

7 Additions to Faith

2 Peter 1:1-11

"Love"

Today we will conclude this series of messages from 2 Peter Chapter One on "Seven Additions to your faith." And what a great study this has been! So one last time, let's read our text in 2 Peter 1:1-11

"Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

(2 Peter 1:1-10 NKJV)

Christian growth begins with faith because every believer has faith. The book of Hebrews states that Jesus is the author and finisher of faith. Jesus puts his faith within us when we choose to become one of his followers. You start with faith and then add to your faith what? Virtue. Because virtue is the moral compass that directs us to do that which honors God. Then you add to your virtue - Knowledge. However, spiritual knowledge is more than just facts and information. It is experiencing God. It is "getting to know" God. Then you add to knowledge – Temperance (Self-Control), which is allowing the Holy Spirit to control your life instead of becoming a control freak. We add to Self-Control - Perseverance. But James says we develop perseverance through the trials of our faith! - Through submission and perseverance, and persistence. Then comes - Godliness. That's when we begin to realize our family resemblance and heritage. God is our Father, and we are made in his likeness. With Godliness, we start reflecting Christ in our attitudes and behaviors. What's next? Brotherly Kindness. We are brothers and sisters in the Lord. We learn to cultivate family unity and fellowship. We are members of God's family and linked to each other in Christ through his blood, which makes us blood relation. Amen?

And now we come to our final step, which is - Love. Only the Holy Spirit can teach us to love people the way God does. It's always easier to love people you really like! It's much easier to love people who think like us and enjoy the same things we

do. Sometimes it's easier to love the saved than the unsaved. It's easier to love other believers than unbelievers. It's easier to love Christians than non-Christians. However, we must remember that when we were still sinners, God loved us enough to send Christ to die for our sins.

John 3:13 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17 NKJV)

Last week we talked about phileo, the tender affection of brotherly love. But this last trait is agape, the kind of love that summons deep commitment and caring. It is a dynamic, compelling, and motivating love.

I. Love Reaches Out to Others

In Matthew 22 (36-38), Jesus says the Greatest Commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. The second great commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself; to honestly care about the welfare of others as much as we do about our own!

Most of us would nod our heads in mental assent that we believe God loves the world. Of course, he does! We would also agree that every good Christian ought to do their part to be a witness for Christ. When was the last time you invited someone to attend church with you? Who was the last person you told how you came to find Christ and what he means to you?

If we really want Crossroads Chapel to be a New Testament church and we want to be New Testament believers, we need the Holy Spirit to light a fire in our hearts and give us an earnest desire to see others come to know Christ. If we seriously care about our friends and family's eternal future, we cannot be ashamed to introduce them to Christ.

It takes courage and concern to reach out to people in love. I often use the words of 1 Corinthians 13 when I do the wedding message, which says, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy; it does not boast; it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." If you love someone, you will always believe in them, always expect the best of them, and always stand your ground in defending them.

Many people today just need someone to believe in them and care about them. The good news is that the heart of God is devoted to loving the people he created. Even though we have sinned and failed and come up short on our hopes and dreams, God still loves us and wants us to know it.

II. Love Sacrifices for Others

This is why God sent Jesus - to convince us of the Father's love. That is the most important message we can ever share with someone we care about. It is the most significant message you can ever share with your neighbor, your teacher, your students, or even with total strangers. The kind of love we are talking about will even cause you to love your enemies.

This Divine Love, or what we often call Agape Love, bridges the gulf between God and us. That love was defined and expressed when Jesus died for our sins on the Cross of Calvary. Through Christ, we are forgiven! In Christ, there is hope for all of us today!

The gospel's good news is that God loves you enough to help you! He doesn't just pity you or feel sorry for you. He promises to help you if you ask him. The Apostle John wrote, "God is Love." And he explains in 1 John 4 that "this is how God showed his love among us; He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

The Bible teaches that God is holy. A holy and just God demands a penalty be paid for sin. Since we are born as sinners, we cannot pay the penalty for our own sin, let alone the sin of someone else. God prepared his own sacrifice. And that sacrifice was Jesus. It was Jesus who turned aside the wrath of God when he took away our sins. The very reason Jesus came into the world was to save sinners.

Sometimes we get side-tracked into thinking that all of the blessings and gifts of Christ are the goal of the Christian life. But the mission of Jesus was to go to the Cross. That was his assignment. Jesus was never distracted by the miracles during his earthly ministry. He was not detoured by the excitement of the crowds during the triumphal entry. The Bible says he set his face as a flint to go to Jerusalem and made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant and being found in the fashion of a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross even though he despised the shame.

Jesus did it all because he loved us and wanted to save us! Jesus didn't die to give us peace and prosperity. He died to free us from our sins. Jesus died to ransom us from the penalty of sin, from the punishment of everlasting destruction, and from being shut out of the presence of God forever.

Through the grace of God, we have become heirs and joint heirs with Christ. But to thoroughly understand the depth of God's love, I think we must understand the fierceness of his wrath. For instance, do you believe there is a literal hell, a place of unimaginable torment, separate from everything that is good? For that very reason Christ came, and died, and rose again; to deliver us from a horrible fate!

In Matthew Chapter 13, verse 40, Jesus says, "Therefore as the tares are gathered

and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:40-43 NKJV)

We have a very good reason to rejoice today because our name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. But what about your mother, or your father, or your sister or brother? What about your close relatives and personal friends? What about your co-workers or your boss? How far does your love reach? How much do you really care? Does it bother you at all that without Jesus in their life, they won't make it to heaven? We are so worried about being politically correct and not offending people today that we rob people of the only opportunity they may ever have to meet Jesus. Paul said, "God's love in me is so strong it constrains me to share the good news."

In 1960 the population of the world was 3.1 billion people. In 2000 it was 6 billion. This year the population will reach 8 billion people. That's a lot of people! We are quickly outgrowing the ability of our planet to provide for us. The solution the World Economic Forum suggests is depopulation. The majority of people they want to eliminate have never heard the message about Christ. Over half of the world's population lives in Asia, in countries like China and India, both of which are nearing over 1½ billion people each. Closer to home, there are still about 140,000 people who live in the Bloomington/Normal area. Most of them are not Christians.

Does that motivate us at all? Do we care that many of the very people we live with and work with will not go to heaven?

III. Love Shares with Others

When Jesus left this world to return to the Father, he left us an assignment. We call it the great commission. It is our responsibility to tell people about Jesus. Sharing your story about how you came to Christ is not an option; it's a necessity. We must be able to show concern and compassion for others. We must be able to love people despite their sinfulness.

Agape love is a love that reaches the unlovable and sacrifices for the ungrateful. It serves the undeserving and helps the helpless. It saves the sinful and restores the fallen. That is the nature of agape love. The greatest and most complete addition you can make to your faith is the addition of God's love that wins the hearts of sinners.

We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19) "Because God demonstrated his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) But this kind of love isn't supposed to be just a "God thing." Jesus teaches *us* to love in the same way, "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to 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. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:43-48 NKJV)

To love this way just isn't human nature.

Conclusion

Sinfulness and fallenness is a basic definition of humanity. But God made us to be more than we are. He created us in his own image. That means you can be better than you are! We can become like him. To think like him, to love like him, to dream like him. We are called to something higher than that which benefits us. We are called to love others the way God does. So add to your faith Charity – God's agape love – and win your world for Christ!