

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

My father-in-law lived in the country. When we visited on occasion, he would load up his truck and say let's go to "**the dumps.**" Whether one calls that place a "*dump,*" or "*the dumps,*" it's a **depressing** place to be! Have you ever noticed that we have the greatest problem **loving one another** when we ourselves are *down in "the dumps"*? It's hard to see the needs of others when we are **down in the dumps**, feeling sorry for ourselves. When we are "**down in the mouth**" because of our failures and life's trials, our mouths may take it out on others!

It's hard to love one another from the dumps! **Love prospers in the heights of true joy and happiness.** How do we get to these heights and stay there? Our Savior tells us:

LOVE LIFTED ME!

I.

Whose love is Jesus talking about? Is it my love for me? Many psychologists and humanist philosophers tell us that unless we can build up our own **self-esteem** we will not be able to love others. Modern marriage counselors give bad advice when they say: "*You have to love yourself before you can love your spouse.*" Another way of saying the same thing: "*You have to forgive yourself, before you can forgive others.*"

Young girls in a high school home economics class in St. Louis were told: "*You need to face yourself in a mirror every day and say, 'I love you. I really love you!'*"

A few years ago a woman made the headlines by announcing her plans to **marry herself!** Why? "Because," she said, "I love *me!*" **Ask the world** "Whose love will lift me to love others," and the world answers: "**Your love for yourself!**"

That's the wrong answer! Jesus gives us the right answer in v. 9: "**As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.**" The love that lifts the Christian to love the brethren and all people comes from God. Jesus says that He loves us with the same love His Father has for Him.

What kind of love IS that? God the Father loved His Son *from eternity — always!* God the Father loved His Son *perfectly and unconditionally!* Jesus says that He also has this **same** eternal, perfect, and unconditional love for us.

How do we know that for sure? Paul tells us in Romans 5 that Christ suffered and died on the cross for "**the ungodly,**" when we were still God's "**enemies.**" Although as **sinners** there is **nothing about us** to love, **Christ still loves us**, and invites us to find forgiveness in His shed blood! It's this **unconditional** love of God — The Father **and** the Son -- which ought to lift our spirits every day.

II.

But how long will the love of Christ lift us? Jesus

says: "*If you keep My commandments, you will ABIDE in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.*" How long? — As long as we keep His commandments. The original Greek word, which is translated "**keep**" means to **hold closely to one's self as to a treasure.**

If Jesus were **only** speaking about **OBEYING** the Ten Ten Commandments we would **all be cast into the dumps of despair again!** Rather, our Savior is speaking of His teachings. The “commandments” of the Son of God are the same as the “**words**” and “**command**” of His Father mentioned in John 12. There Jesus says, “**I know that the Father’s command is everlasting life.**”

The Father’s “*command*” that gives eternal life is to believe in Jesus Christ and to **hold on to all of His** teachings. Jesus **kept** His Father’s commands by coming into the world and carrying out His Father’s will all the way to the cross for our sins! **Therefore He remained in His Father’s love.**

Now Jesus says to His disciples: “**You also HOLD TIGHT to what I command you, and you will abide in MY love. Treasure My words to you! Study them! Follow my teachings!** In John 6 Jesus says that His “**words are spirit and life.**” By His **words of unconditional love and grace we receive the LIFE and love of Jesus!**

So the Psalmist prays in Psalm 40: “**Let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me, O Lord.**” Our Savior wants to sweeten and preserve us by the **uplifting truth of His grace and love.** But those who neglect and move away from His words become **moody, sad, and sour!** This brings us to the last question answered by Jesus: **How FAR will Jesus’ love lift us?**

III.

Jesus says, “Love lifted Me!” How FAR did the Father’s love, lift His beloved Son? *All the way to the cross*, for sure! – But beyond to **complete joy!** Jesus speaks of this joy in v. 11: “**These things I have spoken to you, that MY JOY may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.**” Our Savior spoke these words to His disciples on the eve of His suffering and death on the cross! – How could He speak of His “**joy**” at such a time?

Hebrews 12 says that *because of* the “**joy that was set before Him,**” Christ “**endured the cross.**” Yes, the cross was ahead of Jesus; *but so was His joy!* Later in the agony of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “**and now, O Father, glorify Me . . . with the glory which I had with You before the world was.**” (Jn. 17:15) Whatever He must suffer for our sins, *nothing* could destroy His Father’s perfect love for Him! **All would be well in the END– He would see heaven’s glory AGAIN!**

In the midst of the worst possible circumstances, Jesus could joyfully love us and give Himself for us, **because His Father’s undying love lifted HIM!** By reminding us of His love for us **our Lord wants to fill up our joy so that we too may be lifted to love one another!**

He lifts us from the dumps by calling us “**His friends,**” for Whom He showed the greatest love by laying down His life! Are you Christ’s “**friends**”? If Christ has revealed His Father’s saving word to you, so that you **trust** and **hold on** to that word, then **SURE you are His friends!**

But YOU have **not chosen** Him! Instead, **He** has chosen **you.** He has “**appointed**” us to go forward in true faith and **bear lasting fruit** in our Christian lives! (cf. Rev. 14:13) He has chosen and appointed us so that everything we ask the Father in Jesus’ name — *by faith* — He will give to us!

In John’s First Epistle he writes: “**perfect love casts out fear!**” We should be like upbeat farmer who had a **weather vane** on his barn with the words, “*God is love,*” inscribed on it. One day a preacher asked the farmer: “*What do you mean by that? Do you think God’s love is changeable, the way that arrow up there turns in the wind?*” “*Oh no,*” said the farmer, “**I mean that whichever the way the wind blows, God is still love.**”

This is the wonderful love-relationship with our Savior which **lifts us to fullness of joy** so that

we may get up and out of “*the dumps,*” and feel **free to love others!** The more Christ’s love for us is heard, read, remembered, and rehearsed, the more our own spirits **soar upward** in joy! For this reason Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison, saying, “**rejoice in the Lord always,**” and then quickly added: “**Let your gentleness be known to all men**” (Phil. 4:4-5)

Our Lord and Savior says, “**My Father’s love for ME and for YOU, LIFTED ME** *the cross to the joyful heights of heaven!* May we also be lifted up from the “**dumps**” by the joy of His **perfect love FOR US**, beyond all petty **quarrels** and **selfish considerations**, beyond every personal **misery** or **misunderstanding**, so that we may love others **as He has loved us!** Amen.