

## GOD'S LOVE AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH John 15:13

English Dictionaries associate love with feelings, strong feelings for someone or about someone or something. From Biblical perspective, this undue emphasis on emotional component of love and its expression is grossly misplaced and exaggerated. Emotions have its place in life. It could be a very powerful tool in songs ministry and worship at individual or corporate levels even in the church. However, the greatest part of our Christian life, experiences and journey will require objective clear-headed exercise of will power.

Love as defined and expressed in the world by the unconverted or immature believers not totally consecrated to God is based on English Dictionary definitions, on feelings, sentiments and emotions. Such description, definition or expression as standard measure for true love is non-existent in the scriptures. The closest to it is lust. What the world call '*love*' the Bible called '*lust*', like the love of Samson for Delilah, Ammon for Tamar, and Shechem the son of Hamor for Dinah Genesis 34:3. By Bible standard, no man can truly love without conversion to Christ and devotion, dedication and consecration to God. Actually, the more consecrated we are to God, the more devoted we are to His cause and service, the more we are capable of expressing Bible and God's kind of love.

Biblical love or God's kind of love is a love of choice, reasoning and intentions guided by spirituality and devotion primarily to God and by extension to the good of humanity; foe or friend. This kind of love is a gift from God and an outward expression of a lifestyle influenced by in-dwelling Christ. It is the outworking and evidence of the presence of divine grace in the human heart and enabling power of the Holy Spirit. It is the opposite of selfishness. It is expressed in a life of self-giving, self-yielding and sacrifice for the good of others.

We shall consider three subtopics:

1. The sacrifice of Christ and His modeling of divine love
2. Distinctive peculiarities of God's kind of love
3. Prayer for and consistent demonstration of Christian love

### 1. **The Sacrifice of Christ and His modeling of divine love**

John 15:9, 13, 1 John 3:16, Mathew 5:44-45, John 13:34, 35,

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the greatest demonstration of love that the world may ever and will ever know. Outside its impact and influence, every demonstration and expression of love is transitory, self-seeking, self-serving, and unreliable. Christ loved us and gave up His life as atonement for our sins. The world says '*love*' is a feeling that we have and express but the Bible says "*love*" is a choice we make especially to obey God and His words; the difference is much. The Lord Himself taught that the greatest expression of love is the gift of oneself John 15:13.

Christ loved us and lay down His life for us. The Bible stated that those who benefitted from Christ's love and God's love should in turn be willing to lay down their lives for others especially the brethren. This love is expected to be active and practical. Laying down our lives for others imply our willingness to share with them our time, energy and resources. Love is a commandment that believers must keep irrespective of how we feel. God is faithful. He will give us all the feelings we want if, and when necessary; but we are not to wait for feeling weak or strong before obeying the commandment of God. Rather, divine love is expressed in deliberate choices and actions intentionally undertaken sometimes by overruling or overriding negative feeling that we have towards something or somebody.

This aspect of Christian love, i.e love towards the undeserving makes Christian love to be different from that expressed by sinners and worldly-minded people. It is this aspect of divine love that makes it possible for believers, in line with the commandment of Christ to love their enemies, do good to those who despise them and pray for their persecutors. Such expression of Christ's love makes others in the world to know that we are children of God and disciples of Christ. It is such love that God commanded, approves, accepts and would reward in the end.

## **2. Distinctive peculiarities of God's kind of love**

1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13, 16:14, John 21:15-17, Romans 12:9-10, 13:8-10, 1 John 2:9-11, 4:16, 17

God's kind of love is patient and kind. It is not self-seeking, envious or boastful. It is never rude, fretful or resentful. It does not insist on its own right or way. It keeps no record of wrongdoing. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness but rejoice when right and truth prevails. It always protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres. It does not change like weather or season. It is constant and eternal. It transcends the shores of earthly life and permeates everything done and that will be forever done in heaven. After this earthly life, we no longer need faith and hope but God's love will always be with us and among us. Out of all virtues exhibited and demonstrated on earth, the love of God is the greatest and if found, internalized and retained, it will outlast every other virtue exhibited on earth.

The Bible described how a linear relationship exists between Christ's kind of love and knowledge of God. It stated that those who lack this kind of love did not know God and has no eternal life abiding in them. The word of God stated that such persons who live with hatred are in darkness and are blinded by it. Hate is darkness, it blinds men's mind. On the other hand, those who love in the Christian way dwells in God and God dwells in them 1 John 4:16. Such love gives no room to fear or suspicion. Perfection of it in our hearts expunges all kinds of fears, frets or worries in relationships. It makes us walk, work and live by faith.

The love of God in the human heart, demonstrated towards others is foundation of missions, the cream of Christian religion and yardstick for measuring ideal standard of expression of faith in Christ. Christian faith works by love. If we have it, we have all things necessary and sufficient to accomplish God's purpose on earth. However, without it, we have nothing and we are the poorest of the poor. Demonstration of such love throughout

our lifetime after conversion gives us boldness to stand when men are brought to trial on Judgment Day because the loving, lovely and loveable lifestyle that we lived among men advertised the fact that by God's grace we conducted ourselves as God's representative when we were in the world.

### **3. Prayer for and consistent demonstration of Christian love**

John 15, 9-10, 13, 1 Thessalonians 3:12, Philippians 1:9, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:16, 17

We must daily pray to have more and more of God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We must pray daily for enabling grace to demonstrate it wherever we go and for the rest of our lives. Believers or anyone finding it difficult to demonstrate or exhibit God's kind of love should again look at the cross of Christ and apply or re-apply its lessons as the case may be. Doing so incapacitates our pull towards hatred. Those who daily refresh themselves and renew their minds by meditation on the significance of Christ's sacrifice finds it difficult to hate anyone; not even so-called enemies.

The love of God will make believers to live as Good Samaritans in the world, feeding the hungry, providing shelter for the homeless, visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, lifting up the fallen, and strengthening the weak. We will make a lifetime ministry out of recovering and restoring the lost, providing encouragement to the hurting in difficult and challenging times, bearing up under anything and everything; and enduring everything that may come our way for Christ's sake as we serve in the kingdom and live among diverse kinds of people in this world.

The love of God makes us consider as light affliction every hurt, pain, insult or injury that we suffer in the world. It makes us keep hope alive and our hearts and minds on the far more and exceeding eternal weight of glory that we shall receive from our Lord when we see Him face to face. It makes us consistent in our actions and all we do for God, for Christ; and for His names' sake. True love, Christian love, divine and scriptural love therefore is not how we feel but the outward expression and evidence of God's work of grace in a true believer's heart and life.

### **PRAYER POINTS**

1. Thank God for His unfailing love, thank Him because nothing can and nothing shall separate us from His love
2. Thank God for His daily mercies, steadfast love and faithfulness to us, and to our families and friends.
3. Thank God for His Spirit that dwells in us, helping and guiding us in all our relationship with people.
4. Pray that God will help us to let go offences, strife and resentment
5. Pray that God should remove from us envy, pride, and selfishness

6. Pray that God will purge and heal you of every seed of hatred operating in your life, pray that God's forgiving grace should overshadow you
7. Pray that God should help us to love Him more, that the zeal to serve Him will increase in our hearts as we love Him more and experience His love through our daily experiences
8. Pray that God should give us strength to love Him even in hard and painful times; in challenging and difficult times; and at all times
9. Pray that God should help us to see others as He sees them and relate with others as Christ relates with them.
10. Pray that our love may abound more and more towards our neighbors and He should grant us overflow of divine love by His Spirit living within us
11. Pray that in our businesses, workplace and career, we will express love and deal with people out of the abundance of love of God in our hearts.
12. Pray that God should help us to be patient, kind, selfless, just and true
13. Pray for fellow Christians worldwide, that God should give us the spirit of love; that God should empower us to love each other, that churches, fellowship and denominations will love and serve God more and with the spirit of unity.
14. Pray that God should empower us to have compassion on needy people and express our faith in God by loving other people.
15. Pray that God will make us channel of blessings to people throughout the world

May God hear and answer our prayers!