

November 12, 2023

## Commitment: The Foundation of Love IV

**"Your faith will be tested."** Our faith is being tested in order to **expose our weaknesses** to prepare us for a darkness that is coming. Jesus warned Peter that Satan wanted to *"sift him as wheat"* right before Peter denied Christ 3 times.

**Luke 22:31-34** *And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."*

"Sift you as wheat" means to separate you from your closest relationships; Jesus, spouse, children, family and church family and then from all people. Satan wants us alone and separated so he can destroy us. A **hardened heart** locks people out causing bitterness, draining "life" out of their soul.

**Faith that works through love, is everything! Gal 5:5-6** The best word that describes agape love is **commitment**.

**Love** Strong's # 26, *agape* (ag-ah-pay); an unconditional love that gives of itself without asking anything in return. This is a love of choice and will, not by feelings, chance and emotions. It is a commitment. It is the greatest of all love.

**1 Cor 13:8** *"Love never fails..."* therefore if our faith is working through love, it will never fail.

It takes faith to walk in unconditional-sacrificial-agape-love, and our faith (to love one another) **will be tested**. If we trust Jesus, we will go through this testing knowing it will develop our perseverance, character, and yield great hope, ultimately blessing those around us. Maturity in Christ is the revelation our life is no longer our own, but it belongs to Jesus and He has given us the ability to live for others, just like He lived and died for us.

Do we see the people around us through the loving eyes of Jesus, or the critical eyes of Satan? The answer lies in our heart. We see through the eyes of our heart. We will bring light-love or darkness-criticalness. Light builds up, darkness tears down.

**Eph 1:18** *the eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*

**Enlightened:** Strong's #5461 Hebrew *photizo* (fo-tid-zo); to shed rays, i.e. to shine or transitively to brighten up, illuminate, bring give light, make to see.

**Prov 4:23** *Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*

Jesus commanded us to love, it is not optional; **Jn 13:34-35**.

Love for one another is proof we are truly disciples of Jesus; **Jn 13:34-35**.

If we love Jesus, He said we would obey His commandments; **Jn 14:15**.

Faith without love is nothing; **1 Cor 13:3**.

No greater love has a man than he lay down his life for his brother; **Jn 15:11-14**.

Faith and love working together will never fail; **1 Cor 13:8**.

Love will cover a multitude of sins **1 Pet 4:8-11**.

There is no fear in love, because perfect (mature) love casts out fear **1 Jn 4:18**.

Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me?" then instructed Peter to feed and tend to His sheep and lambs. The #1 way to feed and tend Jesus' sheep and lambs is through the **local church family**; **Jn 21:14-22**.

**\*\*\*The local church family is the foundation on which we stand;** every other type of ministry stems from this foundation. The Church (ecclesia) is a group assembled together, committed to one another, carrying the delegated authority of God to have dominion of their God-given territory (sphere). Many Christians do not want to make a commitment (love) to a local church because they want to do their “own thing.” Sometimes this is due to pride, selfishness, and a misunderstanding of Scripture. There is a **spirit of subversion** breaking down the local church, weakening the Body of Christ. This spirit has caused many local churches to fail and shut down. They left their “first love” loving God and allowing that love (commitment) to flow to one another.

**The #1 threat to love is being offended**, and Jesus said; *“Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!”* **Matt 18:7. Offences will harden our heart, leading to bitterness and rejection. Eph 4:29-32** *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

**Phil 4:8-9** *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*

**Gal 5:22-26** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

### **My Declaration of Unconditional-Sacrificial Love 1 Cor 13:4-8**

**I will suffer long;** I have patience with imperfect people and cover them with God’s grace.

**I am Kind;** I do nice things for people; hold the door, smile, let people go in front of me always performing a random act of kindness.

**I do not envy;** I am happy for other people when they get ahead and are blessed. I am not jealous or envious, but thankful for what I have.

**I do not parade myself;** I will be self-effacing, willing to look bad in order to lift someone up.

**I am not puffed up;** I refuse to be arrogant or conceited, nor do I believe I have all of the answers.

**I do not behave rudely;** I will not be offensive and mean, but always courteous and polite.

**I will not seek my own;** I will not insist on my own rights being selfish. I will embrace the best interest of others.

**I will not provoke others;** I refuse to be touchy, irritable or hostile, but graceful under pressure. My wrath never produces righteousness.

**I think no evil of others;** I do not keep an account of wrongs done to me, but I erase the resentments, believing the best intent.

**I do not rejoice in someone’s iniquity;** I have no satisfaction in the shortcomings or moral failure of others. I will not spread evil reports.

**I rejoice in the truth;** I aggressively advertise the good. I see and embrace how God sees people through His blood.

**I bear all things;** I defend and hold on to others. I’ve got you covered; I’ve got your back.

**I believe all good things;** I believe the best in others and credit them with good, and not crediting myself.

**I hope all things;** I never give up on people but affirm their future believing God’s love will change their heart, as His love has changed mine.

**I endures all things;** I persevere and remain loyal to the end.

**God’s love will never fail me;** His perfect love casts out all fear, so with great faith and peace, knowing His love will never fail me, and that my heart belongs to Him, I choose to allow His love to flow through me as I lay my life down for others. This is my decree: I love You Father with all of my heart, and I love people, so I will walk in Your unconditional-sacrificial love!