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Love Perfected among Us ... in This World

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Love Perfected among Us ... in This World

Day 37

We have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is so also are we in this world. (1 John 4:16-17)

Amazing! Incredible! Can we really believe John's words to us?

"We have *known* and *believed* the love that God has for us." God is love and He loves us. But unless we *know* that truth—unless we *believe* it—God's great goodness can't come to us and change us from the inside out. God's promises spring from His lovingkindness. *Knowing* and *believing* He loves us extravagantly allows us to embrace the extravagance of the life Jesus purchased for us on the cross.

The fall in the Garden of Eden gave God opportunity to show us the full extent of His love. Would God leave disobedient, sinful Adam and Eve to fend for themselves? Or would He welcome the human race in its blindness? Would He stay with us as we scorned, rejected and despised Him?

Apart from the fall, God would have had no stage upon which to display the depth of His passion for humanity. On the cross, Jesus showed us the full extent of God's love—poured out on sinners like ourselves.

John was there. With his own ears, he heard Jesus' agonizing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. With his own eyes, he witnessed the betrayal of Judas' kiss, the mocking, spitting crowds, Jesus' flesh torn open by the whipping. Imagine watching with John as the Son of Man staggered up the hill to Golgotha. Let your ears ring with the pounding of the nails that bound our Savior willingly to the cross. Hear the words from Jesus' parched lips, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Know and believe the love that God has for you. Our knowing and believing doesn't change God; He is overflowing with love for us. But our knowing and believing changes us—so that we come into agreement with God, so His life can have

expression in and through us. What we know by faith comes alive in flesh and blood—in physical expression—through our lives.

Over and over again, Scripture encourages us to *know* and *believe*. Jesus said, “You shall *know* the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Truth in itself doesn’t make you free; knowing the truth does. He said, “He who *believes* in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). *Believing* in Jesus allows rivers of living water—the life of God—to pour from your heart.

“Love has been perfected among us....” What? How can that be? Isn’t God’s love already perfect? Yes! God’s love, as expressed to us in the giving of His Son, is perfect.

But the word “perfect” implies living out the ongoing goal set for us by God. And the goal of love is that *all* would come to know and share life in Christ. We get the privilege of perfecting Jesus’ perfect love by bring it to hands-on, relational fulfillment on earth.

Dear friend, our Father planned that you would be like His Son. The promise is not to be delayed for heaven; it is for your life here and now on earth. You were made to feel and express Jesus’ emotions: intense anger with the temple money-lenders, exuberant joy at the success of His disciples, heart-wrenching grief in the Garden of Gethsemane. You were created to think like Jesus who saw every human being as precious and valuable regardless of worldly labels. You were made to know and believe the Father’s love for you, to love others with that same love and be like Jesus in this world.

Holy Spirit, give us revelation. Help us in our partial belief. Help us to more fully know the love that God has for us. Perfect Your love in us, through us and among us.

Ponder for a Moment

Read today’s verses again. What is God saying to you through these words?