

Shower of Christian Love

by Moses C. Onwubiko

Grace Evangelistic Ministries, Inc.
Nashville, Tennessee U.S.A.

Grace Evangelistic Ministries, Inc. P.O. Box 111999

Nashville, Tennessee 37222 www.GEMworldwide.org

©2012, 2014, 2015 by Moses C Onwubiko. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Scripture quotations (unless otherwise noted) are from the New American Standard Bible, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission (www.Lockman.org).

Scriptures quoted marked RSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission.

Scriptures quoted marked NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version 1984[®]. © 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture marked NKJ taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture marked KJ taken from the King James Version.

Words and phrases in brackets are author's amplifications and not part of the original text.

Printed in the United States of America.

“... love one another, even as I [Jesus] have loved you ... all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

(John 13:34 - 35)



“Love is the most powerful apologetic.”

Ravi Zacharias

Message of Hope

My friend, the information in this booklet is of a spiritual nature. Only those who are born again can benefit from it. The Bible tells us, “*The person without the Spirit [unsaved] does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.*” (1 Corinthians 2:14 NIV).

The good news is that if you are not yet born again, you can experience new birth right now and be forever saved from eternal condemnation. Once you are born again, God’s Spirit indwells you and helps you to understand spiritual truth.

Here's how you can be born again: The Bible records the charges against us, "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). The truth is this: You are a sinner, not because you sinned. Rather, because you inherited Adam's sin, "*sin came into the world through one man [Adam]*" (Romans 5:12 RSV).

Besides condemning man, God imposed a penalty no one could pay, "*the wages of sin is [spiritual] death*" (Romans 6:23). Because we are spiritually dead and unable to pay for our sins, God did something spectacular. He came into the world in the flesh (John 1:14 - cf. John 1:1) through the Person of Jesus Christ. His virgin birth made it possible for Him to be born without a sin nature. Having "*no sin*" (2 Corinthians 5:21), He was qualified to pay for your sins and mine. On the cross, He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. There, God judged Him and He paid the penalty for our sins.

But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died [as a substitute] for us (Romans 5:8 RSV).

...He made Him to be sin who knew no sin... (2 Corinthians 5:21 RSV).

He Himself bore our sins in His body... (1 Peter 2:24a).

The issue between you and God is not sin; your sins have already been paid "*once for all*" (1 Peter 3:18). The real issue is will you, by faith alone in Christ alone, accept that Jesus Christ, though God, became man and died on the cross for your sins, was resurrected on the third day and ascended into heaven forty days later?

If you wholeheartedly believe the infallible truth of Scripture, and trust in Jesus Christ, you will be born again: "*these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name*" (John 20:31).

Salvation is not a matter of good works, “*for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*” (Galatians 2:16 KJ).

Salvation is a grace gift: “*By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast*” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Restoration to Fellowship

God the Holy Spirit limits His teaching ministry to those who are in fellowship with Him. Sin breaks our fellowship with God. Believers are restored to fellowship (or filled with the Spirit) when we acknowledge or admit our sins to God alone.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

So, you may pause, search your soul, and confess any known sin to God.

Heavenly Father,

We acknowledge You as the God of the universe. We praise You for the greatness of Your love and the wonder of Your grace. We thank You for our so great salvation. We humbly pray that Your Holy Spirit will mentor us along as we study. Please Father, open the gateway of our understanding to Your Word. May the truth taught herein impact us “for the praise of Your glory.” In the name of the King of kings, Lord of lords, our wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

When one thinks of being in a rain shower, the first thing that comes to mind is the idea of being soaking wet. A shower is non selective; it pours “*on the righteous and unrighteous*” (Matthew 5:45). Unconditional love is the same concept. When one reflects on God’s love, one’s mind runs to an outpouring

of His undiminished, non-prejudicial, and non-discriminatory love: “*God so loved the [whole] world*” (John 3:16).

“*God is love*” (1 John 4:8). Not only is God love, but He is the Author of it. Love is one of His attributes. He has, in His matchless grace, showered man with the unsearchable riches of His love. He initiated love, “*He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). He gave the world His very best, “*His indescribable gift*” (2 Corinthians 9:15). That is not all: God allows us to tap into His love (Galatians 5:22) through the filling of His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) which is maintained through consistent use of 1 John 1:9.

Now the BIG QUESTION: Is God’s love in us? Our claim to possess His love is an empty one when our love for others cannot fill a teaspoon, much less be enough to soak them with love. The apostle Paul uses other analogies to paint a picture of the emptiness of love without action:

If I speak with the tongues [languages] of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal ... and if I have all faith ... but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Sadly, the phrase “*I am nothing*” is what describes most believers in Christianity today. They are not reciprocating the love of Christ. The apostle Paul, in his masterpiece, goes on to explain love.

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Love, the Christian's Badge

Love is the identifier of Christianity. It should be our badge. This we know from our Lord's mandate to every believer in Christ,

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another (John 13:34; cf. Matthew 22:37-39 emphasis added).

By this [badge of love] all men [believers and unbelievers alike] will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35 emphasis added).

Three times in one verse Jesus Christ refers to the word love. That speaks volumes! He goes on to say that this same love identifies us.

Beloved of God, without doubt, love is one of the dominant subjects of Scripture. It is the most fundamental element in any relationship. More importantly it is the only badge Christians are required to wear. Love is the one and only law in the New Testament. Imagine! There are about 613 laws in the Old Testament, and only ONE in the New. Love is the basis for the entire Law (Matthew 22:35-40).

Heartbreakingly, not many Christians have taken to heart our Lord's mandate to the church. Consider His Words: "*By this all men [believers and unbelievers alike] will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*" Compare that to Mahatma Gandhi's comment: "I like your Christ, I don't like your Christians; your Christians are so unlike your Christ." What an observation. What an honest statement. What an embarrassment to us as Christians.

"Love is one of the most misunderstood and misused words in our vocabulary....The way people use love today...when they say "I love you" what they are really saying is: "I want you, I desire you, I lust for you or I

need you.” Very few people know how to say I love you with the kind of love Jesus was talking about in the Scripture.”¹

Christ’s badge of love was visible for all to see. It distinguished Him from the entire human race. The truth is striking! No one, including Gandhi, can read the life of Christ and not be captivated by His immense love for everyone. He loved, even those who hated Him, “*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34). That is a prayer offered from a heart saturated with love.

“*Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you*” (Matthew 5:44). The following verse tells us that Christians are Christ-like, when they wear His badge of love. “*By this all men [believers and unbelievers alike] will know that you are My disciples*” (John 13:35 emphasis added). Just think, this means that without the Lord’s badge of love, it is impossible to identify a Christian as a disciple (student) of Jesus Christ. Moreover, lack of love causes one to lose his personal friendship with the Lord. That should be of great concern to us.

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.
(John 15:12-14 emphasis added).

Our objective in this brief study is sevenfold:

- Redefine love
- Explain love
- Consider Christ’s love for mankind
- Answer “What is Christian love?”
- Consider the correlation between love and blessing

¹ Dr. Charles Stanley, “No Greater Love” sermon, February 19, 2012

- Answer “What makes Christianity unique?”
- Scrutinize the acid test for Christian love

Love Redefined

Love is a vast subject that cannot be completely conveyed with only one definition. Dr. Charles C. Ryrie said: “Like many Christian terms love is more often discussed than defined.”² Think of it, the apostle Paul wrote a whole chapter just to define love (1 Corinthians 13). For our study love may be defined as a ***thought-based attitude expressed in action for the benefit of the one loved***. Love must be supported by action; otherwise love is merely a word. “*For God so loved the world that He gave [action] His...Son [Jesus Christ]*” (John 3:16 emphasis added).

Explaining Love

Action is the best way to explain love. Talk is cheap; action is costly. My beloved, make no mistake: Christians’ failure to demonstrate Christ’s love was the grounds for Gandhi’s mockery. That is a tragedy.

Consider the sentence: “I *love you*.” Here, the verb love requires an object. Without an object, love is incomplete and therefore meaningless. As in our shower analogy, the object of one’s love must feel the outpouring of love.

In other words, one cannot allege to possess Christ’s love, without having an object to receive that love. Expressed another way, it is dishonest to claim to have Christ’s love and not back it with action. “*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:13). Action is the mark of love.

There are various Greek words for love. For this study we will limit our discussion to two, *agape* and *phileo*.

² Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Victor Books, 1986, p. 39

- **Agape**

“Agape denotes a reasoned-out love, rather than an emotionally-based love...one that loves the object irrespective of the worth of the object and even though the love may not be reciprocated.”³ Agape love is the only love that Scripture mandates for us to have for one another.

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you” (John 15:12). In other words, we are to be a reflection of Christ’s love. What’s more, agape love extends to all mankind. See the difference intended for Christianity!

Agape love has its origin from God, *“God is love”* (1 John 4:8). It is a non-prejudicial, non-selective love. Its objects may be moral, immoral, tolerable or obnoxious. Anyone who possesses such a love must, like Christ, be ever-ready to live it out. He must be ready to rain down love on others, just as Christ showers us with love. The idea that we only keep such love to ourselves is totally foreign to Scripture. Any love that is not backed by action is not love at all.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this [demonstration of an attitude of love] all men [believers and unbelievers alike] will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34-35 emphasis added).

The love here is agape. Based on this passage, how can the world know that we are truly the disciples of Jesus Christ? The answer is simple: They will know when we love others unconditionally, when we do that which does not come naturally, when we go an extra mile to help the totally undeserving ones, when we are consumed with the well-being of our brothers and sisters in our church and beyond. They will also know that we are truly His disciples

³ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 192

when we sacrifice for others. “We know love [agape] by this that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16 emphasis added).

How do we know Christ’s love for us? We observed that He laid down His life for us. “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). He took our place and paid our penalty for us. How can other people know that we are wearing the same badge of love that Christ wore 2,000 years ago? Through observing our thought-based action for the benefit of others. This is the Word of God. Actions speak louder than words!

Christian love is not concealable; it is demonstrable and observable.

“Bear one another’s burdens and thereby fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). This is a mandate that demands an action! “The law of Christ” is the law of love; “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you” (John 13:34 emphasis added). Dr. Vine says it beautifully: “Love can be know only from the actions it prompts. God’s love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1 John 4:9, 10.”⁴ Likewise, Christ’s love is seen by His unparalleled sacrifice on the cross. This is evidence that a Christian’s love must be backed by action. We cannot ignore this truth and claim to be students of God’s Word.

“Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren or [all] men, is not an impulse from our feelings, it does not always run with our natural inclination, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all, Romans 15:2, and works no ill to any, 13:8-10; love seeks opportunity to do good to ‘all men, especially toward them that are of the household of the faith,’ Gal. 6:10.”⁵

But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother [or sister] in need and closes his heart against him [or her], how does the love of

⁴W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1996, pp. 381-2

⁵ Ibid

God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue [words only], but in deed [action] and truth [biblically based action] (1 John 3:17-18).

- **Phileo**

Phileo is more of a “tender affection.”⁶ Unlike agape, phileo is selective and condition-based. Phileo is a love that exists between mother and child. In reality, it is a friendly love reserved for a few (John 14:21). Further, its strength stems from agape. Phileo love by itself is likely to fail; agape love “*never fails*” (1 Corinthians 13:8). Arguably, since phileo is a brotherly love, it is my conviction that a level of such love ought to exist among brethren of the same family, the family of God. “*Let brotherly love continue*” (Hebrews 13:1). Also, “*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor*” (Romans 12:10). Brotherly love is the Greek *philadelphia*, ‘love of Christians one to another, brotherly love out of one common spiritual life’⁷

One cannot have Christ’s heartbeat of love and not convey His love to others. So, the question: Is our love for others noticeable? Are we truly exemplifying the life of Christ? “*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11:1; cf. Ephesians 5:1). Some might say Christian love is a private matter. Ah, how then would “*all men [believers and unbelievers alike]... know that you are [His] disciples?*” (John 13:35 emphasis added). Please ponder this question as we continue.

Christ’s Love for Mankind

Christ’s love ought to be our measuring stick. If we are to be like Christ, we must understand His love for mankind. His love was unselfish in every sense of the word. When He thought of us, He stepped out of His glory, “*For you*

⁶ Ibid

⁷ NASB 1995, p. 1885

know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake, He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). His love culminated at the Cross.

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

While we were yet sinners [unlovable], Christ died [as a substitute] for us (Romans 5:8).

What is Christian Love?

It is love that mirrors Christ’s love, a love beyond our comprehension in its actions. It sets Christians apart from the rest of the world. Unbelievers cannot manifest Christian love; it is the monopoly of the Holy Spirit. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love [agape]” (Galatians 5:22).* It is available to every believer in Christ, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22; cf. Ephesians 5:18)

Christian love is effectively demonstrated by mature believers. Baby Christians act childishly when it comes to applying Christ’s love. Many believers behave like unsaved people because of immaturity. Sadly there are many immature Christians and the world is taking notice of their actions. Where are you in your spiritual growth?

How does the spiritual baby grow to maturity to produce this love? Spiritual growth cannot be measured on the basis of time and knowledge. One can be a believer for 100 years and still be a baby. By the same token, one can be highly knowledgeable in the area of Scripture (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic) and still be as much a baby as one who has no knowledge at all. And having the spiritual gift of pastor or evangelist does not automatically make one mature. Maturity comes from: 1) learning the truths of the Bible and applying them, 2) consistently maintaining fellowship with God and thereby the filling of the Holy Spirit, 3) obedience to God’s commands and submitting our will to His will.

Action distinguishes a baby believer from a mature one. Babies walk like babies, talk like babies, reason and act like babies. Mature believers show a sense of maturity and biblical orientation in everything they think, say and do.

For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice [application] have their senses trained to discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:13-14).

The Correlation Between Love and Blessing

Christian love is unique. “*Many waters cannot quench love*” (Song of Solomon 8:7). It is what sets Christianity apart from the rest of the world. Beloved, there is another side of this love: abundant blessing. Do you wonder how does love correspond to blessing?

Love for God is not only the basis for Christian love, it is also a magnet for unprecedented blessing, “*EYE HAS NOT SEEN, AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD...ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM*” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

There are many other passages including:

Because he has loved Me, therefore I will...set him securely on high (Psalm 91:14).

The Lord keeps all who love Him (Psalm 145:20).

No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly [those who love Him] (Psalm 84:11).

Love for God is also expressed as spiritual maturity, integrity, uprightness and experiential righteousness. No one can rightly claim to love God unless he is obedient to His Word. “*He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I*

will love him, and manifest Myself [in a personal way] to him” (John 14:21 NKJ; cf. v. 23).

That’s amazing! The one who has love for God is held tightly between the unfailing love of God the Father and God the Son. Nothing compares!

My claim to have love for God is baseless if my love for others is not action laced. No one can truly love God, and not love other people with love undying, whether they are lovable or obnoxious. When someone asks you “Do you love me?” Do you say, “Yes, but...” Ah, there is no but in agape love. Ask yourself: Do I love other people, believers and unbelievers alike? The answer is between you and the Lord.

If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also (1 John 4:20-21; cf. vv. 10-12 emphasis added).

The Uniqueness of Christianity

Primarily, three things mark us as Christians.

- The indwelling of the members of the God- head. An authentic Christian is one who anchors his faith in Christ alone, and is indwelt by God the Father (1 Corinthians 3:16), the Son (Colossians 1:27) and the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- The ministry of the Holy Spirit within us” *who works all things after the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11b).*
- The badge of love.

Agape love is available to all believers (Galatians 5:22). It is unique and cannot be duplicated. But Christians forgo their identity when love is not detectable. This explains our Lord’s repetition, “*love one another*” (John 13:34); “*have love for one another*” (v. 35); “*love one another just as I have*

loved you,” (John 15:12); “I command you, that you love one another” (John 15:17). Beloved, Scripture only needs to say something once for us to respond in obedience. Repetition is a sign that we dare not take it lightly.

Acid Test for Christian Love

Our study is not an exhaustive one; nevertheless, we have a basic overview of what Christian love is all about. This study closes with some questions. As a husband, do you love your wife with undying love, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25)? Wife, do you have respect (the highest form of love) for your husband (Ephesians 5:33)? Do your thoughts of someone, anyone, rob your peace? If so, check your engine oil of love. It is likely to have run out. If so, refill it in a hurry so as to avoid wrecking the engine of your spiritual life.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this [demonstration of an attitude of love] all men [believers and unbelievers alike] will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34-35 emphasis added).

Think of what could be repaired when love takes its proper place in our lives; broken marriages, ruined friendships and much more could be restored. Furthermore, the world’s attitude toward Christianity would be drastically altered for the good as people are caught in the shower of Christ’s Love poured out upon them by His followers.

Father-God, it is our heartfelt prayer that the truth taught herein will impact our lives for the praise of Jesus Christ, the One who loved us so much, and gave His life for us all. In whose Name we pray. Amen

Now, may *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”* (2 Corinthians 13:14 RSV).

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 1:24-25 RSV).

“Buy truth, and do not sell it”

(Proverbs 23:23a)

Are you aware that sound Bible teaching is a precious and priceless piece of spiritual jewelry? Indeed, church history has shown how difficult sound teaching is to come by, especially in modern day Christianity! So, when God from His oasis of grace leads us to the pearls of truth in His infallible and inerrant Word, we ought to cherish them without reserve. The Bible is the treasure box that holds your capacity to enjoy abundant life, to reap maximum happiness in life, friendship, marriage, business, and to enjoy unprecedented blessings for today and tomorrow; therefore, *“buy truth [stay grounded in the Word],”* and *“For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her”* (Proverbs 8:11).

Truth: *For you are not under law BUT under GRACE* (Romans 6:14b).

www.GEMworldwide.org

Books • Bible Studies • Newsletters

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

(2 Peter 3:18).



facebook.com/GraceEvangelisticMinistries



youtube.com/user/GEMworldwideUSA

Publications Available

Tracts:

Eternal Security of the Believer (English and Spanish)
Riding the Death Train (A Message of Hope) (English and Spanish) (Audio CD in English)
Shower of Christian Love
Who Are You?

Books:

Biblical Doctrine of Salvation
Comfort in Suffering
Disaster: God's Warning Bell
Focus on Christian Marriage
Forgiveness by Confession Alone
Giving, An Integral Part of Worship
God's Plan after Salvation (English and Spanish)
James: Faith Without Works is Dead (An Urgent Call to Practical Christianity)
Joseph, A Pillar of Grace
Overview of God's Grace
Paul, a Trophy of God's Grace
Signs & Wonders (A Biblical Reply to the Claims of Modern Day Miracle Workers)
The Spiritual Gift of Tongues (A Biblical Response to Modern Day Tongues)
What is the Spiritual Life? (Reflecting the Life of Christ)

To receive this or any publication, please write to Grace Evangelistic Ministries:

In the United States

P.O. Box 111999 Nashville,
TN 37222
U.S.A.
GEMworldwide.org

In Africa

P.O. Box 583 Jos,
Plateau State
NIGERIA
GEMAfrica.org

In the United Kingdom

The Old Co-op Business
Centre Office 38/1
38 Chelsea Road
Easton
Bristol
BS5 6AF
UNITED KINGDOM
GEMEurope.org