



God's Word for Today

Sonjia Hunt Ministries

Teaching Letter 14

Loving God

“. . . do you love me . . . do you love me . . . do you love me . . . ?” (John 21:15-17, RSV)

Loving God is the greatest thing you will ever do. Whatever you have accomplished or hope to accomplish does not compare in significance to loving God. You may be a mother, teacher, preacher, writer, student, father, administrator, counselor or president of the United States (though the President is not on my mailing list). You may aspire to one of these or some other high calling. The list of great accomplishments and aspirations is long. However, God has given each of us a “first and foremost” calling that supercedes all others. Loving God is to be the highest aspiration of our lives.

In the John 21 passage I have referenced for this Teaching Letter, Jesus asked Peter three times—“Do you love me?” This conversation occurred after Jesus’ resurrection. To each query, Peter responded “Yes.” Following each *yes* Jesus gave Peter an assignment or calling. In the Revised Standard Version the calling is stated: “Feed my lambs Tend my sheep Feed my sheep.” Peter needed this re-affirmation of his calling because of his recent denial—before Jesus’ crucifixion—that he even knew Jesus. That was a lie; however, Peter denied Jesus three times. Now Jesus was asking Peter to state the truth in place of the lie. It was upon this truth—Peter’s love for Jesus—that Peter’s ministry would be based. This foundation must be established. Although it is not the only foundation Scripture speaks of, it is, very important.

Sometimes we fail to recognize the importance of this foundation. Talking or writing about loving God seems such a “nice” thing to do—but maybe not all that important to what’s happening in my life right now. What does loving

God have to do with the crisis I am facing? Or the major decisions I need to make? I need help with these. If you are building on the firm foundation of loving God, I believe you will have the help you need for the crises and the decisions of your life. The type foundation on which we build also helps determine whether we remain standing through the storms.

Jesus was asked one day what is the greatest commandment. Starting with verse 37 of Matthew 22 we read: “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (*KJV*). In other words, loving God precedes and supports all other things God would have us do and know. It is a major “first.”

The foundation is laid first, and it would not be wise to build anything without one. Laying the best foundation possible is important for any construction project. The type foundation laid depends on the type structure to be placed upon it.

Right here I would like to digress briefly to point out one of my favorite passages about us as God’s building project. It is found in Isaiah 54:11-12. It says: “O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones” (*NIV*). Isn’t that a beautiful picture? God, the master builder, is laying our foundations with sapphires. What a building we

are! Rubies, sparkling jewels, turquoise and precious stones! What a builder He is!

A very sobering question is posed by David in Psalm 11:3: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (*KJV*). It is a serious matter and a dangerous time when the foundations are being destroyed. What about our love for God? Can that foundation be destroyed? Is it possible?

The Apostle Peter told Jesus he would stick by Him no matter what. Peter overestimated himself—that bold, brash man who spoke so proudly was quickly tried and found lacking. He was sustained by Jesus’ prayers and was eventually restored and strengthened. Thereafter he was transformed by the Holy Spirit baptism and in truth became a strong instrument in God’s hands. Thank God! Peter needed his foundations strengthened, and Jesus was able to do that.

Jesus, in Matthew 24, describes the conditions of the last days—the days in which we live. He says in verses 10-12: “And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity [wickedness] shall abound, the love of many [most] shall wax cold” (*KJV*).

In this passage, Jesus is speaking of Christians. Many Christians will be offended or turn away from the faith and will betray and hate one another. Many Christians will be deceived—those within the Church, not those in the world. And the love of most Christians will grow cold. That is love for God and others. Satan will strike at the foundations. When the foundations are destroyed, the building collapses.

There was a time in Israel’s history when the foundations were destroyed. The walls of Jerusalem were torn down and the Temple was demolished. Nothing was left standing. Israel’s love for God had grown cold, and they had turned

away from Him to idol worship and to dependence on other nations instead of God for their help. Destruction was the result. They were taken captive to foreign nations. Spiritual foundations—including love for God—were destroyed and then physical destruction followed. There was, however, a solution. They repented, turned back to God and called on Him to rescue them. God heard them and helped them. Eventually God sent groups of them back to their homeland to rebuild the foundations, the walls and the city. This was an outward sign that the spiritual foundations were being restored as well.

If we listen to Jesus’ warnings in Matthew 24, we do not have to take the route which Israel took in Old Testament times. We must examine our spiritual foundations now in preparation for further increases in wickedness in these last days. Jesus is interceding for us in heaven right now that our faith and our love for God fail not—just as He prayed for Peter. That doesn’t mean we won’t be tested, for we will. It means we do not have to crumble even though our foundations are attacked.

I will close with one verse in 1 John 4, and then I will ask you to read that chapter for yourself. Verse 19 says: “We love him, because he first loved us.” God loves us with an everlasting love. Let’s ask Him to strengthen our foundation of love for Him. He is laying our foundations with sapphires. **SH**

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