



LightHouse Ranch

20668 Hwy 26, West Point, CA 95255

209-293-1216

gmi.vision@gmail.com

EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS, JUDE 3

A study using out-of-print Full Life Study Bible King James Version and must never be offered for money

AGAPE AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Concerning Spiritual Gifts cont.) research and study notes.

Jim Porteous, May 22, 2016

AGAPE: THE POWER OF GOD'S KINGDOM

1Co 13:1 *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal"* (speaking in tongues without love is as a dull thud, useless).

1Co 13:2 *"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing"* (spiritual gifts without love ... **I AM NOTHING**, useless).

1Co 13:3 *"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing"* (without love good works profit me nothing).

CHARITY (*agape*) love; of great moral import, separate from friendship, natural affection, and sexual love; love that expresses compassion; unselfish love; God's love for man; man must appropriate God's love from God (Ro 5:5). God's agape love endures, does not lose heart (1Co 13:4); is kind (1Co 13:4); does not envy (1Co 13:4); does not boast (1Co 13:4); is not proud (1Co 13:4); does not behave uncomely (1Co 13:5); seeks not her own (1Co 13:5); is not easily provoked (1Co 13:5); thinks no evil (1Co 13:5); does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in the truth (1Co 13:6); bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things in a moral religious sense (1Co 13:7); and never fails (1Co 13:8). In this life as God's children we know only in part, but when we see Christ we shall know and understand all things (1Co 13:9-12). Now we have ***faith, hope, and charity***, and charity (God's love) is the greatest of all (1Co 13:13).

AGAPE – GOD'S LOVE – THE GREATEST ATTRIBUTE OF GOD'S KINGDOM (Joh 3:16)

1Co 13:13 *"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity"*.

It is clear from this chapter that God exalts Christlike character more than ministry, faith, or the possession of spiritual gifts.

- (1) God values and emphasizes character that acts, in love, patience (1Co 13:4), kindness (1Co 13:4), unselfishness (1Co 13:5), hatred for evil and love for the truth (1Co 13:6), honesty (1Co 13:6), and endurance in righteousness (1Co 13:7) much more than faith to move mountains or to perform great achievements in the church (1Co 13:1-2,8,13).
- (2) The greatest in God's kingdom will be those who are great in inward godliness and love to God, not necessarily those who are greatest in outward achievements (Lu 22:24). The love of God poured out within the believer's heart through the Holy Spirit is always greater than faith, hope, or anything else (Ro 5:5).

GOD'S GRACE: THE SOURCE OF GOD'S AGAPE KINGDOM POWER TO THE CHILD OF GOD

Tit 2:11-14 *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”*

Note: Tit 2:11-14 describes the character and purpose of God’s saving grace. According to this passage, saving grace

- (1) instructs the believer to decisively reject the ungodly passions, pleasures, and values of this present age and regard them as abominable (Tit 2:12; cf. Ro 1:18-32; 2Ti 2:22; 1Jo 2:15-17); and
- (2) commands and gives power to the believer to live "righteously and godly," while waiting expectantly for the blessed hope and appearing of Christ Jesus (Tit 2:13; Ga 5:5; Col 1:5; 2Ti 4:8).

ANOTHER KINGDOM – SATAN’S KINGDOM OF DARKNESS (contrasted in John 10:10)

1Pe 5:8-9 *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”*

When man sinned, Satan became the ruler of the world (Joh 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). He dominates the whole world (1Jo 5:19), patrols this earth, and is commander of a host of evil spirits through whom he enslaves and keeps captive those without Christ (Eph 2:2). **Only the believer has been delivered from his power.** Yet, as a roaring lion, he remains a threat to believers (cf. Ps 22:13; Eze 22:25) and seeks to destroy them, especially through experiences of suffering (1Pe 5:8-10). He will spiritually destroy anyone who abandons the protection of God. Through our faith in the blood of Christ (Re 12:11), our resolve to live righteously (Tit 2:11-12; 1Th 5:8), our spiritual warfare by the Spirit (Eph 6:11-18) and our prayers to God (Mt 6:13), we are fully equipped to defeat Satan’s schemes (Eph 6:11), to resist him, and to stand firm in the faith (1Pe 5:9). **Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world** (1Jo 4:4).

MIGHTY WEAPONS THROUGH GOD

2Co 10:4-6 *“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds); Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ: And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.”*

Our warfare is against spiritual forces of wickedness (Eph 6:12). Therefore, carnal weapons such as human ingenuity, talent, wealth, organizing ability, eloquence, propaganda, charisma, and personality are in themselves inadequate to pull down the strongholds of Satan. The only weapons adequate to destroy the fortresses of Satan, unrighteousness, and false teaching are those which God gives.

- (1) These weapons are powerful because they are spiritual and come from God. Elsewhere Paul lists some of these weapons — commitment to truth, a life of righteousness, proclamation of the gospel, faith, love, hope of salvation, the Word of God, persevering prayer (Eph 6:11-19; 1Th 5:8). By using these weapons against the enemy, the church will come forth victorious. That is, the presence and kingdom of God will be powerfully manifested in order to save sinners, cast out demons, sanctify believers, baptize them in the Holy Spirit, and heal the sick.

- (2) The church today is often tempted to meet the challenge of the world by carnal means and by the world's weapons, i.e., by humanistic wisdom, philosophy, psychology, exciting attractions, church performances focused on entertainment, etc. These all too often serve as a substitute for the basic N.T. practices of intense prayer, uncompromising commitment to the Word of God, and fervent proclamation of the gospel. But such weapons will not bring about a Holy Ghost revival, for they cannot possibly destroy the stronghold of sin, deliver us from the power of Satan, and overthrow the evil passions that are running rampant in the world today. If we use the world's weapons, we will only secularize the church and separate it from the weapons of faith, righteousness, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Tragically, the church itself will then be overshadowed by the power of darkness and its families be cast down and taken captive by the forces of the world.

Note: 2Co 10:5, BRINGING INTO CAPTIVITY EVERY THOUGHT.

Christian warfare involves bringing all our thoughts into alignment with the will of Christ; failure to do so will lead to immorality and spiritual death (Ro 6:16,23; 8:13). Use the following four steps to bring your thought life under the Lordship of Christ.

- (1) Be aware that God knows every thought and that nothing is hidden from Him (Ps 94:11; 139:2,4,23-24). We will have to account to God for our thoughts as well as for our words and deeds (2Co 5:10; Ec 12:14; Mt 12:35-37; Ro 14:12).
- (2) Be aware that the mind is a battleground. Some thoughts originate with us, while others come directly from the enemy. To bring every thought into captivity to Christ requires warfare against both our sinful nature and satanic forces (Eph 6:12-13; cf. Mt 4:3-11). Steadfastly resist and reject evil and unwholesome thoughts in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Php 4:7). Remember that we as believers overcome our adversary by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony, and by persistently saying "No!" to the devil, temptation, and sin (Tit 2:11-12; Jas 4:7; Re 12:11; cf. Mt 4:3-11).
- (3) Be resolute in focusing your mind on Christ and heavenly things rather than on earthly things (Php 3:19; Col 3:2), for the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace (Ro 8:6-7). Fill your mind with God's Word (Ps 1:1-3; 19:7-14; 119) and with those things which are noble, excellent, and praiseworthy (Php 4:8).
- (4) At all times be careful what your eyes see and your ears hear. Resolutely refuse
 - (a) to let your eyes be an instrument for lust (Job 31:1; 1Jo 2:16), or
 - (b) to set any worthless or evil thing before your eyes, whether in books, magazines, pictures, television programs, or in real life (Ps 101:3; Isa 33:14-15; Ro 13:14).

GIVING THE ENEMY LEGAL RIGHTS TO BUILD STRONG HOLDS

True believers can open a door for Satan and his horde of demons to legally attack and even set up strongholds in their lives through sin, ignorance, disobedience, abuse or misuse of God's Word, curses of or from others, and involvement in forbidden lifestyles. Six of the most common vulnerabilities of believers to the enemy's legal right to attack or to build strongholds in them are listed in Eph 4:31-32;

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| (1) Unforgiveness, | (4) Bitterness, |
| (2) Hatred, | (5) Loud clamorous noise and confusion, and |
| (3) Anger, | (6) Slander or injurious speech against others. |

The child of God is strongly exhorted to rid themselves of these carnal behaviors through repentance, prayer for forgiveness, renouncing demonic influence, and submission to God (Eph 4:24-32; 1Jo 1:9). God's sovereign will to test and prove His children at times also gives Satan partial and temporary permission to attack but not to destroy the child's life. Love for and submission to God and His authority is necessary to pass the test and provide protection and ultimate deliverance (cf. Job 2:1-6; 42:1-17).

HEAVIER DEMONICALLY ENERGIZED INVOLVEMRNT GIVING RIGHTS TO BUILD STRONGHOLDS

The occult	Rock, rap, and worldly music
False religions and cults	Mental, physical, or verbal abuse
New Age	Abortion or the abortion industry
Secret lodges and groups	Child/sex abuse, promiscuous sexual activities
Alcohol/Drug abuse	Reading/watching witchcraft for entertainment
Stubbornness/Disobedience to God	Bringing cursed objects into your home

Christ delivers victims and perpetrators involved in these demonic activities through His obedient Holy Spirit filled servants who possess and are experienced in His agape love and compassion. Requirements of those bound in these strongholds are the same: forgiving others, repentance, prayer for forgiveness, renouncing the demons and their involvement, and a commitment to obey God and His Word.

THOSE WHO POSSESS GOD'S AGAPE LOVE ALSO HATE EVIL

Heb 1:9 *"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."*

It is not enough for the child of God to love righteousness; he must also hate evil (Pr 6:16-19). We see this clearly in Christ's devotion to righteousness (Isa 11:5) and His hatred of iniquity in His life, ministry, and death. A fundamental characteristic of the wicked is that they love darkness, i.e., they find their pleasure in sin and immorality (Ro 1:18-32; Php 3:19; 2Ti 3:2-5; 2Pe 2:12-15). The truly born-again person, in contrast, loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and is grieved when he sees the unrighteous deeds of depraved people (1Co 13:6). He takes no pleasure in the sensual entertainment or the expression of sinful conduct manifested in the present society (Ps 97:10; Pr 8:13; Ro 12:9; Joh 3:19).

- (1) Christ's faithfulness to His Father while on earth, as demonstrated by His love of righteousness and hatred of evil, is the basis for God's anointing of His Son. In the same way, the Christian's anointing will come only as he identifies with his Master's attitude toward righteousness and wickedness (Ps 45:7).
- (2) The believer's love of righteousness and hatred of evil will increase by two means:
 - (a) by growing in heartfelt love and compassion for those whose lives are being destroyed by sin, and
 - (b) by experiencing more and more oneness with his God and Savior, who "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" (Ps 94:16; 97:10; Pr 8:13; Am 5:15; Ro 12:9; 1Jo 2:15; Re 2:6).

POWER TO BREAK ALL THE ENEMY'S STRONGHOLDS – FAITH, HOPE, AND AGAPE (1Co 13:13)

Lu 10:19 *"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."*

"Serpents and scorpions" are terms representing the most dangerous forces of spiritual evil. Christians have dominion over evil spirits because Christ has given us His power and authority over Satan.

Mt 22:37-39 *“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”*

Ro 5:5 *“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”* **GOD’S AGAPE LOVE NEVER FAILS** (1Co 13:8).