

Christian Perspectives: Christianity is only as real as your love

By Rev. Gord Horsley

Abiding Place Ministries

Is your love growing and becoming softer, brighter, more daring and more visible?

Or, is it becoming more discriminating, more calculating, less vulnerable and less available?

This is a very important issue, for your Christianity is only as real as your love.

A measurable decrease in your ability to love is evidence that a stronghold of cold love is developing within you.

Matthew 24:12 says; ?Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.?

A major area of spiritual warfare that has come against the church is the sphere of church relationships. Satan knows that a church divided against its self cannot stand.

We may enjoy temporary blessings and seasonal breakthroughs, but to win a city-wide war, Jesus is raising up a united, town- or city-wide, church

An earmark of this corporate, overcoming church will be its commitment to love.

Yet, because of the increasing iniquity in the times we live, true Christian love will be severely assaulted, shaken to its core. There is no spiritual unity, and hence no lasting victory, without love.

Love is a passion for oneness, laying our lives down for each other, for the sake of Christ.

Bitterness, on the other hand, is characterized by a noticeable lack of love. This cold love is a demonic stronghold.

In our generation, selfishness and cold love is becoming increasingly more and more common.

Yes, I am talking about in the church! It shuts down the power of unity and prayer and disables the flow of healing and outreach. In fact, where there is persistent selfishness and unforgiveness, the enemy has a hay day.

The scriptures warn that even a little root of bitterness springing up in a person's life can defile many (Hebrews 12:15). Bitterness is unfulfilled revenge. Luke 17:1 states, ?It is impossible that no offenses should come?, and Matt 24:10-13 says, ?And many will be offended, will betray one another and will hate one another.?

Listen, another's thoughtlessness or cruelty may have wounded us deeply. It is inevitable that in a world of increasing harshness and cruelty we will at some point be hurt, but if we fail to react with love and forgiveness, if we retain in our heart the debt the offender owes, that offense will rob our hearts of the capacity to love.

We will end up becoming a member of the majority of the end-time Christian church whose love will and has gone cold.

Bitterness is the most visible symptom of the stronghold of cold love. To deal with cold love, we must repent and forgive the one who hurt us. I believe painful experiences are allowed by God to teach us how to love our enemies. If we still have unforgiveness

towards someone, we have failed this test. Fortunately, it was just a test, not a final exam.

We actually need to thank God for the opportunity to grow in divine love.

Thank him that your whole life is not being swallowed up in bitterness and resentment. Millions of souls are swept off into eternal judgment every day without any hope of escaping from embitterment, but you have been given God's answer for your pain.

God gives you a way out: Love!

Allow me to be perfectly clear, there is no such thing as love without commitment.

The measure of one's love is found in the depths of his or her commitment to others.

How often have we heard people say; ?I loved once, but I was hurt,? or ?I was committed to a body of believers, but they used me??

They also say; ?I was not heard, they did not see my gifting and allow me to move in them.?

When someone withdraws his commitment to a relationship, or church body, he or she is withdrawing their love. It is not one's commitment that grows cold; it is their love. It may not seem like they have become cold; they may still attend church, sing and look the Christian part, but inside they have become hard-hearted, separated from others.

At this stage, they become more and more easily offended.

Jesus said, ?It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come? Matt 18:7.

In your walk, there will be times when even good people have bad days. As long as we live on earth, there will never be a time when ?stumbling blocks? cease to be found upon our paths. People do not stumble over boulders but over stones and little pebbles, little things seem to be blown out of proportion to be some great problem. Have you stumbled over someone's weaknesses or their sin? Many people stumble over faults and human weaknesses, which they then feel justifies withdrawing from others in the body of Christ, even churches.

In reality, these issues, often with a member of a church or, in most cases with the Pastor, are a smokescreen which masks the person's lack of love. God is committed to imperfect people, why aren't we? Or, do we know better than the one who created mankind!

?Well, as soon as I find a church that appreciates me and my gifting and believes as I do, then I will be committed.?

Let me just say that the gifting and callings of God on your life are the Lord's to do as he sees fit; not to make you look important, but to glorify God and minister to one another.

We are to allow Holy Spirit to transform us into the character of Christ, which is love, unconditional love! For perfect love covers a multitude of sins. We are being perfected into unity (John 17). Love and commitment to each other combats cold love! If Christ accepts us while we are still imperfect, we must also accept one another.

We may not like what each other does at times, but we have to love each other.