of the world, on behalf of any sinner and every sinner who will come to Jesus on His terms. Dear precious friend, you may be walking through a dark valley of adversity today. You may be facing tremendous trials, troubles and tribulations. But I want to encourage you with this truth, that your Lord and Savior loves you with an eternal love. Also, not only has He set His love on you in eternity past, but He will continue to love you, into eternity future. Do you suppose, that there will be any time in eternity future, when the Father will cease to love His only begotten Son, both divinely and perfectly? The idea would be utter blasphemy for a believer to even consider! Well friends, Jesus promises you that 'as the Father will love Me divinely and perfectly for all eternity, I will also love you forever and ever"! As the old great hymn says, "When with the ransomed in glory, His face I at last shall see, 'twill be my joy through the ages, to sing of His love for me"! Hallelujah!

Oh beloved friend in Christ, I want to encourage you with these monumental truths today. The Lord Jesus loved you before you existed. Jesus loved you, when He was baring your sins in His body on the tree. Jesus loved you, while you existed as a lost enemy of God, before your conversion. Jesus was loving you, when He redeemed your soul at your conversion. Jesus loves you unconditionally, at this very moment; not according to your performance; but because of His performance and His payment! Jesus will love you forever, throughout the eons of eternity.

Now, after all of these wonderful affirmations of His love for us, the Lord Jesus gives us an exhortation. Our Lord and Savior call's on us today to "Abide in His love"! Remain in My love for you! Rejoice in My love for you! Rest in My love for you! Rely on My love for you!

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When a disciple continues to abide in the sweet and sacred atmosphere of Jesus' supernatural and sacrificial love, it will produce a continual exercise of His love for Jesus; and a continual passion and purpose to be a fruitful disciple for the glory of God. This is exactly why the Paul has well said, "The love of Christ compels me." This stunning and astonishing love for us should melt any hardness in our hearts; and it should have a tenderizing influence in our hearts. This unbelievable love should have an inspiring influence to set our hearts on fire, to accomplish the Lord's plans and purposes for our lives. It should have a strengthening influence in our lives and ministries; for dear child of God, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. His love for us should inspire and energize us to exhibit that same love for other disciples of Jesus. This is why Jesus gave us the new commandment, to love one another, **as He has loved us!** His love for us ought to compel us to go into this world, to love lost sinners around us enough, to declare the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them.

The Lord Jesus has given us the "Great Commandment" and the "Great Co-mission". When He commands us to "abide in His love" He is reminding us that obedience to this commandment and commission, flows from the reality of remaining in, resting in, rejoicing in and relying on His great love for us, that has been demonstrated at the cross. "As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you". Then the Lord Jesus says to each of us, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you". Oh, may each one of us walk in the reality of this "first love" intimacy with our Lord. Furthermore, may each one of us make a fresh commitment to go anywhere; at any time; to anyone; and at any cost, in the "power of His love"!

## ABIDE IN MY LOVE!

### WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR A "LOVE THAT GIVES"

Many of you have been loving and liberal "grace-givers", to this international ministry that our Lord has graced us with! Your prayers and your financial support have been joyfully and freely given, as a channel of blessing to us; so that we, in turn, can be a channel of blessing to "pastors, church planters, cell group leaders and believers", for the purpose of carrying out the great commission in many places around this globe! You have obeyed the command from our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 6:38 "give, and it will be given unto you..." You have been involved in praying for, as well as generously and sacrificially giving, to disciples whom you have never met! I know that the motivating force behind your giving is the grace of our Lord in your lives. This clearly demonstrates that your affections are set on things above; and not the things of this passing world. It is so wonderful to witness the sanctifying grace of God at work in your lives; that has caused you to seek first the Kingdom of God. We are so grateful for the marvelous faith, overflowing generosity and the abundant joy, which has been exhibited in your grace giving. Dianne and I realize that the on-going support of the ministry which the Lord has given us, is a direct and manifested evidence of obedience to the command of our Savior in John 13:34, when He said, "A new commandment I give to you; that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Your joyful giving to this ministry is an expression of the fellowship of the "shared lives" of authentic disciples, who are in union with the Lord Jesus! When a person gives themselves to the Lord, they also begin to give to the great mission of the Lord. This is a precious proof that you have come to see that "you are not your own; you have been bought at a price; so you desire to glorify God in your body, your spirit and your wealth. Please know that we purpose to be good stewards; and to use your gifts for the furtherance of gospel and the glory of our Lord, to the uttermost parts of the world! We love you with the love of the Lord. We pray that these words of reflection, on "abiding in His Love", will be used to encourage your heart, as much as they have encouraged us.

*Abiding in Him,  
Ed & Dianne Lacy*