

Faith's Expression

Lately, we've been studying the subject of **faith**, and being Valentine's Day, I thought we should examine the relationship between *faith* and *love*. In scripture there are numerous verses that refer to both *faith* and *love*. However, in **Galatians 5:6** we see clearly that *love* is as a result of our *faith* in Christ, ***"For in Christ Jesus.... The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."***

Note, what God is looking for in you and me is *faith working through love*. Faith is active (never idle), therefore, it manifests itself in unselfish service to others. And the motive behind all such service is love. So faith works through, and is prompted by, love - nothing else! This is a biblical truth.

Another view is expressed in **Ephesians 3:17**, ***"So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love."*** Jesus resides in our hearts through faith. And as we enter into the enjoyment of His indwelling presence we become constantly dependent of Him. It is through faith that we practice His presence. And the result of Christ's unrestricted presence in our hearts is we become ***rooted and grounded in love***.

To be rooted and grounded in love is to be established in love as a way of life. A life of love is a life of kindness, selflessness, humility and sacrifice. It is the life of Christ expressing itself through a believer. And this is beautiful.

God commanded us to love. To love Him first and then to love each other. And **1 Timothy 1:5** says, ***"The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."*** Loving God, one's fellow believers and the world in general, must spring out of a *pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith*. And when we do this we are recognised by man and commended by our Heavenly Father.

Philemon 1:5 ***"Because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints."***

Ephesians 1:15 ***"For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints."*** Note, it says love for ALL the saints! When you can love others as you love yourself your faith becomes conspicuous. Why? Because it's your faith expressing itself perfectly *through love*!

Many believers would rather express their faith through the gifts of the Holy Spirit - through signs and wonders. But the apostle Paul says in **1 Corinthians 13:2**, ***"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."***

Without *love*, every wonderful gift from God can (and will) only be used for self-gain or self-gratification. Without love no gift can (or will) edify or benefit others. And notice what Paul says, "The holder is nothing!" That is, he is of no help or use to anyone - useless in every way! The upside is this, love makes you truly *useful*.

Likewise, love is the greatest gift because it's the most useful to others. It's never self-centred but others centred. **1 Corinthians 13:13**, ***"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."***

Love, hope and faith are the main moral characteristics of Christianity. These "graces" of the Spirit are far superior to the gifts of the Spirit. And they are more lasting too! But the greatest is love.

Love never fails. Love never ceases. Love cannot be separated. Therefore, this cannot be human love we're mentioning, but the God-kind of love - agape! True love.

What still fascinates me about Jesus is the love factor. It astounded the Roman mentality of the first century. The armies of man accustomed to the use of force found the *power of love* beyond their comprehension. And it's still the same today. The love factor confuses people who equate love with approval or performance. "*I love you if you will love me back.*" But "agape" is totally unconditional. "Agape" loves the unqualified! "Agape" is dependent on the attitude and character of its source and not the recipient (the one at the receiving end). "Agape" is the placement of true value on another person. And "agape" is perpetuated through sacrifice. "Agape" is *another kind of love*.

Corinthians 13:4-8 beautifully describes the qualities that characterise this kind of love.

- (1) **Love suffers long and is kind.** Long-suffering is patient endurance under provocation. Kindness is active goodness, operating in the interests of others.
- (2) **Love does not envy.** Love is genuinely pleased that others should be honoured and exalted.
- (3) **Love does not parade itself and is not puffed up.** Love recognises that its source is God. Therefore, there is nothing in itself of which to be proud.
- (4) **Love does not behave rudely.** Love is always courteous and considerate.
- (5) **Love does not selfishly seek its own.** Love is interested in what will be of assistance to others.
- (6) **Love is not provoked.** Love is willing to endure rejection and insults.
- (7) **Love thinks no evil.** Love does not attribute bad motives to others, and it does not suspect their actions.
- (8) **Love does not rejoice in wrong doings but rejoices in the truth.** Love does not rejoice in other people's failings, no matter how unrighteous they may be.
- (9) **Love rejoices with every triumph of the truth.**
- (10) **Love bears all things.** Love covers, hides or conceals the faults of others. It does not needlessly publicise their failings.
- (11) **Love believes all things.** Love tries to place the best possible view on actions and events.
- (12) **Love hopes all things.** Love earnestly desires and confidently expects that all things work out for the best.
- (13) **Love endures all things.** Love tolerates persecution or ill treatment for the Christ's sake.
- (14) **Love never ever fails.** Love's divine qualities manifest no matter what!