

God's Love Is God's Power

We tend to separate God's love for us from His Spirit and grace that give us power. There is the general love of God for all humanity that is spoken of in John 3:16. God made His Son available to all of humanity, but the individual person needs to have faith in the Son in order to benefit from God's love.

Our love for God is more than an emotional attachment. God wants humility from His creation. Nature is naturally humble toward God. Beings who have free will are not. Angels and humans have the consciousness and capacity to choose humility or to reject it. Many do not choose it. The temptation of the serpent is always intended for us to stay separate from the Creator and be our own gods, but the Creator did not create us with the capacity to function well without Him.

Adam and Eve lived in a idyllic world at first. When they wanted to be like God, they became subject to death, weakness, shame, guilt and fear. The ability to choose good and evil for themselves was accompanied by a decreased ability to do so. The serpent conveniently left that part out. This weakness is true of all of us as their descendants. Paul describes this as the law of sin in Romans 7:19: "For the good I desire to do, I do not do, but the evil I do not want is what I do." The evil in this world is the result of this; instead, many people want to blame God and belittle Him.

This human weakness that we all share is the direct result of our separation from God that started with Adam and Eve. We are naturally weak because of this, but we also need to acknowledge it and be deliberately weak toward God by humility, dependence and unconditional trust in order to receive strength. This makes us receptive and open to divine strength. The world cannot understand the paradox that when we are weak, then we are strong. It only sees the outward strength of the Christian; but it cannot understand that it is

there because of the effects of the Spirit that we receive within us by our humility toward God. This can only be spiritually discerned by those who have the Spirit.

This divine strength is the agape love which is described in 1 Corinthians 13, and which is also the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. It is also the grace that exalts us which Peter describes in 1 Peter 5:5-7 when he says: "Likewise you younger ones, submit yourselves to the elders. Yes, all of you be submissive one to another and clothe yourselves with humility, because 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Cast all your care upon Him, because He cares for you." This enables us to escape the corruption that is in this world through lust (2 Pet. 1:4). It is the peace that passes all understanding that comes from unconditional trust in God which moderates us (Phil. 4:5-7).

All of this can come to us only from the Spirit of Christ. We cannot have agape love without Christ in us. Our own strength and willpower do not have the capacity for it. We receive it by extreme weakness and humility toward God. This is what makes us receptive to it. We must present a void for God to fill. This is the classic definition of passivity. We surrender all. Active pursuit repels it. It is the direct opposite of what we believe brings us the things that we want. This is why the meek shall inherit the earth, and the kingdom of heaven is for the poor in spirit. This is counterintuitive for the worldly person.

Agape love is connected to righteousness by faith. Both are received in the same way because they are both parts of the Spirit of Christ. The faith of both Abraham and his singular seed, Jesus, are counted for righteousness (Gal. 3:16), but Christ's righteousness by His faith in the Father is the only one that can be imparted to us. Abraham had it before Christ, but his spirit is not available for its impartation to us, and we can't have righteousness by our faith directly in the

Father. Our faith has to be in the Son who is the carrier of it. The Father sends only the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. When we have the Spirit of the Son, we also have the Spirit of the Father in us and His grace, which includes agape love and righteousness by faith.

The availability of all of this comes from the death and resurrection of Christ. "So it is written, 'The first man Adam was made a living soul.' The last Adam was made a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). The shedding of Christ's blood was a necessary prerequisite because without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. Then the resurrection and ascension of Christ were required for His Spirit to be subsequently poured out. A dead Christ would not work because both His humanity and divinity have to be available for us in His Spirit; otherwise, He could not be a suitable mediator between the Father and us. All of this preparation was necessary in order for us to have agape love through the Spirit of Christ.

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