

LOVE BRINGS THE PRESENCE OF GOD!

(Scripture: 1 John 4:7-12)

Welcome to virtual Acts 2:42 church.

We may not be physically present, but we are in the Spirit together. I thank God for this technology, the Word of God can still go forth with power! Word of God can never be bound! Revelation 1:10 says that John was in the Spirit on Lord's day. Can we in the Spirit also praise and worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Introduction:

I have always liked the song, we are one in the Spirit. We shall know that we are Christians by our love. It is easy to sing this song, but it is so hard to follow that principle day in and day out! But the Word of God insists that we must. Let us hear what the Word of God has to say.

1 John 4:7,8

7Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Love is from God. Without God, we cannot love someone. Love is one of the fruits of the Spirit. If we have love in our heart, we have the very presence of God in our heart also. This Christian agape love is very different from any other love. It actually overlooks the weaknesses and foibles of the other person and loves that person unconditionally. One interesting story from the Gospel is the story of the young rich ruler.

Mark 10:17-21.

17As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

18And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

19" You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'"

20And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up."

21Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

A young rich ruler came to Jesus. This guy became rich at such a young age! A great accomplishment! His life must have revolved around money, power, and wealth! Yet, he wanted to be spiritual also, and so he asked Jesus, "what must I do to inherit eternal life. He wanted to have the best of both worlds! Our Lord Jesus quoted some of the

commandments from Exodus 20. It is interesting to note that all the commandments Jesus quoted have to do with interpersonal relationship! He told Him to obey those commandments. But they are not that easy to keep as per sermon on the mount. We may all have broken those laws sometime or the other in our life. We all have sinned and fallen short of glory. Scripture says that no one can be justified by the law! But the young rich ruler was self-righteous in his own eyes. He lied that he has kept these laws since his childhood. If we were in Jesus' place, we would have been very angry, and we would have probably insulted him and told him to get lost! But our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did not do that. Mark 10:21 says that Jesus looked at him and felt a love for him. Some translations say that Jesus looked at him and loved him. Yes, Jesus loved him in spite of his self-righteousness. That is love. We need to overlook others' weaknesses, and foibles, and teach them the right way in a loving manner. That's what Jesus did. He told the rich young ruler that he lacks one thing. (actually, he may have lacked many things! But Jesus did not want to bring out all other sins!) Jesus said, "go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." In other words, money had become his idol and he needed to get rid of it and follow Christ, the Lord!

I brought this story to your attention to teach you about two important principles:

Love "EVERYONE" despite their whimsies and follies!
Let us not have any idols in our hearts!

Everyone who loves God and others is born of God and knows God. Let's examine ourselves and see if we have any idols in our heart. Let's confess so that we may be forgiven. 1 John 4:8 makes a critical statement.

1 John 4:8.

Anyone who does not love, does not know God, for God is love!

Only people who love, know God actually, because God is love! When we start tasting relationship of mutual unconditional spontaneous love, we start knowing God better, because the very essence of God is that love. We will know God better, if we love everyone better! Let us go back to the sermon on the mount. God gives rain and sunshine to both the wicked and the righteous! Hardest thing for us is to love the people who upset us and make us angry! But still we must! When there is hostility, contention, and bitterness, devil is present in our relationship! But when there is genuine, joyful love is present, then God is present, for God is Love. God's kingdom is a Kingdom of love! But I don't see that kind of love, when God's people interact with each other. We are not anxious to love and know each other. How will we love others, if we do not try to fellowship with them! Church must be a place of love. Then God is definitely present. But if there is rivalry, hatred, division, and contention, then it becomes devil's habitation. Let us love those people also even if they are obstinate, stiff necked people. Let us love our enemies also!

Matthew 5:43-47.

43“*You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’*

44“*But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*
45*so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

46“*For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?*

47“*If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?*

48“*Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

God loves us in spite of who we are. So should we also. We do extend that kind of love to our family members, and children. But with others, we cut them off!

There is an old Jim Reeves song “But you love me, daddy. It goes like this:

Your five year old face
But you love me, daddy

You scatter your toys
And you make too much noise
But you love me, daddy

You know little lad
You can be pretty bad
But you love me, daddy

You wake me at dawn
When I want to sleep on
But you love me, daddy

When I use the phone
You won't leave me alone
But you love me, daddy

You make sister wail
Pulling her pony tail
But you love me daddy

You scratch up the floor
And you write on the door
But you love me, daddy

You ask foolish questions

Now, you know that true
But you love me, daddy

Now you know that you do
You're so hard to scold
'Cause you're my five-year-old
Because you love me, daddy.

We extend this kind of love to our family members, but we must love the strangers, and enemies also, in this manner! Christian love is peculiar, and it is very hard to practice! But we must practice it if we want to be perfect as our Heavenly Father!

1 John 4:9, 10

9. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God in His infinite love sent His only begotten Son to this hostile world, so that we might live through Him. He did not come here to judge and condemn us, but rather to teach us and to save us. While we were yet sinners, His Son was sent to us as an atonement, or propitiation or expiation for our sins. Then how much more will He love us if we are reconciled to Him?

He first loved us, not that we loved Him first. He did not come to us just to visit and teach, but He gave Himself for us as a propitiation or expiation for our sins, that those who believe in His shed blood for our sins may live eternally! He who knew no sin, became sin for our sins, and died as a ransom for many! This kind of self-giving love is the true Christian love! When we practice this kind of sacrificial love, God manifests, and is present among us!

1 John 4:11,12

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

John insists here that we must also love one another as God loved us! We must take the initiative to love our enemies also first, as Christ did, and we must lay down our lives as Christ, our Lord did! This is indeed extreme love! This is where Christian love is so different from other kinds of love. We first love people irrespective of who they are, and not only we pray for them but take steps constantly to reconcile!

Vs 12 is very critical. No one has seen God. But if we genuinely love one another, God abides in us, and His presence is among us! We can see God, feel God, experience God when we love one another as He loved us. Fellowshiping with God is not some mystical experience. It is pure fellowship of Godly love, peace, and joy with

one another, and with God! Today, let us make a strong commitment to love everyone, even the one who may hate us so much! Christian journey is all about love. Can you be part of that kind of godly fellowship?

Let me just summarize what I preached so far.

Conclusion:

Love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

God is love. Therefore, we must love everyone. If we don't have love, we don't have God.

We cannot love God, and others, if we have some idol in our heart! (The idol could be wealth, knowledge, power, career, some political ambitions etc.)

God loves us in spite of who we are. So, should we also.

He who knew no sin, became sin for our sins, and died as a ransom for many! This kind of self-giving love is the true Christian love!

He first loved us, not that we loved Him first.

if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

It is only by knowing God, we learn to love. It is by loving, we learn to know God more!

Love comes from God, and love leads to God!

Love indeed brings the presence of God within us! Can we today make a conscious effort to really love everyone, that is including our enemies?

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