



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: FEBRUARY 2022 by Lee Shipp

HOW DOES FAITH WORK?

What makes faith work? You have believed God for things that you did not receive. You have experienced unanswered prayers. Certainly, you have heard many ask, "Why don't we see the kind of miracles like they saw in the Bible?" Today, many claim to believe in God but you cannot see their faith. Religion is a personal matter we are told. But Jesus said we are to be the light of the world. Furthermore, there were those whose faith could be seen. Some friends carried their paralytic friend to Jesus. Matthew 9:2 records that Jesus saw their faith!

We are told that if you believe you will see. Many people are believing but not seeing. What makes faith work? How does faith work? Believers beckon God for revival. We are told that the reason we are not receiving the revival we ask for is due to our lack of faith. We are told that we must pray more, repent more, believe more, and then revival will come. We are told that we do not have enough faith and that is why God is not answering us! But what if the problem is not a lack of faith? What if the problem is the lack of something by which faith works? Perhaps it is not faith we lack but love. Paul said, "... faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). Maybe the problem is a lack of love. Without love faith cannot work. Furthermore, Jesus warns us that there will be a lack of love in the last days. Paul said the church would have a form of godliness in the last days and that the church would be overrun by those who are lovers of self and not lovers of God. They will be cruel and unfaithful.

Without love faith cannot work. If faith cannot work, we cannot please God. Love is essential! And you cannot love without faith! D.L. Moody said, "The one great need in our Christian life is love, more love to God and to each other. Would that we could all move into that Love chapter, and live there."

Now don't be fooled - a man can know all mysteries, give away all his goods, and give his body to be burned and not have love. He may think he has love, but it is possible to do many sacrificial and noble deeds without love!

Believers know God's ability and have knowledge of His desires. They know what God is capable of. They even know that God wants to move mightily in the earth. However, they suffer such despair as they rarely see the demonstrations of God that they long to see.

History testifies of God bringing revival. Today, believers with great passion pray for God to bring revival again. They pray for God to rend the heavens and come down. Why? Why does God delay? "We have faith," they say. "Why doesn't God move?" Because faith works by love! The problem is a lack of love! Paul said nothing grieves the Holy Ghost more than Christians not loving one another, not forgiving one another, and not being kind to one another (Ephesians 4:29-32).

Consider the story of the Prodigal Son. It is assumed that the prodigal was by far the wretched son. After all, the prodigal lived in open sin and disgraced the family name. The prodigal's brother - now there is a fine and upstanding man. He honors the father. He is responsible. He is a good steward. He is always doing his work and behaving. But honestly look at that man again. He is full of bitterness and unforgiveness. He is angry. He despises his brother and resents that his father has forgiven him and received him back into his good graces. The resentment pours out of this elder brother. He scolds his father for never giving him a fatted calf to enjoy with his friends. It is the attitude of this elder brother that has infected the church with such inward anger and hostility. Churches are full of angry people; people are angry with God, but they have faith.

Furthermore, the elder brother didn't just have an inward dispute with his father. His bitterness affected everyone: the father, the servants, the happiness of the guests, and not to mention his brother. Certainly, the prodigal could feel the hate coming from his brother. Jealousy, anger, pride, uncharity, cruelty, self-righteousness, touchiness, sullenness - these are the ingredients of this dark and loveless soul. Which man would you rather live with? The prodigal whose heart had been changed and filled with thankfulness and love, or the elder brother? Look who got the provision. Look who got the fatted calf. Look who got the joyful

revival! It was not the elder brother who worked so hard and had faith in his father. It was the prodigal who was so in love with his father and so happy to be reconciled with the family. The prodigal got the fatted calf!

GET OVER IT

The biggest problem we humans have is our failure to get over the problems we find in others! We are so quick to call ourselves wretched, we love to tell others how awful we are. But we will not forgive others. We love ourselves but have such little love for others. This lack of love is what keeps faith from working. Our secret dispositions of the heart, the wounds, and the resentments in our soul are grieving the Lord.

I know we have our reasons to feel the way we do. Wounded by abuse, offended because we were ignored, embarrassed because we were excluded, resentful because we were not recognized. Pour out your complaint to any logical mind and no one would blame you for your lack of trust in humans. Except for God! Jesus told us to love our enemies. He said if we only love those who love us then how are we different than anyone else. Even sinners do this. If we are good to those who are good to us how are we different from sinners.

God says, "Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only son into the world so that we might live through him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another" (1 John 4:7-11).

This love is so lacking today, and Jesus prophesied that it would be. Like the elder brother, we take such pride in how faithful and good we are. And to our pride, we are quick to say things about how bad we are and what sinners we are [or have been]. Yet, like the elder brother, so many in the body of Christ don't believe they are that bad. Many in the body of Christ are filled with a lack of love for others. Many destroy one another through a lack of love. Like the Pharisees, they travel land and sea for one convert. They find him and then destroy him when he does not measure up to their standards (which they claim are the standards of God).

"LOVE IS THE CROWN OF MATURITY"

REVIVALS OF LOVE

Why would God give revival to people like this? Why would God bring souls into His kingdom only to have them destroyed in our churches? If there is no love, there can be no active faith for revival! Why did God give Wales a revival? Because Evan Roberts appealed to love. He called for the believers to forgive one another, and they did! We hold on to one another's flaws as if we did not have any ourselves. We are so discerning about the sin of others. We recognize how far from perfect other people are. We have righteous anger because others are not faithful, but are we faithful? We are keenly aware of the struggles others are in, but we also struggle with our flesh? "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15: 10-11).

The Apostles loved. They were all unfaithful. They knew what weak men they were. They had all forsaken Jesus and then hid behind locked doors. They could not live up to the standards of holiness. They knew they were not perfect. But they had this, they refused to withhold love from the multitudes. Likewise, Paul appealed to the Corinthians to rescue those who would be swallowed by Satan by forgiving, comforting, and reaffirming their love to those who are coming to God.

Consider this admonition to the Romans. Read it carefully.

Accept anyone who is weak in faith, but don't argue about disputed matters. Who are you to judge another's household servant? Before his own Lord he stands or falls. And he will stand, because the Lord is able to make him stand. For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Christ died and returned to life for this: that he might be Lord over both the dead and the living. But you, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and receives human approval. So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.

Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves. Each one of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself. On the contrary, as it is written, The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. Now may the God who

gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice. Therefore accept one another, just as Christ also accepted you, to the glory of God. Romans 14:1, 4, 7-13, 17-19, 15:1-3,5-7 (CSB).

Did you see the admonition? God wants us to live in harmony with one another; therefore, God gives us the grace of endurance and encouragement to do so. Living with each other in harmony is the way we glorify the Lord. Simply put, we are to accept one another the same way Jesus has accepted us. Praise God. By grace we can do that, and faith will work! The religious tone is so strong in churches today. Imagine who we would exclude from leadership. In other words, the spirit of the elder brother is so prevalent in the church that the following people would never be given the opportunity to lead. They would be looked upon with such disdain and ridicule. They would be set in the back and not respected again. They could go to heaven, but they would not be allowed to serve. Those men who would be detested are Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, Samson, Noah, and Judah. What would you say to a man who publicly cursed Jesus? Peter did. Samson slept with many women, but God never gave up on him. God still anointed him and then writes him into the great chapter of faith (Hebrews 11). My point is this: our longing to see God work could occur through the very ones we have disqualified. Our lack of love could be restraining the next move of God.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST THING A MAN CAN DO?

Henry Drummond said,

You have life before you. Once only you can live it. What is the noblest object of desire, the supreme gift to covet? We have been told that the greatest thing in the religious world is faith. Paul said the greatest of these is love. Peter says, "Above all things have fervent love among yourselves." John says, "God is love." Missionaries can take nothing greater to the heathen world than the LOVE OF GOD working within their own character. What is love in the character? It is patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, guilelessness, sincerity.

Take into your sphere of labor, where you also mean to lay down your life, that simple love, and your lifework must succeed. You can take nothing greater, you need take nothing less. You may take every accomplishment; you may be braced for every sacrifice; but if you give your body to be burned, and have not love, it will profit you and the cause of Christ nothing.

We hear much of love to God; Christ spoke much of love to man. We make a great deal of peace with heaven; Christ made much of peace on earth.

Where love is, God is. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. God is love. Therefore love. Without distinction, without calculation, without procrastination, love. Lavish it upon the poor, where it is very easy; especially upon the rich, who often need it most; most of all upon our equals, where it is very difficult, and for whom perhaps we each love least of all. Give pleasure. Lose no chance of giving pleasure; for that is the ceaseless and anonymous triumph of a truly loving spirit.

THE MARK OF CHRIST

From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Galatians 6:17). What is this mark of Christ? The word "mark" properly means the recognition of ownership. It is also referred to as scars left upon the body. According to 2 Corinthians 11, Paul described the treatment he endured for the cause of Christ. He spoke of intense tribulation and severe beatings that surely left "marks" in his body. But are these the "marks" of Christ?

Many people have been wounded. All religions have been persecuted. People of all faiths have been tortured and many said they suffered for Jesus when in fact they were the enemies of the cross. However, Paul's intention in 2 Corinthians is not to reveal the hardship but the reason he endured such hardship. Paul's willingness to endure such a fight of affliction was because of love. He said the "love of Christ constrains me" Paul said that a man can do many things without love. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul said a man could prophesy and not have love. He could give away all he has to the poor and not have love. He could even give his body to be burned and not have love. Paul explains that what he endured and suffered was for the church. He was compelled by love to give Jesus to everyone. Therefore the "mark of Christ" must be love. Jesus said all men will know you are my disciples by your love for one another! The way people could recognize that Paul was owned by Jesus was by this "mark" in his body – the love of Christ!

Paul said to the Galatians that God's call on him was to "reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen (Galatians 1:16). How does Paul fulfill this ministry? For Paul to reveal the Son and fully preach him, he must visibly set forth (before their eyes) Jesus Christ crucified (Galatians 3:1). This simply means that Paul did not just preach messages but demonstrated Christ crucified by pouring forth the "love of Christ."

For the Holy Ghost said, "*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*" (1 John 3:16). Therefore the "mark of Christ" on Paul's life was love; he was willing to be beaten and spent because he loved them enough to save their souls from hell!

LOVE IS NOT ELEMENTARY BUT MATURITY – IT IS THE PERFECT MAN!

In your life, the supreme work of the Holy Spirit is to conform you to Christ. Love is the crown of maturity! According to Peter, *we are to add to our faith – virtue, and add to virtue – knowledge, and so forth. But the end is love! Paul told the Romans they were to be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Romans 12:10).*

Love is the essential ingredient for expressing the message of God. Without love, all things we do and the sacrifices we make are for no profit (1 Corinthians 13). Even faith needs love. Faith cannot work alone, it needs love. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love (Galatians 5:6).

WHAT DOES GOD HATE

Consider what God hates. This should make all of us humble ourselves before God: "*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate*" (Proverbs 8:13).

Do you fear the Lord? Do you hate your pride? Do you hate the perverse things that come out of your mouth: the gossip, the words that do not minister grace, and the wounds that our words have upon people seeking God. Who are you better than? If you look down without pity upon any man, does that not make you arrogant? Would love look down or would love lay its life down to set them free? Perhaps you haven't murdered or committed adultery but are you better?

The Lord threw Satan out of heaven for Pride ... will He let you in with it?

A key element in every revival was a keen sense of MERCY, UNITY, AND FORGIVENESS within the Body of Christ. As fast as the revival flooded in ... it ended. As soon as the dissension among the body set in the revival came to a halt. As soon as an unloving spirit entered the Holy Ghost departed! The Holy Spirit must have a people who agree. He must have a body by which He can move freely without being grieved. Is the Holy Spirit within you grieved by something in your heart? Is the Holy Spirit grieved by the words of your mouth? How can he reveal kingdom things to you if He cannot reveal carnal things to you?

PHARISEES INVADE THE CHURCH

What am I saying? The church is not about pretty people. We are all struggling to be more like Christ. Would to God we would help each other rather than give up on each other. None of us are perfected yet; do unto others as you would have them do to you. We have to bear with one another and endeavor to keep the bond of the Spirit. This is not easy because none of us are easy to live with right now, but love – the love of God can do it in us. The love of God can endure all things, believe all things, hope all things, and never fail.

The elder brother has the spirit of the Pharisees. Pharisees have invaded the church and made it theirs. If Jesus could bid the sick, the sinner, the publican into the church – He would. But the elder brother has dominated the house. You see, most in the church are like the elder brother. They want you to think like them. They want you to act like them. They want you to be right and being right means – what is right to them. If you meet their criteria then you are "IN," and you are right. But Jesus wants you to make it HOME and He knows the only way you will be by His keeping power!!!

People would come back to the Lord if they thought they could. They don't return because they don't think they can. They don't think they can because that is what they have been led to believe by the elder brothers who have taken control of the House of God. There is no love when the elder brother is in charge.

Though she was looked down upon by all the religious, the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and hair was greatly loved by Jesus. Though the elder brothers did not want her around, Jesus said she would never be forgotten!

DO YOU LOVE ME

Jesus went to the cross because of LOVE. God gave His Son because of LOVE. It is not about prayer – for prayer's sake. It is not about church – for church's sake. It is not about worship – for worship's sake. It is about love. Jesus asked, "... Do you love me?" Who are those through whom God had the greatest effect? Those who loved Him most! Jesus said that those who are forgiven much love much! The more mature you become in Christ the more you are going to realize how much you have been forgiven. Your maturity is not measured by how much you know, how much you prophesy, how much good you do, how much you sacrifice for Christ, for all that can be done without love (1 Corinthians 13). The test of maturity is how much you love! Dare I say that many of you are forgiven and have been forgiven, but you do not realize how much you are forgiven; therefore, you do not love greatly! If you do not love greatly then faith cannot work greatly, for faith works by love. The greater the love the greater the faith. A lack of love is simply not realizing how bad you are and how much you have been forgiven. Some of you [in your mind] are good and have always been good. You are not like other sinners! Oh, sure you are a sinner and an awful person, but you are not like other gross sinners! But the truth is that we have all fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus suffered and died on the cross for your sins as well as the sins of those you struggle to love. In other words, He loves them as much as He loves you. Your sins brought His death just as much as the other person's sins. How can you not love if you believe that? How can the other person be so bad and undeserving of love if you could be given love? Oh, that we may love. That we may understand we are all the same kind of sinners. No one is better or worse than another. We must all be saved and sanctified by the mighty blood of Jesus and capable work of the Holy Spirit! Oh, that we would love so faith can work. That we would love like the Apostle and be able to demonstrate Christ crucified by our love for one another.