

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: SECTION THREE

Appendix D – Motivation That Makes a Difference

Since the three responses in regard to obedience for our consideration are so critical to maximizing the benefit of our trials, we must examine the underlying motive for obedient behavior, especially when we are suffering. In a word, that motive is *love*. Adversity puts the love of the Christian for God to the test. If we respond with obedience to God during times of trial, such positive conduct will be motivated by love. This is why an all-out love for God is the greatest of all the commandments (Matthew 22:36-38). It is also the reason Jesus makes obedience to Him the ultimate litmus test of love *for* Him, when He says in John 14:15, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” The motive of love is distinct from duty, as confirmed by our Savior in addressing the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-4. Being motivated by a sense of obligation as a Christian may be sufficient in normal circumstances. But dutiful compliance will prove woefully inadequate when the believer finds himself in the furnace of affliction. If we are to successfully emerge from our trials closer to God and more like Christ, then a strong and sincere love for God must energize our obedience.

When Jesus addresses an unbelieving audience in Matthew 11, He concludes with a beautiful and gentle invitation (11:28-30). It involves coming to Him, in order to receive rest for their souls, as well as taking His yoke upon them, in order to learn from Him. He even refers to His yoke as being easy and light. However, when addressing the twelve disciples, who had already experienced salvation and a large measure of spiritual growth, Jesus issues a challenge that is anything but easy and light. So, in Matthew 10:37-39, He says the following –

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and He who has lost His life for My sake will find it.”

Why did Christ confront His most advanced and committed disciples in this manner? The context of Matthew 10 gives us the answer. Jesus was preparing His best men for the suffering they would inevitably encounter as His followers. From v16 onward, He warns that in serving Him they would enter into dangerous and difficult territory. If they were to survive and even thrive in the midst of adversity, their love for Him would have to prove supreme. Jesus knew that challenging them to affirm this love in advance would be the very best way to prepare them for demonstrating such love when it would matter the most.

Is your love for Jesus Christ supreme? Do you love Him more than anyone or anything else? The greatest opportunity any Christian will ever have in answering those questions resides in the realm of personal suffering.