

speaking to God's people

freegiftfromgod

bible studies

Subject: **Walking with Jesus – Pt 8 – Love**

Scripture

Introduction

Commentary

This is the last of the studies in this current series. I have been discussing the process the apostle Peter defined to help people to progress as Christians in 2 Peter 1:5-7, which says:

5 For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,

6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,

7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

In this final section we look at the ultimate aim of our walk with Christ, which is to embody the love of God.

One of the first things we must understand is that the love of God is not like the love of man. Man has so polluted the concept and understanding of what true love is that it is difficult for people to understand it anymore.

The lies and misrepresentations of love as depicted by Hollywood and in many books has cheapened the idea of love and taken it down to base, primal instincts. They show love as nothing more than “sex with emotion.” And yet true love is nothing like that at all.

What we see in the scripture above is that love as we are encouraged to aspire to is a process. It begins with faith and then progresses through the stages Peter describes until we reach the place of love, that is the love of God.

And you cannot go straight to love without attaining and understanding each of the intervening stages. This is a progression and one stage builds the foundation for the next stage. Thus we see that in order to find true virtue you must have true faith, in order to find the knowledge of the truth you must find true virtue and so on. And you must find and understand each of these elements before you can attain the true love that is the love of God and was embodied in the person of Jesus.

We are fortunate that Jesus came to show us the way for He has provided the perfect example for us to follow.

It is for these reasons that I disagree with many who believe the “All you need is love” mantra. Yes we need love and yes love is the only thing that lasts into eternity for God is love, but man needs to learn WHAT the love of God is and HOW to walk in the love of God. Until we learn to walk in love as Christ walked in the love of the Father we need the Grace of God and His hand, teachings, knowledge and gifts to guide us.

So let us take a look at the “what” and the “how” of God’s love in this last segment of Peter’s instruction on growing and maturing with Jesus Christ.

The “Love” chapter in 1 Corinthians 13 is a good place to start. In it we see the nature of the love of God described and defined and it provides us with an excellent example of what the attributes of love are and are not.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

The first few verses of this chapter shows us what the love of God is not.

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

The love of God is not about the gifts of God. Speaking in tongues, prophecy, miracles and knowledge are not love. Nor is the love of God a form of fanaticism or extremism that leads people to sacrifice themselves or give up their life on this earth.

What we see from this is that love is not about the gifts that you have or your supposed outpourings and displays of affection, praise or worship towards God. The love of God is seen in your behaviour but as we will see it is not about any of the things mentioned above.

As we continue to read 1 Corinthians 13 we see what love is.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

4 Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful;

5 it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

6 it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.

7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends

Look at all of these things that love is. They are all about what you do and your behaviour, especially how you behave with and towards others.

This is no surprise for the essence of our walk with Christ, as many have pointed out, is based on relationships. And relationships are about our interaction with others and with God. Indeed the two Great Commandments that Jesus pointed out in Matthew 23:36-40 are both based upon love, firstly toward God

	<p>and secondly towards our fellow man.</p> <p>So love is about relationship with God and man. Not the base physical relationship of lust as depicted by moviemakers, but a deep respect, patience, tolerance and desire to see the best in others and to help them achieve the best for their sake, not ours. It is not about us but about them, God first and His people next.</p>
Matthew 25:32-40	<p>Now if the “What” of God’s love is about relationships and behaviour, the “How” then becomes equally important. It is pointless knowing what to do if you do not know how.</p> <p>The best example of how to love as God loved is by looking at the example that Jesus left us. We see in His behaviour how he related to the Father and to the people around Him. He taught the people about the Father and the way of His love and then showed them how you truly love your neighbour.</p> <p>In addition He gave us this teaching.</p> <p><i>32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,</i> <i>33 and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.</i> <i>34 Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;</i> <i>35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,</i> <i>36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'</i> <i>37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink?</i> <i>38 And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee?</i> <i>39 And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?'</i> <i>40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'</i></p>

Matthew 25:45-46	<p>This is a perfect example of the love of God in action in His people. You can see here that it is about the relationship we have with one another. Those who are acceptable to the Lord exhibit the above behaviours. They help others, are concerned for their welfare, assist in times of need, provide for their needs and give their time when required.</p> <p>This is the love of God in action, and we see in the last verse of this section that it is all about relationship. How we behave with other people and how we treat them is the outpouring and manifesting of the love we hold for our brothers and neighbours.</p> <p>We serve the Lord in love by serving His people. And when we serve His people we are serving Him.</p> <p>As the above scripture continues on it describes the outcome of those who did NOT show this same care and concern and love for their fellow man. It says in verses 45-46,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.'</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>46 And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."</i></p> <p>Not showing the love of God will lead to punishment and judgement. Thus it is imperative that we learn to walk in love as Christ taught and to follow in His ways.</p>
2 Corinthians 5:14	<p>As we walk with Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, the spirit works a transformation in our lives. We are being slowly transformed to be like Christ and to show the love of Christ in the way we live. Paul describes it in this way.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>"For the love of Christ controls us..."</i></p> <p>The outcome of the process of transformation is to walk in the love of Christ. We will be controlled by the love of Christ not like a slave, but as a willing participant in His love. He loved as the Father loved and we will</p>

	<p>love for He first loved us.</p> <p>Love is not about slavery or being forced to do anything. It is about walking as Christ walked and living as He lived because we choose to live that way. The Holy Spirit gives us the insight, teaching and guidance to find that path until we live a life of love because Christ's nature has become our nature.</p>
1 John 4:16-21	<p>As I said, slavery has nothing to do with the love of God. Nor does fear for fear has to do with punishment as does slavery.</p> <p>But we see that in the perfect love of God there is no fear. There is no reason to fear when love is perfect and the time will come for each of us that the Lord will perfect His love in us. We do not know when that will happen for we are all "Works in progress." But we do know that the Lord came to set these processes in motion so that we could find the love of God and eventually live with Him in perfection.</p> <p><i>16 So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.</i></p> <p><i>17 In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world.</i></p> <p><i>18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.</i></p> <p><i>19 We love, because he first loved us.</i></p> <p><i>20 If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.</i></p> <p><i>21 And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.</i></p> <p>We see the challenges of seeking the love of God and the perfection that it shows. Consider any bias or prejudice you may have towards another person for any reason whatsoever. It could be as simple as a vanity or envy because someone else has something you do not.</p> <p>These things too, envy, jealousy, covetousness and the like are forms of hate. We do not have so we hate</p>

	<p>the other person, even if it is at these other levels and not the violent hatred that plagues others.</p> <p>But as John points out, until we can overcome in these areas, we cannot say that we love as God loves for He hates no one. He hopes for all mankind that they may come to Him through Jesus Christ, despite knowing that many will not and will be lost. It is not His will that any perish, but He has given man the free will to choose to be with God or not. So any who are lost are not lost because of the will of God, but by their own decision and choice to defy and deny God.</p>
1 Corinthians 13:13	<p>In the end this process that is outlined in 1 Peter 1:5-7 is a continuum. Beginning with faith and progressing toward love. I do not say “ending” with love for as it says in 1 Corinthians 13:8, “Love never ends.”</p> <p>However until we reach the place where the love of God is fully manifest in us we must continue to learn, walk and progress with the Lord. This is best described at the end of 1 Corinthians 13 where Paul writes,</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love</i></p> <p>Until we attain the place of love in Jesus Christ we live on the strength of our faith in the hope that we will see the Lord and be perfected in His love.</p> <p>These are like the three sides of a triangle and like a triangle are strongly bound together with an almost unbreakable strength. Love is the greatest of these because it lasts forever and it is the aim of the Christian.</p> <p>The others are important in this age because they sustain us until we reach the place of love. But once the next age comes to pass, faith will be no more and hope will cease to exist...at least as we know it. To explain, why would we need faith or hope when we have the proof of our faith and hope standing before us in the return of Jesus at the second coming?</p> <p>So we will continue to walk by faith and not sight and we will continue to hope for the promise of the Lord to be revealed in us as we walk with Christ. The promise of His love will be revealed to those who seek Him and progress in His ways according to the plan that He set forth in the New Covenant.</p>

So what next?

This is now the end of this series of studies on walking and maturing with Christ. It is brief, especially this last section on the love of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. However I hope it provides enough for you to seek all that the Lord can and will show you when you ask him for insight. I encourage you to continue the search for the knowledge of this truth in the Lord Jesus Christ, and please feel free to send me any comments or things you have learned in your own studies.

So now it's your turn. What would you like to add to this conversation? Send me an email (link below) or engage with me on Twitter (@JohnBLemmon) or send me a comment on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/FreeGiftFromGod> and let's have the discussion continue.

Feel free also to send this to others so they can join the conversation. I hope this has added value to your own walk with Christ.

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