

## LIFE CHANGING STORIES FROM THE BIBLE

### “LOVE JOY PEACE”

Love , joy and peace are fruits of the Spirit. I want to look at them more closely. First let us look at love. When Jesus was asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” he replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30

Think about that, has anyone ever done it? Jesus did it, but has anyone else done it? It is a command to love! It means we love God and put him first before ourselves, everyone else and everything else. To do it completely, and never once fail in our whole life. The truth is it is impossible for us to keep that commandment because we are naturally so wrapped up in pleasing and loving ourselves that we don't know how or even feel like loving God.

It is like a child totally taken up with playing with, and loving a toy and then being told by their caregiver to drop the toy and to run and show love to their father who has just arrived to pick them up. At that moment their whole heart is taken up in loving their toy, they have no desire to give up their toy and love their father. If told they will be punished if they don't, they may through fear of punishment go and outwardly show love to their father, but their heart will still be with their toy. Or if they are physically forced to go to their father and express love to him it will not be real their heart will still be with their toy.

So it is with us, impossible to love God like the command tells us to do because we are so naturally committed to loving ourselves and gratifying ourselves and we don't want to give it up and solely love God and live only to please him. God wants us to spontaneously love him like the little child dropping their toy and running with joy in their hearts running into the arms of their father crying, “Daddy, Daddy, Daddy.”

God knows it is impossible for us to keep this commandment without a change taking place in our hearts. We will never change unless convicted of our need of change. It is the Holy Spirit who brings this conviction, without the Holy Spirit conviction we will never change. We are naturally too bound up in ourselves, this bondage can only be broken by the Spirit. We can either resist the Spirit or allow him to do his work.

Let's look at some scriptures that show how this love of the Spirit operates. 1 John 4:19 “We love because he first loved us.” Or as the AV says, “We love him, because he first loved us” The convicted heart responds in spontaneous love when it realises what Christ has done for it. The load is lifted and our hearts are set free when we realise our sins are forgiven and we have eternal life because Christ died for us and rose again.

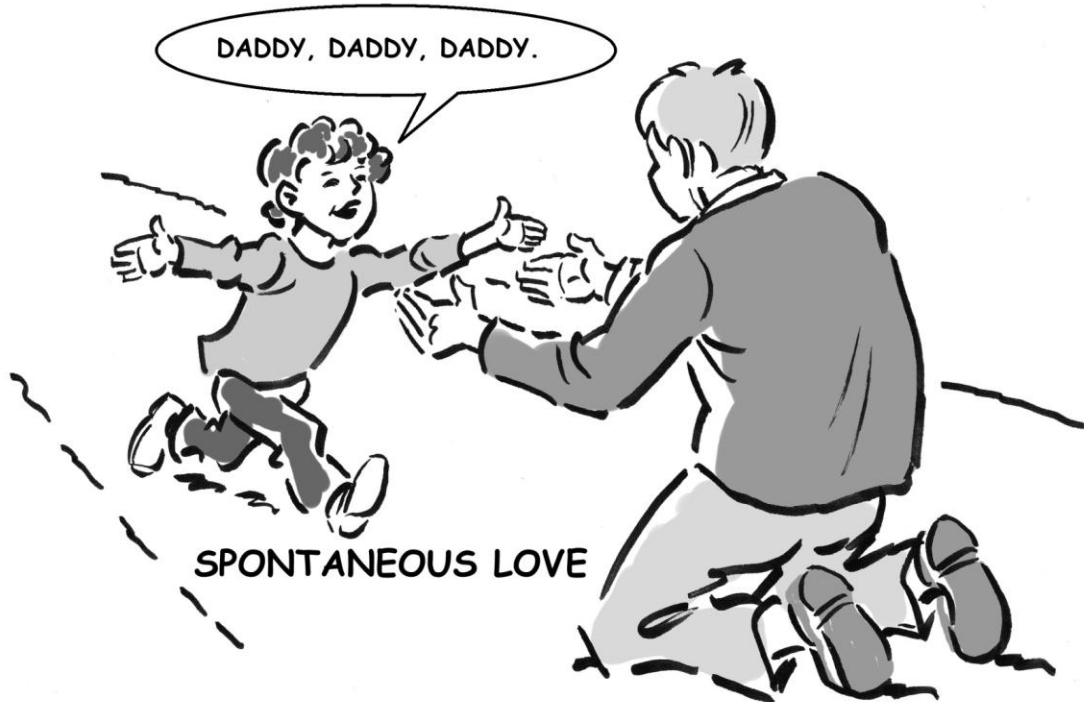
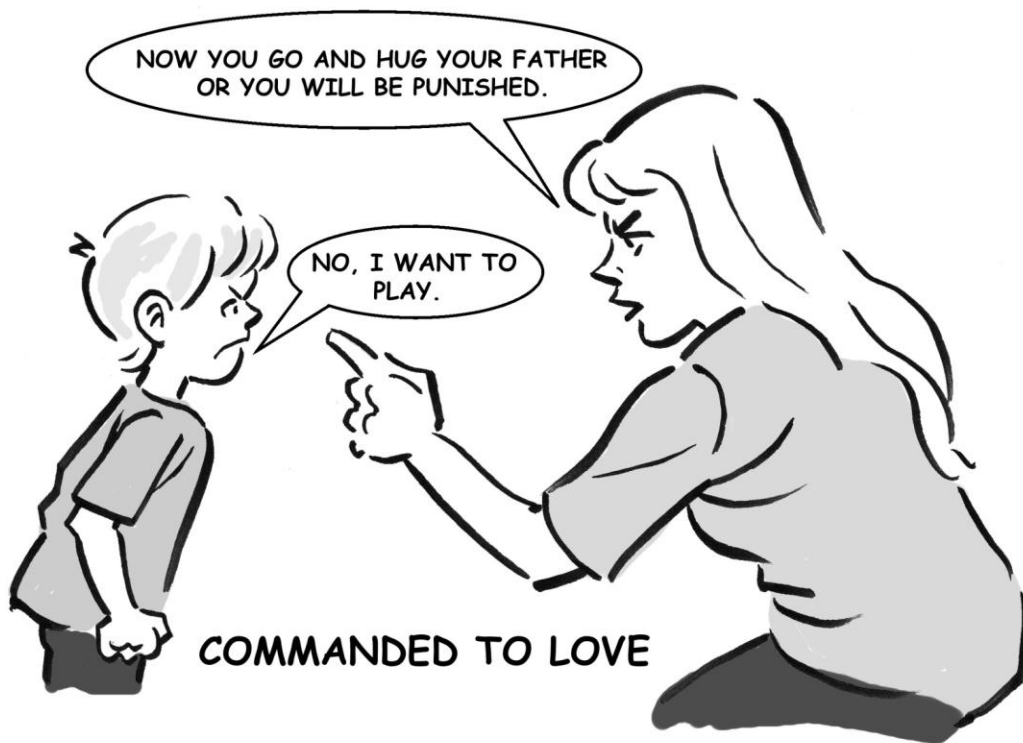
Then in Romans 5:5 we read, “---God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.” Talking about the Lord 1 Peter 1:8 says, “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.” The holy Spirit can make Christ real to us and fill us with his love.

The Holy Spirit can also fill us with joy. It is an inward joy in our hearts that is deeper than human joy. Human joy usually depends on circumstances but Holy Spirit joy can be in your heart despite your circumstances. In Acts 5:41 we read, “The apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing--.” What were they so happy about? Why they had just been flogged or beaten on the back for their faith but the joy of the Lord filled their hearts, they regarded it an honour to suffer for the Lord. If you have the joy of the Lord you can have victory over anything.

But it is possible to lose the joy of the Lord as King David found when he sinned against God. He had to humble himself and confess his sin to God and pray, “Restore to me the joy of your salvation.” Psalm 51:12. He did not lose his salvation he lost the joy of his salvation. So it will be with us when we fail God, we will not lose our salvation but the joy of salvation. Not only that we will lose the peace of our salvation, The peace the Holy Spirit gives us.

Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.” John 14:27. The world’s peace depends on circumstances but the peace of Jesus through the Holy Spirit can be in our hearts despite our unfavourable circumstances. To experience this peace we need to pray about everything. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6,7.

We can lose the peace of God through failure to stay close to God but when we confess our failure the peace will return if not immediately then gradually as we go forward with God.



WHICH KIND OF LOVE  
DOES GOD PREFER?

FRANK HUTCHINSON