



## **Israel's Greatest Hits Vol. II-Part 13**

### **Love the Lord**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well, I read a headline this week that I thought was really weird, really weird and really funny to me. It just seemed odd, bizarre. Here it comes. Ready? It said, "Tennessee Man Secretly Lived in Families' Attic." Secretly lived there. I've traveled to some pretty seedy places that have had, like, mice or rats in the attic and it was not hard to figure that out. Like right away I could figure that out. I'm just lying in bed there for two minutes and trying to go to sleep and I hear the vermin scurrying around in the attic. I just think of a full-grown man was living in my attic. I mean he wouldn't be living in my attic. I would find out. He might drop into my attic, break into my attic, not live in my attic. I mean what was wrong with those people? You had a man living in your attic and you didn't know it.

There are some things that if they're there you know it and if it's not there you certainly know it. I think of the topic that I've been studying this week as one of those in the Christian life. If it's there you know it. You might not be able to point to it and go it's right there, but you know it's there. I mean, you may not even be able to define it very well. It may be hard to kind of describe it, but you know the effects of it and it's there and it's obvious and it's evident. And when it's absent, it's absent. And the bigger this thing is in the Christian life the more obvious it is. And as it grows it's just unavoidable, it's there and you know it's there.

What I'm talking about is what Paul ended his letter to the Ephesians with. The last eight words in our English text speaks of "Love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love indestructible," insoluble, a continuing, enduring, indestructible kind of love. A love that is so obvious that it's there and you see it and you feel the effects of it. You may not be able to say, "Well, this is what I mean by that," but you know it affects everything about a person's life. I mean, it couldn't be more basic than that, that the people of God should be known for loving God. The people of God should love God. It's just obvious and yet so important that we make sure that we have a kind of love that is undiminished, that is not perishing, it's incorruptible, it's an imperishable kind of love that everyone knows you have it. You meet some people, they're godly people, you see the effects of the love of God in their life. Then you've got other people who claim to be Christians and they may go to church but, I mean, you just don't see the effects of it.

I want to help you with that one primary, fundamental, essential, critical aspect of the Christian life - loving God. In the psalm that I've chosen to study this morning, Psalm 116, it is nothing other than a great primer, a template, an outline of what it is to love God, what it means to love God, and the reasons to love God. It starts with the "why" of loving God and then it goes on to the "how" of loving God. Why do we love God as God's people and how do we love God as God's people? It's very simple, as a matter of fact, look at the psalm with me, Psalm 116. I've printed it there for you on the worksheet. I can see it right at the beginning of this, verse 1.

Here's the beginning section, the first 11 verses start with this: "I love the Lord." And, of course, it's capital O-R-D. If you're new with us in this study, you understand that's the English convention to show us in the translation that we're talking about the Hebrew word for God's



proper name, Yahweh. So "I love Yahweh, because..." So, I'm set up well here. I understand that he's going to display to us in his life, his godly life, here are the things that have made me love God. I love God because of this. And he goes on for 11 verses about all those things. Then in verse 12, dropped down to verse 12, he says, "What shall I render to Yahweh for all of his benefits to me?" I'm kind of tipping my hand there to say there are many things about what God does to benefit us that should certainly fuel our love for him. But then he says what do I do in response to all that? What am I going to do? And then he goes on for the next eight verses and tells us what he's going to do. Here's how I love God.

These psalms are here as an example for us and we ought to follow these examples, particularly this one, because it ends with a command for us to follow in the pattern. So I want us to follow the pattern and fuel something that should be so fundamental to you if you make a claim to be a person of God. In our case we call ourselves Christians, we are God's children, then we ought to be characterized by the love of God. Why should we love him? How should we love? Let's look at this. Starting with the first four verses.

The psalmist says, "I love the Lord because," here it comes, "he's heard my voice and my pleas for mercy." OK. I love him because I prayed and he answered, "Because he inclined his ear to me," therefore I'm going to keep on praying, and I'm going to keep on calling him and, "therefore I will call on him as long as I live." How bad was this? Apparently, some big thing, something that threatened his life. Whatever it was that God did to incline his ear and answer him was something big. Verse 3, "The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol," the poetic word for the grave, they "laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish." So this was a big thing. Then he says, I prayed, "I called on the name of Yahweh," and here was his prayer, "O Yahweh, I pray, deliver my soul," and of course he did. Verse 1 - he heard. Verse 2 - he inclined his ear. God answered his prayer.

Look at your worksheet. We need to "Love the Lord because..." let's make this our psalm this morning, because "He's Answered Your Prayers," and I'm sure he has. I trust that he has and I trust you can sit here this morning and say, "You're right, he has answered my prayers." You may be sitting there like so many American Christians thinking, "Well, you know, there are a lot of prayers he hasn't answered." OK. OK. I understand that. There are plenty of prayers that God has not answered the way that you want him to answer. I understand that.

But know this about yourself, please. It is easy for us to focus on the deprivation, the things that God does not do and he's deprived me of. I want that and he didn't do it. Easy to do that. Our flesh wants to focus on that. And yet we have to work and purpose to focus on the provision. Deprivation: I feel it, I'm focused on that and it hurts. But look at all the provision. And I think you're going to say this: you've got a lot more provision in answer to God's prayer than you do deprivation.

I'll prove it to you. Since the last time we were studying the psalms it has been seven days. Seven days we were together, I was here, hopefully you were here. You ought to be praying because Jesus told you to pray this way. It may be convicting for even me to say this to you, but Jesus taught us to pray this way. He said one thing in his model prayer, he said pray like this. He says,



"Give us this day our daily bread." So I know this: this is a daily prayer I ought to be praying every day that God would provide me meals. "God, provide food for me today." Now, most Americans don't pray that way but you should. Why? Because the Bible's very clear, "Every good and perfect gift comes from God." Everything you have is provided by God. "Oh, but I worked out and I went to school, I got a brain, I've educated myself," all of that. The ability for the synapse in your brain to snap and to make your brain work, all of that, the Bible says, is provided for you. Deuteronomy says, "He gives you strength to earn wealth." You can't earn a paycheck without God actively involved in giving you life, giving you intelligence, giving you wisdom, giving you benefits. And so we should be praying every day, "God, provide for me, because if I get something today to eat it is a gift from you."

Well, seven days, if you've been praying that, even if you haven't. Right? We're praying for God to provide. We eat, just traditionally, three times a day. I'm assuming you've had at least 18 to 19 meals. I mean, I don't want to assess you by how you look but it looks like most of us haven't missed too many meals. Right? We're doing all right. And yet, maybe like me, you had a really just busy crazy week and I did miss a couple of meals because of work. I had stuff going on and would teach through meals. I mean, I focused on that because my stomach hurt. Well, there are times I just did not have time to eat. And so I didn't get my 21 meals this week. I mean, I had a drawer full of snacks in my desk, so, I mean, I was doing fine. I didn't lose any caloric intake but I didn't have the meal where I sat down and said, "God, thanks for this food right now."

I realized this: it's easy for me to look at the two meals I missed and forget all the meals I got, the 19 meals God provided for me. And it may be my tradition every day to thank God for my food when I sit down to have a meal. But am I even praying and making the connection between the provision of food and the prayer in the beginning of the day? I've read for you not too long ago some prayers from some really antiquated children prayer books where it teaches children to pray. It teaches children to pray about stuff like that and then we grow up and forget about all that. Prayers to pray before you go to sleep that God, even in that old, it's become almost a, you know, a tagline and a joke, but it's a genuine prayer taught to children in churches to say, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep." You probably didn't go to bed praying that last night. But the psalmist talks about that, laying down under God's provision, God's protection and if you wake up in the morning, this is a gift of God. God sustains you even in the night. You ought to pray about those things. Then you ought to say, "Look, God provided," and you ought to see the connection between praying for your protection, praying for your meals.

In the model prayer, Jesus said, "Pray that you'll be delivered from evil." Do you read the news feeds? Maybe some of you are attracted to the crime blotter in our local, you know, digital newspaper. Maybe you read the old printed newspaper and you look at all the crime going on in Orange County and you realize you dodged most of that, most of you did this week. I had a friend of mine got their house broken into, it's terrible to talk about. But, you know, I thought, oh God, my house wasn't broken into this week. The God I ought to be praying to deliver me from evil and you have. And you have in so many ways. I ought to be praying that every single day and seeing that you provide and you answer prayer.



"Well, Pastor Mike, you know how that prayer starts. It talks about praying 'Your Kingdom come,' and it didn't." You're right. Had I been praying that prayer, as I should, every single day, seven days this week, again, God has said no to that. I have not seen the Lord come back on a cloud calling his people home. That's right. I'm not in the presence of Christ right now. So that prayer has not been answered. And I can focus on that if I'm even ardent and faithful in praying like I should. But then the next thing it says, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That's a mixed bag. And that's the part where I have had a lot of things that I've prayed about and God has provided and then there are some things that haven't been provided the way I want, I feel like your will is not being done here and I'm going to keep on praying. But I need to realize all the things that God has done in terms of how his will has been accomplished in my life just in the past week.

These are things God teaches us to pray every day. Jesus said pray like this. And when he answers, you ought to be saying, "I love you because you answered." Now in this case there are terrible things and traumatic things and things that'll bring you to the brink of death. Maybe it's cancer, maybe it's some terrible thing about your finances and you're praying and in panic and you're praying in the sense of verse 3, "anguish and distress," fine. We ought to pray then too. But we ought to be praying about everything every day so that when God answers those prayers because he's going to answer those prayers.

Most of the time he answers in the affirmative if we just start to pray more often and see the connection between God's provision, God's giving through his good and generous hand to his people, it would accelerate your love for God just to start keeping track of those. Psalm 9 verse 1, "I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds." We're not doing that very well. It's been a constant theme throughout the psalms we've been studying here. We need to be thinking more about God's answer to prayers. When you do and you itemize those you will recognize that's a fuel, a catalyst, the motivation and encouragement for my love for God. I love God because look how good he is to answer my prayers.

Verse 5. "Gracious is Yahweh, and righteous; our God is merciful." Why is he focusing on this? Grace and mercy? Why? Because of this, verse 6, "The Lord, Yahweh, preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me." Now, what's helpful there is tying these words together: "gracious and merciful" with the word "simple." The word simple is putting it nicely. The word simple is often used for someone who's dumb, foolish. Sometimes it's translated very properly "naive" "ignorant." But here's the psalmist saying God you saved me and he's starting this with words like gracious and merciful. Much like we've seen in David's praying sometimes he's praying for the mercy of God even though he's stepped into problems that he has created himself and he says, God, though look he has answered my prayers even though I made the mess in the first place and I'm thinking to myself look how gracious and merciful God is.

And that reality highlights the grace and mercy of God. And those two things, they sit as bookends in the middle of this word "righteous." God is righteous. Look at that. God is righteous. The Lord is righteous. That's a standard of perfection and rightness and there it is. And that is the path, and I'm not on it every day and neither are you, we deviate from it all the time, we fall short of the glory of God. And the good news is God is merciful and he's gracious even when we're



dumb, God has stepped in and helped us. That's the grace of God. The mercy of God - I don't get the bad I deserve. The grace of God - I get a bountiful provision in things that I don't even deserve. I sit back and say, God is such a gracious God. We ought to focus on the grace of God. You'll be focusing on it in eternity when you pass from this life to the next. We'll sit back and say, God was so gracious. I didn't even realize how merciful and gracious God was to me.

Number two, you ought to love the Lord because "He's Been Gracious to You." He's answered your prayers and he is tremendously, exceedingly gracious in not giving you all you deserve in terms of judgment and consequence when you've been ignorant. I read a story this week about drivers in the suburbs of Denver who drove into a marsh, into a bog and they got their cars, dozens of them, stuck. A hundred people followed their GPS, Waze or Google Maps or whatever it was, right into this bog because there was construction going on in this road and so the alternative route took them down this path on this road. The road had signs up saying road closed, road closed, and yet all of them went right by those signs and got their car stuck in the mud. Look this news story up, it's interesting.

And I thought to myself you're kind of ignorant to avoid what's right in front of you. You can see it. This is not good. Not to mention all the cars in front of you kind of dipping into the mud. You should realize that your phone is now leading you astray. Stop it. And yet they ignorantly follow their own path. I mean, think about the tow trucks that are coming. I mean, dozens of tow trucks were dispatched to the suburbs of Denver to pull these cars out of the mud. Now, if you have AAA, I suppose, or roadside assistance or something, it probably didn't cost anything out of pocket, at least at that particular time. Most people had to pay for the tow truck. But think about the Lord graciously pulling you out of the mud that you ignorantly stepped into and all the cost of that has been attributed to Christ. Christ has paid the price for you to graciously pull you out of the mud. God is a gracious God. There's a lot we deserve this week that didn't happen to us because the Lord is gracious.

Verse 7. He says, man, you have been so blessed. "Return, O my soul, to your rest," that's a good word to highlight, "for Yahweh has dealt bountifully with you." Look how good he's been to you. "For you," he says to Lord, "have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling." Again, I think in the context of this whole point about being this simple-minded person, this ignorant person, this dumb person at times who deserves so much worse, a lot of death that I deserved, a lot of tears that I deserved, a lot of stumbling that I deserved, all of that, God has delivered me out of that. Look how good he's been. I can sit here and have peace. "Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you."

That's something Christians have that non-Christians don't have. Seeing the grace of God and the hand of God pulling you out of the mud, putting you in a place, caring for you like a father cares for a young child, to realize that that's the God that we have, brings us peace. We're like sheep going our own way. We have a shepherd, as the Bible says. We return to the Great Shepherd of our souls. We follow him. And you know what those dumb sheep have when they're following the shepherd? They have peace. And so often "he leads them beside still waters, he leads them into green pastures, he restores the soul" of his sheep.





That's grace. Jesus said it when he left. He said, "You know, you're going to need a lot of faith here to follow me because I'm going to be physically gone, I'm going to send my Spirit, I'm not going to orphan you. But here's what you need to remember, John 16, "My peace I give to you." My peace I give to you, not as the world gives, the world just does not have this. The world's peace is based on circumstances, it's based on the amount of money in your bank account, it's based on all kinds of things that have nothing to do with the peace I give to you. Peace I give you is not like the world. My peace I leave with you. Of course, it's all bound up in the Spirit of God and you have a relationship with a real God of the universe, you have something, you have "peace that surpasses all understanding." You have peace that is not tied to your circumstances.

If you're not a Christian I know you don't understand any of this, but you need to recognize we as Christians, and you do if you're a Christian in this room, have something in the interior of your life that, like Christ, can put you to sleep in the cushion of the hull of a ship in the middle of a storm. And everyone's going to say, as the disciples said to Christ, "Why aren't you freaking out." My peace I give to you. Not like the world gives it. You ought to be thankful for that because some of you experienced that this week when your non-Christian friends say, "You have cancer. Why aren't you freaking out? You don't have any money, you lost your job, you got marital problems, you got issues in your life. Why aren't you freaking out?" And you realize this because, "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil for you are with me." Even though I've got enemies surrounding me, maybe suing me, maybe pursuing me, "you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies," you restore my soul, you give me rest.

Number three, Letter "C", you want to love the Lord, let this fuel it. Because "He's Given You Peace." If you're not a Christian you don't understand it but if you are a Christian you can say with the Apostle Paul, I've learned the secret of contentment. I know what it is to be at tranquility in my heart. It's not tied to circumstances. I know it whether I have a lot or a little, because "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." He ministers to me, the Bible says, in the inner man and people can't see that. He'll never leave me, he'll never forsake me. That's a peace that you should say to your soul, particularly when you look at the way God has taken you out of the miry bog that you've gotten yourself into, and say, you know what? I got something the world doesn't have. I love God because he gives me peace, he's the good shepherd, he answers prayer, he's gracious, he gives peace.

Look at verse 9. Look at the optimism, the confidence, the assertion. "I will walk before Yahweh in the land of the living." That's a future statement, it's not just you saved me from this terrible situation. Maybe it was some sickness that he thought he was going to die in verse 3, "anguish and distress," and he thought he was going to be snapped up by death. It's not about the present. It's about the future. I'll walk before the Lord. I'm confident about the future. And he looks back there and he says this about the past. "I believed," I had this confidence, it was underlying, it was the foundation. You may not have seen it, and that's why I think the Hebrew translation here in verse 10 is correct, he says "even when," and some grammarians will debate about how to translate that phrase, but "even when" I think is exactly right, as the English Standard Version translates it "even when I spoke: 'I was greatly afflicted,'" underline greatly, that's the emphasis there.



I know it because of the next verse, "I said in my alarm, 'All mankind are liars.'" Now you can say that as an absolute statement and say, "Well, that's true." Right? We've all fallen short. Everyone lies eventually. Yeah, that's true but that's not the picture here. The picture here is: God loves me, he's delivered me, he's going to keep on delivering me, even when..." I know that because I have security in this relationship. Even when I've said really dumb things. Things that ultimately were overstatements and exaggerations, "greatly afflicted" and "all mankind are liars." Are they in a technical sense, in an absolute sense? Sure. But in a relative sense, come on. You don't have reason to say that. It's not like the world is against you.

Listen, our Daily Bible Reading has helped us in this regard this week. We again are reading this summer through Job. And in Job you recognize we see at the beginning of the book he's presented as such a godly man in the first two chapters, it ends with an assertion that Job did not sin with his mouth, he did not sin with his words. That's super important for us to realize. As a matter of fact, if you want to think you're righteous here today just go to James 3 and realize this: we all stumble in many ways. If you don't stumble on what you say you'd be a perfect man, but you're not a perfect person. So you sit here this morning knowing that you sin with your mouth and it says there Job, so far at least at that point, had not sinned with his mouth, but then you keep reading in Chapter 3. And he starts sinning with his mouth.

Matter of fact, when you read yesterday's Daily Bible Reading it starts with this: he says to the three friends who come around him that he does have who are there trying to comfort him and he starts lashing out at them. He says, "Miserable comforters are you all." And then he starts going after God. We didn't get out of yesterday's Daily Bible Reading in the Old Testament before he's accusing God of this: "You've set me up like a target." I mean, really to just modernize it, it's like you are just some frustrated, angry, vindictive kid who's set me up like a tin can in the backyard and you cranked up your B.B. gun and you're shooting at me. God, you just set me up as a target and you're just lashing out at me. Was any of that true? No.

He sits there and accuses God over and over again. And if you read this morning's reading he just goes at it. He's sinning with his mouth. He's overstating it. "Everyone's horrible, everyone's terrible. I'm so greatly afflicted. God, where are you? You don't love me, you hate me. I curse the day of my birth. I just want to die." And I know that Job regretted all that because when God comes on the scene at the end of the book, verses 38 through 42, what happens? God says, "Hey, let's call the fault-finder here. Who's going to find fault with me? Bring him up. Gird yourself up, stand here like a man, you want to put me on trial like you've been doing for all these chapters. Now's the time, come and talk about it. You've got a problem with me? Let's hear it."

And Job recognizes, as God goes on for a couple of chapters about the greatness, the majesty, the inscrutable wisdom of God, the power of God, he realizes I deserve nothing from God. And he says this: "I'll put my hand over my mouth." I'm going to shut up now, he says. "I have spoken once, I won't answer twice. I repent in dust and ashes." He realizes this: he sinned a lot with his mouth. He said things that should have ruined his relationship with God. And yet God does not come on the scene after that rebuke and say, "Great. I'm taking you to the woodshed. I'm going to beat you now." He doesn't say that. Matter of fact, how does the book end? Do you know? He restores Job.



He affirms his love for Job. He even tells Job's friends, "Hey, you better realize what a choice servant that I have here. I mean, you better realize how important and how much I love this guy."

"I'll walk before the Lord in the land of the living." "Even when I spoke: 'I am greatly afflicted'; in my alarm I said, 'All men are liars.'" I know this: underlying all that was a trust. Even today we saw it in the Daily Bible Reading where he knows that ultimately God is a God. There's this kind of schizophrenia in our frustration that we have. But God takes even those words and forgives us. You say some things to a stranger or an acquaintance and they're going to hate you for the rest of your life. You say some of those things in a context of a deep love that you have, in a context of relationship and covenant and guess what? You know that they're going to be forgiven. You don't say them because they're going to be forgiven, but you know that's what love does. And God forgives.

Do you want something very specific about loving God because he first loved us? Focus on his forgiveness, Letter "D." You need to love the Lord because "He Has Forgiven Your Sins," even down to the things you said this week that you should never have said. The exaggerations, the overstatements, the things you've said in your despair and your frustration and your anguish, "in your alarm" the things that you've said. If I put them up on the screen and said, "I've got some choice statements here from someone in row 16. Here it comes. I've recorded everything you've said. I pick the things that have deviated from the righteousness of God and we're all going to listen. I've miked your car and your house and your bedroom and we're going to hear all the bad things that they've said. You would, I hope, be embarrassed. And recognize, you're right, we all stumble in many ways.

I'd be perfect if I could control my mouth but it's a deadly poison full of venom. I realize the trouble that I caused with my mouth. I could stand here in church and bless the Lord with my words, but you know what? When it comes down to it there's a lot coming out of my mouth I'm ashamed of, not to mention our life. Love the Lord because he's a God who answers prayers. He's answered your prayers. He's gracious, he's been gracious to you, he gives peace. I hope you've experienced that peace, leading you by still waters and he's forgiven every last single sin that you've ever committed that you can say with the early church in Rome, "There is no condemnation for those in Christ." Whereas I should hear, "Depart from me, you accursed ones, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." I'm not going to hear that, instead I going to hear, "Hey, enter into your rest." "This kingdom that has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world," come and enjoy. Enter into the rest of the king, the joy of your kingdom. That's going to be a great day and I don't deserve any of that.

How good God is to forgive our sins. What should our response be to that? Well, that's a good question, verses 12 through 19 real quick. "What am I'm going to render to Yahweh for all his benefits?" Well, a few things. Here's the answer. First one, verse 13, "I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of Yahweh." Now glanced back up to where we've been, verse 4. In the midst of his troubles he said, "Then I called on the name of Yahweh." Same phrase.

Go up to verse 2, "Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live." He's answered me in the past. I'm going to keep on asking him because he's so good to have





answered me. I'm going to ask him some more. Now, some people will look at this and say well if you're lifting up the cup of salvation maybe that's a sacrifice of thanksgiving with your words. Maybe that's verse 17, "I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord." We've got two different callings on the name of the Lord in this passage. One, you're right, seems to be focused on giving thanks to God. The other ones early in the passage seem to be those in asking God to help you. Where do we go with this phrase? "I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord."

Well, lifting up a cup, putting my hands on a cup, certainly has that reference to what we'll see in the next verse about a vow, giving something to God. It was called a drink offering. You'd pour it out, an ablation. You would give this cup of something valuable, wine or oil, and you'd pour it out before God. I get that. But if you're going to lift that cup up, you're going to hold it up, it's almost like a trophy of victory. "I am so thankful for what God's done. I have this treasure. I'm offering it to God. I'm so grateful for the salvation that God has given me." Which in the context is small "s", but we've gotten to in verses 9 through 11, certainly my sin, that's a capital "S". I'm freed from the penalty of my sins and he's plucked me out of the bog of the problems that I've had this week. God is a good God. What I'm doing now is realizing this. I will call on the name of the Lord.

Let's just take this, even though it's questionable, it could go either way, let's take this the way he's clearly stated it in verse 2. That is, "Hey, he's inclined his ear to me. I'm going to call on the name of Lord as long as I live. I'm going to keep calling on the Lord." I think that's part of what we have in verse 13, if not the whole of what we have in verse 13. And that is, you know what? Look at the trophy of God being so good to me. I'm going to call on the name of the Lord. He's already said that's his pattern for the rest of his life. He's going to be giving God hope-filled prayers and saying, "I need this. I want this. I'm asking for this." You're thinking, "that's how you love God?" That's exactly how you love God. That's the first thing I want you to do in expressing your love for God.

How do you love the God who saved you and is good to you? Letter "A", second half of the outline. Here it comes: love the Lord with "Hopeful Prayers." Say to the Lord, "Listen, you are a giving, gracious deliver. I need you to deliver me even from hunger today, 'give me this day my daily bread.' I need you to protect me, 'deliver me from evil,' I need to be in a path of righteousness, 'deliver me' and free me 'from temptation.' God, I need 'your will to be done.' Please do it." "God finds pleasure in that? Is that an act of...? Seems like a pretty needy..." That's exactly what God finds pleasure in.

You want to love God, here's a great way to do it. Capitalize on what God is all about. God is a giving God who says this to you, as Jesus taught us: "Ask. Ask." You're invited to ask, you're commanded to ask and it will be given. "Knock, seek." These are words that are given to us and we are to do this because God is a giving God, a gracious God. God finds great pleasure in that. "Well, that's kind of hard to understand." Well, it's not. Think about it. Some of you grandparents, you have a grandchild and it's December and we're heading into Christmas and that grandkid who you love so much comes to you and asks for something. Right? And sees you, not to inflate your head, but the giver of all good things, Grandpa.



Right? I bet you take some joy in that. I bet you see that as an expression of love when the dependent one comes to the one who now is being viewed as the provider of great things. Oh man, you're going to run out right now. "You want that? I'd love to give you that." Do you know what the next statement is from Christ in that passage about asking and seeking and knocking? He says, "What parent is out there who when their kid asks for bread gives them a rock, a stone?" Hey, tell me what parents out there when a kid says, "Hey, please. I mean, I need here a fish. I'd like to eat." And you give him a snake. "Here take this, it's going to bite you." No. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your kids, how much more does your heavenly Father know how to give good gifts to his kids." God would love for you to ask him for more. I've already convicted you, I hope, by saying the Bible would have you ask for your meals every morning, ask for protection in your sleep every night. God loves that. And that's a great expression of your love for him. Love the Lord by giving him more hope-filled prayers as you call on the name of the Lord.

Well, that cup that he's holding up is described in the book of Numbers as a drink offering. One-fourth of a Hin, the old description of a liquid measure. It's about a quart, about a liter. And they would take that and they were instructed if they had thanksgiving and they made a promise to God, they'd say, "I'm so glad you did this, here take this." You were to take that and to pour it out before the Lord. A quart. We see it even when Jacob is told that he's going to be blessed just like Abraham was promised in Genesis 12, now Jake was being promised that, even changing his name to Israel. So he's going to be called what the whole nation would be called. So he's going to have descendants and going to be blessed. In response to that it says he pours this drink offering out to the Lord. Included in the description is oil. Oil and wine, think about that. These are precious commodities. I mean, things you're pouring out there. What a waste to pour it out.

I mean, I have to admit that I like sweet tea. I know I live in Southern California but I like sweet tea. Blame it on my mother from Alabama, but I like sweet tea. All those vacations to Alabama when I was a kid. Back in the day, you couldn't really find it. They didn't have it at Taco Bell. Right? So, I didn't drink much sweet tea. I wasn't going to make it for myself. I don't know why I said that, but (smile). Finally, Chick-fil-A comes to town and they got sweet tea. They sell it by the jug. Did you know that? And McDonald's. I can get a big giant sweet tea for a dollar. That's a win right there. I remember when Chick-fil-A came to town and I realized they had it. You know, I try not to do it that often, maybe twice a month, or maybe once a week, I don't know. But I come back to the office driving through and get a jug of that just liquid gold right there. The sweet tea. And someone comes up to me and meets me at the door and say, "Hey, do you love the Lord?" I say, "Oh, I love the Lord. Amen, brother." And they say, "Prove it. Pour that sweet tea in the bushes." I respond, "Can I love him some other way? I don't want to do that. I want to go enjoy it." Oil and wine, such precious commodities. Things that were there for you to enjoy. And they couldn't pour it out and just kind of run through the drive-thru and get some more. They worked hard for these things. An entire liter they would pour out. Wow!

The drink offering was usually brought with an animal and that animal was then given to the Levites and Levites would feed their families and stuff their faces with it. Wow! It's a hard-earned animal that you've raised and cultivated and cared for and fed. It's your money. The promise was made when you were thankful to God, a vow. It says in verse 14, "I will pay my vows to Yahweh



in the presence of all the people." And if you didn't get it, verse 18. "I will pay my vows to Yahweh in the presence of all of his people." I'm going to pay my vows. In my love and thanksgiving for God, I'm going to make a promise about my finances and I'm going to give finances to God.

You want to know how to love the Lord? Letter "B," with "Financial Gifts." I know you don't want me talking about finances but here it comes. Pay your vows to the Lord. There was a giving that was underlying all of Israel's giving in the Old Testament called the tithe. There was two of them and a triennial tithe, so 23.5%, you had plenty of money that you're supposed to give to the Lord as an obligation. Just like in the New Testament you're required as Paul argued from the law and he reasserts it in the New Testament, you were to give to your church those who sow spiritually into your life, you ought to give materially to, so when we pass the bag or we set up PushPay on your phone, you are required to give. That's a requirement. But then there are these vows in the Bible where you make a decision to give over and above what you normally give.

And so it is we've had examples of that, certainly in the New Testament, when Paul comes to the Corinthians he goes, "Hey, Corinthians, there's something going on in Jerusalem here, we need to help and you need to make a decision about giving, and you need to do it hilariously, you need to do with cheerfulness in your heart. You need to do it because you are excelling in this grace of giving that you have this love for God and the love for the saints and love for the work, just like Solomon said, you ought to love God and give to the building project of the temple. Now you've got the giving you got to give, but then there's this other giving.

I had someone do something super nice for me this week. Super nice. He went the extra mile, stayed the extra hours, spent the extra dollars for me, a brother in Christ and I couldn't help but respond by getting home that night and going online and buying him something. I just couldn't help it. I just was so thankful for that. I went in and I found something and I thought, "Oh, that would be great. I would love that and so I bought that for him and I had it shipped to his house. And as I was doing it I thought to myself, you know what? I've wanted this for a long time and I just think it's too expensive to buy for myself and I just bought it for that dude. That was weird for me.

For some reason I couldn't bring myself to hit click and buy it for myself because it was too much money, but guess what, I pushed right through all of that with joy in my heart because of some brother in this church who did something for me and I thought, I just want to express my thanks to him. That act of brotherly love, it expressed itself in a monetary gift. A monetary gift that really was so extravagant, I'm not trying to brag on my own generosity here, but so extravagant that I wasn't willing... maybe I'm talking about my cheapness, I'm not willing to buy it for myself. Because that's what love does.

Don't tell me you love the Lord if it hasn't filtered into your finances. Just no way. Oh, you can feel constricted. I get all the letters, I get the people complaining, I had it yesterday. If I ever talk about money I had people complaining to me about that. Listen, that tells me more about you than you're telling about me. Right? I'm sorry. I'm tired of apologizing for this. I'm not a televangelist, you understand. I've been introduced as much because I've been on TV preaching, but I'm not a televangelist. Does that even mean anything anymore? I guess that's an 80s



reference. I don't air-conditioned my doghouse. I don't even have a dog. See? That's how frugal I am.

What's the point? The point is this: You ought to love the Lord by expressing that through your finances in giving. Not just your regular giving which you should, you should go over and beyond. We certainly have given you examples of how to do that recently. That didn't happen just as we're looking for ways to have you spend your money, but because together we're trying to get excited about what the Lord is doing. If you want to love the Lord, love him with hopeful prayers, love him with a financial gift.

Love him with this: verses 15 and 16. It needs some untangling here, but look at it. "Precious in the sight of Yahweh is the death of his saints." What? What does that mean? Here's what it means, verse 16, "O Yahweh, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You've loosed my bonds." What does that mean? I am owned by you. I'm your problem. I'm your servant and you're my master, you're in charge, you own me, I'm here to serve you, and when I was in trouble you freed me from the bonds. What bonds? "The snares of death," verse 3, "that have encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol that laid hold of me, my distress and anguish." You freed me from that.

OK. How does that relate to verse 15? Here's how it relates. "Precious in the sight of Yahweh is the death of his saints." The death of the saints, which he counts himself one, is not a positive thing, that's a negative thing. Now if you hear this at a funeral by some preacher who is trying to say, "Isn't it great. God is just in heaven going, "Yay, another one of my people died." That's not what's happening. I know that because Jesus, the God-man, stood at a funeral of his friend Lazarus, and it's the only passage we have where it tells us that Jesus wept. So he's not cheering at the death of the saints. Even though there's going to be a resurrection, even though to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Death is a bad thing.

This is the word that's used to describe the precious metals and costly jewels in the Old Testament. Costly, precious, important. And here's the idea that God looks at death for his kids as a big deal. It ain't going to happen in a slight manner. Jesus put it this way: "a bird doesn't fall from the tree apart from your Father," without the Father just strategically, sovereignly planning that. And then he says; "Aren't you worth far more than many sparrows?" What's the point? You're not going to die with some slight, "Oh, God wasn't looking." Do you have a day you're going to die? Absolutely. God has got it. As we used to say, it is an appointment not an accident. There's going to be a day you're going to die and God has got it planned.

But here's the thing. It's not done lightly. I mean, to God it's a big deal, it's a costly thing. He's removing a light, a testimony, a friend, a Christian in this world. A representative of his. A godly person is leaving the planet. That's a big deal, that's precious to God. He's not going to do that slightly. Put this reference in the margin if it's not already there in your reference Bible: Psalm 72:14. Same idea. "From oppression and violence he redeems their life," the people of God, he redeems them, he frees them from that, "and precious is their blood in his sight." You're not even going to bleed without God going, "Oh! That's my kid. That's my servant." We're God's, we're precious to him. Our death, our pain means something. Our tears matter to God. You've got to



have that perspective because guess what? None of that was felt in verses 10 and 11. Job wasn't thinking that when he was saying, "God you just got me like a tin can here. I'm just a target for your shooting practice." You need to have the right perspective, most importantly, in this context, about yourself.

Number three. You want to love God? Get the right perspective. Get the "Proper Perspective" on you. Get a biblical perspective about what God thinks of you. You know what God really loves? Just like I think in relationships that you have, love relationships, don't you want that person to think rightly about how you think of them? I mean, that's part of the goal of you constantly expressing. I mean, if you're in love you want them to know, "here's what I think of you," and you want them to be convinced of that and not doubt that. Am I right? That's what God wants. You're going to love him by having the right perspective.

Does it lead to pride? I don't think so when you realize that we are naive and ignorant people. We've done wrong, we're transgressors, but you will certainly please God, and you'll love him by saying I going to think biblically about who I am. I'm a gift from the Father to the Son, from the Son to the Father. I am a purchased child of God. That's a big deal. Get a proper perspective on yourself. It's a costly thing if God is going to allow you to go through difficult times. Do you think it was easy for God to watch Job suffer? "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the blood of his saints."

Lastly, verses 17 through 19, he says, "I'm going to offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving. I'm going to call on the name of the Lord." I think in that context, we're talking about praise and thanksgiving. "I'm going to pay my vows to the Lord," there's the repeat of verse 14 and verse 18. "In the presence of all the people." We focused on the vow part, let's focus on this part now, because this is the context. He goes on to say in verse 19, "In the courts of the house of the Lord, in the midst of Jerusalem," a big, busy city, "I'm going to pay my vows." I'm going to tell God he's great. I'm going to give him this sacrifice. I'm going to pour out my drink offerings "in the presence of all of his people, in the courts," not private, public, "in the midst of Jerusalem." I'm going to do it so everyone hears it.

And then it ends with this. Look back through it all. It's "I this, I that, I this, I that, my eyes, my tears, my feet, my stumbling. All of it's me, me, me, my. And then finally we get to the last word in Hebrew: "Halel-U-Jah" translated here, "Praise the Lord." Halal. If you looked that up in Brown-Driver-Briggs, if you're a Bible student or a seminary student, you'll know that. It's the classic and authoritative Hebrew lexicon. Look up definition number one of the word Halal. You'll see this word: "to boast," "to brag." That's what this word means. We don't like the word "boast" or "brag" because you're trying to do your kids not to do it, you're trying to get your friends not to do it, you're trying to get yourself not to do it. But that's because you're bragging about you and you don't want people bragging about themselves.

Jeremiah 9 says if you're going to brag, there's nothing wrong with bragging, just make sure you're bragging about someone who's worthy of the brag and that's God. "Let the wise man not boasts in his wisdom, let the rich may not boast in his riches, let not the strong man boast in his strength, let the one who boast boast in the Lord." Boast in a God who does good things, who's





just and righteous. Paul references that passage in Jeremiah 9 twice in his writings. He says this: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

If you want to love God start bragging about him. Letter "D" boast about God. Love the Lord with "Boasting About Him," and do it in public. Make sure people know it. Brag about the Lord. If you brag about the Lord, you're going to want people to brag with you. As a matter of fact, it turns from a testimonial "I, I, my, I" to do this: "Halel-U." Right? Lu is the second person masculine imperative. That's what it does to that verb. And then Jah is God's name, Jah. at least it is the abbreviation of Yahweh. So praise you, speaking of sweet tea. Praise you all, praise y'all, Yahweh. Praise the Lord. Translated for us, used 26 - 28 times in the Old Testament. Some old translations just transliterate it - Hallelujah. And that concept, that word is a calling, it's a bold thing to do.

It's like when you get a new car and you want people not just to... you don't want to just say, "Isn't this a great car?" You want them to say, well that's the point, "Isn't this a great car?" You want them to say it. Right? You got a grandkid who hits a home run, you want everyone to say, "Look! Look at it. Wasn't that great?" You're asking a question. I want you to say that's great. That's the calling of someone... It's a bold thing, it's a pushy thing to do. "God is great, he's been good to me. You ought to praise him," and in the context here, "for what he's done for me."

I'm going to be pushy here at the end of this message. I want you to praise the Lord and boast and brag about God because of what he has done. Not just for me. The good news is I want you to focus on something he's done for us. And maybe not all of us but half of us. Half of us who have seen with a consistent provision of God in the past that I'm saying with verse 2, listen, "He's inclined his ear to me in the past. Hey, I'm going to call on him as long as I live." There are two things here. I want to be grateful about God's answer and I want to continue to pray with hope-filled prayers about the future.

(At this point, Pastor Mike moved the service to the new construction in Building 145 of the Compass Bible Institute across the street from the main auditorium.)