

December 07, 2014

Mostly Personal...

Loved Ones,

One of the most amazing things about being a Christian is this: though mankind has a fallen nature that is essentially selfish in most respects, we who believe are given the amazing ability to love God.

Before we get too proud of ourselves, we need to head directly to 1 John 4:19 KJV – “We love Him because he first loved us.”

Most translations remove the “Him”, thereby translating the passage as, “We love, because He first loved us.” There is case to be made for either translation, but the principle is the same – all the love we possess and express is a direct result of God’s love freely given to those who are His own.

This love for God is not something I can lay claim to out of my flesh. It requires a power, a supernatural power, which has its source in another world:

- 1 John 3:1 ESV “See what kind of love (*what foreign, other-worldly type of love*) the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”
- John 1:11, 12 KJV “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
¹²But as many as received him, **to them gave he power to become the sons of God**, even to them that believe on his name.”

The thing that intrigues me is that God doesn’t require a slavish, forced affection to be manifested by any of us, but rather He gives us the supernatural ability to love each other and to love Him, in a way that is contradictory to our old nature and is sometimes counterintuitive to all our fleshly natural instinct.

Paul knew God’s love is the fountainhead of all true affection. He wrote in Romans 5:7-9 NIV “*Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. **But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!***”

Consider a few of the amazing passages about Poppa’s empowering love:

Deuteronomy 23:5 NIV However, the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, **because the Lord**

your God loves you.

Hosea 3:1 NIV The Lord said to me, Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. **Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites**, though they turn to other gods.

1 John 4:7 NIV Dear friends, let us love one another, **for love comes from God**. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Romans 1:17 NIV To all in Rome **who are loved by God** and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:20 NIV I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, **who loved me** and gave himself for me.

Ephesians 5:2 NIV and walk in the way of love, **just as Christ loved us** and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1 Thessalonians 1:4 NIV For we know, **brothers and sisters loved by God**, that he has chosen you.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV But we ought always to thank God for you, **brothers and sisters loved by the Lord**, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:16 NIV May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, **who loved us** and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope.

1 John 4:10, 11 NIV This is love: not that we loved God, **but that he loved us** and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, **since God so loved us**, we also ought to love one another.

Jude 1 NIV Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, **who are loved in God the Father** and kept for Jesus Christ:

Amen! It’s no wonder Paul proclaimed, “I can do all this through Christ who gives me strength.”

He loves us to the moon and back and because of that, we have the ability to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30)

I love you,
Pastor Stephen

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