

The Victory of Love

Series: Victorious #2
2 Peter 4:8; 1 Corinthians 13

Introduction: Palm Sunday; the day of the Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem with people singing, 'Hosanna to the king,' was followed three days later with His resurrection: the ultimate day of victory! The Lord rises triumphantly, victoriously from the dead. He is alive. But between Palm Sunday and Easter there lies the very center of Christianity; the cross. Christians are first people of the cross before they are people of the resurrection.

Turn to 1Co 1:18 ***'For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.'*** ***22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,'***

Let's PRAY

Last week I began our vision series for this year, VICTORIOUS with a message called, "The Battle Belongs to the Lord" from 2 Chronicles 20. Today my message is "**The victory of Love.**" Let me just say that the Cross defeats every battle we will ever face. If sin was our biggest battle (and it was), God took care of that at Calvary.

The cross is ground zero from which the earthquake of redemption flows. There is no Christianity without the cross. If you neglect the message and revelation of the cross, you miss the power and benefits of the resurrection.

Galatians 6:14 the apostle Paul says, ***"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.'*** [NIV]

In 1 Corinthians 11: 25-26 says, ***'In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink***

it, in remembrance of me.” 26For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’ [NIV]

The three-fold message of the cross.

I. The cross declares that God is holy.

The cross is shocking! Offensive because it reveals a God that is different than we think or want. Mankind standing before the cross is amazed that such a death is required of God.

The son of God hangs, ugly before us. He’s beaten beyond recognition, a crown of thorns, exhausted, thirsty, hated. This is not the loving God who walked with us, miraculously feed us and healed all our diseases.

Once and for all, the holiness and righteousness of God is displayed in graphic, undeniable proclamation of God's standard. The cross declares that God is holy, righteous and just! He is separate, perfect, pure and untainted. He is grieved with our sins.

God is holy and God must judge sin and this is what sin is and does. Look at the cross and see what a holy God must do with sin.

The cross of Christ declares the truth about sin. It separates from God. It destroys. It is death. It must be paid.

The cross says you are helpless, fallen and you cannot get up! It says all our efforts without Him are failures. ‘All we like sheep have gone astray, the Lord has laid upon him the transgressions of us all.’

If we think of God as some vague, distant force, we will never see the need for reconciliation between God and man. If we insist on a God who only loves, who know neither holiness nor wrath we will miss our redemption. The cross declares that God is Holy.

II. Secondly, the Cross Declares our Freedom!

This message was shouted at the end of his pain and passion, when Jesus said, “It is finished!” The resurrection was yet to come, so what does it mean when Jesus says at His death...*it is finished?*

A. We are free from Satan's rule. Satan cannot hold us any longer! We die to self, so Satan has no ownership of us a God’s new creation.

Eph 1:7 says, *'In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.'* [NIV]

B. We are free from the judgment and wrath of God! We are free from the penalty of our sins before a holy and righteous judge!

Romans 5:16-18 tells us, *'Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: the judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. (17) For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. (18) Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.'* [NIV]

C. We are more than forgiven, we are restored to God’s family.

1. Eph 2:19 *'now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,'* (NKJ)

2. 1 John 3:1, *'See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!'* [NIV]

D. We are free to follow Jesus and to be like Him.

Galatians 2:20 *'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.'* [NIV]

III. Lastly, The Cross Declares that God Loves Us.

The cross was love meeting the holiness of God. Love demands the cross. The holy God loved us enough to die in our place. That is love beyond description.

What happens when an immovable object (holiness) meets an irresistible force (love)? We see the victory of love. John 3:16, ***'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.'*** [KJV]

STORY: Many of you might have heard of Dr. E. V. Hill. He was a black preacher from Los Angeles, California at Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, a great preacher of the word of God, a great intellect, a great man of God. He pastored in a rough section of Los Angeles. He was senior pastor at the Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California from 1961 until his death in 2003. Under his leadership, it became one of the largest African American congregations in the US. He has fearlessly stood in his pulpit and called sin...sin and he has declared what is wrong and what is right. And through those years when he would speak out on a social issue, he would get death threats.

One day he got a threatening telephone call. They said we are going to bomb you, we are going to bomb your car, we are going to bomb your house, we are going to bomb your church, we are going to get you, we are going to kill you. And Dr. Hill took it very seriously, as a matter of fact, the next day he lived so close to the church that he walked instead of driving his car. And when he got through in the afternoon, he walked the few blocks back to his house.

When he got back to his house, he saw his car was missing from the driveway and he thought well somebody has stolen it or somebody has taken it and they are rigging it with a bomb to blow me up. So, he sat down on his front porch, and he just pondered the threats made against his life. And 30 minutes later, he looked up as he heard a car approaching and he saw his own car coming into his driveway and his wife was behind the wheel.

When she got out, he said, woman what in the world were you thinking? You could have been blown up in that car. You know they are threatening my life. She said I know that is why I took the car. She said I knew that this community needed

you a lot more than it needed me and if anybody was going to get blown up I decided it ought to be me and not you. And E.V. Hill said, I preached about love and I talked about what love was, but for the first time in my life, I understood what love was all about when I saw that my wife was willing to lay down her life because of her love for me.

The cross is the greatest beacon of unchallenged love the world has ever seen!

In a hurting, confused, broken world the cross says! God loves you! Not just all the good! But all of us are loved supremely. The kings and queens, the beggar and the homeless. The Bible belt family man and the drug pusher in the inner city. Red and yellow, black and white...Jesus loves all the children of the world.

Romans 5:6-8 says, ***'You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'*** [NIV]

Listen to Jesus on the cross. He says, ***"Father forgive them they do not know what they are doing."*** The love of God is not cheap!

God does not love you theoretically

God does not love you theologically

God does not love you philosophically

Look at Jesus' hands and feet. The cross declares that God will never stop loving you! If he loved you at your worst, how much more now!

He knows everything about you and loves you. How can He do that? God's love is not like the love of this world. The love of this world is based on talent, looks, performance, resources, reciprocation...you love me, I'll love you back.

Love is one of the most ambiguous words in the English language. "I love Italian food. I love my sports team. I love my wife. I love the Lord." Same word. The Bible

was written in the Greek language, which was much more descriptive. There were four words for love, three of which were:

1. **Phileo** means friendship love, words like Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, or philanthropist, one who gives generously to the causes he or she loves.
2. **Eros** is sensual love, the love of passion, a love that fulfills the senses. It encompasses sexual love. But it also would include a passion for beauty, the arts, and good food. Eros love is based on my needs being met. "I'll love you as long as it satisfies my senses."

But there is another kind of love that the New Testament talks about.

3. **Agape**. It's a word that means an unconditional love, not dependent on reciprocity or feelings or self-gratification. Agape love is perfect love. Here is how 1 Corinthians 13 describes it:

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.' [NIV]

1 Cor 13 is sandwiched between chapter 12 and chapter 14 both of which talk about spiritual gifts. That suggest to me that: **Agape love is at the heart of who we are and what we do as Christians.**

"Our calling and purpose as followers of Christ is to love God completely, to love self correctly, and to love others compassionately." Kenneth Boa.

I Corinthians 14:1 in the Living Bible says, *'make love your greatest aim.'*

A. Five Things that are True when Agape is Lacking

1. WITHOUT LOVE ALL I SAY IS INEFFECTIVE

It says, ***"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels and have not love I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."*** My words, no matter how beautiful, they can be the language of angels, they can be the most eloquent of men and without love they are empty. All that I say is ineffective without love.

2. WITHOUT LOVE ALL I KNOW IS INCOMPLETE

He says, "If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries." That means if you can understand the book of Revelation and you know what every horn on the head of the beast means and you know what every symbol in the book means and every number in the book means and if you know all about the dragon and the great tribulation, if you know all that, you know all mysteries and you have all knowledge but have not love I am nothing.

You may be a genius, you may be a walking bible, you may be brilliant, you can have so many degrees they call you "Dr. Fahrenheit", but unless it is knowledge tempered with love coming from a heart of love, you are incomplete.

The bible says, knowledge puffs up but love fills up.

3. WITHOUT LOVE ALL I BELIEVE IS INSUFFICIENT

If I have faith and can move mountains, but don't have love I am nothing. When we stand before Jesus Christ we are going to be evaluated on a different scale than what we evaluate people. You say, I believe in Jesus Christ, big deal, so does the devil. I believe the bible is the inerrant word of God, the devil knows it is the inerrant word of God. Galatians 5:6 says, ***"the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."***

It is possible to believe in God and believe the bible totally and completely and not have love. There is not anything much harsher than a person who believes the entire bible, but he practices it without love. He becomes self-righteous because he says, I believe and others don't believe. He becomes judgmental because as he looks at other people's lives, and believes he/she is better.

4. WITHOUT LOVE ALL I GIVE IS INSIGNIFICANT

Look at verse 3, it says, "if I give all I possess to the poor but have not love I am nothing." He is talking about something way beyond tithing. The bible says if you give to the poor you are lending to the Lord. You know, God is a safe investment risk. If you give to the poor and you're lending to the Lord, God will pay you back.

Pastor, doesn't the fact that they give mean that they love, not necessarily? You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. If you love you will give, but some people give for power and control. Some people give for prestige to have their name written, to have a college named after them, to be recognized, some people give for selfish reasons. The bible says the only way God will bless our giving is if it comes from a heart of love.

5. WITHOUT LOVE ALL I ACCOMPLISH IS INADEQUATE

If I were burned alive for preaching the gospel Paul said, but I didn't love others it would be of no value whatsoever. He is saying I can give you a list of impressive achievements, I can tell you how I have been in prison, how I have been persecuted for preaching the gospel of Christ, but that is not the big thing, the big thing is that I preach the gospel because I love people. In II Corinthians 5 Paul says, for the love of Christ constrains me.

Without love all I say is ineffective, all I know is incomplete, all I believe is insufficient, all I give is insignificant, and all I accomplish is inadequate.

B. Four Things that are True when Agape is Limitless.

1. AGAPE IS UNCONDITIONAL. *"It bears all things."*

Jesus bore the denials of Peter and kept on loving him. He bore the doubts of Thomas and kept on loving him. When the Holy Spirit has hold of my heart, this is how I love my family, friends, neighbors, and even enemies. I will still love you, because it doesn't depend on you. It depends on me allowing the Holy Spirit to do his work in my life, creating in me the love of God.

2. AGAPE IS UNCOMPROMISING. *"Love believes all things..."* We tell our children not to believe everything they hear, and only half of what they see. We are telling them not to be gullible.

Agape is never gullible because it takes its character from the heart of God and its wisdom from the mind of God. Agape doesn't assume truth, it discerns truth and believes it without compromise.

3. AGAPE IS UNCONFUSED. *"Agape hopes all things..."* Agape doesn't despair when disappointed. Agape doesn't give up on people.

The prodigal son was prodigiously prodigal, but he was still a son. Is there any hope for the boy? There is as long as the father has agape in his heart.

What do we do when we run out of hope? We quit. What do we do when we pour out a 1000-piece jig-saw puzzle on the table? I say put the pieces back in the box and give them to someone else next Christmas.

The only thing that keeps us from giving up on ourselves and others is the love of God in our hearts.

4. AGAPE IS UNQUENCHABLE. *"Love endures all things..."*

When we talk about endurance, we automatically think of pain, suffering and hardship. When we love people selflessly and sacrificially, there will always be

pain and suffering involved. God's love for us carried the highest price tag in history.

First Peter 4:8 says, ***“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”*** Proverbs 10:12 says, ***“Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.”***

To “cover” sin is to forgive it, and forgiveness is associated with love. The best example of a love that covers sin is Jesus’ sacrificial death on our behalf. Jesus’ prayer from the cross, “Father, forgive them,” says it all (Luke 23:34). Jesus’ bearing of our iniquities was an undeniable act of love (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10). In fact, Jesus did more than just cover our sin; He did away with it completely (Hebrews 10:12–14).

Jesus told His disciples, ***“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”*** (John 13:34–35).

First Corinthians 13 tells us: Love does not cover over a multitude of sin by sweeping matters under the rug. Love protects by helping both the victim and the offender, and it also strives to prevent further offenses.

Love covering sin also does not mean we disregard our own emotions or ignore our personal boundaries. We cannot “cover” sin by denying that it hurt us. We cover sin by acknowledging it and then extending the forgiveness God has given us to others.

The phrase “love covers a multitude of sins” points to the essential ingredient that keeps relationships healthy: FORGIVENESS.

The idea is simple yet profound: love has the power to forgive, heal, and mend even the deepest wounds.

In a spiritual context, “love covers a multitude of sins” is a call to embody the highest virtues of compassion and mercy. It challenges us to imitate divine love, which is unconditional and all-encompassing.

Love's ability to "cover" sins is not about denial, but about transformation. When we respond to hurt with love, we break cycles of anger, bitterness, and revenge. Love creates space for growth and change, both for the person who has erred and for those affected by the wrongdoing.

In Jeremiah 31:3, God said, ***"I have loved you with an everlasting love."***

In the New Testament, Paul explained in his letter to the Romans, 8:35-39:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

37No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

C. Three Things that Describe the Victory of Love.

1. THERE IS A PERMANENT VICTORY.

V. 8 says 'love never fails.' Love continues when other things cease to be. There is never a time when agape is irrelevant. It is the kind of love that never fails. Agape never destroys our relationships. Agape is how we experience the victory of permanence in our relationships.

2. THERE IS A PERFECT VICTORY.

Verse 9 says, 'For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

A little boy ask his dad, "How do birds fly?" The dad said, "I don't know son." Dad, how come fish don't drown?" The dad said, "I don't know son." The son said,

"Why is the sky blue." His dad said, "I don't know son." "Dad does it bother you for me to ask so many questions?" The dad said, "Why no son, how else are you going to learn if you don't ask questions?"

Verse 12 says, *'For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.'* [NIV]

3. THERE IS PREDOMINANT VICTORY.

"But now abides faith, hope, and love, these three but the greatest of these is love." Love is greater than faith and hope. Why? God is love.

Jesus didn't say to his disciples that if they believed in him, they would keep his commandments; or if their faith was great enough they would keep his commandments. He said, *'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.'*

Billy Graham told a story about a couple who visited an orphanage where they hoped to adopt a child. In an interview with the boy they wanted they told him in glowing terms about all the things they could give him.

To their amazement the boy said, 'If you have nothing to offer but a good home, clothes, toys and other things that most kids have, I'd just as soon stay here.' "What on earth could you want beside these things," they said. He said, 'I just want someone to love me.'

Without God's Agape Love displayed on the Cross, there is no permanent, perfect, and predominant victory in Jesus.

CONCLUSION:

Do you know why the church is still here after two thousand years? After persecution has come against it, after the devil has fought it, it has survived scandals, it has survived persecution, it has survived poverty, it has survived imprisonment, it has survived torture and the church of Jesus Christ is marching on today, it is because of love. Love never fails; love will always endure. Love is the victory that we have in Christ.

Think about it, how long will fun last? There is always an end to fun. If I live for pleasure, how long will it last? It always has an ending. If I live for security, how long will it last? If I live for the approval of others, some day that will end.

The bible says, love is permanent, it will last for eternity. Look at verse 13, "in this life we have three lasting qualities, faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of them is love." Why is love greater than faith? Why is love greater than hope? I know that faith is important because the bible says apart from faith it is impossible for me to be pleasing to God. I know that hope is also important because faith is the substance of things hoped for. But you know, one day in heaven we don't need faith because in heaven everything that we believed by faith will become sight and everything that we have not seen we will see.

What I'm trying to say is:

Agape love is not natural; it is supernatural. It is a turn-the-cheek, go-the-second-mile, love your enemies, kind of love. It is not something we decide to do. It is a work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. When the Holy Spirit is in charge of our lives, Agape is active.

If you hear sermons on love and hear that you must consciously decide to be patient, kind, etc., you're hearing the wrong message. **The message on having Agape love is that the only choice we must make is to surrender our lives to the Holy Spirit.** Agape isn't something we choose to do, it is the fruit of the Spirit. As the Holy Spirit does his work in and through us, love becomes a spontaneous action of the Holy Spirit.

Oswald Chambers writes of agape, "The springs of love are in God, not in us. It is absurd to look for the love of God in our hearts naturally. It is only there when it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." On that basis, Chambers insists, 'Love is not premeditated, it is spontaneous.'