

# Those whom I love

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'd like now to turn your thoughts to the passage we read in Revelation chapter 3 and the words that we have from verse 19. Revelation chapter 3 verse 19.

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, be zealous and repent. Those whom I love. Jesus had a word of commendation to the other six churches that are mentioned in the opening chapters of this book.

And he had great words of commendation because he knew exactly the position of every congregation spiritually.

So those six were commended except this last church. The churches were commended except this last one.

[ 1 : 08 ] And although Jesus had very strong words to say to them, he spoke with compassion. Because he still loved the church.

Even though it wasn't what it once was. Even though they had wandered from the standards that he has set for them.

He still loved them. And he wanted them to be in the place where he could bless them. So, what we have before us is a striking example of the care, the compassion of the Lord for all his people as individuals.

But also for his congregations where God's people meet together. And there are a number of things that I want us to notice.

And the first is the most obvious. The devotion he expresses. Those whom I love. The devotion he expresses.

[ 2 : 26 ] But then in the second place, the discipline they'll experience. I reprove and discipline. You have the duty that he expects.

Be zealous therefore. And repent. First of all then, the devotion that he expresses to this church in Laodicea.

Those whom I love. I'm sure there are times we wonder why God loves us.

Maybe there are times we wonder if he does love us. And yet to all his people, he reminds them that he loves them.

And nothing is able to separate any of his people from that love. So, there are three things that I want us to notice. About this devotion that Jesus is speaking about here.

[ 3 : 28 ] The first is this. This love is unchanging. You see, there are times when we are aware of letting him down.

There are times when we may be afraid that we have let him down. Now, somebody said this and I found it very interesting. His plan for us has already taken into account our failings, our faults, and our fears.

The Lord doesn't want us to doubt his love for us. Just think of that.

He does not want you to doubt the love that he has for you. This love is unchanging.

This love is eternal. So, when you think of this devotion that he speaks of, then think of this. It's a love that is unchanging.

[ 4 : 46 ] But then also, it is a love that is unique. This love is like no other love.

Jesus, the Son of God, is saying to all his people, those whom I love.

And that's a reference to all who believe. All who trust. All of us. And if our hope and our trust is in him, then we know that he loves us.

And he will always love us. And he will love us like no one else could. Have you ever thought of this? That God loves his people in the same way he loves his Son.

I want you to just think about that for a moment. God loves his people in the same way he loves his Son. And Jesus said in John chapter 17, verse 23.

[ 5 : 59 ] And this is what Jesus says. That the world may know that you have sent me and loved them as you loved me.

The Lord loves his people in the way he loves his Son. And this love is perfect. You know when you think of the love that is banded about just now, it's not perfect love.

This love is perfect. And as I've hinted at already, this love is permanent. So it is unchanging. It's unique.

But a third thing is this. It is unconditional. And you could sum it up with four words. That this love, it's total.

It's absolute. It's complete. And it is unlimited. There are no strings attached. Now, there are two ways that I want us to think about this.

[ 7 : 10 ] First of all, the promise of that love. The promise that he has given us. And we have that in Jeremiah chapter 31. Where he says, Have you ever thought of this?

The devil doesn't want us to believe that God loves us. And there are times when the devil will plant that thought into your mind.

And he will say to you, God doesn't really love you. But he does. And that he loves us in this unconditional way.

Now, somebody said this. The less we believe that God loves us, the easier it is for the devil to lead us into despair. The more we believe that God loves us, the harder it is for Satan to cast us down.

We have the promise in his word of his love to all his people. But then, there's a second way to look at it. In the scriptures, we have the proof of that love.

[ 8 : 30 ] We accept that he loves us. And if you're sitting here tonight and you're saying, Yes, I believe the Lord loves us. How do you know?

Well, first of all, because he does. And because he has said it in his word. But also, because he died for you.

He was willing to go to that awful cross and die that awful death for his people. Yes, it was love first and foremost to God.

But it was love for his people that caused him to go to Calvary. Another way that you might say we can prove his love and the fact that he drew us to himself.

I don't know how far away you were from the kingdom. But you know that there was that day that the love of God reached out to where you were.

[ 9 : 41 ] You could have been right down in the very gutter. You could have been as far away from God as was humanly possible. And what happened? The love of God, the cords of God's love reached out to where you were.

These cords enveloped you. And these cords began to draw you to the Savior. You didn't come of yourself.

You couldn't. The Lord put that desire in your heart that you wanted to know him. And it was the love of God that began to draw you.

Another proof of that love is he defends us. He has given us his word. He has given us his spirit. He defends us. And he reminds us what happens, what we do under the attacks of the enemy.

But then also, a proof of that love is that he disciplines us. And that's what we are being reminded of here. He says, those whom my love I reprove and I discipline.

[ 10 : 58 ] In other words, the Lord shows his love to us that when we go astray, he deals with us.

Now, when you think of Ephesians chapter 2, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace, you have been saved.

Think of this love. You have the promise of that love, but you also have the proof of that love.

And that's why I'm saying that this love is not just unchanging, not just unique, this love is unconditional.

He loves his people with a never-lasting love. But then, moving on to the second thing, I want us to notice the discipline that they'll experience.

When you think of it, the Savior planned to discipline his people as a proof of his love for them.

[ 12 : 22 ] And what does it do? It proves our sonship that we are the sons and daughters of the Most High. And as I said, when we do go astray, the Lord, by the power of the Spirit, he will speak

to us.

He will deal with us. Now, there are two main ways, I believe, that we know this discipline. The first is this, the truth of God's Word.

And God's Word rebukes. And God's Word reproves. And maybe tonight you're sitting here and you're aware that the Word of the Lord is rebuking you.

That you are being reproved. When you listen to God's Word, then the Spirit of God is able to take that Word and apply it to your heart.

And you know that God is speaking to you through the Word. and you know that it is a form of discipline that comes. You see, this Word is powerful.

[ 13 : 38 ] God's Word is powerful. And the Holy Spirit takes that Word and He applies it to our hearts with a power and with a conviction so that we're left in no doubt that it is God that is speaking to us.

But also, that Word is very personal. Maybe you've been sitting in church and you're aware of God's Word speaking and you may have thought to yourself that Word is for someone else when in reality that Word was for you and it began to dawn on you that what was being said was for you in other words this Word was very personal.

But then also this Word this Word of God being precise. By that I mean something that maybe you hadn't thought of or put it this way maybe those thoughts you had they're never going to be mentioned they're never going to be brought up I'm never going to hear about them from God's Word and then suddenly you're sitting under the preaching or you're sitting listening to the reading of God's Word and that Word speaks to that particular need you have.

In other words that Word it's precise. It may be something you're thinking it may be something you're doing it may be something that you ought not to do and you do it.

Now there are one or two children here tonight I want to say a wee word to you. I wonder do you do what you're asked to do or if you're told not to do something do you go and do it?

[ 15 : 49 ] Right as I said this morning I was brought up on a farm and we had a tractor and it was a Fergie tractor and one day I learned how to start this tractor and move it.

And my father realizing what had happened he said to me don't do that again. Don't touch the tractor don't drive the tractor.

Anyway this day he was out on the hill gathering sheep two or three dogs with him and all of a sudden while I was sitting driving the tractor I saw the dogs bounding down the hill.

What happened? My father had the binoculars and he could see the tractor moving and he could see who was sitting in the tractor and he made his way he would have been running down that hill and the dogs going before him and I managed to get the tractor back exactly to where it was.

But you know I did something that I was told not to do. So he comes and he puts his hand on the bonnet of the tractor and he says did you touch the tractor?

[ 17 : 32 ] Did you move the tractor? Did you start the tractor? And again he puts his hand on the bonnet of the tractor and that bonnet is hot.

Did you move the tractor? No. I said no. And again he put his hand on it and he said did you move the tractor? Now for some reason I don't remember what happened after that but I can imagine that I got a good telling off for deliberately disobeying for doing something that I shouldn't have done and for telling a lie at the same time.

see to all of us God is saying to us you don't do that you don't think that you don't say that and God's word speaks to us and God's word tells us when we go astray so the truth of God's word speaks to us it rebukes and reproves but then there's a second thing the trials which God you might say prescribes or the trials that God permits why does God allow trials into our experiences why do we have to go through this why do we have to endure that if God loves us then why the trial why the testing why the difficulty why there may be three reasons for it and the first reason is this

God may allow a trial into your experience in order to discipline you you've done wrong and the Lord sends a trial to discipline you now you're not to imagine that every time you're going through a particular difficulty or a particular trial that that is God discipline you for some sin the point I'm making is this that can happen now it's not that God is on the war path it's not that he is looking for every fault in your life it's not like that but sin can have such a detrimental effect upon our lives that God has to act God has to do something if there is that sin that particular sin in our lives you see certain sins can preoccupy our thinking certain sins can prevent us from being blessed by the

Lord or put it another way where we are robbed of our joy and our peace certain sins can produce a fear guilt anxiety in our experiences where there's a shame and where there's a worry you see there are sins that can paralyze our testimony we can't be the witnesses that we maybe once were that we ought to be our lives and our testimonies cannot speak for God because of a particular sin and in order to discipline us God may send that difficulty a trial into our experiences but then there's a second reason God may send a trial in order to develop you to make you the person that he wants you to be

[ 21 : 40 ] I wonder can we trust God that these trials that he sends are for a reason can you trust God in that way Lord I know there's a reason for this trial can you accept that can you believe that can we believe that God trusts us with those experiences can we believe can we accept that God can turn these experiences turn them from sorrow into joy can we believe that these experiences are for a reason even even though we don't know the reason or even though we may never know the reason can we believe that they are for a reason when you're going through a particular trial a difficulty a time of testing can you believe the scriptures all things work together for good now that's not just good theology that's experience we have learned we have developed we have grown spiritually if we're able to say all of these things they're working out for good

God is in control he is working behind the scenes all these things working for good so he may send these trials in order to discipline us in order to develop us but also God may allow certain difficulties trials into our experiences in order to deter us now the best example we have of that is the apostle Paul 2nd Corinthians chapter 12 God gave me a thorn in the flesh a stake like a spear and he's saying God gave me this pain it was a lot of pain and Paul is saying do you want to know why why did

God allow this thorn in the flesh to keep me from exalting myself to prevent me from becoming proud see God can bring all these things into our experiences to discipline us to develop us or to deter us there's a reason for every trial and test we go through I want us to notice thirdly the duty he expects God is saying to all his people look when you go astray I will deal with you I'll speak to you through my word the spirit will apply those words to your heart the duty then he expects and he says that I reprove and discipline be zealous and repent two ways we can react to the trials we can receive them or we can reject them and we can reject them remember what the writer to the Hebrews said he said my son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor be weary when you are reprov'd by him for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives you don't continue regardless when God is speaking to you when God has disciplined you then you take it on board there's not to be a carelessness there's not to be you know regarding it lightly or despising it or whatever you're not to take the wrong meaning out of it but then the second thing is this we can accept we can receive and that's why often it is said you'll be ready you know here it says in the in the in the in verse 21 where he in verse 19 where he says those who might love

I reprove and discipline be zealous it could be ready be ready when God is dealing with you be ready to accept it to receive it it gives us the idea of something boiling over Lord you're speaking to me I want to do the right thing so in conclusion I want us to sum it up like this we can never doubt the love of God for us even in our severest trials we can never doubt his love for us sometimes we might wonder why he does love us but he does but there is one thought that

[ 27 : 59 ] I want to leave with you and let it register into your mind and heart we can never gauge our love to him by feelings the way we gauge our love to him is how much are we prepared to do for him for him and for his cause even to suffer for his kingdom I wonder this evening have you experienced the love of God in your heart in your life in your experience you may not be able to point to that day nor that hour but tonight you sit here and you believe God loves me we love him because he first loved us do you know that there is nothing never going to be anything that is going to separate you from that love you're his for time and for eternity and one of the most precious doctrines of God's word is the eternal security of God's people nothing will separate them from his love but the question then is this do you take this for granted are you taking God's love for granted are you just acting in a way well doesn't matter

God loves me that's it if you if the Lord loves you and you love the Lord then at all times you will want to please him and you will want to reciprocate that love that he has for you so I leave you with these thoughts as many as I love those whom I love I rebuke and chasten there is always a reason for the Lord's dealings with us amen let's bow our heads in prayer