

Made Perfect in Love

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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

Love is a powerful element in a person's life. Some have described love as a state of mind, and they can go into all kinds of theoretical descriptions of how the mind can be trained to love. It all comes across as very academic and very methodical.

The Bible, however, provides us with a different picture of love. It shows us that "love" is not just a state of being. Rather, it is primarily an action. Furthermore, love is always in search of an object that will receive its action.

When Jesus approached Jerusalem, in Luke 19:41-44, He wept as He beheld the city. Why did He respond that way? I believe one reason is that Jesus loved the people there so deeply. Yet, He knew how His love would be rejected and the consequences of that rejection, both for the city and for the people. Jesus' love longed for the opportunity to make a difference, and He was moved with compassion because the objects

of His love opposed Him.

Love is made perfect when it acts, as you will see in this booklet. God *is* love, and His love is still going out to the world, acting and moving and living in believers everywhere, constantly seeking those who are lost as objects of that love.

Chapter One

FAITH THAT WORKS BY LOVE

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

“But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:14-18).

Faith comes alive when it enters into the substance and evidence of the promises. The Greek word *hupostasis* means to “abide or stand

under.” Faith is something that must stand under the absolute authority of God’s words.

A person who is right with God always has a faith that acts. This is what we see throughout Hebrews 11, the faith-heroes chapter. Verse 4 refers to Abel’s more excellent offering. He committed an action of faith, by grace, through the Holy Spirit. In verses 5 and 6, Enoch was taken up to heaven because he pleased God, who is only pleased by our faith in Him. In verse 7, Noah prepared the ark by faith, and for the one hundred and twenty years that it took, he preached to the people. In verse 17, by faith Abraham offered Isaac, the long awaited child of promise.

In every one of these cases, someone put his faith into action.

Do You Believe What You Know?

I really do not believe that which I do not implement. If I believe what I know, then I will reveal it with what I do. I must enter into obedience to what I have learned and set priorities with what I have inside of me. If God is my source, that will be revealed in my life throughout each day.

Faith acts under the absolute truth of the

Bible, but faith is absolutely nothing if I do not understand love. Galatians 5:6 tells us, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

One problem today is that few preachers really understand what love is about. Love does not get up in the pulpit and compromise the Scriptures, not daring to speak the whole truth of the Word, but making sure that everyone enjoys each message without anyone getting offended. A godly preacher, one who preaches every single word of God, will actually offend people with his message on many occasions.

The only thing that counts with God is love that is perfected. I do not have God's love if I have not a love that is perfected. There are diversities of meanings for the Greek words translated as "love" in the New Testament. *Phileo* can mean, "I love you because of you," and *agape* can mean, "I love you because of me." Now, when I love you because of God's love in you, and I love you because His love is in me, we can have a wonderful time with God. This means we both have love in us, and that is the basis for objective fellowship.

Love: The Only Fruit

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

“We love him, because he first loved us”
(1 John 4:17-19)

A Christian who is perfected in love doesn't linger in depression. He is not afraid. He is not insecure. Instead, he walks with a tremendous identity all because perfect love is the source of his self-image.

The fruit of the Spirit *is* love (Galatians 5:22, 23). Here, the verb is not plural but singular. This is the only fruit of the Holy Spirit. Joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance—these are attributes of the fruit of the Spirit. God knows what He is talking about; He utilizes good grammar. The fruit of the Spirit is love, and then He mentions these eight attributes. Why? Because these are the evidence of the fruit of God's love in believers.

For example, love gives us joy and the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). God's

joy remains in us, according to John 15:11, because love is the source of our joy.

Peace is part of the fruit of the Spirit. Love gives us peace, and that peace is perfect (Isaiah 6:3), not transitory such as the peace the world gives (John 14:27). Love is always giving something, so it gives us peace.

Longsuffering (*makrothumia* in the Greek) represents a supernatural patience with people and a supernatural ability to stand in adverse circumstances. Still, longsuffering is only one characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit. You can train yourself to suffer long and still not have God's love, but if you do have God's love you will suffer long.

Next, there is gentleness (*christotes*) which is extreme courtesy and kindness that comes from a love that has lost its life at Calvary, at the Cross, and now lives on in its resurrection provision.

Then, there is divine goodness. You have to be careful when you say someone is good, because if he is good in his flesh then he is not good at all. He simply has trained Adam to be good. Divine goodness comes from love. It reveals a love that is very unusual.

Faith, meekness, and temperance are also given to us when love is our source. All of these

attributes spring from love—the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two
LOVE IN ACTION

“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;

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the

truth;

“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

“But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13).

This chapter reveals the way love gives us those eight things we mentioned. Love is more than just a mental attitude. If it is just a mental attitude to you, then you have not been made perfect in the area of love.

Can you imagine being around someone

who doesn't know how to love? It is one thing to know what love is, but it is another thing to know how to love. First Corinthians 13 shows us how to love.

Consider the Christian who does not have a burden for the lost. He does not have love. He has not been made perfect in it. A church that doesn't purpose to seek and save the lost in its Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth is a church without love. It might be a very nice church that preaches the Gospel. But there is no love there. Love is only perfected when it acts.

In 1 John, love is mentioned almost fifty times. The apostle John, who became known as "the apostle of love," understood that without an object, love cannot act. The Trinity was filled with love before they created anyone or anything. The Father loved the Son, the Son loved the Spirit, the Spirit loved the Father. The Trinity acted in love before the angels were created. Love always needs to have an object to love because love is only perfected when it is in action.

A Laid-Down Life

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). The action of

laying down His life is directed toward an object. James 4:6 declares that He gives more grace to the humble. He gives. Love always gives. Love is not complete until it gives. Love is not perfected until it gives from its source, Jesus Christ. Then, the Holy Spirit sheds love abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

If a married couple is having a hard time, then God's love is not being made perfect in that marriage. They may be sincere Christians and they will go to heaven, but they do not understand perfect love.

Perfect love in a marriage is the husband loving his wife as Christ loved the Church. Just as Christ gave His life so the husband gives his life and uses the Word of God to invest life in his wife. Love has been perfected in him. Likewise, the wife's love is perfected when she responds and reflects the source of the love she has received.

Love always acts. If someone doesn't give others the ingredients of love, then love is not perfected in him.

As God is in heaven, so are we in this world. God so loved the world that He *gave*. What did He do? God, who is love, gave His only Son. What a beautiful thing to consider.

Chapter Three
MIRACLES OF LOVE

Several years ago, we had a couple in our church named Charlie and Ethel. One day, I was doing our radio show and God told me to pray for someone who was bedridden and an invalid. Ethel was healed that day. She got up out of bed and met her husband at the door. She started twirling and dancing around their living room.

The doctor who had treated Ethel said himself, "This is from God. I had nothing to do with this."

That was God's love in action. Afterward, these two people were at everything we did at the church. God had perfected in them this deep, deep love from Calvary. Remember, there can be no perfect love without the Cross. There can be no perfect love without resurrection. And, there can be no perfect love without the filling of the Holy Spirit.

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate

you.

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:13-15).

Love gives. Proverbs 28:27 says, “He that giveth to the poor shall not lack....” It is not a works program; it is love being perfected in someone.

Can you imagine preaching Christ and not being made perfect in the area of love? How are we made perfect in love? It comes by living in obedience, by faith, in the grace that is given through the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is love.

If I love those who don't love me, then love has been perfected in me. If I only love those who love me, then I am just like anyone else. I love them because they are good to me (Luke 6:32).

Love That Withstands Opposition

A missionary went to the interior of Uganda and served the people for fourteen years, yet he was persecuted and hated and finally beaten and killed. One of this missionary's friends followed in his footsteps and there came a great re-

vival. Sadly, he too died in the midst of a government skirmish.

So many believers lay down their lives for people in the same manner—in the way of love. Maybe not to the death, but they suffer and go without, all because love has been made perfect in them.

Jesus came down from heaven as the God-man in order to perfect our faith. He died on the Cross to show us perfect love. To show us how perfect love is imparted, He saves us the moment we believe. To show us how perfect love is imputed, He will never impute sin to us. He gives us eternal security to show us how perfect love gives us confidence that comes from knowing His character and the permanence of our relationship with Him. He will not let us go.

Jonathan loved David as his own soul. He made a covenant with his friend and gave David his robe, his sword, and his girdle—all of his garments. What was Jonathan doing? He was expressing God's love.

"David, God used you to defeat Goliath," Jonathan said to him. "God has spoken to me. I am not to be the king. You, David, will be the king. And, I am going to make sure that you are."

As long as Jonathan was alive, David never committed immorality. The perfected love he received from his friend gave him great encouragement to draw closer to God.

See, you can never separate love from giving. You can never separate love from obeying. You can never separate love from the geographical or the operational will of God. You can never separate love from the perfect will of God.

People need to be in God's geographical will for their lives in order to take advantage of all the opportunities to have love perfected in them.

Don't Get Careless With Love

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

“And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee,

because thou hast left thy first love.

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:1-5).

The mention of the works of love refers to having an active faith that does something. In a ministry such as ours, we have to keep our hearts warm every day and make sure we do not become careless toward each other. We cannot afford to become careless toward the world or our enemies, and we must not become careless toward the lost.

We must make sure that the Holy Spirit fills us with His precious love—love that is always serving and always giving.

CONCLUSION

When we are made perfect in love, we simply walk in love, and our actions, through the Holy Spirit, reveal that Jesus Christ is our source. Remember, a spiritual man is not made spiritual by what he knows. I could understand everything about the Bible and still not be a spiritual man. I could pray for hours and hours and still not be spiritual. I believe in prayer and I believe in studying the Bible, but I still need to be made perfect in God's love.

If your love is perfect, you will impart that love to people who need it desperately. You will give it to those who are lost to different values in this life. Beyond this, you will remain patient enough to wait until those people can finally receive that love.

God loves us even when we don't know anything about love, when we haven't responded to Him at all. He makes us perfect in Him, because *His* love depends entirely upon Him.