James 1:12 - *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who LOVE Him.*

James 2:5 - *Listen, my beloved brethren. Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith? Did God not choose the poor of this world to become heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who LOVE Him?*

What does one rich in faith do? Praise the Lord. If he's rich in faith, he believes. He loves the Lord. What does an heir to the kingdom do? He loves the Lord. Through close reading of Scripture, I think we can see that those in the kingdom have a lavish love for the Lord. I was really tempted this morning to move on, but I don't think I want to yet, because I'd like to impress you again with what was said yesterday morning (message: *At the Cross is the Love of God*).

When I started back on these messages again, the last thing we had seen was the Lord's resurrection, Mary Magdalene's love for the Lord, and the Lord's jealousy for His people, for His bride. The Lord's demand for love from His children. He said to Simon Peter, "Do you love Me?" And He said again, Simon Peter, "Do you love Me?" And He said again, Simon Peter, "Do you love Me?

His bride loves Him. She has an incredible task to perform. She stands in the lineage of an incredible love. For preceding her love is an eternal unexpressed love, pent up. Following that love is the Father's love for the Son. And following that love is a dual love. It's almost a trilogy, a triumphant love. I mean by that a three-part love. It is the Lord Jesus' own love for His Father in return to the Father. It's the Lord's divine love for His wife, and it's the Lord's human love for his wife.

All of that preceded the resurrection and the day of Pentecost. Wow. Man carries an inferiority complex. His religious nature wants to love the Lord, and at the same time, while it pushes us to be good and meet all the Lord's demands, it also pushes us and says, "We're unworthy; we can't do it." That religious nature has got to be denied. A concept of your divinity has got to come into you, and this complex has got to drop. I had a wonderful privilege one day; it happened to me in Tyler, Texas. Beyond my selfishness, my soulishness, and my sinfulness, I also discovered one day that I loved Jesus Christ.

Have you ever been overwhelmed by the fact that you actually do love your Lord? Sometimes I hear some saints say, "I just don't love the Lord like I ought to," or "I just don't love the Lord." That's just the biggest lie. Your soul may not always love Him, but you didn't get up this morning at 4 a.m. because you were an atheist. Something motivated you, and it wasn't religion either. I promise you that even religion has its limits.

This is the first, and most startling, thing about the church of Jesus Christ: she was born in love with the Lord. I want you to know that it was on Sunday (Pentecost) that 3,000 people were converted. They're just ordinary folk. They had never laid eyes on Jesus Christ, but on Monday morning, they gave up everything they had on earth. They were 24 hours old in Jesus Christ when

they dropped everything. She matched His love; maybe she didn't match it perfectly, but she matched his love. She honored Him with love, but that love had to grow in its expression.

Now, praise the Lord for this. Here is the church's testimony after Pentecost, but we praise the Lord that, along the way, individuals raised a standard for the church to see. The whole church always needs to see standards of individuals to bring the church corporately on. We need Barnabas's. We need Peter's. We need Stephen's to raise the whole church up. I'm no longer speaking of sacrifices.

Simon Peter had won the right on Monday morning to ask everybody to leave everything, because he had done it, but boy, the fall of Simon Peter's life is just beautiful to see that love for him grow. If you get a chance anytime soon, would you read 1 Peter and 2 Peter? And know that the brother who stood there with a burning heart for Jesus Christ and called all those people to give up everything they had, that same brother wrote a letter in his last years of life…and that love was still burning. Read 1 Peter and 2 Peter and look for an old man's love for Jesus Christ. I'm going to promise you something according to the Old Testament. My Lord, your Lord, His loving kindness endures forever. Simon Peter had seen much, but love was still alive in him.

Okay, now the church takes off under the example of individuals who have abandoned for the Lord in love. Brothers, I want you to distinguish between the love that you think of as love for the Lord and love for the Lord. I am not talking now about a man who gives up everything and gives away everything because he loves the Lord. That's good, but that's primarily negative. I believe that's what every man ought to do, or it'll become a stumbling block somewhere down the line. I'm impressed with the need for every man to drop everything to go with the Lord, but that's primarily negative.

The positive is the passion of love for Jesus Christ. Have you grasped what I'm speaking about yet? I believe you've gotten the point somewhere, have you not…of a love for Jesus Christ? I'm sorry, I regret…but the Lord doesn't regret…I have one view; the Lord has another. He and I disagree. This morning, I regret that we have not personally met the testimony of the sisterhood of Mary. I praise the Lord for sisters who can fall down in front of an automobile that won't work and repent in the Lord's presence, and I'm not just overwhelmed by the need to repent, but by the reason they repent.

Do you know why they repent? Do you understand why they repent so quickly? Does anybody understand the reason behind it? They repent for a purpose. They repent in order to renew their first love. Someone said it's because they love the Lord, but there's a slight difference: they repent based on revelation. *Repent, for you have lost your first love.* Well, if the automobile doesn't work, they assume that they've lost their first love, so they repent. I think it'd be a little bit better to just keep your first love. I hope you keep your first love. Some of the brothers in the first century kept their first love to the very end.

Now, it was neat on the day of Pentecost to give up everything for the Lord, but a few years after that, Saul came in and began persecuting the church. Now, uncomfortable circumstances have moved in on the church. It wasn't easy to sell everything and live commonly, but it wasn't threatening. It wasn't uncomfortable, but now Saul has come, and if you don't follow the Lord, the chances are you're likely to get your back beaten. You're going to get thrown in jail. Praise God that

the church had the testimony of John and Peter being beaten and rejoicing. Do you understand what it means to rejoice?

There are many ways to rejoice, and I think that we can rejoice quietly, but after those brothers had been received the 39 stripes, do you think they rejoiced quietly? I think they came out of that place raising the roof. Now, I'm not interested in the fact that they raised the roof. We've raised the roof around here. Maybe we can raise the roof again around here pretty soon. I am not talking about raising the roof or the joy, but I am talking about the passion. I don't think the church recognizes this yet, but I am here right now declaring war on our unconscious concepts, our limited view of loving and worshiping the Lord.

You know, Brother Jim, you said something the other day, and I 100% agree, but I still want to challenge it. You said that you don't want to look peculiar to the world. You know, the way we dress would look odd to the world, like the plain people in Pennsylvania; they wear 18th-century garb. That's fine, I don't want to dress differently. I don't want to act too differently. I don't want to. I know what you mean, and we're kind of in danger of that because it's a peculiar thing we're doing, ending up like the sunburst people up in mountains, alone.

Now we're going to live in the world. Still, at the same time, when it gets down to this business of being related to Jesus Christ, I want you to know my heart burns to see a total breakthrough, a complete leaving of this whole stinky, limited, messy way of being related to the Lord. I know it's in me. I believe it's in you. I *know* it's in your spirit. The only thing I can say right now is it's an abandonment to the Lord.

When the weekend's over, I have one more message to bring, and this is the introduction. The day came when those brothers had a chance to love the Lord in adversity, and they did, loving the Lord with abandonment. I want to ask the church this weekend to just kind of start; you don't have to struggle and don't get under bondage, but I'd like to ask you to move like you've never moved before.

I want to challenge you to stop and come to Him in some way you've never come before. I want to challenge you. Fall down on your face, thank Him for a sofa that won't go through the door, and praise and adore Him for it. Be simple. Be downright stupid. Praise Him for a broken leg…on the sofa (laughter). Praise Him for door hinges painted so they won't come off. Praise Him for a door that's in the way. Just stop and thank and praise Him. Glorify Him with abandonment.

He who is faithful over little will be made ruler over much. He who can find the Lord in life's little frustrations will get through the crosses, and he who can get to the crosses will make it through the crucifixion. Brothers, it's the little crosses that set us up to be destroyed by the medium-sized crosses.

I am speaking to the church this morning, and I say to you: start looking for the love of God. Start looking for the love of God. Boy, it's out there if you want to find it. I read the verses I read the other day again this morning. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, for once he has been tested, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to those who love Him. Now I

want you to listen to that verse of Scripture again, because I am going to read most of it backward. Here is the crown of life. Do you understand what crown means?

Here are the feet of life. The shoelaces of eternal life. Here are the loins of eternal life. Here's the breastplate of eternal life. Here are all these things. Here are all the aspects of eternal life, but there is a crown to eternal life. There's the crowning aspect of eternal life. *...and I will give him the crown of eternal life.*

You know what the crown is? The crown is the thing you get when everything else is...you get crowned when you've been made king. You get crowned when you have won the battle. You get crowned when you have become the victor and all things are under your feet. Here's life down here, but it's not the crowning part. There are aspects of life above it, but for every life aspect, there's one above it, which means this part of that life can still be conquered. But when you get the crown of life…now listen…there is a crown of life.

I'll give you the secret to victorious Christian living this morning. I'll do more than that. I'll give you an experience that will end once and for all an 1800-year-old tradition of Christians being battered and kicked around. I give you triumph this morning. I said the other day that there's a message that will absolutely shake the universe to its foundations, and that's the message of the gospel of the kingdom. I want you to know something else, and I'm committed to this all summer.

There's got to be a message of Jesus Christ that, in its totality, leaves the Christian prepared for the rest of his life for all things. I mean, there has got to be a Christian experience that settles all questions. I've heard every kind of Christian message there is to be heard, and every one of them leaks just a little bit. There is a Christian message that doesn't leak. There's a Christian experience that doesn't leave. There's a Christian experience that, having done all, stands. Do you understand what I mean? When there is the undefeatable Christian.

I give you a big hook of that secret this morning. He has promised the crown of life. Literally, it's the crown. Here's the crowning aspect of that life. All things are below that crown. Listen very carefully. *He will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised.*

Is that given to those who persevere under trial? Absolutely not, and I can testify to that. I have persevered under trial. As far as that goes, brothers, I can tell you I have persevered under trial, and this morning I'm ashamed of that. Some time ago, an awareness broke into me that persevering under trial may be higher than anything else people generally do in a trial, but it's not the crown of life.

When you persevere under trial, you come out with your garments smoking, and you're staggering, and you're saying, " Praise the Lord." That's not the crown of life. Praise the Lord, you survived. You're still in the battle, but you haven't gotten the crown of life. Let me read it. I want to make sure I say it correctly. *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial.* That's blessed. That man is persevering, and God says that's blessed. After he perseveres and passes the test…what's passing the test? It is loving the Lord during the trial and after the trial. It is taking that trial as an act of love from the Lord. That's way up here, brothers and sisters.

I ask you, can that trial touch you? When a trial comes to you, and you turn it into the love of God…and at this point, I'm a frustrated man. But remember, would you, by Monday or Tuesday, I'm a frustrated man, because I'm working on how to communicate this. I don't know how to communicate it. At this point, it's turning that thing into the Lord's love. Here it comes, and you say, " That's the Lord's love. The Lord really loves me." That's not enough. Is it the Lord's love, or is it not? Is it the Lord's love, or are you going to pretend it is?

Alright, if you were walking down the street today, no, let's make it more private than that. Let's say you came home, sat down, and suddenly felt a serene consciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ's presence. That presence began to grow and grow until you were overwhelmed, until, like an ocean, it poured over you. You would find no problem whatsoever in falling on your face before the Lord, pouring out a passionate love for Him, abandoning your inner being, and loving Him with passion. For that is a recognizable expression of the Lord's love. A human can recognize that, but I tell you, only a divine creature could recognize the crucifixion as an act of love and receive love in response.

Can you see yourself falling down and pouring out a passionate expression of love to the Lord in a trial? I don't mean endurance. I don't mean recognizing it as the Lord's love; I mean getting down to the physical business of falling on your face before the Lord and passionately loving Him; expressing love…for a trial. I tell you, the Lord will give you the crown of life. No power in the universe can touch you. May God be so merciful to us.

May I beg you to do something? If we Americans are known for anything, it's our sarcasm. Never demean what I'm saying. It is so easy to say, " Wow, my wife's sick, my little girl's in the hospital, the Lord really loves me. Boy, I lost all my money today… I got a speeding ticket…the Lord really loves me. Brother, you've missed the mark. I don't mean to put you under the pile; I join you. I've missed the mark so many times. That's taking something holy and still turning it into a drag. I think you understand. I'm sure you must understand what I'm saying. It's bringing it down to something common. Oh, brothers, be like a hungry hound, looking for the Lord's love, matching it with passion. Now, if any of you think you're already there, I want to tell everybody that I've never seen what I'm speaking about. It has come to provoke love out of your inmost being.

I rarely do what I'm about to do, but it impressed me so much; the thought impressed me. I'm not here to put anybody under a pile. It's just that it's the best illustration I've been able to come up with, and it's been in me for so long. Terry, I'm going to speak to you personally. I know you'll understand, and then I think that, in speaking to you personally, we will all understand.

Last January, I really felt sorry for you. You lent your car to the brothers to go to Memphis, and we all saw it. Because of some of Steven's helpful words, those who drove the car back were really helped. Some of you don't know. It broke down, so they tied it to the back of another car, and as they drove along, the other car whiplashed it, and her very expensive car got whipped and beat up. They were under tremendous strain, of course. Finally, they just had to stop. The cars were all broken. Well, they had already stopped with that one; another car had come along and picked them up. It was just really bad.

Terry, I praise the Lord, sister. You took that a lot higher than a lot of folks might have. When that car was pulled up there, and you saw it beat up and battered, you really turned to the Lord. I mean, that could have really been bad. I know; I've been through things like that, and I take it very seriously. There's bitterness, disappointment, resentment, or just plain depression, but I look forward to the day when all of the Lord's people could come to an incident like that, walk out onto the lawn, see that fortune beat and pulverized, fall down on your face, and praise Him and love Him.

Take hold of a fender, hold it, and say, Lord, I thank you for your blessed, pure, precious love, and sit there or lie there and love Him and worship Him and adore Him, with your whole being poured out. Skies and heaven are under your feet, and you will have matched your Lord. She'll be a bride worthy of the King of Kings.

I want to say one more thing: I know everybody here is going to go out looking for a smashed-up automobile. You'll find your smashed-up automobile in the form of a contrary wife, a horsey husband, or a worldly employee you work with. Your wrecked automobile may be nothing more than a flat tire on the freeway.

All I can tell you is this. Jesus Christ loves you passionately and has already expressed it. And there's a passionate love in you that you have for the Lord. Probably, if it lacks anything more than anything else, it lacks an unabandoned expression at the slightest move of His sovereignty. I am talking about something I have never seen in a corporate group of people, and only an eye of faith can see it. If you see it, it can be yours, and in it is the crown of life.

I want to remind you of James 2. It says *God has taken the poor of this world and given the kingdom of God to those who what? Who love Him.* You get the crown, and you get the whole kingdom when you can love the Lord like that. And we love Him because He first loved us like that.