

## LOVING GOD WITH GREATNESS! ©

Mark 12:28-34

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***What is keeping us from using all of our bodily powers to loving the Lord our God?***

### I. LAST TIME:

In my expositional series on Mark 12:28-34 I raised the following question:

What does it mean to love [agape] God with all your heart *and* with all your soul *and* with all your mind, *and* with all your strength (Mark 12:30)?

In my study of the Greatest Commandment I discovered the following truths:

- a. The “*heart*” emphasizes your deep-seated affections, your inner desires; it is the control center of your human personality;
- b. The “*soul*,” while it is a rich concept with a variety of meaning, we can say at least it emphasizes your self-conscious thought life.
- c. The “*mind*” emphasizes your capacity to think, reason, understand, and make judgments.
- d. “*Strength*” emphasizes your bodily powers (physical & emotional capabilities).
- e. We also discovered two other significant words:
  1. The word “*and*” (found in the Greek) is between each phrase, given equal emphasis and attention to each phrase (you shall love God with all your heart AND with all your soul, AND with all your mind, AND with all your strength.

2. The word “*with*” denotes origin. Thus, we are to love the Lord our God from out of all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Therefore, when you place your trust in Jesus Christ as Savior you are given a new mind, a new heart, and a new will. When you the child of God, exercises your mind toward God to know Him, your heart to love Him, and your will to obey Him, then you are in fellowship with God. In his classic and unforgettable work, *Designed to be Like Him*, J. Dwight Pentecost makes the following observation:

...if any area of your personality is not in harmony with Him, then you are not enjoying fellowship with God. And because fellowship with Him is the reason we were created and then re-created in His image [2 Cor. 5:17; 3:18; Romans 8:29; 1 Cor.2:16; Col. 3:10], we cannot glorify God apart from that fellowship.

### II. THIS TIME:

I want to conclude my series on loving God by taking a closer look at what it means to love God with all your *bodily powers*. Now, in order to really understand how Jesus is using the word, “*strength*,” we will need to turn to various Scripture passages in order to gain a really robust understanding of what it looks like to love God with our strength. So, be ready! I’ve titled this message, “*Loving God with Greatness*.” Hopefully this title captures what it looks like to love God with one’s strength.

Now many of us prize success. For those of us who do, we not only earnestly desire success for ourselves, but also for our children and those we care about. No matter what culture you examine, it seems success is valued, whether it is hunting down an animal to feed a tribe to climbing the corporate ladder in an honorable way. Success can be very honorable!<sup>1</sup>

See, unless something is wrong with our faculties, we relish in the experience of individual and social achievements. The experience of

<sup>1</sup> Check out my December 2011 blog article, “How to Recover from the Malnourishment of Success” at [www.prshockley.org](http://www.prshockley.org) under (*Paul’s Pensees*). This article deals with the problem of anemia among some of the people who achieve their long-term goals.

great accomplishments, especially noble ones, can generate a beautiful sense of personal fulfillment, satisfaction, and rest; we find achievement to be a good thing. We value success and are relieved when our goals are realized. Our ability to work through certain problems, combined with our accomplishments, can become a source of legitimate or proper pride and delight.

It is very interesting to see what reaching success looks like if one studies what takes place at the Super Bowl. We have two successful teams who will strive to win the highest sports title. We shout and scream for our favorite team to succeed. We carefully watch each play and will quickly complain when one or more make a mistake. But if you look more closely, what do we see when you watch each player? At this point in the football season, we have a tendency to see each player using every aspect of their physical and mental bodily powers in order to become this year's champions. Every movement is intentional, every movement is maximized, and every ounce of every resource is used to try to win the championship title.

What if we were to apply the same type of bodily resources these football players do to loving God? What would it take to even apply this same type of mindset, drive, discipline, and longings these football players have to loving God with greatness? If we were to love God with the same type of disposition that these Super Bowl football players do, I suspect we would be more inflamed for God, more used by God, and touch more lives by God for His glory than we are right now. What is holding us back from pursuing Him knowing that at any moment we might be raptured (cf. 1 Thessalonian 4:13-18; Revelation 3:10) and in His presence before the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 2 John 8)?

See just as these football players are using their minds, muscles, refined skills, and bringing all the lessons (the good, bad, and ugly) from their past to this particular moment in time, we are called to do the same; to love God with greatness in our moment-by-moment living.

These football players are re-directing every resource to reach their dream, their goal. Thousands and thousands of hours of practicing, studying, doing, corrections, guidance, and careful listening go into the Super Bowl experience. This is what it looks like to love God with your bodily powers. Just as these football are mandated to use every bodily

power to try to win the Super Bowl in front of millions of fans, you and are called to do the same when it comes to loving God with our bodies. People are watching you! God is watching you!

But we also have to recognize a significant difference between ourselves and the football players. We cannot do it in our own strength; self-discipline is insufficient. Let me put it this way, God has extended an invitation for you to join Him, to worship Him, to exalt Him, and He even offers you His power to do it through you, but the question remains: What is holding you back? What is keeping you and me from loving God with greatness?

Consider the following seven obstacles that might be holding you back (this list is not exhaustive):

**First, the problem of false pleasures.** Some of us are intoxicated by false pleasures. In fact, I contend that the indulgence into false pleasures is the most obvious reason why we do not love God with all of our bodily powers. False pleasures are those activities that take us away from making our life count for something great. Why? False pleasures are illicit or illegitimate pleasures that fall outside of God's purposes. While false pleasures offer much, they *extract* from us our best resources, skills, and dreams (e.g., adultery). On the other hand, true pleasures are those activities that align one's will with God's will. For example, meeting the practical needs of others, enjoying intimacy with marriage, genuinely loving others, and serving our community with greatness are all true pleasures. But when we embrace false pleasures, as exemplified in Oscar Wilde's infamous character, Dorian Gray's quest for pleasure or Gollum's lust for the ring of power in J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, we become our own worst enemies. False pleasure changes us into broken people with ruined lives (e.g., alcohol abuse; pornography). Sadly, the pain does end with ourselves but strikes the hearts of those who love us dearly.

As a result of the intoxication of false pleasures we have cultivated a lust for false pleasure; they are turning into appetites and habits. As a result, we are becoming lost in an obscure fog, a stupor, a state of dissipation with no moral compass: we do not know who we are or where we are going. Though we may the dream to love God with greatness, our souls are filled with regret in view of what we are becoming. Moreover, we cannot seem to get beyond the mind-numbing concoctions of pleasure. Like Gandalf said to Frodo about

Gollum's pursuit of the ring of power: "And now the Ring has drawn him [Gollum] here. He will never be rid of his need for it. He hates and loves the ring, as he hates and loves himself." Numbness grows.

**Second, the problem of distraction.** What is keeping us from offering our very best God is that we have become distracted by other things. Even good goals can distract us from our reaching what is best. As a result, our limited source of energy, resources, and time are "spent," scattered like "*chaff in the wind*." We try to do better, but because of distractions, we can only seem to offer God our leftovers.

**Third, the problem of impulsiveness.** Related to above, some of us have become too impulsive in the way we live our lives. We follow the changing winds with little or no serious attention given to the types of activities that will help us best love God with greatness. We have these dreams about serving God on His terms, but we allow ourselves to become distracted by people, objects, activities, and ideas that continually come in and out of our lives. All too often, these "interfering" activities, while often popular and sensational, are trivial, unimportant, and malnourishing; they do not qualitatively "nourish" are disposition, inform our minds, refine our good habits, or meaningfully contribute to the control center of our personality in order to offer God our very best.

Sadly, because of our whimsical nature, our lives are like "*driftwood*," following along wherever the currents lead us. For some us, when we drift, we typically float along the path of least resistance. Aimlessly wandering along, snagging ourselves on whatever is before us. As a result, we have a shallow walk with God, a weak faith, and are perhaps riddled by indecisiveness.

**Fourth, the problem of pride.** There are those of us who most certainly aim for the top in wanting to love God with greatness. But our goals are rooted in pride for we demand to serve God on our terms and not His terms. As a result, when we achieve what we want for God, we find that we are not satisfied; it is not what we thought it would be. The results are not what you expected them to be. Why... because we did it our way and not His way? Thus, our lives become broken by repeated experiences of failure. Sadly, it is in the feelings of failure that bitterness finds fertile ground to grow.

**Fifth, the problem of personal failure.** Some of us have simply given up on loving God with greatness because of personal failure. We have tasted the experience of sin and it is too bitter for us to swallow. Failure because of sin is not only quite embarrassing, but can also be terribly painful. Even with one encounter with significant sin (e.g., having an extramarital affair) or the growing catalogue of small sins (e.g., telling white lies), melancholy, depression, and even despondency can emerge and become our closest "friends." With the help of these "friends," we may eventually come to the conclusion that recovery from sin is not possible or there is no way God can forgive us for this error. We've crossed the line; the dye has been cast. God will not forgive me and if He does, He sure won't use me. So, we wallow in the black tar of self-pity. And no matter how many times we are encouraged to "pick ourselves up," as well intended as those remarks may be, we classify them as "empty exhortations," "wishful thoughts," and "Pollyanna notions." In fact, we may even mock such statements and look upon those who point us to the cross with scorn!

**Sixth, the problem of spiritual entitlement.** The problem with spiritual entitlement is that we claim that it is our privilege, our right, and our prerogative to receive instant spiritual success and maturity. Since we have become His children, we have started asking "God, where is my Thomas Kinkade life?! God, I thought you wanted to make me happy!" As a result of this bad belief, we only want the mountain top experiences and reject every valley that comes our way. Instead of allow God to refine us through good, bad, and ugly events that come our way, we demand that God turn us into the servant-leaders without little input, responsibilities, training, and refining fire on our part. This indulgent notion is the plight of the Christian "sluggard." "God, make me successful in loving you... but will you so kindly do it for me! Studying the Word can be so boring! God, just give me the instant download!"

One seminary student turned to his professor and said, "I intend to be the next Chuck Swindoll." The professor looked at him and asked, "Are you willing to pay the price He did?" So, when we don't receive the success that we think we deserve, turning us instantly into people like Amy Carmichael, Edith Schaeffer, Chuck Swindoll, and Charles Spurgeon, we turn around and blame God. Sadly, some of us even become disillusioned with Christianity altogether.

**And seventh, the problem of ignorance (Phil. 2:12-13):**

We fail to recognize the symbiotic relationship between what we are called to and what God will do, and this generates disappointment and chronic failure.

1. See, some of us are told that what it means to love God is to serve Him in His name but in your own strength. But that only takes you so far.
2. Others are told to allow Him to do it all through you but that demands little responsibilities on your part. If you are the elect, you will grow. Just let Him do it. If you don't grow that informs you that you are not the elect!
3. Others are told that you must let go and allow Him to do it through you. In other words, you are called only to "let go and let God." But that is incorrect as well. Loving God does not mean serving Him in His strength apart from your strength.
4. Others are told to wait for the Holy Spirit to baptize you in fire. Once you receive this second anointing, then you will love God with greatness. We wait and pray and wait and pray for the baptizing fire of the Holy Spirit to come down, but it does not happen.
5. No, as we learned from our study in Philippians 2:12-13, we are called to do certain things and He will do certain things though us. Francis Schaffer calls it active-passivity; I call it the doing and undergoing.<sup>2</sup>

The bottom line is that we need to analyze why we do not love our God with greatness. What are the factors? Are we disillusioned about what God expects from us? Are we misinformed? Are we just plain lazy? Are we too preoccupied with other matters to offer God our very best? Is it sin? Are we embarrassed to serve Him with greatness? Are we afraid that He will demand something from us?

These are questions ladies and gentlemen that I ask myself? It is so convicting because I see how easily misdirected I am.

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<sup>2</sup> See my lesson, "Balancing the Christian Life: The Doing & Undergoing" under spiritual life tab at my website: [www.prshockley.org](http://www.prshockley.org)

### III. STUDY OF "STRENGTH":

But let us turn to our Bibles and examine this word, "strength," more closely. While I believe you got the picture already what is asked of you when it comes to loving God with your bodily powers, let us turn to Deuteronomy 6:5:

- A. In Deuteronomy 6:5 it states, *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might*<sup>3</sup>
- B. Just like in the N.T. the word "*might*" appears last in the command." Remember in Mark 12:30 the word "strength" is listed last in this greatest commandment.
- C. When we first see this commandment in the O.T., in Deuteronomy 6:5, you see that the word "*might*" used.
- D. This word "*might*" in essence, means "*strength, power.*" *It is the exerting of force in a situation* (2 Kings 23:25).<sup>4</sup> We see an example of what this looks like in the life of King Josiah.
- E. Consider 2 Kings 23:25: King Josiah!
  1. One king who exemplified obedience to this command is Josiah. Like his grandfather Hezekiah, who was known all throughout the Jewish world as one who trusted the Lord (2 Kings 18:5), Josiah was a righteous, godly king.
  2. In 622/1 BC, the "book of the law" was found during the course of Temple repairs (2 Kings 22:8-10; 2 Ch. 34:8-18). It is commonly accepted that this scroll was, or contained, the book of Deuteronomy. This collection of ancient law, fanning the already burning feeling of

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<sup>3</sup> Cited Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; [2 Kgs. 23:25].

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Dt 6:5.

<sup>4</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), DBLH 4394, #2.

nationalism, led to further political and religious reform. On the basis of this book, Josiah obliterated pagan worship (2 Kings 23:4-14), including the false priests (kemārîm, Akk. kumru; 2 Ki. 23:5) and the altar at Bethel (2 Ki. 23:15; cf. 1 Ki. 13:2). He and the people made a new covenant with Yahweh (2 Ki. 23:1-3; 2 Ch. 34:29-33) which would make this book the law of the land. He also celebrated the Passover in such a grand style as had not been seen since the days of Samuel (2 Ki. 23:21-23; 2 Ch. 35:1-19).<sup>5</sup>

3. In fact, 2 Kings 23:25 describe Josiah as follows.

*“Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.”*

4. What did Josiah do? He very consciously observed and was obedient to God’s law. He removed all informal practitioners from Israel: mediums and spirits which God had condemned. He destroyed all household gods that were worshiped as sources of prosperity and prosperity. They along with all other idols throughout Judah and Jerusalem were destroyed. Moreover, household gods were worshiped as sources of prosperity and as oracles. These were destroyed as well as all other idols throughout Judah and Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup>
5. Thus, we see that Josiah loved God with all his “might” and this is demonstrated in his personal life and rulership over Israel as an expression of worship to God. So, great was his love for God that the Bible describes him who fulfilled this command in Deuteronomy 6:4...in a scroll that was once lost but was found and embraced.

<sup>5</sup> D. R. W. Wood, *New Bible Dictionary* (InterVarsity Press, 1996, c1982, c1962), 615.

<sup>6</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary:: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:584.

- F. In the N.T. the word “**strength**” [ἰσχύς (*ischys*), ἰσχυρός (*ischyros*), ἰσχυρία (*ischyria*)] has two basic nuances:

1. **Capability:** This word implies personal potential (Mk 12:30, 33; Lk 10:27; Eph 1:19; 6:10; 2Th 1:9; 2Pe 2:11; Rev 5:12; 7:12; Lk 11:11);
2. **Strength:** Might, power (1Peter 4:11).<sup>7</sup>

- G. On this latter nuance that “**strength**” (*ischyos*) is “**might**” and “**power**” consider the following way in which it is used in 1 Peter 4:11. Please turn to 1 Peter 4:11:

***“If anyone speaks let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone minister, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

1. Now in 1 Peter 4:11 Peter divides Christian service into two general categories: the one who **speaks** (*lalei*) and the one who **serves** (*diakonei*; cf. v. 10).
2. These two general ministry functions often overlap. But what is common to both is *dependence* upon God’s gracious provision. The reason for relying on God’s words (cf. Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12) and strength (*ischyos*, “power”) is that God will receive the praise through Jesus Christ.
3. In fact, at the mention of Christ’s name Peter offered an appropriate word of praise as a benediction: To Him be the glory and the power (*kratos*, “might”) forever and ever. Amen. (Cf. the similar benediction in 1 Peter 5:11.) The praise and credit for Christian ministry should always be given to Christ.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), GKG2709.

<sup>8</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:854.

- H. So, in this passage we see that these two ministry functions, speaking and serving are not to be done in one's own strength. Rather, they should use the power God gives them to do His will.
- I. So, in N.T. Greek we have the nuance, "strength" which emphasized "might" and "power." But the word "**strength**" also can be used to refer to **capability, implying personal potential** (Mk 12:30, 33; Lk 10:27; Eph 1:19; 6:10; 2Th 1:9; 2Pe 2:11; Rev 5:12; 7:12; Lk 11:11);
- J. It is this nuance that used in Mark 12:30. But before we unpack the meaning of this nuance in the context of the Greatest Commandment, I want to show you how it is used elsewhere. This will enrich our understanding of the way it is used here. **Please turn your Bibles to Ephesians 6:10:**
- K. Ephesians 6:10: "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*"
- L. Now the word translated "*be strong*" does not mean we are to "*strengthen*" ourselves, flex our muscles, and know 12 forms of martial arts until we have become warriors of hard driven excellence. Rather, the grammatical construction here implies that we who are set apart to spiritual battle are to receive strength from someone else. Therefore, we could re-translate this passage to read, "***Finally, my brethren, be strengthened in the Lord.***" In sum, we are not battle in our own strength, but in the strength given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ.
1. How is this possible? Where do we receive this strength? Look closely at the passage again: "*my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*" So, instead of looking to our muscles and skills, instead of looking to a gifted commander and tactical officer, we are to "*direct our thoughts to the Lord, in whom we can have complete confidence as the One who will strengthen us for our daily conflict.*"<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Pentecost, *Designed to be Like Him*, 215.

- M. Now go back to 1 Ephesians 1:15-23 though I will be focusing on verses 19-23. Starting from verse 15 the passage states as follow (**Read Ephesians 1:15-23**):
1. In his opening prayer for the believers at the church at Ephesus, Paul prays that they might know "***what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the workings of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places***" (Eph. 1:19-20).
  2. In this passage, particularly, verses 19-20 He expresses his desire for the Ephesian believers to know the greatness of the power which saved them.
  3. In verse 19-23 Paul brings attention to God's incomparably great power for us who believe. The word "*power*" (*dynamis*; cf. 3:20) **means a spiritually dynamic and living force**. This power of God is directed toward believers. Paul then used three additional words to describe God's power.
- N. Look at the passage again and I will point them out to you. **Eph. 1:19** "and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working [*energeian*] of the strength [*kratous*] of His might [*ischyos*]<sup>10</sup> which He brought [*energeo*] about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,<sup>10</sup>" These three words are:
1. "***according to the working***" (*energeian*, "energetic power," from which comes the Eng. "energy");

<sup>10</sup> **2479** *ισχύς* [*ischus* /is-khoos/] n f. From a derivative of *is* (force, cf *eschon*, a form of 2192); TDNT 3:397; TDNTA 378; GK 2709; 11 occurrences; AV translates as "strength" four times, "power" twice, "might" twice, "ability" once, "mightily + 1722" once, and "mighty" once. **1** ability, force, strength, might. *Additional Information*: For synonyms see entries 970, *bia*; 1411, *dunamis*; 1753, *energeia*; 1849, *exousia*; and 2904, *kratos*. This is a footnote just to note the relationship of all these words that deal with power, strength, and might.

- b. **“of the strength”** (*kratous*, “power that overcomes resistance,” as in Christ’s miracles; this word is used only of God, never of believers);
- c. **“power”** (*ischyos*) of God’s inherent strength (*ischyos*) which He provides (cf. 6:10; 1 Peter 4:11). This magnificent accumulation of words for power under scores the magnitude of God’s “great power” available to Christians.<sup>11</sup>

O. Listen to the words of Dr. J Dwight Pentecost:

“When God saves a person, he brings into effect the same power that raised Jesus Christ from physical death, elevated Him to glory, and seated Him at the right hand of the Father. The power that brought Christ out of the tomb after He bore out sins on the cross is the same power that operates to bring us into spiritual life and salvation. This is also the same power mentioned in Ephesians 6:10 as ‘the power of His might.’ That awesome, incomparable power is available to each one of us as we are strengthened in the Lord by relying on Him.”<sup>12</sup>

- P. Interestingly, in 2 Peter 2:11 the same word for strength we are examining also used with reference to angels; though in a different degree they share this strength. Moreover, doxologies which acknowledge and magnify God’s eternal being and Godhead ascribe *ἰσχύς* to God and His Christ in passages such as Rev. 5:12; 7:12.
- Q. Listen to Revelation 5:12: **“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom and Strength and honor and glory and blessing!”**
- R. Let us now turn to Mark 12:30:

<sup>11</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:620.

<sup>12</sup>Pentecost, *Designed to be Like Him*, 215-6.

- a. *ἰσχύς*, **“ability of man,”** Mk. 12:30: all human strength must be concentrated on the love of God. This is the teaching of the first commandment.<sup>13</sup>

S. This word stresses the factuality of the ability; the stress of this word falls on you having **the ability** to love the Lord with your whole strength. It is an issue of capability. Let me retranslate Mark 12:30 thus far combining all three previous lessons together.

***And you shall agape love the Lord your God with all you deep seated affections and with all your conscious thought life and with all your abilities.***

#### IV. HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?

A. What are indicators or “road signs” that you are loving God from out of your bodily powers:

*I am loving God from out of my whole strength (bodily powers) when...*

1. My lifestyle reflects the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27);
2. I’m a God-honoring steward of what God has given me;
3. I control my tongue (James 3);
4. I physically flee from sin;
5. I refrain from violence;
6. I demonstrate agape love by meeting the practical needs of others;
7. Corporately worship God;
8. I consistently surrender my personal plans and goals in order to minister to those people God placed in my life;
9. I mourn for acts of rebellion against God personally and sociologically;
10. I celebrate Gods’ perfections;
11. I turn away from my habitual sins;
12. I promote physical modesty;
13. I turn away from the allurements that appeal to sensuality;
14. I pursue sexual intimacy the way God has intended;

<sup>13</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 Edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 Compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976), 3:399.

15. I redirect my energy, resources, and time in such a way to “magnify” my intimacy with God;
16. I “magnify” God by my death;
17. I press myself to glorify God in the midst of a world that is opposed to God;
18. When I consistently bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23);
19. I cultivate God-honoring habits (virtues) and resist the formation of bad habits (vices);
20. I live the utmost to the glory of God;
21. My testimony before others consistently reflects faithfulness;
21. I pour my life out by being used by God to make disciples of Jesus Christ (Mark 8:34);
22. I deny myself of those things that inflame the frailties of the flesh, contribute to the counterfeit kingdom, and honor Satan;
23. I do not allow myself to in situations that might lead to moral compromise and corruption;
24. I do not risk my life recklessly;
25. I reject a life of laziness or mediocrity;
26. I refuse to live a life of mediocrity but one of moral and intellectual excellence;
27. I’m physically discipline;
28. I consistently practice humility;
29. I acknowledge everything I have and all that I’m belongs to the Lord Almighty;
30. I fulfill my promises;
31. I live a lifestyle of evangelism;
32. I’m divinely enabled;
33. I listen to God and heed His truth;
34. I don’t allow situations to dictate my spirituality;
35. Precepts of Scripture are practiced;
36. When I serve the unlovely with the love of Jesus Christ;
37. I listen to those who are wise and spiritually mature;
38. I meditate upon God’s Word;
39. I cultivate an intense prayer life;
40. I refuse to associate with the idolatrous;
41. Live a life of grace and gratitude;
42. I reverently fear God;
43. I protect my family;
44. I contend for the Christian faith;
45. I physically work hard;
46. I keep a clear conscience;
47. I rejoice in the way God has made me;

48. I speak the truth in love and love in truth;
49. I inculcate Scripture into virtues;
50. I’m controlled by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 5:18).

*I’m not loving God with my whole strength (bodily powers) when...*

1. My lifestyle reflects rebellion against God;
2. My lifestyle reflects indifference to God;
3. My lifestyle reflects mediocrity; Christ is only a part of my life;
4. My lifestyle reflects ignorance of the things of God;
5. My lifestyle is entangled in affairs of corruption, compromise;
6. I seek to serve myself;
7. I pursue evil;
8. I’m lazy;
9. I commit gluttony;
10. I allow my situation to dictate my spiritual life;
11. I don’t control my tongue;
12. I associate with debauchery and sensuality;
13. I’m involved in premarital sex and extramarital affairs;
14. I’m impulsive;
15. I walk in the flesh and not in the Spirit;
16. I’m in debt
17. I’m prideful;
18. Overemphasize the physical over and against the spiritual;
19. I’m self-centered;
20. I don’t listen to others;
21. I choose not to make my life count for something Great;
22. I use others to accomplish my own goals;
23. I take pleasure in reckless hate;
24. I promote sin;
25. I only do what I need to do in order to get by;
26. I live recklessly;
27. I violate the moral, natural law written upon the heart;
28. I grieve the conscience;
29. I quench the Holy Spirit’s influence in my life;
30. I bear the fruit of iniquity.

A lifestyle of Jesus Christ is exemplified when I make it my life’s ambition to be pleasing to Him (2 Corinthians 5:9-10): To live a life pleasing to God the believer needs to realize that it is not merely a decision, but a life of consecration. It is not merely a life of consecration, but lifestyle separated from the things of the world. But

it is not merely separation, but transformation by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:1-2).

B. Is it even possible to love God with greatness?

1. Consider the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:13: Look very closely at Philippians 4:13. Take note of both of these words “can” and “strengthens.”
2. “can.” *ischuo* /is·khoo·o. The Apostle Paul uses the same “can” that Jesus uses in Mark 12:30 when he refers to “*strength*.” The stress falls on being able to do all things.
3. Thus, it is Christ who is infusing His strength into the Apostle Paul and this is reflected in the word, “strengthens.” Paul’s capacity is in harmony, yielded, and dependent upon the Lord. While he seeks to obedient, God gives him the strength to do so. It is like swimming in harmony with a current. He is swimming with all of his might but the current is carrying him along.
4. So, if the apostle Paul can love God with greatness, so can you!

C. How can I love God with greatness? As I thought about how I can love God with my all strength I was immediately drawn to Romans 6:4-13 where we are presented with three central truths regarding the use of our bodies. In this passage he states that we are not to present our bodies to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present our bodies to God as instruments for righteousness. In sum, Paul offers three truths or steps to help us be all that God has called us to be—especially in view of our appetites of our former rule of life and the culture we find ourselves. I believe this is very applicable to loving God with all our “bodily powers.”

1. **Step 1:** You must know—really come to understand that we are not who we used to be. Therefore, we cannot live like we used to. ***Listen to Romans 6:6.***

- a. The fact is that through union with Christ the old you died and sin’s authority over you was ended; you are a new person with a new power to live for God as your new master.
- b. Understand what is already true of you. God has declared the old you dead and the new you righteous in His eyes.
- c. As Pentecost explains:  
  
The fact is not changed by your acceptance or rejection, your belief or unbelief, your knowledge of the fact or your ignorance of it. God says you are crucified, and in God’s sight you are a crucified one. God is not asking you to add to the value of the death of Christ by crucifying yourself again and again.<sup>14</sup>

2. **Step 2: Consider.** You must accept as true what God has said about you and keep it at always at the forefront of your thinking. Listen to Romans 6:11.
  - a. This word “consider” is the first imperative found in Romans and it is in present tense. It is our responsibility and something we are to do continually.
  - b. This word, “consider” from a Greek word that means “to calculate, to take into account, to figure.” It is a financial term, an accounting term. Rather than meaning “act like it is so,” it means “reckon it true. Enter it in the ledger. Record it in the creases of your brain.” ...By calculating (considering) all of this and by taking into account the truth we know to be a fact, we *dethrone* sin and refuse to obey our lusts any longer.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Designed to be Like Him*, p. 121.

<sup>15</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*, p. 121.

c. It focuses on the activity of the mind, but incorporates the whole person. The heart believes and the will acts on what the mind thinks. The power is in the truth, not in our thinking. But, thinking the truth enables us to believe and act on it.

d. Dr. Bill Lawrence of Dallas Seminary describes it very well:

It is imperative to remember that reckoning is not a “make believe” kind of response, a wish trying to come true, neither positive thinking nor possibility thinking, but reality thinking. We are simply reckoning *what is true* about us because of our union with Christ. Failure to do this will result in defeat; faithfulness in doing this will result in the experience of God’s constant triumph.<sup>16</sup>

e. Let me put it this way: we must change the way we think about ourselves and about our relationship with God. We must stop seeing ourselves as we formerly were in Adam and start seeing ourselves as we are presently in Christ. Therefore, those who love God with greatness are not those who have psyched themselves up from some crippled state of slavery to sin. Instead they have laid hold of the liberating truth of the new person they are and the new power they have in union with Christ. They can say no to sin (Rom.6:12) because they choose to believe what God has said about them is true.

3. **Third step: Present.** Act on what you know and believe to be true by rebelling against sin’s rule in your life and by offering your whole self to God for righteous service. Listen to the words of Romans 6:12-13.

a. Paul allows no room for our attitude to be divorced from our action, our belief from our behavior. Sin no

<sup>16</sup> William D. Lawrence, Unpublished Spiritual Life Notes 1999, Unit 6, p. 8.

longer has the right to rule our lives and we have no reason to allow it to usurp authority. A second imperative follows hard after the first. It too is a call to continuous action (present active imperative). Sin exerts influence most often through our “*mortal body*” and always with “*evil desires.*” (6:12).

b. “**Instruments**” is an old word for tools used in a workshop or weapons used in war. Our bodies are like weapons used in war. We must choose which of two military commanders will have the use of our weapons (body). Both the negative and the positive are included. We must withhold the use of our weapons by the old commander (sin nature) and actively devote our weapons to God our new commander-in-chief.

c. Lastly, it is important to notice that Paul changes tenses in this verse as he moves from the negative to the positive. The first “**present**” in the present tense indicates continuous action. **Every day** we must deny the sin nature the use of our bodies.

d. The second “**present**” is aorist tense indicates that this “present” is also to be a qualitative mindset, a lifestyle commitment of our bodies to God. This is in keeping with Paul’s use of the aorist in the once for all presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice in Romans 12:1. Noting that it is the same word, but different tense, to the struggling believer Paul says, “Stop debating it, start doing it!”

## V. CONCLUSION:

Therefore, the opportunity is before us to love God with greatness! Just like the Super Bowl athletes, we are called to something fantastic, and someone altogether Glorious, our God and King. Others are watching! They have heard so many times that they can become freed from the penalty of sin. But they are watching to see if you are really free from the power of sin. Therefore, take all that you and all that you have become all that God has you to be but do so in His strength. If you are believer who has placed your faith in Jesus Christ, believing

that He is God, who died on the cross for your sins and rose bodily from the dead. The bottom line is that the issue is no longer capability; this issue is your willingness to live for Him.