

Love God With all your Heart

Jesus said to him, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37 - 40)

Loving God with your whole heart is the key to everything in life; because your relationship with God affects everything and everyone in your life. It is impossible to love God too much; however it is easy to fall short of loving Him with your whole heart. In a moment of honesty with myself and the Lord I asked "Lord, how can I love you more"?

Instantly the Lord responded "be thankful". In one moment, with those two words, came several scriptures to my mind and concepts that I had not thought of before. I also understood for the first time that anything, whether past or present, that we are unthankful about is a part of our heart that does not love God. In that same moment I also understood why this is true. Deep down inside our spirit we know that God is in control of the universe. If we have had painful experiences which we are not thankful for then we are unhappy and unthankful to God for them, consciously or unconsciously.

You may not even know that you are blaming God; you may think that you are blaming Satan or you may be blaming other people. However, in reality you are blaming God also because you know that He is in control. God allowed the experience to happen to you. God could have prevented it and you know it. Each painful experience which you are unthankful for is a dark spot in your heart that does not love God. *Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1:21)*

We are commanded to love God with our whole heart. That is because it is possible to love God with only a part of your heart. Only when you are thankful to God with your whole heart do you really love Him with your whole heart. That means you must be thankful for everything in your life, past and present. Thankfulness is a gauge that measures your heart condition; it reveals anything which is blocking your love for God. Thankfulness to God is an indication of a heart that has right standing before God. Out of a thankful heart flow expressions of love to God, including praise, worship, and obedience. This is a good question to ask your self, "is there anything that I am not thankful to God for"?

*See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, **in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.** (1stThessalonians 5:15 - 19)* Being unthankful causes you to quench the Holy Spirit because it is unforgiveness. The word "quench" means to put the fire out. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love. When you quench the Spirit you quench love.

God says in everything give thanks for this is His will for you in Christ Jesus. Right now you may be saying I can't be thankful for the terrible tragedy or wrong that happened to me. You may even be in a current situation that is very painful. But your choice in every situation is to either be angry with God or thankful. Maybe you think that you love God but you also admit that you

are angry at people who have hurt you. *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? (1st John 4:20)* If you will decide to be thankful to God for the situation, recognizing that it is God's will for you, then the hate and anger will be replaced by love, even for the people who have hurt you. Love always brings revelation, allowing you to see things and people in God's light.

Why has God allowed you to experience painful situations? It is for your good, He wants you to be an overcomer. The Lord is teaching you to trust Him and love Him in every situation with all your heart so that you will be more than a conqueror through Him. *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)* If you are having a difficult time being thankful for a situation and you are thinking I do not see any way that good can come out of this it may be that you are preventing the good from being revealed.

Remember that the promise in Romans 8:28 is conditional, for those who love God. If there is a part of your heart that is unthankful and therefore does not love God you may be preventing the Lord from being able to make the situation "work together for good". When you become thankful then that part of your heart loves God and the Lord can now make the tragedy into a testimony. As long as you hold on to the pain, being unthankful, it can not work out for good because you do not love God with that part of your heart.

You will not see the good until you become thankful. You must trust Him and say Lord I thank you for this situation because I know that you allowed it for my good, according to your word. When you become thankful you will experience the love, peace, and joy of God's presence. That is because we enter into God's presence through thanksgiving. *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations. (Psalms 100:4-5)*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any **wicked** way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalms 139:23-24)* The Hebrew word for wicked, in this passage, means idol and it also means pain and sorrow. Any situation that has caused great pain and sorrow can become an idol in your heart if you choose to be unthankful for it. Until a person can trust God enough to become thankful for those situations they are in bondage to them and they do not love God with that part of their heart. Sometimes tragic events become such an important part of a person's life that it becomes a part of their identity such is the case with victim mentality. This happens when a person sees themselves as just a victim instead of being an overcomer. *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1st Corinthians 15:57).*

Unthankfulness is not the cause of a heart problem rather it is a symptom of a root problem. A root problem may be unforgiveness, anger, bitterness, jealousy and any other spiritual condition that opens a door for Satan and closes a door to God. The root problem will need to be put to death first before a person can become thankful. If a root problem has become a part of your life you will need to go through a "dieing to yourself process". Recognize that you are not a victim and that everything that happens to you is a part of your life to help make you into the person God wants you to be.

The law of sowing and reaping tells us that what cost the most receives the greatest reward. When you decide to be thankful to God for a very difficult situation in your life you will be taking a big step in denying yourself; because you will be giving up what has become a big part of your life. You will be sacrificing your pride and humbling yourself before God. This allows God's grace

to flow into you and cover the whole painful situation. It will be a big step in your spiritual growth in the Lord, causing you to love Him and trust Him more.

You may not be thankful for something that you did which caused suffering for you or others. However, you can be thankful for the lessons you learned. *Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:10)* You can also be thankful to the Lord for the way He is going to work it out for good. Often we do not see the good that God has planned. However, every time we go through a suffering situation with a thankful heart we grow in our love and faith in God.

We must realize that when we go through difficult situations it is not because God does not love us, but rather because He does love us. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35 - 39)*

In the passage above the word "conquerors" is the same root word used for "overcomer" in Jesus' messages to the churches in the book of Revelation, chapters 2 & 3. We overcome by the blood Jesus shed for us, the word of our testimony, and by loving God more than our own life. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death; (Revelation 12:11)*. When you become thankful for your suffering it is turned into a testimony. It is also a way of denying yourself and giving up your life for Jesus. It proves that you love Him more than your own life. *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 16:24 - 25)* This is why, "For His sake we are killed all day long".

Job was a wealthy blessed man but in one day he lost all he owned and all ten of his children were killed. This was Job's reaction. *Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. (Job 1:20 - 22)*

Then it got even worse for Job. God allowed him to go through a very difficult time of physical pain and suffering. After it was all over Job said, *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. (Job 42:5)* When you decide to be thankful to God, even for the suffering, then the love in your heart for God will increase and so will your revelation of knowing Him. Afterward God blessed Job with more than He had before.

Paul and Silas were beaten by a large mob of people and then whipped with many stripes. Afterward they were thrown into prison and the jailer put them in stocks. They were in terrible conditions, suffering from their painful wounds, and their hands and feet were locked in a very uncomfortable position. *But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. (Acts 16:25 - 26)*

That night the jailer and his family were saved. The next morning Paul and Silas were let go. When you thank and praise God in your suffering your love for God allows Him to make the situation work together for good, for you and for other people also.

Right now ask the Lord how you can experience more love for Him. Ask Him to reveal anything in your life that you are not thankful for, anything that is blocking your hearts' flow of Love to Him.

... Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:18b - 20)

*In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
(1stThessalonians 5:18)*

<http://www.seekgod.org/message/lovegodwithallyourheart.html>

©2007 Gary Ballard – Seek God Ministries

All Rights Reserved

<http://www.seekgod.org/>