

September 22, 2013

IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW MUCH I DO – DO LOVE YOU

by Pastor Clarissa Martinelli

If Only You Knew - Patti LaBelle

I must have rehearsed my lines
A thousand times
Until I had them memorized
But when I get up the nerve
To tell you, the words
Just never seem to come out right

(Chorus:)

If only you knew
How much I do
Do love you
If only you knew
How much I do
Do need you

Ephesians 6:18: *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

John praises Christ, "to him be glory and power for ever and ever," because Christ is "him who loves us." Note that John does not use the past tense – Christ "loved" us. Nor does John use the future tense – Christ "will love" us." Rather, John uses the present tense – Christ "loves" us. It is a present and ongoing love. It is a love that is abiding and permanent and never ending. To Christ be glory and power because He loves us and continues to love us.

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" **Jeremiah 29:11**

IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW MUCH I DO – DO LOVE YOU

"To him who loves us ... to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen." Some of John's audience might question this love. After all, they were Christians under attack. They were facing persecution and even death. The Roman authorities hated them. The Jews slander them. So how can John say that Jesus loves them?

IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW MUCH I DO – DO LOVE YOU

I'm finding myself in a stage of life where I am trying to get rid of things I don't need, breaking myself free from things, people, situations that are hindering my spiritual growth. For most of us, life can be divided into two phases—accumulating and de-accumulating. After decades accumulating a mass of things especially after nearly 25 years of moving in the Navy, I am well into the de-accumulation side. I find myself throwing things away left and right. Marty and I have come to the realization that we just do not need it anymore, and any de-cluttering guru will tell you – If your house was burning and your family, pets, and purse were already out of harm's way, what else would you want to save? Probably not the blender that only works on one speed, the china you inherited but never use, or the photo in which you're not exactly looking your best. Which begs the question: If those things aren't worth taking, why are they in your home in the first place?

There's no reason to be surrounded by things that don't work, that you don't need, or that you don't even like. What should you keep and what should you kiss goodbye. Well, if you haven't touched it in year, more than likely you will not touch it the following year. I find myself going through something similar spiritually. I want to go back to basics in every area. I want to find those things that are true and that matter eternally, and that's where I want to spend my life. I pray, "Lord, strip away the things that don't matter, so that what is left are the things that will still matter thousands of years from now."

IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW MUCH I DO – DO LOVE YOU

Jesus wants you to invite him into your life so that he can do life with you. He will reside in you and make his home in your heart if you will allow him.

Have you ever been relaxing at home and the doorbell rings? You look around your house and it looks like a hurricane has blown through your house so you start picking up all the clutter and cleaning up the mess around you... You don't want to let guests in your messy house.

Some people react to Jesus the same way. He's knocking on the door of your heart and you think, "I can't let Jesus in right now. I've got to clean up my life. My life is a mess. When I straighten out my life, then I'll think about letting Jesus in."

Jesus comes in to clean up your life! He will help you get your house in order. He can come and bring order to the chaos in your life.

IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW MUCH I DO – DO LOVE YOU

"For God SO loved the world"

The little word "so" speaks volumes. It means that God's love is limitless. It is

immeasurable. You may fail and fall and you think you reach rock bottom, but God's love has no bottom. David learned that when he committed adultery and murder. He thought he reached rock bottom. But instead he found out that God's love had no rock bottom. Paul learned that when he allowed the killings of Christians before his conversion. But instead he found out that God's love has no rock bottom.

“Nothing you can do could make Jesus love you more, And nothing that you've done could make Him close the door.” God's love is indescribable.

Have you ever received a chain letter or one of those chain emails? The purpose of the chain is that one person can pass along one thing to many people. The Scriptures show that God started this idea to spread God's love. Jesus said, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." God's love produced love. You might say that God's love was the first link of the chain. It started here: the Father loved Jesus. God created the world and gave it to his Son. He gave him the name that is above every name, so that upon hearing his name, all in heaven and on earth and under the earth would bow down and praise him. He gave him all authority and power and dominion.

In keeping God's commands and bearing the fruit of love, Jesus loves you. Do you see the chain? Love produces love. God loves the Son. The Son loves you. You are the next link. Remain in Jesus' love by fulfilling his command to love others. Your fruit shows your love. Your behavior and your actions will show your love for God. When you are willing to lay down your life for others, you will show your love for God. That doesn't necessarily mean you have to die. What it means is that everything you do, everything you say, everything you think, everything - will show love for others. Put others first, as God put the Son first and as the Son put you first, and your love (your fruit) will produce more love.

IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW MUCH I DO – DO LOVE YOU

“For God so loved THE WORLD”

God's love is inclusive. He loves all colors, all sizes, all types, all nationalities everyone and everything created – God absolutely loves.

IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU

“That He GAVE His only Son”

God proves His love with action. He created the world for you. To prove His love to you, He gave us sunrises, sunsets, the rain, the snow, the flowers, the fruits, the ocean teeming with fish, the majestic mountains. You name it and God created it to show love for you. He created you in His image. When we were created, God knew that we would fall short and sin, which would sadden the great Creator. But, praises to our Savior Jesus

Christ who exhibited the greatest love known to humanity - he laid down his life for each one of us. "Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends." Jesus gave up the life God had given him in heaven. He gave up the name that is above every name. He gave up his power, authority and dominion. He gave up his position at the right hand of God. Jesus gave up everything, right down to his very life, because he loves you.

IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW MUCH I DO – DO LOVE YOU

“99 and a half would not do.”

God could have given the whole world, but it would not have been enough. God could have given all the angels in heaven, but it would not have enough. Only the giving of His only Son would do. Because when God loves, He does it in a complete way. Not partially. Not 99%. Not 99.99%. No 99 ½ would not do. Only 100%.

Jesus said, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." Just as Jesus did not think that following God's commands was a burden, he does not want you to think that loving each other is a burden or giving anything less than 100% will do. Jesus calls this loving joy. Jesus finds his joy and happiness in loving you. He wants you to have that same joy; he wants your joy to be complete -100%. Following his command to love each other, bearing the fruit of love - produces joy.

IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW MUCH I DO – DO LOVE YOU

Jesus doesn't love me! Don't we often think and talk the same way based upon the circumstances of our life? We wonder or even doubt if Jesus loves us because: we lost our job, a loved one has cancer, we are facing surgery, there is a family fight going on, someone close to us has died, the stock market has crashed, our spouse wants to leave the marriage relationship, a child has gone astray and the list goes on and on and on. We look at these circumstances and we question whether Jesus loves us. We throw a "pity party" and doubt whether Jesus loves us. We feel sorry for ourselves and think only about ourselves and conclude no one loves us.

How do you know if Jesus loves you? Is it based upon your feelings? Is it based upon the circumstances of your life? Is it a conditional love based upon how religious you are? Of course not! He loves us – regardless of how we feel, regardless of what happens in our life, regardless of how many times we sin. Jesus loves you, and me says John.

How do you know if Jesus loves you? The New Testament points to one event as the crowning expression of the love of Jesus for His people. This one event proves beyond question that Jesus loves you. What is this one event? You know it and John states it: He "has freed us from our sins by his blood."

I want you to notice that John changes the tense of the verbs he is using. John uses the present tense to tell us that Jesus loves us with a present and ongoing love. But he uses the past tense to tell us that Jesus "has freed us" from our sins by His blood. Implied in this is bondage, slavery and imprisonment. We are in bondage to sin, enslaved to sin, imprisoned by sin. But Jesus set us free by His blood. Blood means sacrifice, it points us to the cross; it reminds us of the crucifixion.

How do you know Jesus loves you? How do you know Jesus loves you right now, today, at this very moment, and in this place? Don't go by your feelings! Don't look at life's circumstances! Don't look at how religious you are – as if you can somehow earn the love of Jesus! Any day, at any moment if you feel doubt and you truly want to know that Jesus loves you, all you have to do is look at the cross – the cross where our Savior hung there, not because he had to, but because he chose to die for to save a sin-sick world and to save a sinner such as us.

“Come to the Father though your gift is small, / broken hearts, broken lives, He will take them all. / the power of the Word, the power of His blood, / Everything was done so you would come.”

“So that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have ETERNAL LIFE.” God wants you to come to Him today because He has something very special for you. He has the best gift you can imagine. Nobody can give this gift to you. It is better than anything you can imagine. He wants to give you eternal life. “Eternal” does not only mean longevity. It means quality. It means heavenly. It is everything that only God can give.

The story of Christmas is that God sent his Son to save you. In **Matthew 1:21** the angel told Joseph, *“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*

All of us have sinned. All of us have messed up. We need a Savior to bridge the gap between our holy God and our sinful lives. This is what Jesus does. He grants us entrance into a relationship with God. He washes away our sin so that we can be in God's presence and so that he can make his home in our hearts.

The gift of Christmas is not a 25th of December occurrence. Jesus desires to be with you every second of your earthly life. He will change your permanent place of residence, i.e., you will become a citizen of heaven. He will give you a new family that loves you and supports you. He will give you refuge and security in an insecure world. He is the greatest gift you will ever receive.

Now turn to your neighbor and say:

NOW YOU SHOULD KNOW HOW MUCH I DO – DO LOVE YOU

Amen. Amen. Amen.