

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

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CONTENTS

1.	<i>Do We Love God?</i>	Martin Bleby	1
2.	<i>Made for Love</i>	Jonathan Button	2
3.	<i>Haters of God</i>	Derek Schiller	4
4.	<i>Love Has Come</i>	Simon Dent	6
5.	<i>I Love the Father</i>	Andrew Klynsmith	7
6.	<i>Captured by Love</i>	Martin Bleby	9
7.	<i>Love Is Strong as Death</i>	Martin Bleby	10
8.	<i>Being Kept in Faith, Hope and Love</i>	Noel Due	12
9.	<i>The Greatest of These Is Love</i>	Randall Lawton	13
10.	<i>Love Your Neighbour</i>	Ray Bell	15
11.	<i>Loving to the End</i>	Doug Schultz	17
12.	<i>To See the Fair Beauty of the Lord</i>	Martin Bleby	18

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

1. DO WE LOVE GOD?

Martin Bleby

LOVING GOD

What we have been made for and commanded to do as human beings: Deut. 6:4–5; 10:12; Micah 6:8; Matt. 22:37–38: ‘the greatest and first commandment’. Is this what we do? Since we are preoccupied with ourselves, loving God could not be further from our minds much of the time. Yet we are structured for it. How do we respond to Ps. 116:1; 18:1? When something like that has happened to us, then we are prepared to accept by faith: Rom. 8:28; James 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:9. Also to tell others: Ps. 31:23.

LOVING THE LORD JESUS

See 1 Cor. 16:22—Is this scary? Or is it simply the way it is? How was Peter able to write 1 Pet. 1:8? Because he had been through John 21:15–19: he was led by Jesus to discover that, despite everything, he actually loved the Lord. What a discovery! What a gift! Compare Luke 7:36–50.

LOVE IS FROM GOD

What is it to ‘love God’? Deut. 10:12–22. ‘First commandment’: compare Exod. 20:2–3; Josh. 23:6–11. Requires a cutting away of all else: Deut. 6:13–14; 4:15–20; 1 John 2:15–16; Matt. 5:8. In our self-centred sin, we can’t do that. God does it for us: Deut. 30:6. Truth is, love is not from us; love is from God: 1 John 4:7, 19.

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

LOVING ONE ANOTHER

There is much more in the Scriptures about God's love for us, and our love for one another, than there is about our love for God. All of a piece and flows from it: John 14:15, 21, 23; compare Deut. 11:1, 13, 22. Particularly loving our neighbour: Matt. 22:39; compare 1 John 4:21; 2:7–10. There are places where love of neighbour takes precedence over 'loving' God: 1 John 4:20; Matt. 5:23–24; Amos 5:23–24—can't have one without the other.

2. MADE FOR LOVE

Jonathan Button

DESIGNED FOR LOVE

Ps. 42:1–2; 63:1–8: Are these desirable expressions of devotion? No doubt (but why? . . .); and not merely nor primarily so. The loss of love is too devastating (Ps. 42:1–2; 63:1), and the knowledge and experience of it too super-abundantly full ('better than life'!—Ps. 63:3a) to be just dealing with human devotion. These words are spoken in the realm of the Lord's love (63:3a); they have to do with the gifts and claims of divine love for our lives.

This way of loving for us comes from having been created—structured—of God's love, for the knowledge and experience of it. The life and love of God are a river of living water—the flow of water that gives all true life—of which God the Father is the only fountain (Jer. 2:13; John 7:37–39). We are created to be sub-fountains of that same living water (Prov. 4:23; Isa. 44:3; John 7:37–39), receiving, living from, and freely giving that same flow of life and love from God the Father, which is the direct action of God's Spirit in our lives (John 7:39). Thus we are created, designed, structured for love (Gen. 1:27)—it is 'programmed' into our DNA. For us to love is inescapable—however much

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

we may rebel against it! Yet as this love is what we are created for, to live from and in it is true, real, rich, full human life—*the best!*

THE RIVERS AND THE RIVER

God's supply of water to the creation for earthly life is intimate and personal to creational life (Gen. 2:6; Ps. 104:27–30). Creational water and life are not detached from the supply of God's life and love to His creation/creatures. The presence and goodness of the River of Life are to be known and received in the rivers—i.e. in the goodness of the creation. God's personal relationship with the creation is dynamic (as God's love for the creation is powerful and passionate); there is giving, restriction, withholding and overflowing (Ps. 104:27–30). What may God in His love be saying to us that our rivers and land are drying up?

LOVE TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

In His love for humanity God the Father delights in us (Prov. 8:31); exactly as the Father loves His own eternal Son! (Matt. 3:17). The love of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for one another freely overflows the bounds of their relationship to us in creation, redemption and glorification (Eph. 1:3–10). The Father has blessed us with all the fullness of their blessed love, that it might overflow in and through us, as we take it to the ends of the earth (Gen. 1:28; 12:1–3). We are to live out this love in all our relationships—from those closest to us to those furthest away.

LOVE UNTO ALL ETERNITY

As the issue of God's Fatherhood (Gen. 5:1–3; Luke 3:38), and made in the image of the God who is love (Gen. 1:27; 1 John 4: 8, 16), we are to be with Him in the action of His love forever (Rev. 21:3, 7). God is the living God (Ps. 84: 2), and the God not of the dead, but of the living (Luke 20:38). As He has bound Himself to us in covenant love (Gen. 9:12; Isa. 54:10), His love for us does not cease at death or the end of the age. Through the saving work of Christ, His love for us is with a view to resurrection and eternal life. Neither does our created nature,

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

structured for love, cease in the resurrection, but finds its true glorification and fulfilment in eternal life (1 Cor. 15:35–58). Divine love—God’s best for us—is eternal (1 Cor. 13).

THE ACTION OF GOD’S LOVE THROUGH ALL CREATION

‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8, 16). Therefore there is nothing He does in creating, sustaining, judging, redeeming, and bringing His creation to its goal that is not the action of His love. Through God’s relationship to the creation by creating and redeeming it, the river of living water of His love is flowing through it all. We are all—whether we know it or not—in the flow of its stream (Acts 17:28), gaining life, benefit and blessing from it (Matt. 5:45). We may move and live for and with it, knowing and enjoying the goodness of it, thanking God for it. Or we may move and live against it, refusing thankfulness, and at points know the pain and judgement of living against our true created nature. But we all may, and are to, move and live for and with God’s love—‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind’ (Matt. 22:37), and ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ (Matt. 22:39). As it is our created nature to do this, and the action of God’s love in and through us, this is not a hardship, but a light burden and an easy yoke—and our joy.

3. HATERS OF GOD

Derek Schiller

‘I DON’T LOVE GOD, I HATE HIM’

When faced with the truth of God’s holy character, we do not remain indifferent to Him (Rom. 3:11–18). All begin as haters of God, hostile to His very nature (Rom. 8:7; 1:30).

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

LOVERS, BUT HATERS OF GOD

We were all created to love but this has been distorted. Rather than lovers of God, we obstinately choose to love ourselves (Matt. 6:24), the devil and the world (Eph. 2:1–3), or our idols (1 Cor. 12:2–3).

HATERS OF THE SON

Opposed to God in every way, when we are faced with the full extent of His love—seen in His Son Jesus—we rise up in corporate hatred and kill the Son (Mark 12:1–12).

In our self-righteous pride and rage we cry, ‘Crucify Him!’

LOST AND DELUSIONAL IN FUTILITY

We fix our love on anything but God, and become slaves to the death we love so dearly (Titus 3:3). The extent of our pollution knows no end (2 Tim. 3:3–5), and we can no longer think or act with any sanity (Titus 1:15). Our lives are consumed with protecting our own god-status (Gen. 3:12).

ENEMIES OF GOD

Hatred of God is met with direct opposition from the holy God (Deut. 5:9; 7:10; 32:41; Ps. 5:5; 81:15; Prov. 6:16–19). God is not fooled by our pathetic religious attempts at self-control (Isa. 1:13; Jer. 7:1–8), and the future of those who remain enemies of God is bleak (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

GOD PURSUES THE HATERS IN LOVE

God’s love is directed towards those enemies (Ps. 23:6), and He deals with His righteous wrath against the haters whilst maintaining His holiness (Hosea 11; Rom. 5:8–9).

Now as friends of God we participate in His love for enemies (Luke 6:27–36), and we live under the animosity of the haters of God (John 15:18–25; 16:2; Acts 9:4).

God’s plan means that all hatred is self-defeating and doomed to failure (Rev. 17:16–17; Acts 2:23).

4. LOVE HAS COME

Simon Dent

God is love (1 John 4:8, 16) and life (Col. 3:4). To love the Lord and obey His commands is life and joy (Deut. 30:16; Ps. 1:2). This is God's will for us, yet man cannot do this because of his sin and fear of God (Gen. 3:10; Rom. 8:7). What then was God, being good, to do?¹ The Father sent His son as the vicarious man so that we may be made anew to the love, life and joy which is God.

JESUS THE TRUE SON

God's covenantal promise given to Israel, God's 'son' (Ps. 2:7), yet Israel proved to be the prodigal. Jesus has come among us, knowing and loving the Father as no one else has ever done (Matt. 11:27; John 14:31). As the son, Jesus has known the Father's love and delight as no other has (Mark 1:11; John 3:35; 5:20, 26; 8:29; 16:32).

DOING THE FATHER'S BUSINESS

Knowing the Father's love, Jesus delights in doing what pleases the Father (Heb. 10:5, 7). This includes having and being in the Father's love for the unlovely enemies (Matt. 4:12–16; Mark 2:13–17; 5:1–13; Luke 15); whether they respond worthily or not (Mark 10:17–22).

JESUS THE TRUE WORSHIPPER

Jesus has come to be for us the true worshipper of God. He worships the Father as our great high priest. Our worship is sanctified (John

¹ St Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, translated and edited by A. Religious, C.S.M.V. (A. R. Mowbray, London, 1944).

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

17:19; Rom. 15:16) by his ongoing priesthood (Heb. 7:23–25), enabling us to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14) and know life (John 17:3).

HAVE YOU RECEIVED HIS LOVE?

So Jesus commends to us the love of the Father that he knows himself (Matt. 6:25–31; 7:7–11; 10:29–31). Have we heard and accepted the commanding invitation of that love?

5. I LOVE THE FATHER

Andrew Klynsmith

LOVING THE FATHER WHO LOVES THE WORLD

In and from eternity, the love of God has never been locked up within the Godhead as a ‘closed circuit’. Love is not only a *circulating*, but an *ever-overflowing*, river.

Creation—and its glorious destiny—*always* the intention and focus of the love of the Godhead. Matt. 25:34—a kingdom prepared before the creation of the world for those the Father blesses. Eph. 1:3–6—the exalting-in-God joy of knowing that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us utterly by including us in all of the Son’s own blessedness! Before creation (and *we*) came to be, the Father *in love* had determined that we share in the holiness and blamelessness of His Son, adopting us into that in His Son, through the grace enacted in His *beloved* Son. The Son loves the Father and so is involved in the outward loving of the Father—John 5:19–23. For this reason he was sent, and he came—John 3:16. John 17:24—Jesus prays that those the Father gives him have a full share in the glory of his own ‘belovedness’ from before the foundation of the world. Eternal intention reaching its particular outworking in history.

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

THE FATHER'S LOVE THAT WAS ALWAYS GOING TO THE CROSS

Before eternity it was determined that this love would express itself in a cross (Rev. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:19–20; Acts 2:23; Isa. 53:10). Someone has said, 'Jesus Christ did not come into the world to meet with his friends. He came to die for his enemies.'

Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33f., 45—the whole of Jesus' ministry was focused on the cross (John 3:14–15; 6:51; 10:11, 17–18; 12:27–33).

John 8:28–30; 14:28–31—at the cross the love of the Father and the Son is laid bare for all who see it. Jesus acts from and fulfils the love of the Father for the world. The Father loves the Son for this obedience; the Son loves the Father in it; but together love is being enacted for the world. His 'doing exactly what the Father has commanded me' is no dry 'keeping God happy' obedience, but his participation in the Father's love for the world.

GOING TO THE FATHER, HE LOVED TO THE END

All the events of the betrayal, arrest, trial, suffering, crucifixion, death are marked by love. John 13:1—'now he loved them to the end'. In love he took our place so that we may come to where he is in the Father's love—John 17:24.

THE FATHER TURNS HIS FACE AWAY IN LOVE

In 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 3:25–26; Heb. 9:27–28; 1 John 4:10—Jesus Christ, full of the love of the Father, bears human sin into himself, exposes fully sin's terrible reality (its power and pollution) without any pious rationalisation, endures the judgement (penalty) of God on sin in its full outworking. Isaiah 59:2—sin separates from God, hides His face from us. Isaiah 53:3–12—the Father's will to crush the Servant. Into this willingly steps the beloved Son fully loving the Father. Mystery beyond telling. Love in this action goes to the fullness of the wrath of love on sinful human beings for their redemption.

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

Are we prepared to receive this love? Are we willing to let Christ wash us and serve us this way? Has this love overwhelmed our hearts? Have we discovered that in this love-sacrifice of Father and Son (by the Spirit) a miracle happens so that we become those who cry, 'I love the Father!' And more, has this love so grabbed you that in loving the Father you love the world that He loves, ready to give yourself in suffering for the men and women that the Father loves so deeply? Whoever loves the Father, must love the brother and sister.

6. CAPTURED BY LOVE

Martin Bleby

GOD'S LOVE AT THE CROSS

The love of God that is poured into our hearts is not other than God's love at the cross: 1 John 4:9–10; Rom. 5:5–11. What happens to us when this love is poured into our hearts?

WHAT HAPPENED TO PAUL?

Example of Paul: Gal. 2:20; Acts 9:17; 22:16; 9:20, 22; 1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 8:14–17—removal of guilt, impartation of faith, adoption as sons, renewal in hope. Summarised in 1 Tim. 1:12–17, where we already detect an onward movement of love.

CONSTRAINED BY CHRIST'S LOVE FOR ALL IN HIS DEATH

This issues directly in a ministry constrained by the love of Christ for all in his death: 2 Cor. 5:14–15. We see Paul's love for those to whom he came: Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:7–8. Even for those who rejected him: 2 Cor. 6:11–13; 7:3; 11:8, 11; 12:15.

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

LOVE MORE AND MORE

Paul urges others to be the same: 1 Thess. 4:9–12; 2 Thess. 1:3. So with us: there is no such thing as a cosy love-relationship with God that does not move out towards others: 1 John 3:16–17; 4:7–21.

7. LOVE IS STRONG AS DEATH

Martin Bleby

MAN-WOMAN LOVE AND GOD-PEOPLE LOVE

The Song of Songs climaxes in these words:

love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a raging flame.
Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If one offered for love all the wealth of his house,
it would be utterly scorned (Song 8:6–7).

In the context of the whole song, this speaks of love between a woman and a man. It has been interpreted as a picture of the relationship between God and His people (as in Jer. 2:2; 31:32; Isa. 54:5–8; Hos. 3), and between Christ and his church (as in Eph. 5:32). Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) delivered 86 sermons on the Song of Songs, with this understanding: ‘love speaks everywhere; if anyone desires to grasp these writings, let him love. It is vain for anyone who does not love to listen to this song of love, or to read it, for a cold heart cannot catch fire from its eloquence.’²

² *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Sermon 79, <<http://glorifyhisname.com/system/b81/>>, accessed 29-04-08.

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

THE SONG OF SONGS

We will look at the song as love poems between a woman and a man, bearing in mind that this relationship is intended to reflect and participate in the relationship of God with His people in Christ. What does it show us of this love?

First Song: 1:2-2:7

The lovers' appreciation of each other, and the active yet restful attraction between them.

Second Song: 2:8-3:5

The eagerness of the bridegroom for the bride, and of her for him, enhanced by threat of separation.

Third Song: 3:6-5:1

The wedding and consummate union of bridegroom and bride.

Fourth Song: 5:2-6:3

Love marred by self-preoccupation, met with judgement, leading to deepened appreciation and union.

Fifth Song: 6:4-8:4

Mature enjoyment of one another, and fruitfulness in love.

Sixth Song: 8:5-14

Invincible union, and desire for others to know and come into this love.

GOD AND AFFECTIONAL LOVE, STRONGER THAN DEATH

Are we affronted by this? If our love for God is any less affectional than this, are we missing something of the full nature of the love of God (see Rom. 6:4; 8:31-39; 1 Pet. 1:8)?

8. BEING KEPT IN FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

Noel Due

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE: CREATIONAL NECESSITIES

(1) While the 'triad' of faith, hope and love appears as such on a number of occasions (e.g. 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; Col. 1:3–5), it is present in many passages even if each element is not directly named. For example:

- Often two of the three are mentioned, but in a context in which the third is assumed. Most commonly faith and love are mentioned together, but in the overall context of eschatological hope that frames the whole of the apostolic gospel (e.g. Gal. 5:6; Eph. 1:13ff.; 3:14ff., 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:14; etc.).
- The thematic links are shown to be inescapable (e.g. Rom. 5:1–5).
- Finally, all of the pastoral injunctions and exhortations in the NT relate to these three themes (e.g. Hebrews; 1 & 2 Corinthians).

(2) Essentials, not options.

- Faith, hope and love belong to our creational state.
 - If we do not have them in God, we will still need to find them!
 - Each *Weltanschauung* (worldview/world outlook) is orientated to faith, hope and love.
- Though twisted in the fall, redemption re-orientates and reorders them.
 - All are granted to us in Christ (e.g. 1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:20).
 - We are kept in them all by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17; cf. 1 Pet. 1:7–9), and by so doing we 'keep ourselves in the love of God' (Jude 20, 21).

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE: INSEPARABLE THREADS ILLUSTRATED IN TWO EXAMPLES

- Rom. 5:1–5: Grace and faith; peace and perseverance; hope and love: the truth of where we really stand in the midst of the tribulations of this life.
- 1 Pet. 1:3–9: New birth, inheritance, the preciousness of faith, and the love of God.

STIRRING ONE ANOTHER UP IN FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

- ‘the aim of our instruction’ (1 Tim. 1:5).
- ‘faith working through love’ (Gal. 5:6).
- ‘provoke one another to love’ (Heb. 10:24).
- ‘all who have this hope’ (1 John 3:3).

9. THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

1 Corinthians 13

Randall Lawton

THE EXCELLENCE OF LOVE (12:31; 13:1–13)

- a) Love is everything (13:1–3). The first of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). From Love (Rom. 5:5) for love. It is easy to be headstrong, clever, spiritual, powerful in faith or extremely generous and sacrificial but be a million miles from love! It is possible to be full of spirituality or religion and empty of God.
- b) Love is ethical (13:4–7). The sanctified church loves according to God’s character. There is a love-way according to God’s grace and mercy, which understands and lives in love’s indestructibility amidst all opposition, for God is love! Holiness works its way

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

firstly through attitudes and acts of grace and mercy, and then through moral obedience.

- c) Love is eternal (13:8–13). Maturity looks forward to eternal love: ‘face to face’ with Christ. Love always works according to what is personal and perennial. Quick fix quests for feel-good worship of elation and glory-seeking are childish and short sighted. They miss the pre-eminence of our Lord, over-emphasising our needs and so keeping ourselves at the centre. He is the goal of our love and centre of our praise! Forever!

GIFTS AND LOVE

- a) Chapter 13 applies to the whole book, but the issue of love comes to the forefront in the way gifts are used, that is, our outward expression of what God gives. Freedom to exercise my gift in my way or time doesn’t always equal wisdom, the way of God’s love for the good of the other. We are only ever free when we love (1 Cor. 8:9).
- b) Paul is speaking about the possibility that a gift given in love may be used for selfish purposes (13:1–3; 14:4).
- c) The problem of an independent spirit before God (12:4–7) and in the church (12:12–26). It is more about the God we confess, rather than what we claim!
- d) Love honours others, especially the less honourable: it does not promote the self. There is no room for elitist Christianity (1 Cor. 12:21–25).

GIFTS, GRACE AND UNITY

- a) The whole letter is book-ended by the cross (ch. 1) and the resurrection (ch. 15). This structure indicates that the life of the Corinthians is contained within Christ’s complete work on their behalf. The gospel is the gospel of grace (*charis*): all we have is given (1:1–31; 4:7). The fruit of grace is a life of unifying love: what else could it be?

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

- b) So spiritual gifts (*charismata*) come with love and generosity from God (12:4–9). We are to use them in a way that is in harmony with their essential purpose in the gospel, that is, for the good of the wider church: edifying, encouragement, and consolation (14:3), and for the conversion of outsiders (14:20–25).
- c) Love considers other's different gifts, allowing the body to function in all its variety (12:4–11, 27–31) and seeks functional unity by receiving other's gifts (12:12–26).

CORINTH AND TONGUES.

- a) Tongues and love: the Spirit does not create chaotic (14:26–40; Gen. 1:1–2) nor irrational (14:1–25; ch. 2) church gatherings. Two or, at most, three, in turn, with interpretation (14:27).
- b) To be spiritual is not to be 'other-worldly', to shun created life (7:1–7; 11:2–16; 15).

10. LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Ray Bell

WHY SHOULD I LOVE MY NEIGHBOUR? (LUKE 10:25–37)

Because we are commanded to (Lev. 19; Matt. 5:43–44; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27–28; 1 John 3:11). To inherit eternal life (Luke 10:27–28). To confirm our salvation (1 John 2:10; 3:14, 19).

Jesus takes us to the very core and essence of this command in the Sermon on the Mount where he tells us to love not only our neighbour, but our enemies too! Why? 'That you may be sons of your Father in heaven.'

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

IF YOU KNOW GOD YOU WILL LOVE (AND VICE VERSA)

In 1 John 4:7ff., this is stipulated quite clearly. To love, we must know God, or rather, as Paul says, be known by God (this is relational, not intellectual). It is only by revelation that we can know God (Luke 10:22; John 15:15–16). And when we do know God we are to love, for love comes from God. God is love. We are made in His image and therefore are created to love—but not from our own resources. And as fallen humanity need to be redeemed in order to love. God is the source of our love and in us *His* love is made complete (1 John 4:12)—God’s love comes to its goal when we love. To share in this action of the Father’s love is pure joy!

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

Do we try to justify our lack of loving (Luke 10:25–37)?

Jesus twists the question around from ‘Who is my neighbour?’—i.e. ‘Who should I love?’—to ‘*Be* a neighbour!’ i.e. ‘Love!’

Love costs (for the rich young man in Mark 10:17 it would cost a lot). One thing you lack . . . love! This ‘one thing’ is everything! But it costs nothing that hasn’t been given to you already.

Source—motive—goal.

*Greater love has no-one than this,
that he lay down his life for his friends.*

CAN WE DO IT? YES HE CAN!!!

Another self-justification?—I try and I try . . . but I can’t!

This conscious battle is evidence itself that God has given us a new heart and a new spirit—a heart of love and a spirit of love.

How could the Father and the Son even consider commanding us—sinful humanity—to love? Because He first loved us (1 John 4:19) when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). We have been redeemed so that we might worship God—so that we might love Him and love our neighbour. So that God’s love is made complete in us!

A final encouragement—with a sense of urgency (Rom. 13:8–14).

11. LOVING TO THE END

Doug Schultz

LOVE FROM THE START

- Love's source is the Living Father, Son and Spirit.
- All things come from Love—God.
- Very dynamic—Divine Love.

LOVE CONTESTED IS NOT LOVE DESTROYED

- Forsyth, *Cruciality of the Cross*,³ p. 5—holiness, love, grace and judgement all linked.
- Forsyth, *Cruciality of the Cross*, pp. 8 and 9—our religion has a 'moral centre'.
- John 1:5–13—darkness seeks to overcome light.
- A human illustration.

LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

- Another human situation: Luke 22:24—Lord's Supper fight.
- The trial of 'Love'; Jesus in 'weakness': John 19.
- Peter and Jesus in high priest's house: Luke 22:54ff.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINS US

- *Love Is the Spur*;⁴ and a letter of love.
- Now we know something: 2 Cor. 4, 5.
- A human story: Luke 7:36–50.

³ P. T. Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross*, NCPI, Blackwood, (1910) 1984.

⁴ Geoffrey Bingham, *Love Is the Spur*, Eyrie Books, North Parramatta, 2004.

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

LOVING TO THE END

- Judas—love continued to him.
- The Church, the Beloved, Rev. 2, 3 and others.
- You *and* I, or you *with* me.
- Another human story.
- The ‘Bride-to-be’ is the Bride.

12. TO SEE THE FAIR BEAUTY OF THE LORD

Martin Bleby

SEEK HIS FACE!

Psalm 27, in both its parts (1–6, 7–14), longs for and seeks an immediate face-to-face relationship with God: see verses 4, 8 (compare Rom. 5:1, *pros ton theon*).

IN THE FACE OF MY ENEMIES

In verses 1–6, David faces external enemies, verses 2–3. In 7–14, he faces the internal enemy of his own sin and potential separation from God, for which he needs God’s grace, favour and salvation: verses 7–9. (Some commentators think these must be two different psalms, since these verses contrast so much with verse 6. But see Rom. 7 following Rom. 6.) In both instances, David is given a single-minded seeking to be in the presence of God, face to face, to see God’s ‘fair beauty’ (or ‘graciousness’) for what it is.

TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

NOW, AND IN THE AGE TO COME

This is for now, when God can be known as ‘light’, ‘salvation’, ‘strength’, ‘shelter’ and up-lifter, and for when we see God’s ‘goodness . . . in the land of the living’, even in the age to come. For this we wait in prayerful and active anticipation, as in 1 Pet. 1:8.