

## Be Watchful to Love the Lord God

Joshua was old and advanced in years when he summoned the Israelites to instruct them one last time. The desire of his heart for Israel was the same as that of Moses: Obedience and love for God. It had been a long time since the Israelites had left Egypt; many died in the desert for lack of faith, but many arrived in the Promised Land. The task of leading Israel to the Promised Land was handed to Joshua after Moses' death. He encouraged Joshua with these words: Be strong, courageous, and firm, for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to possess it. It is the Lord Who goes before you; He will [march] with you; He will not fail you or let you go or forsake you (Deut. 31: 7,8). Joshua was now old and before his death he summoned all Israel to instruct and to encourage them to love the Lord God through obedience.

The love of our God is among many ways, measured by the gift of His Son's life to save the world. We, somehow, exempt ourselves from the duty to love Him by not renouncing our unholy fleshly desires to be crucified with Him. The sacrifice of YAHSHUA linked and reconciled us to God through His love. Our love for Him is measured by obedience. When we talk bad about our brothers and sisters in judgment we do not love God; when we ignore the cry of a needy person, we are not showing to love God; when we are greedy we show to love money and things that money can buy, more than God. Our closets are full and spilling out clothes and shoes we do not wear, while others are naked and bare feet. Where there is no obedience, there will not be the fruit of love.

Be watchful to love the Lord God. To be watchful is to be careful, is to make sure that our action will show love for God. Our love for Him compels us to obey Him in everything we do or say. We cannot submit to Him without love and gratitude. YAHSHUA established a new Covenant with us; it was the covenant of blood – His blood that would be shed for us. A covenant is a binding and solemn agreement made by two or more individuals. Our part in this covenant is simple: to love and to obey Him. How do we know to love and obey Him? YAHSHUA said, If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love and live on in it (John 15:10a). Obedience is the key to live continuously in God's love. The heart that is contrite before God is submissive to His will. There is no love in the heart that is proud; no love for God and no love for others, because it cannot bend its will to the will of God, and to the needs of others. Love for God is the essence, the firm foundation of our faith. Paul commends us to be imitators of God following His example as our heavenly Father. To love is the supreme example He left behind for us to follow. Our love for Him can never be compared to His perfect love for us, but our obedience to Him, expresses our undying and incorruptible love. Our obedience to Him can only be energized through our love for Him. We must be watchful not to lose focus of our love for Him. Love is a path that will lead us to do good to others; it springs forth from a pure and unselfish heart compelled by faith in God. When we partake of His love to others it is because we do love Him. Love is a two way road; it cannot exist without reciprocity. When God demonstrated His love for us in His Son we were obliged to reciprocate such love by loving others.

To love God *is to forgive and lose the bands of yoke from those we forgive; it is to let the oppressed go free; it is to divide our bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into our house; when we see the naked, that we cover him, and that we hide not ourselves from our own flesh and blood; it is to pour out that with which we sustain our own life for the hungry and satisfy the need of the afflicted (Isaiah 58)*. Although this chapter's emphasis is not about love, it gives a picture of true love in action. What are the results of true fasting? A demonstration of love for God applied to others. When we are in the path of a desert or a valley we think God has forsaken us, or that He does not love us. We tend to think that His love is demonstrated to us only when things are going just right for us. We tend to ignore Him and sometimes we do behave as a rebellious child toward our Father when we don't get what we want. We want Him to come down to bless us but we do not submit to His will. That is obviously a lack of love for Him. We do misinterpret His Word to satisfy our ideas and ignore the foundation of the true love for Him. If we do love Him because He first loved us, our love for Him should be consistent in our actions, just as is His love for us is unconditional. When we go our own way He still continues to love us by correcting and bringing us to the right path. We will always be recipients of His love to love Him and others in return. The Bible teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves; and to love God with all our hearts minds and will – soul. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your mind and with your entire being and with all your might. And these words which I am commanding you this day shall be in your own minds and hearts; you shall whet and sharpen them so as to make them penetrate, and teach and impress them diligently upon the hearts of your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign upon you hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes; and you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deut. 6:6-9).

When our love for our God fails, others may suffer the consequences, but we suffer even more; we become alienated from His blessings. Let's be watchful to love our heavenly Father with all our mind and heart –soul. We should hold unto our duty to love Him always, independent of circumstances; we should not love Him because we have to, but because of Who He is, what He has done for us. Remember that for every wound His Son took upon His body it brought healing to all of us who accepts His gift of eternal life. He gave His life for you, what will you give Him? Nothing is more important to Him than your love.