

## Faith Works Through Love

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith working through love.” Galatians 5:6*

The Bible says true faith only works through love. The Greek word for love used in this verse is *agapē*. This is the love that comes from God and is the heart of His Divine Being. Jesus said *agapē* love is the primary evidence we are His disciples: “By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another (John 13:35).” John wrote, “Beloved, let us love (*agapē*) one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love (1 John 4:7-8).” The Bible says we cannot say we love God if we disdain others (1 John 4:20). Paul described *agapē* love this way: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).” Whereas God’s love is pure and unselfish, man’s love is soulish and based on mutually beneficial interests. For example, people who belong to the same club have natural affection for one another. We might call this “club love” or even “neighborly love.” This can also be true when people belong to the same church. However, affection that comes from belonging to the same neighborhood, club or church is not the same as God’s love, which comes solely from our abiding in Christ. Furthermore, it is one thing to love your neighbor, but what if your neighbor is your enemy? Jesus taught, “You have heard it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:43-44).’” The Bible says I can have faith to function in the supernatural gifts and to even move mountains, but if I do not have love, I am nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2). Why is this? There is a difference between the supernatural gift of faith that empowers us to perform miracles, and the

fruit of faith that enables us to love others (1 Corinthians 12:9; Galatians 5:22). Whereas the gift of faith is received and exercised spontaneously (Romans 12:3-6), the fruit of faith (God’s *agapē* love) is produced over time by abiding and persevering in faith (Luke 8:15). Therefore, simply exercising the gift of faith to perform miracles does not necessarily reflect someone’s spiritual character and sanctification, whereas expressing spiritual fruit is a reflection of someone’s character and sanctification. Consequently, Jesus said we may function in the gift of faith to perform miracles, but unless we exhibit the spiritual fruit of faithfulness to Him, we will not enter into our inheritance in heaven (Matthew 7:21-23). Since faith only works through love, this should surely motivate us to practice loving others (especially forgiving others). As Paul said, “Let love be your highest aim (1 Corinthians 14:1).” The Bible says if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us, and if we mistreat others, God will not hear our prayers (Matthew 6:14-15; 1 Peter 3:7).

Some people are naturally more kind and merciful, but this does not mean they have God’s *agapē* love. Since *agapē* love is the essence of God Himself, it can only be expressed as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and not as a natural attribute produced by our human efforts (Galatians 3:3; 5:2). We cannot express God’s love by trying harder to be more patient and kind. How then can we manifest God’s love? There is only one way. We must believe and act on what Jesus Christ has accomplished for us on the cross. When we were born again, God spiritually included us in Christ’s death in order to remove our sinful nature, so that His Holy Spirit could live in us (Romans 6:3-11). Now that we no longer have a sinful nature, we have been freed from the tyranny of sin. Although we no longer have a sinful nature, our soul (our will, intellect and emotions) was not automatically converted into Christ’s image. But since we are no longer under the power of sin, our soul-life can now be transformed, so that we can love others with a pure heart as God loves us. The Bible says, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has

not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:2-3).” Purity means something is wholly of God’s Spirit, whereas impurity means something is a mixture of the unconverted soul and His Spirit. For example, Paul warned that some ministers “preached Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives (Philippians 1:17).” Carrying our own cross and losing our unconverted soul-life by believing and acting on the truth that Christ’s death has done away with our old sinful nature is the way God has designed to purify our soul from impure attitudes, so that we can fully express His *agapē* love. As Paul wrote, “The goal of our teaching is love *from a pure heart* and a good conscience and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5).” And Peter wrote of this sanctification process: “Since you have purified your souls by obeying the truth, so that you have a sincere love for the brethren, then love one another fervently from the heart (1 Peter 1:22).” If our soul-life is not purified by God’s process of sanctification, it will remain a mixture of impure motives and attitudes that can stop God’s love from being manifest through us. Even if we try to apply the truth of the cross that we no longer have a sinful nature, our “faith” will not work for us and we will continue to be overcome by sin if we are not motivated by God’s love for others. So faith works through love, and love can only be expressed from a pure heart. Therefore, after we are saved, we should desire to be progressively sanctified (purified) by the Holy Spirit, so we can love others as God loves us. Otherwise, we will continue to be entangled in compromising sins no matter how many times we tell ourselves that we are dead to sin, and our so-called faith and holiness will be worthless. If we want our faith to work, so we know God and live in Him, then let us pursue the holiness which produces His love for others.

*“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else... now these three remain: faith hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Thessalonians 3:12 & 1 Corinthians 13:13*