

IMPACT

I **M**ust **P**ersonally **A**cknowledge **C**hrist **T**oday
Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; *in all your ways acknowledge Him* and He shall direct your path.
Proverbs 3:5-6

Passage: I John 3:14-18 “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.... By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” [Also 2:9-11]

Quote: Biblical love is the essence of living out the joyful Christian life, and it stands in sharp contrast to all other religions.

Love for God and others is the cornerstone of expressing the reality and the joy of saving faith. Unloving, joyless people who profess to be Christians are self-deceived counterfeits. Indeed, love and joy are twin expressions of saving faith. Jesus said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”¹ He told His disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. *By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*”² Before enduring the cross, where He personified biblical love, Christ taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*”³ God the Father demonstrated His love towards us through the Person and work of His Son when we “were by nature children of wrath,” “children of disobedience” and “enemies in our mind.”⁴ “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.

Beloved if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.... We love Him because He first loved us.”⁵

Like saving faith, biblical love, or agape’, has its counterfeits that try to duplicate the real thing for the selfish purpose of deceiving people and gaining desired ends. Biblical love is known by the godly actions that it prompts. Agape is not fundamentally an emotion. It is first and foremost a choice. To guard against self-serving motives, we must choose to obey the command to love without fanfare, or a craving for recognition. We must do so in spite of perceived or real weaknesses and offenses on the part of others because this pleases God and imitates His love for us. Agape is *unmerited*; it cannot be earned. Agape is *unconditional*; it has no prerequisites of any kind. Agape is *unreserved*; it has no areas that it does not address. Agape is *unselfish*; it often involves sacrificial investment for the benefit of the person loved. Agape is *unending*; it never ceases and will perfume all eternity in the presence of God Who is love!

Joy through love!

Biblical love paves the way to sharing the gospel by demonstrating the joyful difference that Christ makes in hearts that are naturally self-serving. The words of Paul, the converted killer of Christians, capture the essence of what it means to show forth Christ’s love even to those oppose us. “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bear me witness n the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh....”⁶ What makes Paul’s faith and love so exemplary is his intense suffering at the hands of the very people for whom he was burdened!⁷ May we always embrace the truth that faith is best demonstrated through active love, especially for those who scorn our feeble attempts to be like Christ. May we never forget that demonstrating biblical love for others *for Christ’s sake* is like demonstrating it to the Lord Himself!⁸

1 Matthew 22:37-40 2 John 13:34; Matthew 25:34-40 3 Matthew 5:43-46 4 Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 1:22-23 5 I John 4:10, 11, 19 6 Romans 9:1-3 7 I Corinthians 11:22-30 8 Matthew 25:31-46