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The Holiness of Christ

Let's note some of the qualities of Jesus. The first one, of course, is holiness. Our God is holy and our Lord is holy, and we call the Spirit the Holy Spirit. Now think how stained and how spotted and how carnal the average Christian is. We allow stains – months go by without repentance. Years go by without asking for cleansing or taking it. Then we sing, "Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord." Or we pray, "Come, Lord, come to this meeting." Well, the Lord is there. What we're praying is, "Oh Lord, show Thyself," but the Lord cannot; a holy God cannot show Himself in full communion to an unholy Christian. You ask, "Is it possible to be a Christian and be unholy?" It's possible to be a carnal Christian. You can have the seed of God in you, be regenerated and justified and still be unholy in some of your inner feelings and desires and willingness.

The Unselfishness of Christ

The second quality is unselfishness. Do you notice that Jesus Christ was completely unselfish and gave Himself? But how self-centered and self-indulgent most Christians are! Even when they're reading books on revival, they're still self-centered. Even when they're praying for revival, they're still self-indulgent. A revival is, among other things, a sudden manifestation. It's a breaking of the sun through the clouds. It's not the coming of the sun; it's the breaking of the sun through the clouds. I'm sick in my own heart, sick about myself, sick about my friends, sick about the preachers and their ministry. How utterly self-centered we can become. We live for self, talk loudly about glorifying God and boast and say, "This is to the glory of God" – and yet we are self-centered. You'll know you're self-centered if anybody crosses you and your

hackles go up. Don't smile about it. It's not funny – it's serious. There's enough money, potentially, in the average congregation not only to keep the church going but to double the missionary offering. There would be enough – if we weren't so self-indulgent. Of course, a perfectly selfless Christ who gave Himself and poured Himself out and had no selfishness can't warm up to the Christian heart that is self-indulgent and self-centered. He loves us; He's our Shepherd; He's our Advocate above, who pleads our cause in heaven. We're His brethren in Christ and God His Father is our Father. But our selfishness prevents us from enjoying the fellowship, the sweetness that changes some people into saints while they walk on earth (and I mean *saint* in more than a technical sense).

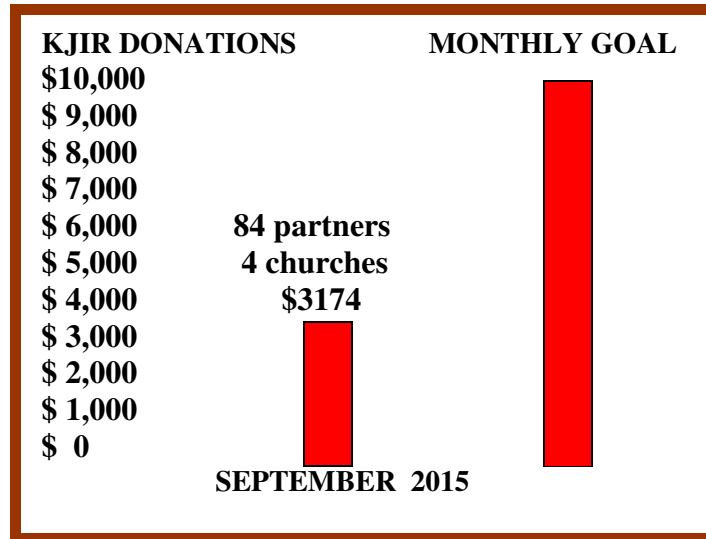
The Love of Christ

The third quality is love. He so loved that He gave all. But how calculating so many of us are! We say, "Well, I can go to this meeting but I can't go to that one; the doctor has told me not to overdo it." So we have it all figured out. We put our spiritual life on a budget. We won't spend anything for God unless we can justify it in the columns of our budget. What a cheap, carnal way of living, and yet it's true – we do it! How narrow God's people are.

The love of the Lord Jesus Christ was a great, passionate, outpoured thing that caused Him to give Himself completely. It is said, "Christ pleased not himself" (Romans 15:3). Even our Lord pleased not Himself. But do you know what is wrong with us? We are self-pleasers. We live for ourselves. There are people who would buy a new car even if it meant their church went broke and had to close its doors. There are women who would dress in the latest style even if the mission cause died and every missionary had to be sent home. Yet we're saints, we're born-again, we're believers – we have our marked New Testament! We may be Christians, but the love we have is a calculating and narrow love, a love that doesn't give itself. And so how can He who gave Himself ever fellowship with us? Do you want a Bible illustration of this? Let me give it to you. It is the fifth chapter of the Song of Solomon, that delicate, gentle, wondrous, beautiful book of which Dr. Scofield said, "Sin has almost deprived us of the ability to kneel before that burning bush."

You'll remember that the bridegroom (who represents Jesus) had given gifts to his bride-to-be. He was out taking care of his sheep, out among the lilies. The dew was falling, and his locks were wet with the dews of the night (5:2). He was out there doing what his interests required him to do, what his heart wanted to do. He came and knocked on her door to say, "Won't you come and join me?" She said, "How can I? I am not dressed for it. I'm dressed for the couch and the home, and even my hands drip with the ointments you've given me. I can't come." And so he disappeared (5:3-6). He was still her lover and he still wanted to marry her (and he did finally, thank God, and it came out all right).

He was out there pouring himself out, and she was in her house admiring herself and taking long whiffs of the perfume that he'd given her, standing before the mirror and admiring the robes and jewelry he'd given her. He wanted her, but she wanted his jewelry and his perfumes. Then finally she got under conviction about it and she quickly, hastily



dressed, not really for street dress. But she got some clothes on and a robe about her and started out looking for her beloved.

She asked the watchman, "Where is he?" And the watchman beat her (5:7) and said she was a harlot and told her to go home. She went on staggering under the blows and couldn't find him. And while she was hunting him, her friends said, "What's the matter? Why don't you go home?" They said, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" (5:9). And then she burst out into a beautiful song of praise, saying, "My beloved is white and ruddy" – she described him from head to foot – "the chiefest among ten thousand" (5:10).

He wanted her fellowship and she was too selfish and self-centered. Of course there could be no fellowship while he's out there doing one thing and she's selfishly staying in the house doing another.

A.W. Tozer

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