

“Endless Love to the End”

John 13.1

'Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.
[NASB]

HOPE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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I. The Season for Love

'Tis the season for love. Wedding season officially opens on the 19th May. Well, I suppose some might dispute the particular date, but few will dispute that we are entering into the season of the year most prominent for weddings. We are also entering into the section of the gospel most prominent for words of Jesus' love. The section begins with these words: ¹"...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. It concludes with these words: ^{Jn17.26}"...I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

It is heartening how frequently I am compelled to say something like, "These few verses contain everything you need to know of the Gospel." I must say it again of this verse. ¹"Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." There are three questions of this verse that I'd like you to explore with me: Whom Did He Love? How Did He Love? And, When Did He Love?

II. Whom Did He Love?

First question: Whom Did He Love? "...He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." You see there are two in this verse whom He loved. Firstly, He loved His Father. Jesus would do anything to be with His Father. Anything His Father wanted Him to do, that is. Yes, Jesus would *die* to be with His Father. Jesus had come into this world and suffered unfathomable humiliation: God lowering Himself to become man. It's what His Father wanted. And now Jesus would go to the cross to go to His Father. It's what His Father wanted. Such was Jesus' love for His Father.

Secondly, Jesus loved His own who were in the world. He loves all people in a general way, but He loves "His own" in a particular way. "His own" are those whom the Father has given to Him. ^{6.39}"His own" are those whom He purchased with His own blood. ^{act20.28}"His own" are those His Father predestined to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ. ^{eph1.4f}"His own" are those who ^{Heb10.14}"by one offering He has perfected for all time... those who are being sanctified." "His own" are those who are members of the Church. ^{Eph5.32}

III. How Did He Love?

Second question: How Did He Love? And because I know I've tested your patience beyond measure with three-point outlines, I shall now bless you with fifteen points. How did He love?

A. By Departing

One. He loved by departing. If He loved them to the end, departing had to be part of His love. His departing would be through the cross. He would depart through death. He loved His Father by dying and rising up from the dead. In this way He satisfied His Father's Law and His Father's Love. Jesus satisfied God's Law by bearing all the righteous punishment of the Law for our sins, and that punishment is death. Perfect fulfillment of justice.

Jesus satisfied God's Love by being the Way that God would keep His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God promised to bring into heaven the spiritual descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—all those who had the same faith in God. Jesus gave to us His account of perfect obedience necessary to receive the favorable smile of God upon us. Thus Jesus loved His Father and His own by departing through the cross. Perfect fulfillment of mercy.

Furthermore, Jesus loved His Father by departing, in that after He died and rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, He was again at the Father's right hand forever. And Jesus loved His own in that He sent forth the Holy Spirit, the Helper, to dwell richly inside our hearts.

B. Patiently

Two. He loved *patiently*. He suffered long. Many injuries have His own heaped upon Him. We have given our heart-affections to others, devotion that was due unto Him alone. We have made up our own ways of serving Him—ways that did not at all please Him. We have dishonored His name by being ashamed of it before men. We have not rested in His love as being all that we truly need. We have made ourselves gods instead of considering others better than ourselves. Our sins were His death, and work destruction in lives all around us. Our lusts break again hearts He is mending. Our stealing denies His bounty. Our lies put blots on His very fundamental nature. Our envy rots the bones He would make whole.

For two thousand years, on top of at least four thousand before that, He has born the burden of all our injuries... and has not retaliated. He nailed the burden of these injuries to the cross once and for all, yet His love is *patient*.

C. Kindly

Three. He loved *kindly*. Justice would justify His righteous retribution, yet He persisted in *lovingkindness*. He was *not* disposed to do us harm. Rather, He was disposed to do us *good*. He required no payment for doing us good. We had nothing to offer to purchase the tiniest favor, the smallest drop of refreshing water. He paid the entire price for God's favor.

His kindness toward us permeates and sustains *everything* He does. Even the severest chastening arises from nothing if not from His kindness toward us. No matter how much trouble you find yourself in, the Lord blesses you and will keep you; He makes His face shine upon you and is gracious to you; He lifts up His countenance upon you and gives you peace.^{Nu6.24} He is not forcible with you; He draws you with lovingkindness.^{Jr31.3}

D. Not Envious

Four. He loved without envy. He never cut anybody down to make Himself feel important. He never worried that others—good or bad, strong or weak—were going to get promoted ahead of Him. He never undermined anybody's reputation. He did expose the hypocrisy of Pharisees, but He did it for their good, not for His promotion. When Jesus loves you, there are no bones rotting with envy in Him. He is not afraid your achievements might outshine Him. If He could make you greater than Him, He would.

E. Not Bragging

Five. He loved without bragging. He did not heap praise upon Himself. He rarely, albeit clearly, said that He is God. He told people *who* He is and He told people *what* He had come to do. He is the Son of God and he came to seek and to save the lost, to destroy the works of the devil, to do His Father's will, and to bear witness to the Truth. He was not bragging, He was just making His mission clear. He could not have accomplished His mission to save your soul, if He had not spoken to you so that you might understand and believe.

In fact, there is no more perfect economy of words than His economy. If dragged in front of Herod and Pilate, most would have bragged in order to save their skin. Jesus answered them nothing.^{Lk23.9} Jesus was no windbag; He spoke the perfect words in the perfect time. Nothing more and nothing less. Every word Jesus has spoken to you is perfectly calculated for your eternal comfort.

F. Not Arrogant

Six. He loved without arrogance. He did not exaggerate His importance or self-conception. He had no superiority complex. Someone—NOT in a movie—who knows a lot about love once told me there is no such thing as a superiority complex; it is only an attempt to hide an inferiority complex. (Like certain domesticated animals, you know.) He did not try to make Himself better than you; in fact He lowered Himself to lift you up. He did not think of Himself more highly than

He ought to have thought.^{Ro12.3} Nor did He walk around making a show of His prayers or His piety. There was nothing impious about Him that He had to cover, and when He prayed He often retreated into private.

G. Not Unbecoming

Seven. He loved in a way that was not unbecoming. He was never rude; He never acted disgracefully, dishonorably, or indecently. He did ^{Isa42.2a}not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street" to save Himself. He never made a fool of Himself, though all the wicked claimed He was worse than foolish. It makes you wonder, doesn't it, why we can be so ashamed to be united to Him? He is the Paragon of uprightness, grace, gracefulness, honor and decency. We may cower at declaring His name, but if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for he cannot deny Himself.^{2ti2.13} He will *never* disappoint His own with behavior unbecoming of a King.

H. Not Seeking His Own

Eight. He loved by not seeking His own. Certainly He sought His own people; He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and He shed His blood to save His body—the Church. He loved His Father by doing not His own will but the Father's will. He loved you by seeking *your* own good, rather than by striving for *His* own good to the exclusion of yours.

That is the difference in the way He loved. We seek our own good ahead of others' good. If they happen to benefit from our good that is nice. But Jesus sought *your* good, and *your* good benefitted Him. He got you as His bride! But it did cost Him His life. There is nothing wrong with loving yourself and seeking your own good. You should, lest you break the sixth commandment! But the problem is when we neglect the love of God and love of neighbor. We should have great love for ourselves—God made us, after all—but we should have proportionately greater love for God and for others. It is quite amazing how we benefit from loving God and one another.

I. Not Provoked

Nine. He loved and was not provoked, irritated, or easily angered. How His own disciples tested Him! They continuously misunderstood Him. They vied for position in His kingdom.^{Mk10.37} They thought it was cool to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans.^{Lk9.54} (What... wouldn't *you*?) They grumbled when it seemed like they were getting short shrift.^{jn21.21}

How much (or should I say how *little*) does it take us to get irritated and provoked to anger by the ones we love most—our very own spouse, parent, or child? Jesus does not get easily provoked at you. If you are like me, you may assume that He gets provoked easily. That is not the case. He loves you in a way that He does NOT get irritated with you! He does NOT get easily angered at you.

Our Holy God does get angry when we sin against Him. But here is a difference: our anger easily converts into hatred. His anger *never* converts to hatred for His own. He convicts and disciplines you, but if we only knew the gentle compassion from which this comes even when aroused by anger, we would be so much quicker to thank Him.

J. Keeps No Record of Wrongs

Ten. He loved and kept no record of wrongs against Him. He came into the world from the Father for the very purpose of taking upon Himself the entire account of the wrongs of His own people. He came to nail that entire account to the cross in His own body. And... He came to cover His own with His entire account of rights. Do you get it? Jesus took all your wrongs and nailed them to the cross. He then covered you with all His rights.

Jesus is not into paperwork. He has taken the whole file cabinet and carried it to the cross. He had no desire to take into heaven all those indictments against you written out on paper in

big black letters. So instead, He wrote your name on the palms of His hands, and carried that into heaven.^{Is49.16} Jesus is not into paperwork, you see, but He *is* into blood work. So He ascended into heaven with your name written on His hand. He has put you like a seal over His heart, like a seal on His arm.^{Cant8.6} When His Father asks about you, Jesus shows Him your name on His hand.

And when His Father wants to see you, Jesus shows points down to you and says, "There! See that one who has done everything exactly as You wanted, who has thought everything exactly as You willed, who has said everything just as You like to hear? There he is. And that one over there... there she is. You'll not find anything wrong with him, nor anything amiss with her. According to their accounts, they've done exactly what You wanted and nothing You forbade. I love them so; see this name on My hand and this seal on My heart!" That is what Jesus says to His Father about you.

K. Rejoices in the Truth

Eleven. He loved with no rejoicing in unrighteousness, but with full rejoicing in the Truth. Lk19.41 "When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it;" His eyes^{Ps119.136} "shed streams of water, because they do not keep God's law." Jesus did not love by winking at wickedness. Never did He utter a nervous laugh when somebody told a joke with God or the Church as the subject. He never chuckled and forwarded emails that made light use of Scripture. He wept at the iniquity that would think such to be a laughing matter.

No, He loved with rejoicing in the Truth. He rejoiced when the Spirit showed Peter the divine nature of Christ.^{Mt16.16f} He rejoices when your children walk in the truth.^{2Jo1.4} He rejoices when we, like He, bear witness to the Truth.^{Jn18.37;1Ti3.15} Yes, this is how he loves: Zep3:17NIV "The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

L. Bears All Things

Twelve. He loved by bearing all things. He suffered all things for the sake of His Father's name and His own. He denied Himself the revenge that we think tastes sweet but turns bitter. Rather than letting hatred stir up strife, His love covers all transgressions.^{Pro10.12} Rather than pleasing Himself though He was strong, He bore the weaknesses of those without strength.^{Rom15.1} He said, ^{Ps89.50} "Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants; How I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples,⁵¹ With which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD, With which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed."

His love for you brought suffering upon Himself, and He was willing to bear it all.

M. Believes All Things and Hopes All Things

Thirteen. He loved by believing all things and hoping all things. He believed God's will for you was good and not evil. He believed that taking all your wicked sinfulness upon Himself, and cleansing you with His righteous and holy blood would be sufficient to make you a pure bride. He confidently expected that His Father would uphold His end of the covenant agreement, that if Jesus obeyed the Father *for* you, the Father would *give* you to Him. He eagerly anticipates that *all* whom the Father gave to Him will forever be with Him where He is.^{Jn17.24}

N. Endures All Things

Fourteen. He loved by enduring all things. Jn13.1 "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." Many times, it seems, Jesus could have taken a short-cut home. But He would not, because "His hour had not yet come."^{2.4;7.6,30;8.20} He did not cut short His time nor His burden of humiliation. He endured the entire course of learning the obedience from the things which He suffered.

He waited until the file cabinet of charges against you, and the bowl of your fears were completely full. He loaded them all upon Himself. He waited until He had the perfect, complete obedience to replace your want of obedience. Then He was perfect, complete, in His ability to be the source of your eternal salvation.^{Heb5.8f} He loved you by enduring all things for you... including the eternal pains of hell.

O. Never Fails

And finally, fifteen. He loved by never failing. His love will never fail, will never end. Other gifts have their time. Prophecy, tongues, unveiled knowledge; all passed away. We do away with childish things as we grow. We see dimly now, but then we will see Him face to face. We now have faith, hope, and love, but even faith and hope as we know them now will have no more place. Love, however, will never fail. The love with which He has loved His own will never fail.

IV. When Did He Love?

And this, actually, is the answer to the third question, When did He love? He loved forever and will love forever. From all eternity, He loved His Father and He loved His own to the end of all eternity. His love is endless. Something in the back of our mind and the bottom of our heart fears the approaching day, when by unfaithfulness or by death we will lose the love of a person we hold most dear. And we know that each day on this earth brings us closer to that day.

But a hundred billion years from now, the end of Jesus' love for you will be no closer than it is today. To the contrary, you will know a hundred billion times more than you do today, how many thousand trillion years of love He still has left to give you. He will love you to the end. And the end will never come.

V. Receiving

Now you are asking me what to do with these fifteen points. And my answer is "nothing." And "everything." This verse does not tell you to do anything. The verse says that JESUS loved them to the end. That's all. Jesus will tell you soon enough what to do (v14). But for now you are to do nothing. You are simply to be loved by Jesus unto the end. That's all. Period.

Okay, okay, I know that is asking too much. So I'll give you something to do. Two somethings. One: enjoy being loved by Jesus. Think about it, sleep in it, frolic in it, talk about it, sing about it, laugh about it... *joyfully*. Two: If you *are* enjoying being loved by Jesus, then you probably grieve at least a little that your love looks so little like His. But even this grief brings joy in the morning. For you recognize that in heaven, in every way humanly possible *YOUR* love for Jesus and for everyone around you will be *just like Jesus' love for you*. The more you see that now, the more your love will start looking like His, even now before you get to heaven.

But if you take no joy or comfort or trust in Jesus' love, then hearing three points about it is irritating; fifteen is insufferable. Would you really despise the One who offers freely to you the love that cost His life? His love is patient, His love is kind; it is not envious; His love does not brag and is not arrogant; it does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not keep a record of wrongs, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. His love never fails.^{1co13.4ff} With such a love as this would He love you to the end. And the end will never come.

Before you do anything then, do nothing. Be loved by Jesus. That is everything.