

Faith - Love

In one sense the love of God came first.

1 John 4:10 [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.”*

This is from God’s viewpoint, but if we look at the two, faith and love, from our viewpoint, our faith in the love of God comes before we can learn how to love God.

Jesus the Son of Man is the example of this faith leading to love.

Matthew 3:13-17 [NIV] *“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “**This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.**”*

Jesus the Son of Man had His faith in the Father confirmed at this point.

John 1:29-34 [NIV] *“The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, “**Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!** This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.’ **I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.**”*

It was only after this confirmation that Jesus proclaimed that He was the Son of God, and the Lamb of God. He then began His ministry to express the love that God had for all humanity. This ministry ended with the love sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the cross.

There is no way that we can have any physical confirmation that accepting the blood sacrifice of Jesus the Son of God will cleanse us of all our sins except faith in the Words of God as found in God’s Word, the Holy Christian Bible.

It was faith in the words from God the Father that led His Son Jesus Christ to express the love that God has for us, His children.

Romans 10:8-13 [NIV] *“But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: **That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Faith in what God has done for us through Jesus Christ, His Only Son, is the starting point of a life that will in the end be saved from eternal death.

This love of God which Jesus Christ showed humanity by His death on the cross was **not** found in the Old Covenant laws.

Only a faint shadow of what was to come in the future was expressed in the animal sacrifices.

Hebrews 10:1-4 [NIV] *“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshippers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. **But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**”*

The Old Covenant laws gave no permanent removal of sin, only a constant reminder of sin and the need for forgiveness.

Romans 7:5-7 [NIV] *“For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed **I would not have known what sin was except through the law.** For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”*

Paul shows the value of the law to show us what was sinful, but could not eradicate the penalty of the law, death.

Hebrews 10:5-7 [NIV] *“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am, it is written about me in the scroll, I have come to do your will, O God.’”*

God did not take pleasure in the offerings we as humans could make, it was His Son in whom He was well pleased.

Hebrews 10:8-10 [NIV] *“First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” **He sets aside the first to establish the second.** And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*

It was God’s will that we are only made holy, free from the pollution of sin by Jesus Christ, fulfilling the will of His Father.

Hebrews 10:11-14 [NIV] *“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when **this priest** had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he **sat down** at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy.”*

All our efforts to become holy by our own efforts are futile, come to nothing in the end.

Only our faith in “*this priest*”, referring to Jesus Christ is acceptable.

The fact that Jesus Christ “*sat down*” indicates that this part of His work was completed, the one and only needed sacrifice had been made.

Hebrews 10:14-18 [NIV] *“because by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. **I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.**” Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.”*

The era of the New Covenant began as Jesus Christ the Son of Man and the Son of God sat down on the right hand of the Father on the mercy seat, His Throne.

The New Covenant is a “*spiritual*” covenant that is based on one law only, the law of love.

Romans 13:8-10 [NIV] *“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.”*

First, our faith in the love of God, expressed in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Then God invites us to respond by extending this love we have received to other human beings including the “*Son of Man*” Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:13-15 [NIV] *“for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”*

This is how we respond to our faith in the love sacrifice made by Jesus Christ.

Reflect that love received by sacrificing our time and wealth to reach others with this good news of what God has done for all humanity through Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

It is by following the example of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, by making our lives a living sacrifice that we please God, as Jesus did, and fulfil His will for us, as Jesus did.

When we submit to God in this way it allows the Holy Spirit to begin His job of creating in us a new being that will be acceptable to God.

This new being will conform to the pattern of God’s mind, not that of the society around us.

Philippians 2:1-5 [NIV] *“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:”*

This is the pattern of the mind of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:6-8 [NIV] *“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”*

The mind that led Jesus the Son of Man to make the love sacrifice for us on the cross.

1 John 4:10-21 [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. *No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. **If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”***

The faith in God’s love for us frees us from the fear of the punishment that was attached to the law and makes our love for our fellow human beings perfect.

The key to this change of mind and heart is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

This intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit will cause His characteristics to “*rub off*” on us.

Galatians 6:1-5 [NIV] *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.”*

This is showing love to our fellow human beings.

Galatians 6:7-10 [NIV] *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. **A man reaps what he sows.** The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; **the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.** Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”*

This love for our fellow human beings is a life-long commitment, but the reward we reap is eternal life in the presence of our Creator God whose name is love.