

Walking In Love part 3 Loving God

Ephesians 5 :1. Therefore be followers (imitators) of God as dear children. 2. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Recap :

We've been looking at LOVE, what it is and what it is not.

Agape love is totally unconditional. It is not moved or produced by what it is focusing on, but is self existing, self generated, self activated. It needs no external props, support or encouragement. It is purely an act of the will, a decision made irrespective of feelings, flattery, faults or failings. Agape love is pure. It does not grow stronger when received or weaker if rejected. It remains constant in supply, consistent in every circumstance and complete for every occasion.

There is no higher form of Christian life to attain to. It is summed up in its supremacy by God's very own description of its divine nature. God Himself calls it, "The most excellent way". For God Himself IS AGAPE LOVE.

1/. The challenge to love God.

Mark 12 : 28. Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" 29. Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30. 'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

"You shall love the Lord your God WITH ALL"

Question : God asks us to love Him with all our heart soul, mind and strength. Is this too demanding of God? Is it asking too much of us? What are your thoughts on this?

God is only asking us to give Him, what He has already given to us. God has given us, and continues to give us nothing less than everything that is within Him and what He possesses..

He has given us , the Heart of Christ **2 Corinthians 3 : 3.**

The Spirit of Christ in **Romans 8 : 9**

The Mind of Christ in **1 Corinthians 2 : 16.**

The Strength of Christ in **Philippians 4:13.**

Every spiritual blessing in Christ **Ephesians 1:3.**



God has unconditionally given us all that He is. For the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form in Christ Jesus. **Ephesians 1:23**

Viewing from the angle of Gods love to towards us.

Due to God's love being unconditional, He still chooses to love us even when we fail Him. He still chooses to love us even when we disobey Him. He still chooses to love us even when we don't give Him what He wants. He still chooses to love us even when we don't make any time for Him. God still chooses to love us even when we don't talk to Him. God still chooses to love us even when we don't listen to Him.

Viewing from the angle of our love towards God.

Do we still choose to love God when we think He's failed us? Do we still choose to love God even when He hasn't done what we've asked Him to do? Do we still choose to love God even when He doesn't give us what we want?

Do we still choose to love God even when we think He has no time for us? Do we still choose to love God even when we think He isn't talking to us? Do we still choose to love God even when we think He isn't listening to us?

Do we honestly AGAPE love the Lord our God with all our heart soul, mind and strength?

Question : What challenges have you been through, or maybe are going through right now, that have made you realise that you have not really loved God with all that is within you?

2/. The learning curve.

Galatians 3 : 21. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.



Romans 7 : 9. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. 10. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. 11. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. 12. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. 13. Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

1 Corinthians 15 : 56. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Question : In regard to the context of these previous three verses, that is, that the law had a purpose in our lives. What do you think the first commandment was really trying to show us?

One of the hardest lessons for us to learn is that we, out of our own strength and in an un-renewed state, we are not able to love God. From this truth can come true freedom and deep gratitude for the sacrifice that Jesus made for us and the provision He has laid up for us.

3/. How we are brought to a place of self realisation and living by faith.

Lessons from Peter.

Mark 14 : 27. Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" 28. "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." 29. But Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." 30. And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." 31. But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all said likewise.

Peter is totally convinced that he would give his life for Jesus. I can envisage the disciples pledging their undying allegiance to Jesus in the manor of a group of death defying marines. HOORAH.....!!!!



The reality of what is happening in the spirit world, revealed to the disciples.

Luke 22: 31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift YOU (plural) as wheat. 32But I have prayed for you (singular), Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." 33But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." 34Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

The process of sifting

CHAFF : The refuse of the grain that has been threshed and winnowed. This is partly dust and dirt, but the real chaff is the hard and inedible coat of the grain. The grain was threshed in the open air, a custom made possible because the harvest season was free from rain. During the threshing time the grain was guarded by harvesters who spent the nights on the threshing floor. The grain was winnowed by tossing the grain and chaff into the air with a wooden fork or shovel so that the wind might blow away the chaff. This was usually done at night, to take advantage of the night breezes. The chaff was either burned or left to be scattered by the winds. The grain was then sifted (to remove stones and other impurities), and collected into pits or barns.

Imagine the tossing and the turmoil that the grain went through over a period of time. This was not a smooth process. We all often go through periods of being thrown around by life's circumstances. Its during these times that the lord will bring out the best in us. **"What the devil means for evil"**

Jesus addresses the disciples, then Peter .

You is plural. Jesus was telling Peter the plans that satan had to test the disciples. Satan was going to sift them as wheat is sifted.

Jesus then addresses Peter personally about his part to play in this sifting.

"But I have prayed for YOU (singular), that your faith would not fail." And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

The scattering.

They were all going to be scattered, tossed into the air and thrown around. Jesus mentions this in Mark 14:27 and saw this moment as the fulfilment of **Zechariah 13:7. Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.**

Peters personal journey.

Peter was going on a journey that would prepare him for ministry. Breaking down his self reliance and building him back up to a reliance upon the lord.



However, Peter had no idea of what was going to happen to him or why he needed to go through what was about to take place.

Peter thought he was ready for anything. He was determined to go with Jesus anywhere, to fight for Him, even to die for Him. Even if nobody else would follow Jesus, Peter would. Peter had masses of natural strength, will and determination. He was probably seen as the head disciple. He was the one who walked on water. He was the one who found the coin in the fishes mouth. He was the one commended by Jesus for his revelation from God the Father that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He was the one who rebuked Jesus for saying He was going to die. He was the one who not only wanted his feet washed by Jesus, but his hands and head as well. He was full of zeal. He wanted to be the first in everything. He had given up his career, left his home, family and friends. He would do anything for Jesus. Surely he was ready for anything! He even had it within him to cut off the high priests servants ear, so he was no coward when it came to fighting.

Coming face to face with a spiritual enemy.

We don't fight against flesh and blood.

Peter was about to have a wake up call. Peter had plenty of faith, but it was all in himself and it was all based upon earthly things. What he had not counted for was that satan was the one going to attack him, not mankind. The natural man is not equipped to fight with a spiritual enemy. As long as he kept thinking he was ready for anything, that he would go anywhere, he would be of little use to Jesus or anyone else.

The disciples suffered a beating.

The trauma of going through real spiritual battles has its effects on even the strongest of personalities. This is evident after Christs resurrection, He appeared to the disciples three times in John chapters 20-21. Twice in Jerusalem and then in Galilee.

In Jerusalem. He commissioned them. Then He appeared to them through a wall. Yet after seeing Jesus raised from the dead, walking around in a body that needed no blood. Moving through walls and also having the memories of being with Him for three years, healing the sick, casting out demons and raising the dead, you would think that they would now be ready to change the world. BUT, In Galilee, Jesus found them, and they'd gone fishing. Peter is a crushed man.



The three steps to Peters restoration.

First time. "Do you love (Agape) me Peter". After failing Jesus in His time of need, Peters soul is crushed and bleeding. He once was so strong, confident, full of zeal and passion. Now he is a failure, He feels he can never serve Jesus ever again. That he would fail him all over again, but the word of God comes to him a second time, "Do you love me Peter, feed my sheep". Peter, having gone through so much pain, now has a choice to make. Am I prepared to go through all that again? The work of the cross must come to bare on his soul. Not my will, but your will be done. Three times asked without a response from Peter. Once he would have jumped at the chance to serve Jesus. To be the first in the cue of volunteers. Now he just remains silent. "You know I love you, BUT, it's hard, i'm scared, i'm hurt, i'm a failure, i'm am not able". He is now ready to be used. Not because he wants to be used, but because Jesus is able to use him. His uncertainty of himself, his own strength, his own ability, his own confidence, makes him the ideal vessel to bring Glory to God.

Second time. "Do you love (Agape) me". You know I love you, YOU KNOW ALL THINGS" Peter now realises that Jesus knows all about him. He cannot but resign to this fact after all Jesus had said to him. Once he thought he could die for Jesus, follow Him anywhere. but Jesus said , "where I am going ,you can not come now". They weren't ready, but Peter thought , no , I am ready, he believed he was. All that he thought he was died, when satan threw him up into the air and blew away all the impurities out of his life. All he had left was his knowledge of who Jesus is, and how he failed Him miserably. This was the intention of the Lord all along. When all that is left is our knowledge of who HE is, and our realisation of who we are without Him.

What is Jesus looking for.

Jesus asks Peter, "do you agape (love me with a totally unconditional love) me"? Peter replies, "You know I Phileo (love with a brotherly affection) you".

Jesus is looking for Peters realisation of his own self. Once Peter was under the impression he would do anything for Jesus, but now he knows that his own feelings are deceitful and unreliable. Peter has come to a place of self awareness. Twice Jesus asks Peter for unconditional love and his willingness to serve Him. Twice Peter replies, I do love you (Phileo) , but I don't have that kind of love (Agape), I can't"

But this is exactly what Jesus wants to hear. Jesus does not condemn Peter for his answer.



Third time. This time Jesus comes down to Peter's level of love and asks him, "Peter, do you have brotherly affection (Phileo) for me". This grieves Peter because Jesus had descended to his level. Peter says "You know all things, you know that I have brotherly affection for you". Peter has learned that Jesus knows him completely. All his faults and weaknesses. The very thoughts and intents of his heart. Everything is laid bare before Jesus. Then Jesus asks him again to feed His sheep. The invitation is still there for Peter. Despite what Peter had done in the past and his present condition of brokenness. Jesus is saying, "I accept you just the way you are. Now we can work together. You know who you are and you know who I AM.

Then Jesus gives Peter an incredibly encouraging word. "When you were younger, you could please yourself where you went and what you did. But when you get older you will be tied up and carried away with your arms out stretched to a place you don't want to go. This signified to Peter what kind of death he would have. But more than this. Jesus was saying to Peter, "you may not be where you want to be in your relationship with me today, but I will make you so strong, fearless and bold that you will even be prepared to give your life for me". Then Jesus says, "Follow me". Peter now has complete confidence in Jesus. That though he may not be the great man of God he wants to be today, if he is prepared to devote himself to Jesus, trust Him and continue to follow Jesus where ever He leads, Jesus will make him into the man he desires to be.

Conclusion : Jesus is prepared to meet us and accept us where we are at.

Some of you feel like you're being sifted right now. Take courage. If you are finding it hard to love God with all that you have and Love people? Then you're on the right track. Jesus will bring the best out of you if you do not grow weary while doing good, stay on course, keep following, keep trusting. He will make you into the person you were born to be.

