



Marks of the Christian 2: Selflessness

Romans 12:10-11

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If you have your Bibles with you, I would invite you to turn once again to Romans, chapter 12. We're going slowly and deliberately through chapter 12, the list of marks of the Christian that Paul is setting forth here, what it means to live like a Christian in light of God's mercy. We're going to focus on the second half of verses 10 and 11, but I'd like to begin my reading this morning at verse 9, because that gives us the overarching context for not only *this* mark but the other marks we will look at in weeks to come. The Word of the Lord is completely inerrant, the Word of the Lord is completely sufficient, and the Word of the Lord is completely authoritative. Romans 12, beginning at verse 9:

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.”

Thus far the reading of God's Holy Word. Let's pray for his blessing upon it. Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning, and we ask that you would open up your Word to us, that by the power of your Holy Spirit, the author of this Word, you would enlighten our minds, that as we look into your Word we might see the Lord Jesus Christ, we might see your provision for us, and then we might also truly see the duty you require of us. This we ask in Christ's precious name, amen.

Last week, we looked at the great principle that oversees all of Christian conduct in verses 9 and 10, and that principle is *love*. This week, we're going to look at the second mark of the Christian: *selflessness*. Over the next couple of months, we're going to look at five great marks of the Christian, five attributes of the Christian life. We who follow the Lord Jesus Christ and we who have been changed by Jesus Christ will live out the salvation that has been given to us.

Now, what we cannot forget as we look this week and in weeks to come at these marks is that they are to be viewed in light of the call to love, and we cannot forget that all of these marks are founded upon the merciful work of God in Christ. That is why at the beginning of all of this in chapter 12, Paul points us back with a *therefore* and a reference to the mercies of God.

Our conduct, our living is never separated from the work of Jesus Christ and from what we know of that work. Now, in verses 10 and 11, Paul gives us three directives, three commands that can be summarized in one word: *selflessness*. A good definition of selflessness is not focusing on yourself but rather focusing on others. Paul gives us three ways we can do that this morning.

First, he tells us we can exercise selflessness by *putting others first*, by putting others before ourselves. Secondly, he tells us we are *not to be focused on self*. We are not to look inwardly or to look at ourselves, but rather we are to look

outside of ourselves. Thirdly, he shows us where we are to look, that we are *directed toward the Lord*. It is not enough merely not to look at ourselves; we must look to the Lord. Putting others first, not focused on self, directed toward the Lord.

Putting Others First

Let's begin, then, where Paul begins in the middle of verse 10. "Outdo one another in showing honor." The very first thing Paul tells us is that we are to put others first. He says we are to show honor to others. Now, before we begin in earnest, a brief note about the grammar of what Paul is doing here. In verses 10-13, we have nine specific descriptions of what love looks like in the Christian; specifics to give flesh, as it were, to love.

As we look at this list, we're going to group various items together along a theme, highlighting a mark of the Christian. This week, we're going to look at the first three with the theme being selflessness. I want you to remember that we saw in verses 9 and 10 that love is not just an emotion, but it is rather a commitment founded on the truth. Love hates evil. Love loves good.

Paul is now going to start telling us what this looks like. We actually saw the first of the specifics last week in verse 10 when Paul said, "Love one another with brotherly affection." How Paul phrases these nine specifics is interesting. He does it with a noun coupled with a participle, a verbal adjective. It's really only two elements: the noun and the verb.

We could translate it, because the noun is placed first for emphasis, something like this: "With respect to this noun, do this." That's what Paul says over and over again. Why is this important? It's because the brief language Paul uses can be translated several ways in English. It's not that we don't understand what Paul is saying, but the less words someone uses, the more difficult it is to translate into another language.

Paul does this intentionally. He is giving us multiple aspects or multiple perspectives on these specifics by using a few words. He uses rare words, and he uses brief phrases to help us to see different aspects of these specifics. The very first specific we see is in verse 10. "Outdo one another in showing honor." We might translate it this way: "With respect to honor..." There's our noun. "...outdo one another." There's our verb. Or we could also say, "Give preference one to another."

Paul is really saying two things here in this one short specific. He is telling us to put others first, but he's also telling us to lead the way in showing honor to others. What does Paul mean here by *honor*? *Honor* is not a word we use very often in our ordinary conversation. When we think of the word *honor* we may think of knights and castles, princes and princesses, or judges in flowing black robes. "Your honor."

What does Paul mean to show honor to others? At its root, the word *honor* has the idea of price. I don't want you to think of something arbitrary. It's not an arbitrary price; it is rather the price you put on something after making an evaluation of the thing. It's after something has been examined for its worth. That's when you place a price on it.

You might think of it *this* way. If you've ever had the opportunity to go into a dealership to buy a car... You walk by the vehicle and see a sticker price on the vehicle, but I daresay very, very few people, if any, walk up to the salesman and say, "We saw that car. The sticker price said \$29,995. Here's a check." No, you don't do that. You do research first.

You find out what the value of that vehicle is, what other dealerships are selling that vehicle for, what other makes and models that are similar are costing. You might even think about the time of the year. Is this a time when the dealers are over-flushed with vehicles they're trying to get off the lot or is it the brand-new entry of brand-new vehicles? All of that comes into determining the value of that vehicle. It's not arbitrary. You place a value on it, and that's the price you're willing to pay.

Some of you may even have had the opportunity when talking with the salesman... When he doesn't agree with your valuation, you say, "That's fine; I'll go down the street," and you walk out. Now, once you know something's value, you treat it with reverence and respect. Think about our English word *value*. It means to put a worth on something, but it also means once you *have* something of value that you value it. You take care of it.

Perhaps some of you grew up collecting rare baseball cards like my father did. When you collect rare baseball cards, you place a value on them. You know they're worth something. What you do not do is grab them all up together in a stack, put a tight rubber band around them, and throw them in a footlocker. You would never do that. You treat them as something of value.

Instead, you get plastic sleeves (and not just *any* plastic sleeves...*special* plastic sleeves) so you can gently slide the card in so it protects it from sunlight and from dirt and even from air. You value these things. The ladies are looking at me like, "What do you mean 'baseball cards'?" So perhaps another illustration is in order. You might value something like fine china, the china you received for your wedding.

When you have fine china, you don't just stack them in the cupboards, do you? You don't just stick them in the dishwasher to wash them. No. Of course you don't. You value them. You have to wash them by hand. What child doesn't know the exquisite pleasure of having to wash the china when there's a perfectly good dishwasher sitting there? It's because you don't treat something with that kind of value like that. You value it. You revere it.

When we're talking about people, then...not things but people...that means treating others with respect. It means valuing *their* thoughts, *their* actions. Paul puts on us the fact that love values others. He puts us on alert that love values others. This is important to Paul, because we show our love is genuine by honoring others. That's what Paul tells us.

So, how do we then act with respect to others? If we are to show honor to others, how do we go about doing that? Paul uses a unique verb here that is translated *outdo*. It's unique because this is the only place in all of the New Testament that this verb is used. When that happens, it's difficult to find out exactly what the meaning is. We know generally what the meaning is, but it's hard to get the precise perspective on it, because we can't compare it to other passages.

Again, I think Paul does that deliberately here. He could have used another word. He deliberately chose a word that would have several connotations to it so we would have a full meaning, so we could obtain much learning in brief words. Now, there are two emphases that come from this one common meaning of this word. The common meaning is captured in our translation *outdo*, but the question is... *Outdo in what way?* What does that mean?

The first way we can think about it is in the sense of giving preference to others. You are to treat others better than yourself. You show honor to others. You give them respect, the respect *you* would want to get. No. Even more than that. Paul puts it *this way* in Philippians, chapter 2: "In humility count others more significant than yourselves." What love looks like is to show honor to others, to put them before yourself, to treat them more highly than you would treat yourself.

In the church, that means not only do we not look down at people, but instead, we go out of our way to honor and value them. That's what it looks like. The second way we can take this verb is in the sense of to take the lead in showing honor. This verb can also mean to go first, to go before. In *this* sense, what Paul is telling us is not to wait for praise from others but to be first and foremost in showing honor to others. We are to set the pace in showing honor.

It's not just that you go first. You are also to have leadership in showing honor. For example, you might be out somewhere in a public place, perhaps at a buffet. You look and see the buffet set up, and you're not really sure where to start or where to go. "Do I start at *this* end or *that* end or do I go to the back? Do I get the dish first? Do I get my drink first? What do I do?" It takes a brave soul to say, "Follow me." He goes up to the buffet and starts the line. It isn't just that he's first. Everyone follows him in cue. That's what Paul is saying here.

It's not just that we are to be first in time; we are to be setting a culture of honor and value in the church. We are to be a part of establishing a culture that values others. You are to be an example to others, especially new believers. In this sense, we are to give others an opportunity to use their gifts. We are to show them that they are valued, that how they serve the church is important. We are to remind fellow believers around us that they are significant and that they are valued.

Now, this does not mean we are to go about showing a false modesty. The same Paul who wrote this didn't walk around saying, "Oh no, no, no. *You* write the Bible. I'm really not capable of writing the Bible. Oh no, no, no. *You* plant the church. I really don't know a lot about church planting." Remember, Paul talked about this before in verse 3 when he told us we were to have sober judgment about ourselves.

We saw that pride manifests itself in one of two ways: either thinking too highly of ourselves or having a false humility. When we have that false humility, what we're really asking for is someone to disagree with us and tell us how great we are. There's no false humility here. Paul understood this well. He didn't fail to exercise his gifts. He didn't fail to exercise his authority, because it had come to him from the Lord, but he always did this in the context of how blessed he had been by God.

Paul never thought or said or pretended it was his greatness that allowed him to do the things he could. Instead, he knew the value he had was not a value he placed on himself but, rather, a value God had placed on him. Paul

puts it *this* way in 2 Corinthians 3: "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is of God." Do you see what Paul is saying there? He says, "I know I'm not sufficient in myself, but I *am* sufficient, because God has given me that sufficiency."

Not Focused on Self

So, the first thing Paul tells us is to put others first, and we do that by showing them honor and by setting an example for others to follow. The second thing Paul tells us is that love is not focused on self. Paul is now going to give us two specifics as to what that looks like. He does this in verse 11. "Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit..." Once again, he is using the same grammatical technique of a noun in its place of importance and a verb that tells us what we are to do with the noun.

Paul starts with a negative, as it were. "With respect to zeal, do not be slothful." This takes some explaining, because, again, this is a perfectly good translation, but I don't think these words are common parlance to us. We don't talk about the *zeal* we have. Many of us have never used the word *slothful*. The only way we can even understand what that word means is we think of the animal. We think of the animal who is slow, who is lazy.

We even see this most recently... There has been an animated film in which there was a sloth, and you knew he was the sloth because he talked slowly. When you're around a sloth you want to say, "Come on! Pick up the pace here. Let's go! What are you doing?" Paul is telling us not to be slow, not to be lazy. Another way to translate this, perhaps more commonly, would be, "In regard to what you ought to be doing, don't be lazy."

The emphasis here is on the attitude, not on the actual actions. That doesn't mean the actions are unimportant, but what Paul is doing here is focusing on our attitude. It's the attitude that's important. I think Paul knows us well. If Paul had said, "Do not be slothful in teaching," we would be eager to not be lazy in teaching, and then we'd be lazy in other things. Then when someone came up and said, "Why are you being slothful?" we'd say, "Because it's not teaching. Paul said 'teaching.' That's the only thing I have to worry about."

Here, instead, Paul says something that is more general that covers all of our actions. Paul is given this advice in the same way he gives it to the Galatians. In that letter he tells the Galatians, "Do not grow weary in doing good." This is very practical advice. If we are honest, what makes doing good hardest is to be unappreciated, to think that what we are doing doesn't matter. It's difficult to keep going in doing good.

Let me now speak directly to our young people, our kids. Your mother cooks for you. Right? Your mother cleans up after you. Right? Your mother probably makes your bed even though it's *your* job to make your bed. Do you show her she's appreciated? Do you thank her? If you don't, she might grow weary in doing good, and you may wake up to a head of lettuce on the table for dinner. Show your mother she's appreciated so she continues in doing good.

That's what Paul is saying. If we're going to continue in doing good, it's much easier if we are appreciated. Often, this takes the form of a reward for what we do. We want a raise or we want praise from others or we even just want some recognition of what we're doing. When that doesn't come to us, we wonder why we're even doing it.

Paul wants to encourage us, even if we're not recognized, even if we're not appreciated, to not be slothful with respect to zeal, to not grow weary in doing good. This noun Paul has used is *zeal*. Sometimes this word means to be in haste or to be eager. When we are zealous for something, we get right to it. The word has the connotation of being vigorous, of being alive to it.

Now what does that mean? If you want to see zeal in this sense, you have to watch a 6-year-old boy at the beginning of the day. You know how they act? Everywhere they go, they go a hundred miles an hour. Everywhere they go, they're busy. There's no stopping them. There are no halfway measures at all...until they crash. Then at the end of the day, they may fall asleep on their bed, on the couch, on the floor. They haven't even changed their clothes. They are out, because there are no halfway measures with a 6-year-old boy.

In the same way, Paul tells us we should have no halfway measures in what *we* do. We're to be energetic. We're to be eager. But *zeal* also has the idea of diligence or carefulness to it. It's not just energy and quickness. There's also a carefulness to zeal. For example, Peter says in his second letter, chapter 1, that we are to make every effort to add virtue to faith, knowledge to virtue, etcetera. That phrase *make every effort* is our word for *zeal*.

So, in order to be zealous, we are to be conscious of the effort we make. We are to be diligent. The Christian life is not meant to be passive. We're not meant to be tossed around by the currents. We are to be diligent in how we live. We are to pursue Jesus Christ with an eagerness and a diligence, like we would anything we placed value on.

This is furthered by the verb here: do not be *slothful*. Again, *slothful* is not a word we use much, but it means to be slow, to be hesitant, to be lazy. In many ways, this word is the opposite of *zeal*. It makes sense. What Paul is saying is, "Don't dampen your zeal by being lazy." But there's also another sense to this word *slothful*. It can also mean irksome or troublesome. We might even put it *this way*: *annoying*.

Paul says in Philippians, chapter 3, "To write the same things to you is no trouble to me." The word there for *trouble* is the same word for *slothful*. Paul is saying again, "Do not dampen your zeal." Do not limit your activity by being lazy, by being annoying, or even perhaps more properly, by being annoyed with what you have to do. We don't do things well that annoy us.

You do not want me working on anything mechanical at your house. One element of it is that I don't know what to do with socket sets and wrenches and everything. The other thing is I don't *care* what to do with it. I don't *want* to learn how to use them. They annoy me. If you want something done like that, you call my wife or you call Daryl. You don't call me, because I have no interest in doing that.

If you think about that within the church, if things within the church annoy us and we show other people that we will do it, but we're really annoyed to have to do it, what does that mean? It's a dampening of zeal. What Paul is telling us here is not to focus on ourselves, but instead, to focus on others; not to focus on the perceived effect we are having, but to focus on how we can serve others.

The Devil wants you to analyze the value of your actions before you undertake them. He wants you to be disinterested in action. He comes and he brings everything he can to discourage you, and it shows up like this

thought that runs through your mind: "Well, it won't make any difference if I do *that*. Well, no one really cares anyway if I even *do* that." What does that do, then? It makes you lazy. You don't undertake those tasks because you think they're valueless. You think they're worthless. They're not worth your time.

You're focusing on yourself and *your* effect rather than on others. So, what are you to do then? Paul tells you. Rouse yourself. You need to be active with other believers. You need to be zealous for the work of God. You should not focus on yourself or what rewards you can receive or how effective you think you can be. No. When you focus on the Lord and on obeying him, you will not grow weary in doing good.

Paul then continues in verse 11 with a positive counterpart to that phrase. He tells us to "be fervent in spirit." If we are not to grow weary, if we're not to be lazy in doing good, how much more, then, do we need to be active? Paul is once again pointing us away from ourselves. The noun of emphasis here is *spirit*, and it can have two meanings, but in either way, it points us away from ourselves.

You have to understand that when Paul was writing these letters, in the original manuscripts and even in the copies, there were no capital letters. You didn't capitalize words. As a matter of fact, *all* of the letters were capitals. So there's no way to definitively tell whether when Paul writes *spirit* here he means "small S" *spirit*, *our* spirit, or "capital S" *Spirit*, the Holy Spirit.

The good news is that both of these meanings come together. In the first sense, if we take it to mean *our* spirit, we mean it refers to our spirit that is empowered by God, and it shows forth Jesus Christ. We don't have a spirit that can be fervent apart from God. This is Paul's way of telling us we are to live a way that reflects who Jesus is, not who *we* are.

This is very hard. Our habits are hard to break. Far too often, when we interact with others, we show them ourselves rather than Jesus, but that's why Paul gives us this command here. We are to constantly reflect Jesus to others. We cannot completely change who we are. You cannot undo your personality completely, but we are to show Jesus in our lives.

The second way of taking this word *spirit* is as the Holy Spirit. In this sense, the emphasis would be on the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It's not that different from the first sense. It's just perhaps a bit more directly focused. After all, your spirit is only alive inasmuch as the Holy Spirit gives you life. So, what are we to do in the Spirit? Paul says we are to be *fervent*.

Now what does that mean? Again, it's not a common word. We don't hear often in our homes, "Children, would you like to go to the pool?" "Yes, father. We are fervent for swimming." You just don't see that. But it's a perfectly good word if we unpack it. This word means to boil or to bubble over. It means to have energy, to be active. One commentator summarizes it *this* way: we are to be *aglow* with the Spirit.

Again, it is the opposite of slothfulness. Instead of falling asleep, instead of a fire dying out, we are to be active and to be energetic. We are to see the flames rise and the embers crackle and dance. Now how do we do this? Paul tells

you the positive and the negative in his other writings. He tells us how we see this fervency rise in us. You are to be open to the Spirit's leading. You are not to resist the work of the Spirit.

Paul puts it *this* way to Timothy: "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God." This is a good illustration. If you've ever been camping and sat around a fire that was starting to die out, you know how you take care of it. You know the worst thing you can possibly do to a dying fire is to dump a big log on top of it. If you do, it will put it out. What you need to do first is to fan the flame, to get it glowing, to get it hot, to get the flames rising up.

If you are a risk taker or just not very careful, you will get right up on the fire, cup your hands around your mouth, and blow, and hope you don't get soot, ash, and embers in your face. If you're a little bit more cautious, you might get a branch or a piece of cloth, and you might fan that flame so the embers glow hot and so the flames rise up, and *then* you put another log on it. It's fanning the flame.

Another thing Paul tells us about this is what we do *not* do. He tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, "Do not quench the Spirit." This should be self-evident. What would you do at this same campfire if you were standing around and you said, "We need to get this flame going again," and someone said, "I have just the thing for it: a bucket of water." *Poof!* Is that how you fan a flame? Is that how you get fervency in a fire? Of course not! So, we need to not only fan the flame of the Spirit; we need to avoid anything that would quench the work of the Spirit in our lives.

Now how do you do this? How do you fan this flame? It's actually very simple. The method is not difficult. What's hard is the consistency. What's hard is the determination. What you do is you read your Bible. You pray. You remind yourself of the work you have been given by your Lord. When you do these things day upon day, week upon week, month upon month, you will see a fervency in the Spirit. We don't focus on ourselves; we focus on what the Lord is doing and the work he has given to us. We are to put others first. We are not to focus on ourselves.

Directed Toward the Lord

Finally, Paul tells us who we *are* to focus on: the Lord. He uses this same construction again with the noun and the verb. He says, "...serve the Lord." We might put it *this* way: "With respect to the Lord, serve." Some commentators think this phrase is out of place here, that it's a mistake, that it's too general a command, it's not specific enough to go in this list, but it seems to me that it is perfectly appropriate. When Paul tells us not to look someplace, he has to tell us where to look, and that's what he's doing. He's telling us to look to the Lord.

When we look outside of ourselves, that is when we find success. You might think of it *this* way. Some places of the world still plow fields the old-fashioned way: with a hand plow, making furrows. I don't know if you've ever watched someone make furrows, but if you have, you notice they do not look back to see how straight their furrow is, because anyone who does that has rows to plant in that look like *this*, like a zigzag puzzle. What they do is they fix their eyes on a point ahead, and that gives you the straight line.

That's what Paul is telling us here. Our eyes have to be fixed on the Lord, and *then* our activities, *then* our work, *then* our service will be successful. It starts with knowing that we belong to the Lord. If we think about it, so much

of pride, so much of personal preference, so much of the conflicts we have with others would be done away with if it was constantly before our eyes that we are not our own but that we belong to the Lord.

Paul knew this well. Over and over again, he refers to himself as the *servant of the Lord*. He does it at the beginning of Romans, in 1 Corinthians 3, in 2 Corinthians 4, in Galatians 1, again in Philippians 1, in Colossians 1, in Titus 1. Over and over again, he refers to himself as the *servant of the Lord*. Now we've looked at this word in other contexts before. It doesn't mean a respectable servant. When you hear the word *servant*, do not think of Jeeves, the butler, dressed in a tuxedo.

What it means is a bondsman. It means you belong to someone else. It means you have no rights of your own. Do you know that you are not your own? Do you know that you belong to Jesus? If you profess faith in Jesus Christ, if you know that by his life and his death you have found forgiveness of sins, then you are not your own. You belong to another. Paul puts it *this* way: you were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body.

Now this is critical, not just so we can understand that *we* belong to God but so we can properly view ourselves and others in the church. I belong to Jesus. Therefore, I cannot focus on myself. My reputation is of no concern, only Jesus' reputation. My preferences are of no consequence; only Jesus' preferences matter. But there's more. That person who's next to me? He belongs to Jesus too.

It doesn't really matter what I think of his habits or his preferences. He belongs to Jesus. As I love him and as I serve him, I'm serving Jesus. We are not our own. When we know whose we are and whose others in the church are, it gives us a proper perspective. There is no time for quarreling, no time for rivalries. We only have time for Jesus. All of our efforts are focused on him.

Finally, the supreme motive for all of this is to serve the Lord. We do not forget this. Beloved, it is not our cause. It is not our business; it's the Lord's. Our motive for living is love for God. It is not self-satisfaction. It is not praise. The slave does nothing for himself. He does everything for the master. This helps us in a very practical way. When the servant is under the master's eye, he is always hard at work. Isn't that true?

I may have told you this before, but back when I was much younger, in college, I spent a summer working in my father's office. For those of you who have seen a picture of my father, especially when I'm wearing my glasses, you'll notice I look an awful lot like him. My father was the vice president in charge of the entire office. I was the mail room clerk, so I just went around and delivered packages and drove messenger packages in a vehicle and really just tried to stay out of trouble.

It was inevitable that what would happen is during the day I'd be gone for a period of time, and I would come into the mail room, and as soon as I walked in, everybody would get really busy. They would be shuffling papers. They'd be writing stuff down. They'd be doing all kinds of stuff, not because *I* was important but because they thought I was my dad. They thought they were under the eye of the boss.

If we're honest with ourselves, that's how we live. We work harder when other people are watching us. Kids, don't lie to me. This is true all the time, isn't it? We work much harder when Mom and Dad are in the room. Not that you don't work otherwise, but you make sure you're working hard when they're watching over you.

What we need to realize is we are always under the eye of the Master. There is never a time when God's eye is not over us. You can't turn away from God at work. You can't be free from God at home alone with your family. You can't even be free from God or away from God when you're by yourself. You are always before God. You are always accountable to God. He is the Master you serve.

Two final brief thoughts about this. First, knowing we serve the Master helps give definition to our fervency and to our zeal. It focuses our energy. We're not just wild dervishes. We're not just bundles of energy. We are focused in our energy on serving the Master.

Then, secondly, knowing we serve the Master helps us to deal with adversity and opposition. Our enemies are not against us; they are against God. When you see things in our culture that make you angry and that are opposed to the church, to Jesus, they are not opposed to you personally. Their aim is far higher than that. They are opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Acts, chapter 4, when the apostles were thrown into prison for proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ, when they were released, they prayed to the Lord, and they didn't say, "Lord, deliver us from the people who would jail us and from our enemies." They said, "Lord, you have said, why are they against *you* and your anointed?" That opposition is opposition to God.

In conclusion, God has given you good, practical instruction about the attitude you are to have as a follower of Jesus. He has told you that your love is to be genuine. Now he tells you that your love expresses itself in an attitude of selflessness. Being a follower of Jesus means looking less and less at yourself, *your* needs, *your* preferences. It means putting others first.

It means showing them honor, thinking more highly of others than yourself, and it means not focusing on yourself, not being distracted or discouraged from the work the Lord has for you. It means looking to the Lord, *his* work, *his* business. After all, you have been bought with a price. Everything you have you owe to the Lord. As you serve him, remember that no one can ultimately defeat the cause of the Lord. There *will* be hard times, there *will* be sin, but the Lord is at work in his church. Trust him. Love him. Serve him.