

God's Love:
A Real Revival

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. If any man loves, the same thing is known of him (see 1 Corinthians 8:1-3).

Can you honestly say that you are filled with God's love? Is God's love the key to everything you do?

First, God's love is the hope of His calling. Second, God's love is the riches of His glory in His saints. Third, it is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. Fourth, God's love is the proof that we are saved. We know we have passed from death unto life if we love the brethren (see 1 John 3:14). What's more, we love our enemies (Luke 6:27). We love them that hate us (Matthew 5:44), and because we love God's Law, we never get offended (Psalm 119:165).

This booklet will show us that we can always bear the fruit of the living Christ who is filling us. As a result, we will have a love that goes way

beyond knowledge, filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19).

Chapter One

UNDERSTANDING PURE LOVE

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:1-5).

Many men and women are wonderful ser-

vants and examples of God's love. But a Christian who is not hospitable does not express God's love. A pastor could build a big ministry, preach the truth, and avoid overt sin—yet without ever really knowing God's love. A missionary could be serving God without being a servant of God. A man could build a great work without being built up in the work of God. He could demand that people treat him a certain way because of his position.

The disciples had a similar problem. "Which one of us is the greatest?" they asked Christ. They were occupied with themselves instead of loving others.

Jesus said, "He that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Luke 9:48). And again, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matthew 20:28).

Christians must understand the pure love of God. Yes, we must observe the Ten Commandments: We shall not commit adultery. We shall not steal, nor bear false witness, nor lie. But these are not the great commandments. According to Matthew 22:36-40 the greatest commandment is to love.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity"—

God's love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

God desires to do a deep inner work in our minds regarding the importance of having pure love.

We Are Owed Nothing

Even if we have no place to lay our heads, be thankful to God and realize that no one owes us anything—though we do owe them something. The Bible says we are to owe no man anything but love. He who loves his neighbor fulfills the law. Love works no ill toward his neighbor, for love is the fulfillment of the law (see Romans 13:8-10).

To love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and body is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). We can be sure that we are saved when we love others and practice that love moment by moment. When we love, we lay down our lives. We don't expect a thing in return. If God adds to us, we receive it.

The Problem Lies with Us

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of

the glory of God.

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulations worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope:

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us” (Romans 5:1-5).

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God because we know that tribulation works in the fruit of the Holy Spirit through love. Love comes before joy and before peace; before longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness; before meekness, faithfulness, and temperance. While all of these things are parts of love, we cannot have one of them without knowing, experiencing, and giving the love of God first.

So, tribulation works in us patience, and patience works in us experience, which gives us hope, and hope makes us not ashamed. Why? Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is in us.

Chapter Two

FOCUS ON SERVING

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:6-10).

This is how we know whether we have the right kind of love twenty-four hours a day. Unless we weep and serve others instead of expecting them to serve us, we don't know the real meaning of these verses.

God reconciled us to Himself through the death of His Son; and if we are reconciled by His death, we will be saved by His life. We joy in God, by whom we have received the atonement—payment in full for all of our sins.

Love Does Not React Negatively

Love does not behave itself unseemly (1 Corinthians 13:5). This means, according to the original Greek text, that when pure love is reigning, no negative reactions or maladjustment will be revealed on our countenance. This is because love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things”—and love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:6-8).

God is love. It doesn’t matter that we love Him, because He loved us first. Jesus said, “All men will know you are My disciples if you love one another. And, the world will know this: that the Father sent Me and that you are of Me” (see John 13:34-35).

If this love for other believers is missing from any area of your life today, repent and be changed through the grace of Almighty God by receiving the gift of repentance (Jeremiah 31:18b).

Chapter Three

GOD'S LOVE BEARS FRUIT

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

“Greater love have no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and

bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

“These things I command you, that ye love one another” (John 15:10-17).

If we abide in Him and His words abide in us, we can ask what we will and it shall be done unto us. Herein is the Father glorified, that we bear much fruit. As the Father loved Jesus, so He loves us: we are to continue in His love. If we love Him, we will keep His commandments and the righteousness of the Law will be fulfilled in us.

Learning to Love

There is no way you can “fall in love,” though you can fall into an attraction. You can fall into appreciation. You can fall into a wonderful acquaintance with a desire that it will develop into a relationship.

Love is something the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts. But consider the process of brokenness He uses:

“[The Lord Jesus Christ] in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was

heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:7-8).

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

As redeemed sinners, we must learn how to love one another with the quality of God’s love. There is nothing natural about it. And yet, the average couple getting married today does not have God’s love for one another—and they know practically nothing about unconditional love. They may *learn* to love with God’s love. They may develop God’s love for each other. They may be extremely happy and have integrity to recognize that they need to learn how to love with God’s love.

Love doesn’t just happen. We don’t serve God so that He will love us, but in serving God, we learn how to love.

When we begin to serve and invest in other people’s lives, we begin to love. God said that by faith we are to “serve one another in love.” We will begin to invest in people, and suddenly recognize, “That’s my friend.” And the more we invest and serve, the more we love.

Serve by Example

My mother went to bed at midnight and would get up at four in the morning to serve seven children with her hands crippled by arthritis. Our house had no running hot water—just a pump, no insulation, an old wood stove, and an outhouse. Many of you can identify with this scene. She served us with the most amazing devotion anyone could ever have. Not once did she raise her voice. She would serve poor families in the area, giving them food and making cakes and pies for them.

Do you think she loved us? You bet she did. Do you think we loved her? We adored everything about her. That was my mom. She invested; she served. She already loved, but she learned how to love as a servant.

Jesus said to Peter in his backslidden state: “Do you love Me more than these?”

“Yes, I am very fond of You,” Peter replied.

“Then, feed my lambs. Peter, do you really love Me more than these?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Well then, feed my sheep. Peter, do you really love Me?”

Peter answered: “Lord, You know how I love

You. I saw You raise the dead, feed the multitude, and cast out demons. Of course, I am drawn to You the best I can be.”

And Jesus said, “Okay, then feed my sheep.”

What was Jesus saying to Peter? He was saying, “If you get busy in the vineyard, you will start loving Me properly.”

Behind every command of God is omnipotence (1 Thessalonians 5:24). And behind every act of obedience, the love of God should be motivating the one who obeys.

Abiding in Obedience

As I serve, I learn to love. As I obey, I love Him. As I keep His commandments, I love Him. As I abide in His Word, I love Him. As I trust Him in prayer, I learn to love Him. This is why Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” The Law is fulfilled, so He was not talking about the Law. God’s love fulfills the Law, and the Holy Spirit sheds that love abroad in our hearts.

Love never complains. Love never criticizes, mentally or verbally. Never! Love never finds fault. It doesn’t behave itself unseemly; it doesn’t seek to have its own way. It is not easily provoked. It thinks no evil. No corrupt commu-

nication proceeds out of its mouth. But love always ministers grace to the listener and speaks words that edify (see Ephesians 4:29).

Love doesn't live with a grieved spirit. All bitterness, malice, and infectious speaking—all of it is removed. Love is kind and tenderhearted, forgiving everyone as Christ has forgiven. And as Christ laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for each other (1 John 3:16).

Chapter Four

GOD'S LOVE: THE TREASURE THAT MEETS EVERY NEED

We receive God's love and therefore enter into God's love when we start giving of ourselves. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Instead of people serving us, we serve them and pay our debt of love.

I have found that people who have invested a lot of money in the stock market are very interested in it. Likewise, the Christians who have their treasure in heaven are very interested in heavenly things. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).

Think in terms of God's love for you. Speak in the love of God shed abroad in your heart. Serve in the love of God. Don't leave the freshness of having His love preeminent in every detail of your life (Revelation 2:4). There is no fear in love. Furthermore, love never compares itself with others (2 Corinthians 10:12), and it

never thinks evil. I am repeating that because this kind of love is missing from scores of lives. Don't be condemned by these words. Just let love do her perfect work in you.

Imagine serving God on the mission field for years but without charity. Imagine facing God after being on the foreign field for all that time and hearing Him say, "You were filled with negativity—and the trouble wasn't with the people. The trouble was with you."

I appreciate all those who labor for the Lord in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. But imagine being saved and serving in a church without having biblical charity in action. Many need to deal with this issue.

Have a silver tongue, because you have the mind of Christ.

Real Forgiveness

Among the most beautiful things in the world is to realize the love that reclaimed Hosea's wife Gomer (Hosea 3). That love restored Peter after he had failed miserably (John 21).

On the second Sunday after the resurrection, Jesus went to Thomas first because he needed Him most (John 20:27). Love will always go to the one who needs it most.

Love never refuses to forgive. Real love forgives even without going to ask someone if he said something. Not many pastors will teach this. It is in Matthew 6, found in the original text: If I heard that you said something about me, I am to forgive you and forget it without even asking about it. Love covers what you did without even questioning you.*

If I do have to go to someone because of something serious, I go in God's love—not to condemn but to help them stop “chain sinning,” because without God's perfect love, we will live in a cycle of “chain sinning” no matter how much we serve God.

Revival is not an emotional display. Revival is loving—loving everyone—because it is in you through the Holy Spirit.

The husband loves his wife with all of his heart. If she becomes ill or changes in some way, he still loves her. She is his baby. They are married; they adore each other. If the wife becomes bedridden, he loves her even more. He just loves her because he is expressing something that has been inside of him for years. Now, her need is greater, and in his expression, his love just comes out.

One of the greatest things I have ever seen

was when a young man was crippled in an accident and remained in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. His wife constantly wheeled him in, and wheeled him out. If he was in pain during a service, she would just gently put her hand on him and look at him with amazing love. She never seemed weary—at least she never showed it—because pure love is so much like that.

If someone were trapped in a burning building, love says, “I am going in!” because love lays down its life.

Love doesn’t make human evaluations—love makes love evaluations. When we are going through something, love is expressed to help us through. It is not natural love; it is God’s love. And that is how we experience real revival.

**Read Coverings, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Concerning the homosexual, the prostitute, the drug addict, the immoral person, God said, "I am going to die for them all. If they go to hell, it is not going to be because of anything that they have done. I will never judge them for their sins. Their sins were judged when My Son took them on at the Cross. The only reason anyone will go to hell is because they have refused to receive My gift of Love, and His name is Jesus."

This is the kind of love that God sheds abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

It is God's message for today. Every time I get up to preach, my prayer is this: "God, I have prepared, now You go to it. I am getting out of the way. Use this vessel to communicate Your thoughts."

All of us need to "get out of the way" and let God love others through us.