

Love Brought to Perfection



The Goal Is Love (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

Now there are two ways, primarily, that God imparts His love to us. I just want to mention them without going into great detail. The first one is by the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5 says:

> "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

So the Holy Spirit pours out the love of God into our hearts. I don't think there's any limit on God's side, He just pours out His love. The limit is on our side, how much do we receive? I have enjoyed that experience, I've had the love of God poured out in my heart in the Holy Spirit.

I'll give you just one brief example. Serving as a soldier in North Africa, after I had come to know the Lord, I ended up in a very remote barren, inhospitable corner, the northeast corner of what is now the Sudan. And before I got to my actual destination which was a small military hospital on the Red Sea Hills I was detained for a few weeks in what the British Army calls a Reception Station. And, for the first time in three years of army life I didn't have to sleep in my underwear because this Reception Station was equipped with three beds with nightgowns and with everything that could make you comfortable. So as I had no patients, I thought why not enjoy a bed which I hadn't slept in, and wear a nightgown rather than sleep in my underwear, which is what I was used to sleeping in. Well, one night I began to pray for the people of the Sudan and the particular tribe that I'm thinking of is called the Hudondewah. They are not attractive people. They are war-like, aggressive, they've known no religion but Islam all their lives. The men have a habit of fixing their hair with mutton fat so that it stands about eight inches above their head. There is nothing you would say would be outwardly attractive or appealing. But that night as I began to pray, God poured out His love in my heart for those people. I couldn't even lie on the bed. I had to get up and pace up and down across the floor of the room, pouring my heart out for these people whom I didn't know and whom I had no natural reason for loving whatever. If I can say this, and I hope I will not be misunderstood, as I was doing that in the darkness I discovered that my white nightgown was gleaming. It was supernaturally illuminated. I glimpsed somehow that I had become identified with Jesus, the Great Intercessor, just for a

few brief moments. Later I had the privilege of leading to the Lord the first member of that tribe who had ever confessed Jesus Christ as Savior.

I say that because in a little measure I understand what it means when it says "the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." But I want to tell you at the end of that experience I was still a very imperfect, immature Christian. You might not believe it but I was often irritable, selfish, self centered, insensitive and I easily got angry—after all that.

Now I'm not belittling the experience, but I want to point out to you it takes more than that to change your character. And God has another means to do it, His other instrument which is His Word. It is not the Spirit alone nor the Word alone but it's the Word and the Spirit working together—which has been God's way ever since creation. Because if you read the account of creation in Genesis 1:2, "the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters." Genesis 1:3, "God spoke…" And when the Word and the Spirit were combined, creation took place. And that's how God works in our lives, by the Word and the Spirit combined.

Let's look at what God says about the Word. 1 John 2:5:

> "But whoever keeps His [God's] Word, truly the love of God is perfected in Him. By this we know that we are in Him."

So how is the love of God brought to perfection in us? By what? By keeping His Word. It's not the Spirit alone, not the Word alone; but the Spirit working with the Word.

I want to give you one of my favorite scriptures as we come to a close. I believe there is a progress in the Christian life, an upbuilding of character. The climax is love but there are six steps to get there. Love is the seventh step. If you have a Bible before you, turn to 2 Peter 1:5:

> "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue…"

The basis of everything in the Christian life is faith but on that faith we are to add seven successive stages of character development. The first one is virtue. I prefer to translate that excellence because it's a very broad word which has many meanings. For instance, the virtue of a horse is to run fast. I always like to emphasize that the first evidence that you have been saved is you should become excellent. If you were a teacher before you were saved you should become an excellent teacher. If you were a bus driver you should become an excellent bus driver. If you were a doctor or a dentist you should become excellent. Excellence should be the mark of Christians. The first thing we add is excellence.

> "…to excellence knowledge…"

I don't believe that means scientific or intellectual knowledge primarily but it means the knowledge of God's will revealed through His Word. We need that knowledge to progress.

> "…then to knowledge [in verse 6 if you are following – we add]self-control…"

This is a virtue that is very little spoke of in contemporary Christianity. But if you do not add self control you'll never progress any further because every time you're about to progress you'll lose control of yourself, you'll lose your temper, you'll yield to lust, you'll yield to excessive appetites, you'll yield to ungodly emotions, you'll yield to such things as depression and unbelief, and that stops your progress. Self control is an essential step on the total progress.

And then it says:

> "…to self-control perseverance [or endurance]…"

And again, this is essential because in the process of maturing you will encounter tests, trials and obstacles. If you haven't acquired endurance you'll give up. And when you give up your progress ceases.

There's a scripture in James that Ruth and I recite. I won't recite it now, I won't ask her to recite it. But it really convicted Ruth at a certain time because she was going through a real struggle for her health. And every time one thing got better something else got worse. Then she read in James chapter 1:

> "We count it all joy when we fall into various trials…"

The Holy Spirit convicted her, "You're sinning, you're disobeying the Word of God. You're not counting it all joy."

And then it goes on:

> "We count it all joy when we fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of our faith produces endurance. But we let endurance have its perfect work that we may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

Do you want to be perfect and complete, lacking nothing? Then you have to cultivate endurance, there's no other way.

Otherwise, every time God puts you into a process that's designed to make you perfect and complete, you give up and your progress ceases.

These two things, self-control and endurance, are what I call the bottleneck. If you can't get through them you can't make any further progress.

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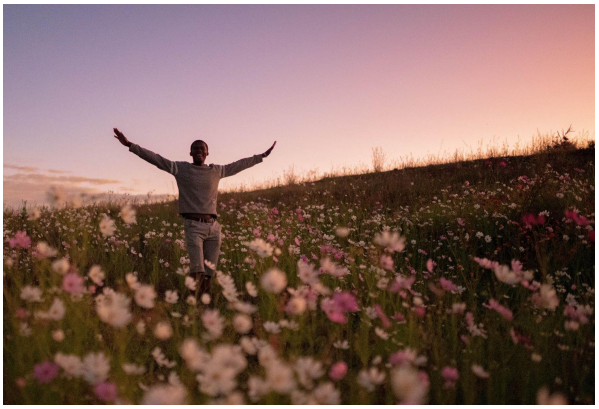


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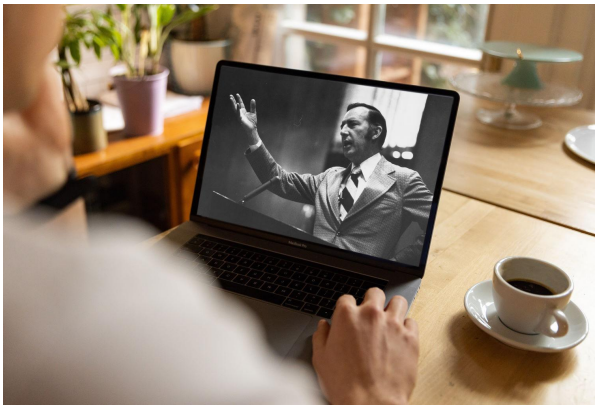
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