

Fatherly Talks 5

Devotional Series 5.01 to 5.24

By Peter Tan

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PREFACE

This fifth series of Fatherly Talks cover the important areas of the love of God. The love of God is the central theme of this ministry and this devotional series expresses brings a greater and deeper understanding of the love of God. These talks were delivered from April 2009 to September 2009.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said that by this (referring to His commandment to love one another), shall all men know that we are His disciples (John 13:34-35). The love of God is the greatest without which faith, prophecy and everything else fails but love never fails (1 Corinthians 13).

We pray that all who read these would increase in their capacity to receive and demonstrate the love of God in their lives.

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.01

The Spirit of Wisdom

Dearly Beloved

The Bible declares that wisdom is the principle thing (Proverbs 4:7). At the very beginning of all creation, the attribute of wisdom was released (Proverbs 8:22-23). There are many blessings associated with wisdom:

- Those who love wisdom will inherit wealth (Proverbs 8:21).
- Kings, princes and judges need wisdom in order to rule. If you want to be a great leader, then the wisdom of God must be present (Proverbs 8:15-16).
- Riches and honour are found in wisdom (Proverbs 8:18).
- Enduring riches and righteousness are found in wisdom (Proverbs 8:18).
- Whoever finds wisdom, finds life and receives favour from the Lord (Proverbs 8:35).

The above are but a tiny sampling of the blessings of wisdom and we should pay heed to the phrase that wisdom is the principal thing and ‘in all your getting, get wisdom’ (Proverbs 4:7). The New Testament advocates that we pray for wisdom without doubting (James 1:5-6). Wisdom is a Spirit which can be imparted via the laying on of hands like Moses did with Joshua (Deuteronomy 34:9). It is a gift which can be received overnight like Solomon did in a dream (1 Kings 3:5-15; 5:12). It can be combined with other aspects of God’s Spirit like revelation producing light which impacts the eyes of our understanding (dianoia) (Ephesians 1:17).

1. There is a worldly wisdom which is different from spiritual wisdom (James 3:15).
 - a. The wisdom of the Spirit is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits (James 3:17). The wisdom of the world produces strife, envy, self-seeking, confusion resulting in sensuality and evil (James 3:14-15).
 - b. The wisdom of the Spirit is humble and meek whereas the wisdom of this world is proud and boastful (James 3:13-14; 1 Corinthians 8:1).
 - c. The wisdom of the Spirit of God is like foolishness to the carnal man and vice versa (1 Corinthians 2:14; 3:19).

2. We must receive the Spirit of wisdom before we are enabled to do all that God wants us to do.
 - a. Joshua needed to be filled with the same Spirit of wisdom that Moses had in order to lead the Israelite nation (Deuteronomy 34:9).
 - b. God filled all the artisans of the Tabernacle of Moses with His Spirit of wisdom to enable them to build, sew or create for His temple (Exodus 28:3; 31:3, 6; 35:26). In these last days, God will be filling His New Testament people with His wisdom in order for them to build the last day church.
 - c. Joseph was promoted to head the whole of Egypt because Pharaoh saw the wisdom of the Spirit through his spoken words and advice (Genesis 41:38-39). Many Christians today desire to rise to be the head and not the tail; they desire to excel in their jobs, businesses, ministries and professions. The key is to tap upon the Spirit of wisdom and operate in it. When the wisdom is seen in your words, actions and ways, God will promote you and give you grace, favour and honour.
 - d. Before Daniel and his friends were recognised and promoted, they were given wisdom by God (Daniel 1:1-20). Wisdom always precedes advancement in this life. If you want to be successful both in the natural world and in the Spiritual World, you need to receive the Spirit of wisdom first. We advance in both natural and spiritual worlds in proportion to the wisdom of God incorporated into our lives and being. In the Spiritual World, those living creatures (zoon) around the throne, angels, spirits of redeemed men and women made perfect who have the greatest impartation of the Spirit of wisdom in their lives, govern with authority and love the Spiritual and material Universe of God's creation.
3. Wisdom flows in three areas: knowledge and understanding, methodology and style, anticipation and prediction.
 - a. Knowledge and understanding

It is a privilege to know how things work, its functions, creation and mysteries. Wisdom seeks this out; it seeks to understand and know for the joy of knowing God through His creation (Romans 1:20). Such knowledge can be gained through an impartation of God's Spirit of wisdom. Solomon's wisdom surpassed all the wise men of his time, all the men of the East and all the wisdom

of Egypt (1 Kings 4:29-31). He spoke of trees, animals, birds, creeping things, fish, three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs (1 Kings 4:32-34). I personally believe that today, if we seek and pray to God for wisdom to understand any of His mysteries and even of the creation and inventions of men, that God will give the Spirit of wisdom to do so. It may take time for the wisdom to be imparted (more because of our ability to receive than God's ability to give) but pray in faith and God will give the wisdom in all areas of skill, professionalism, arts, or science or any new field of knowledge (James 1:5).

b. Methodology and style

One key area missing in the wisdom of Solomon was that he was wise in knowing things but not in his lifestyle and morality. In lifestyle and morality, he was foolish. David, who did make some mistakes in lifestyle and morality, basically had great wisdom in methodology and style. He might not have understood the mysteries of creation and science like Solomon or Daniel had but he had wisdom in how to conduct himself (with a few failures when his guard was down – no one is perfect). When David became the most popular man in Israel (he had his own ladies fanclub who sang songs about him to his embarrassment), he behaved wisely (1 Samuel 18:5-8). Even though Saul eyed him jealously, and in a fit of jealousy threw a spear at David, David continued to behave wisely in ALL his ways (1 Kings 18:14). In fact, Saul was afraid of the wisdom of David whereas all of Israel loved him (1 Kings 18:15-16).

David was cast into a very difficult political situation when Abner, who was controlling the eleven tribes and had not made David king yet (David was only king of Judah in his first seven years and six months – 2 Samuel 5:4-5), was murdered by Joab, David's top general. It would have been easy for people to conceive that David had plotted to kill Abner and take control of all Israel. In spite of all this, David behaved wisely and correctly, and through his decision not to eat but to mourn publicly for Abner, the whole of Israel knew that it was not David's intention to kill Abner (2 Samuel 3:36). His wisdom in such areas was so great that whatever he did pleased the people even when he was seeking to please God (2 Samuel 3:36). Such wisdom was also in Jesus and Jesus was in favour with God and with men (Luke 2:40, 52). It was difficult for Jesus to submit to earthly imperfect parents yet Jesus did it in style and increased in wisdom in favour with God and men.

All of us who are successful in this life, both ministry and profession or business, must pray about the wisdom of God in how we live our lives. Decisions like where we live, what we wear and what transportation we use are going to impact people indirectly and directly. We need to be wise in this area. Is it worth it to lose souls because of our lifestyle? No one is perfect and I am sure that of the thousands of earthly things that we surround ourselves with in this life that there are sure to be some areas that would not please everyone but the main thing is to live like Paul where we learn in all things to be contented, learning to abound and to be abased (Philippians 4:12). Many things may be lawful and rightful for us but are they expedient? (1 Corinthians 6:12) In speaking about his authority over demons and idols and his right to eat foods at the markets even though they had been offered to idols, Paul says that all things are lawful but not all things are expedient or helpful because all things do not edify (1 Corinthians 10:23, 25-27). For all ministers and leaders, when you chose to follow God's call you chose to live in a glass house. It is not just what you know that is important but also how you live and your lifestyle that is equally important. A picture paints a thousand words. A lifestyle paints ten thousand pictures.

c. Anticipation and prediction

Wisdom is demonstrated in its ability to anticipate an outcome based on present analysis of people and actions or even predict an outcome based on available knowledge. God is able to predict and anticipate all human success and actions based on what is in their heart (Genesis 6:5-7; Deuteronomy 31:21). God knew Abraham that he would continue in his ways by his present actions of keeping his whole household in obedience to God (Genesis 18:18-19). Joseph by the wisdom of God knew the purpose of the fruitful years and how to survive the seven years of famine (Genesis 41:33-36). The apostle Paul knew by looking at the council that his best defence was to stand on his belief in the resurrection (Acts 23:6). The ability to live in the last days being aware of the rise of the anti-Christ and his influence rests not in just the prophetic ability to foretell but also in the Spirit of wisdom (Revelation 13:18).

All wisdom is now available in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:20). We need to understand that the purpose why God created us so that we are always dependent on His wisdom and not our own minds and strength is so that no flesh can glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:19). That we may all be

able to kneel down and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and bow in humble worship before the lamb of God, the source of all our wisdom.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart (where God's wisdom resides) and lean not on your own understanding, and He will direct your paths (Proverbs 3:5, 6). This whole proverb (Proverbs 3) is expressing our dependence on the Spirit of wisdom (Proverbs 3:7, 13-22).

May God increase His Spirit of wisdom and revelation upon our lives.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.02

Understanding the flow of thoughts

Dearly Beloved

What does it mean to know something? What does it mean when we say we understand? It is one thing to know and another thing to apply and do. It is also possible to do out of obedience without much understanding; yet such obedience probably arise out of an inner knowing of its correctness before the obedience would have taken place. It would be safe to say that all actions come out of knowing, not necessarily a knowing of the mind but at minimum a knowing that it is a right course of action or an inner conviction that gives energy to the action. There must therefore be different levels or types of knowing.

- There is a knowing that comes forth from the heart. This is vitally important and should be the basis for all actions. This inner knowing might not have a mental understanding accompanying it (Proverbs 3:5, 6). God takes credit for all understanding and wisdom that arises in our hearts (Job 38:36). Out of the heart flow all the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).
- There is a visual knowing in the mind (*dianoia*) that requires a separate work of the Holy Spirit from that which works on the heart (Ephesians 1:17). Paul points to the blindness of the heart and the separation from God's life that produces a darkening of the understanding (*dianoia*) (Ephesians 4:18). We are commanded to love the Lord our God with the mind (*dianoia*) (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). God writes and puts His laws in our mind (*dianoia*) (Hebrews 8:10; 10:16).
- There is a spirit mind (*phroneo*) which produces peace and life (Romans 8:27). This same mind (*nous*) is also the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; Romans 11:34). This *nous* mind within us can be the source of all our carnality or the source of our spirituality when it is renewed daily (Romans 12:2). *Phroneo* seems to be that which frames the *nous* mind. For example the word 'positive' or 'negative' when applied to the mind speaks about the framing of the mind (*nous*) towards a positive or negative attitude. *Nous* seems to apply to general consciousness of understanding. In Scriptures, *phroneo* would thus apply to the spiritual framing of the mind as opposed to

the carnal framing of the mind. To choose to think from a spiritual perspective rather than a carnal perspective. For example, we can think of a job as a place to earn a living or a job as a place to find our destiny in life. The 'process' of framing the mind into a mould is 'phroneo' which originates from the Greek word 'φρηνη' (root meaning midriff). Picture 'nous' as the breath and 'phroneo' as the diaphragm which forms the breath.

- There is an emotional part of the mind (enthumesis) which also influences the mind (nous). Every thought has three components: a conscious factor, an emotional factor and a knowledge or data factor. The conscious factor is the 'nous', the framing of the knowledge or data factor is the 'phroneo' and the emotion or experience factor is the 'enthumesis.' The spiritual emotions part of the mind and thought patterns are very important for they can produce the fruit of the spirit into the experiential part of the conscious mind. The word of God has a direct impact upon the enthumesis part of the mind (Hebrews 4:12). Peter, as a Jew, wrestled emotionally to understand with the vision of the Gentile food (Acts 10:19). We might not understand the language or the content of a speaker but we can pick up the emotional content of their thoughts and mind. Jesus knew (enthumesis) the thoughts of the Pharisees (Matthew 9:4; 12:25). Before the spiritual world experience, I used to separate the emotion part of the thoughts from the cognitive part of the thoughts but now I have come to understand that both are simultaneously present in every thought. Sometimes one can precede the other.

To help us in understanding the above area, try to imagine the mind as the process of breathing. The overall process of breathing is likened to 'nous', the framing of the breathing by the muscles of the diaphragm are like the 'phroneo' and the nerve impulses that control the breathing and its speed or regularity is the 'enthumesis.' Emotions in real-life also do affect our breathing speed and patterns. Secondly, note that in the process of breathing, the air does not belong to the body but it is continually exchanged in that process. Through the spiritual world experiences, I have come to understand that our mind is only a receiver and transmitter. It has no function if there was no environment for it to function just as our lungs and diaphragm would have no function without an atmosphere. Thoughts and words are part of the spiritual energy of light that God used to create this Universe and there continues to be a supply of His light (thoughts) that permeate through His creation (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-5). Our free will only helps us to tune the frequency of reception and transmission of the flow of

thoughts whether for good or for evil. On the question of the presence of evil thoughts present, the devil and his cohorts take upon themselves the life of God's thoughts and His creation and pervert them to turn them into the frequency of dark flow of thoughts. However, just as the sun gives natural light, God through Christ gives spiritual light (thoughts) to all His creation.

The secret to the renewal of the mind then is to put on the mind of Christ daily. It is not our thoughts that triumph but the thoughts of Christ received through our mind tuned to Him that triumphs in us. The word 'renew' in itself implies a replacement of the old with the new. The effort of having God's laws in our minds is not ours but it is God's – He does the putting and the writing (Hebrews 8:10: 10:16). The carnal mind is at enmity against God and can never ever be subject to God (Romans 8:7). It is thus impossible to try to convert or change the old mind. We just completely switch on to the new mind and the old will just pass away. The new mind of Christ is a possession that is already ours and not something we could earn or try to get (1 Corinthians 2:16).

By going to a field of flowers, we will see a multitude of flowers; by choosing to tune to the thoughts or mind of Christ we will receive a multitude of thoughts that flow from Him. At first this flow might not affect our consciousness but by tuning to it, our consciousness will be affected. Paul exhorted that the Corinthians pray in tongues because by praying this way, the spirit man speaks mysteries and words which the nous understanding does not know yet (1 Corinthians 14:2, 14, 15) but in time, through the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:13), they will gain an understanding of it. Just as a smell or taste can bring back an avalanche of forgotten experiences, a thought from God received can bring a tidal wave of good spiritual thoughts. The key to this process is to realize that the nous understanding part is the final part of the process of the flow of thoughts (not the beginning) and that it is actually the dianoia, the phroneo, and the enthumesis which are the first parts that are affected by the flow of thoughts from the mind of Christ. The picture-sense, the spiritual-frame-sense, and the fruit-of-the-spirit-sense of thoughts will be the first that is received before the nous understanding part is awakened.

Jesus opened (dianoio) his disciples understanding (nous) so that they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). It was a gift of His mind that He imparted into their lives, and expansion of their capacity to tune to His thoughts, that He performed upon them. We know that part of this process was the entrance of light into the dianoia as expressed in Paul's prayers for the Ephesians (Ephesians 1:17). How do we tune our minds to Christ to receive His thoughts? We do it by praying in the spirit, yielding to the peace of God and the love of God in our hearts. Our understanding must be

garrisoned by the peace of God and our hearts must be purified in order to receive the full flow of thoughts from the Throne of God (Philippians 4:7-8; Matthew 5:8). When our hearts are filled with the love of God, no fear can exist within (1 John 4:18). As long as fear is in our hearts, our minds will never function properly nor can they tune to God's thought frequency. Set the heart right with God first, and then the mind will follow. Out of the heart flow all the issues of life. You can always trust your heart even though you cannot always trust your mind (Proverbs 3:5, 6). And when our heart is always full of God's love, God will never allow any circumstances that work against us to remain (Romans 8:28). When God is not our first love, other images and thoughts would infiltrate into our mind deceiving us that it is of God. For this reason, everyone who seeks to train their dianoia and enthuses in God must first know how to turn all their heart in first love towards God. Only when this is complete are we 100% protected from any pollution of the enemy.

The whole objective as we walk in this life is to have the fullness of the mind of Christ. With the mind of Christ, we can see all that God wants us to see and understand all that God wants us to do. For those who have begun this journey of the renewal of the mind, keep holding on to the thoughts that contain the love of God and all the fruit of the Spirit. Remember that your thoughts are not your own but are just part of the flow of thoughts that is generated from beyond this world. Allowing them to linger in your heart and mind gives them the incubation time needed to produce their fruit. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but they are mighty in God for pulling down strongholds of thoughts bringing every thought subject to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Thousands of thoughts flow through our mind each day, so seek like a surfer on waves, to ride upon those thoughts that contain God's love, are in line with God's word and produce the right visions within you. We might not get it right overnight, but through time as we become skilful in the discernment of the thought realm, we will become skilful in recognising the flow of thoughts which are from God from that which is not from God. And the right way to overcome wrong thoughts is not by resisting them but rather by just simply changing the flow to a new flow of holy, good and loving thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

Every thought has three components (the emotional, the cognitive and the visual) and we might not always feel all three components simultaneously. Sometimes we catch onto one of the components before the other but when we have caught all three components, then we have tapped on the whole flow of the thought and are not just touching the fringe of the flow of thoughts. The whole of the Christian life is designed around the renewing of the mind and the transformation of our character. They transform how we feel, how we understand, and how we see. When we feel as Christ feels,

understand as Christ understands and see as Christ sees, we have truly become like Him.

It is a gift to be like Christ and not an effort. Allow Him to change you from the inside out through the flow of His thoughts (Romans 12:2).

In Christ's love

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.03

The permissive and the perfect Will of God

Dearly Beloved

It is important to know that in working out the Will of God in our lives, that due to free choice it is possible for us to walk either in the permissive Will or the perfect Will of God. Kenneth E. Hagin in his biography (I Believe in Visions) spoke of a time in his life when he had an accident and fractured his elbow knocking it out of place. Jesus then appeared to him in the hospital and told him that he had been out of His perfect Will for two years and had only been living in the permissive Will of God. It was the third time that the Lord spoke to him about this and therefore the Lord had allowed the accident to arrest his attention. The Lord said that if he had not allowed it to happen, Hagin would not have lived past the age of 55 years. Jesus revealed to Hagin that He had called him to be a prophet and a teacher but that he had reversed the order and only sought to be a teacher first and neglected to deliver the prophecies God gave him to pastors or people whom the Lord sent him to. In doing so, he had entered into the permissive Will of God.

The permissive Will is not an area which is the breaking of God's revealed moral and spiritual commands in the Bible. Breaking God's commandments would constitute being out of God's Will completely. The permissive Will is doing something that might seem good but it is either not God's Will in our lives or not God's time for it to be done.

In Romans 12:1-2, the Scriptures speak of the body being presented to God and the mind being renewed to prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect Will of God. The good and acceptable constitutes the permissive Will of God. It is still outwardly and apparently good. For this reason, the vast majority of Christians are actually living in the permissive Will of God without knowing it. They are well intentioned but have not been obedient to all that God has called them to do. Only a small percentage of Christians are actually living in the perfect Will of God.

How does a Christian move out of the perfect Will into the permissive Will without knowing?

1. They move out of the perfect Will by allowing the wrong motives to direct their actions. Such wrong motives result in them doing things and wanting things before their time. The Israelites demanded a king for the wrong motives. They wanted to be like all the other nations of their time (1 Samuel 8:5). Although it was God's perfect Will one

day that they would become a theocratic kingdom (Deuteronomy 17:11-20), it was just simply not God's time for them nor were their motives right. God showed His displeasure through thunder and rain and the people admitted their sin on the day of coronation (1 Samuel 12:18-25).

- a. Being in the permissive Will does not mean that God's anointing or gifting stopped functioning. Saul was still anointed to play the role of a king. Hagin was still functioning in the anointing as a teacher. Good was still being done. Many of God's leaders are trying to pastor churches when their calling is not to pastor but either called to be an evangelist, a teacher or prophet (only apostles and fivefold pastors are called to pastor churches). For this reason, many such good intentioned people suffer deaths or accidents in their families after a grace period of two to three years because the Lord keeps trying to speak to them but they are not listening. Not all tragedies are caused by such but definitely being in the permissive Will always results in death. It is not something that any one should take lightly. The deaths and tragedies are not caused by God but open doors that the devil exploits to work death.
- b. Being in the permissive Will does not mean that good things in the kingdom of God are not being done. A lot of good is actually still being done and people are being blessed by the minister who walks in the permissive Will. Hagin was blessing many people with the teaching gift in his life but he was not obedient to deliver the prophecies that God gave him to warn pastors and churches because he knew that they might reject the message. People in the permissive Will are just doing something because they like doing those things (and might even be good in it) and because those are the things everybody wants them to do but it is not God's perfect Will for them. David wanted to build the temple of God and even Nathan the prophet thought that it was a good idea (2 Samuel 7:2-3). However, God later revealed to Nathan to inform David that it was NOT His Will that the house should be built by him, rather it was to be built by his son (2 Samuel 7:12-17). David had the money, the ability and even the detail plans for the temple but it was NOT God's Will for him to build it. He was obedient in not moving into the permissive Will

of God. Many business people and leaders today are trying to be pastors when God did not call them to do so. Just because one has the money or the talent to be a leader does not mean that one can simply be a pastor. Many gifted prophets and evangelists today are pastoring churches when it is NOT God's Will for them to do so. They will never fully enter the fullness of their callings until they enter the next phase of their prophetic or evangelistic calling. Some of them die without even entering the first phase of their ministry because they have not been obedient to their specific calling.

2. They move out of the perfect Will by lacking boldness to leave their present surroundings to enter into a new environment.

The old surroundings could be a geographical place, a group of people, an organization, a church or anything which does not require them to grow and exercise fresh faith in God. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Some people would rather wait until circumstances move them instead of them moving out of the circumstances. Not everyone is fortunate to live it out and sometimes there is a loss of time and potential growth or reward because of the delay in obedience. Not only that, in eternity they are also held accountable for the delay in other people's perfect Will which depended on their obedience. Every life affects another and every person living in the permissive Will affects the lives of those whose perfect Will depended on them. Abraham waited until his father Terah died before obeying God's call (Genesis 11:32-12:1-2). God spoke to Abraham when he was still in Mesopotamia before he came to Haran, where the Genesis second call took place after the death of Terah (Acts 7:2-4). We do not know if perhaps Terah might have come to know God instead of dying an idolater if Abraham had left earlier and prospered in Canaan. Many Christians are stuck in churches that do not help them to grow nor help them to walk closer with God. They might not regret in this life because of their busyness but in eternity they will greatly regret the lost opportunity. Many ministers have lived and died without entering the perfect Will of God and have eternally lost the opportunity that earth life provided to develop the gifting God gave them. Rehoboam lost a great portion of his kingdom by persisting in listening to the advice of his peers with whom he grew up (1 Kings 12:1-17).

3. They move out of the perfect Will by adding unnecessary weights to their original calling.

It was not God's Will to have Ishmael but Abraham had to live the rest of his life with the reality of division and strife within his own home because they tried to hasten the promise of a child of his own (Genesis 16:3-6; 21:11). Solomon added wives to his life and they led him completely out of God's Will into idol worship (1 Kings 11:1-6). We should be obedient to what God has called us to but we should also know what God has NOT called us to. Otherwise, we will be doing every good thing under the sun and not have sufficient time or energy to do ONLY what He called us to be and to do. It was only AFTER he left for the promised land that God spoke to Abraham (Genesis 12:7-8). It was only AFTER he was separated from Lot that God spoke more details to him of His promises (Genesis 13:14-18; 15:1-21). Many people do not hear more from God concerning their life and ministry because they have NOT been obedient to take the first steps of walking by faith into that which they know God wants them to do. They lack clarity and specific details that would have established them in the ministry and call of God for their lives. This also applies to those called to the professional and business areas. Obedience to God in the little directions result in greater detailed directions and blessings.

Not all deaths and tragedies are caused by being in the permissive Will. Some of them are caused by the lack of obedience to dietary laws or soul laws like living free from fear (many people worry themselves to death). It is however very, very dangerous to be in the permissive Will of God for it definitely will lead to death. The only place to be in this life is in the perfect Will of God. Never allow your loved ones, your friends and peers or anyone in this life to rob you of being in the perfect Will of God. We all are accountable to God on a one to one basis at the Day of Judgment. We will have to give an accounting for our lives on earth (1 Corinthians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11). We cannot excuse our personal actions and decisions by blaming our spouse, our family, our friends, our environment or anything outside of us. No doubt society, environment, friends and family may make it harder or easier to do God's perfect Will depending on whether they are flowing along or not. But it is no excuse before God's Throne. Adam tried to blame Eve and Eve blamed the serpent but each one still receives the judgment due to them.

God's perfect Will can never be discovered without seeking His face and waiting on Him. Many Christians are running about doing things with hardly a thought about whether it is God's perfect Will. Sometimes in the quiet moments of their lives, there arises within them the knowing that something is amiss. If they would seek God to find out what is amiss, the Lord would show them His perfect Will.

Beloved, it is my desire that each of you walk in God's perfect Will that He may blessed you spirit, soul and body in this life and in the life to come.

In Christ Jesus

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.04

Discovering the Perfect Will of God

Dearly Beloved

Every sincere Christian desires to do God's perfect Will. The perfect Will of God is written in heaven for each of us even before we were born (Ephesians 1:4; Psalm 139:16). Even our Lord Jesus had the perfect Will of God determined for Him before His manifestation in the flesh to redeem us (Hebrews 10:7). Knowing that God has His perfect Will for our lives does not rob us of our free choice for it is up to us to discover and find our destiny. Like the Israelites who died in the wilderness, it is possible to live and die without entering into the first phase of God's perfect Will in our lives. Jesus told Kenneth E. Hagin that many of His ministers lived and died without entering into the first phase of their ministry (I Believe in Visions by Hagin).

How does one discover God's perfect Will?

1. There will be clues in our upbringing and training that show forth part of the talents and gifting that God has for us to fulfil.

Joseph was put through administration and governing skills even before his final destiny as the ruler of Egypt under Pharaoh. He was his father's right hand man to report on his brothers, the ruler of Potiphar's household, the person in charge of prisons and finally the Prime Minister of Egypt (Genesis 37:2, 14; 39:4, 22; 41:40-41). It does not excuse Joseph from needing a better attitude towards his brothers nor the requirement to live an upright and moral life. Joseph still had to make the day to day choices of choosing the right thing to do but his environment and areas beyond his choice were shaped by his overall destiny. Paul was particularly brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the best teacher in his time, and excelled in his training to be the top Pharisee (Acts 22:3; Galatians 1:14). Roland Buck, who was taken to God's file room, shared how God even ensured that Paul was gifted with a larger brain capacity to fulfil his destiny (Angels on Assignment by Roland Buck). Indeed, none of us have anything to boast about for any of our talents and gifting. It is truly just the grace of God in us that has established us (1 Corinthians 15:10). Daniel was destined to be Prime Minister and he was given opportunity to excel in the training to serve the Babylonian king (Daniel 1:3-6). Predestination gives us the environment in which we can develop our destinies but does not remove the need to choose carefully and make the right choices. There are many who have been

given the opportunity but in choosing incorrectly failed in fulfilling their destinies. For those interested in discovering their destinies, examine the kind and type of environments in which God has placed them and also the 'natural' talents and gifting that are there (sometimes even before one has met and accepted the Lord Jesus as Saviour). A common theme would point to a particular destiny that one has to fulfil.

2. The joyous harmony within and without.

Our destiny is written in our natural and spiritual DNA. When we move alongside its flow there will be harmonious vibrations between what we do and what we are that produce love, peace and joy in our lives. Nothing makes us happier than fulfilling our destiny and many times, even from our youth, it is a driving force in our desires. We were created for our own individual and specific works and we work them out through walking in them rather than working in them (Ephesians 2:10). It is 'work' to everybody else but not 'work' to us because it is something that we were designed to do with great pleasure. Discovering God's perfect Will is not just discovering the right thing in our life to do but it is also discovering the pleasure of doing God's Will (Philippians 2:13). Joy is our inherited right as a believer and not just things like healing and redemption (John 15:11; 16:24). Unfortunately, in this life we sometimes have to do work which is not our destiny in order to put food on the table while seeking to do what truly is our dream and vision. Many pastors have to work in order to support themselves especially when they have no support in their outreaches. Independent missionaries have had to find ways to do things to raise funds to fulfil their heart's desire of working with the underprivileged. Artists and professionals have to work menial jobs while they establish their dream talent and gifting. Yet, it does not lessen the fact that even such 'waiting period jobs' need to be prayed over and determination made as to whether it would help in the direction of the ultimate destiny. Jesus worked as a carpenter before entering fulltime ministry at the age of thirty (Luke 3:23; Mark 6:3). Being a carpenter was a part of God's Will for Jesus even though it was preparatory to His ministry. Many times it is through such menial jobs that humility and character are acquired. Think about the brashness and rudeness of those who have lived a life of luxury without hardship. Their character poverty is eternal even though they escape temporal poverty. It is far better and richer to be a person of good character than to have all the luxuries of the world. Moreover, the richness of a vision far outweighs the hardship of the temporal vocations. To Jacob, the seven years of hard labour under Laban was but a few days because of his love for Rachel

(Genesis 29:20). Far too many impatient young adults have destroyed themselves and their own characters because of their haste. Remember that your destiny will always be there but your character development for that destiny might take longer through much testing and trials. Paul was especially warned in his first few days as a Christian of the great many trials that he would face in fulfilling his destiny (Acts 9:16). All 'waiting period jobs' that are preparatory to the ultimate destiny will always create a sense of harmony, peace and joy within oneself and also in the environment (Luke 2:52).

3. The friendships of destiny

Friendships are so important that the Bible advises us to be careful as to whom we fellowship with (Psalm 1:3). It does not take the place of God's word but it does play a role in shaping one's destiny (Psalm 1:2-3). The source of much of the strife and complaints in the wilderness was the mixed multitudes who were still Egyptian in their palate and character (Numbers 11:4). Friendships that lead to idolatry and straying away from God are to be cut off severely (1 Corinthians 10:20-21). The apostle Paul balances his message of interaction with the world by saying that he does not mean cutting off all the people who are unbelievers otherwise one might as well be a hermit and cut off from the world (1 Corinthians 5:10-11); rather he meant that those who name the name of Christ and do not live their lives as such should be completely avoided especially those who cause divisions and strife (Romans 16:17-18). Lot was a worldly man who only made decisions based on worldly benefits and his friendship was never a blessing to Abraham (Genesis 13:10). As long as he was around, there was constant strife amongst the herdsmen. Only when Abraham separated from Lot, was he in the perfect Will of God (Genesis 13:14-17). On the other hand, there are friendships that are born not of this world but from eternity and gathering together with such will enhance the fulfilment of God's perfect Will. Daniel was fortunate to have formed such friendships even when he was a slave with his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. This friendship of four prayed through many tough times together (Daniel 1:14; 2:17-18). They probably strengthened and comforted each other through the sad things that they had experienced in losing everything in Israel. And where would Paul be without Barnabas to open the various doors to him? There would have been no opportunity to fellowship with the apostles nor an open door to Antioch from which his ministry was launched (Acts 9:27; 11:25). Their friendship lasted through many years of ministry and even their differences. The writings of early church fathers (The

Nicene and Post-Nicene encyclopaedia) showed that they wept when they parted in Acts 15 and kept their friendship and fellowship strong even though they parted ways after John Mark. There is no doubt that Barnabas played an essential part in Paul's formative years. Some friendships like that of Daniel and his three friends and Luke the physician and Paul lasted a whole lifetime. No one enters their destiny without standing on the shoulders of others before them and none enter their destinies without a helping hand from friends and partnerships born of the Spirit of God. Joseph had a very short time to form a friendship with the butler in prison but it was the key to the rest of his life (Genesis 40:6, 14; 41:12).

4. Flow with each phase of the perfect Will of God.

When the Lord Jesus appeared to me in January 1986, He told me that every life is organized in phases and each of us must be faithful to each phase; and the entrance to each phase is determined by faithfulness to the phase before it. In Jesus' own life, He was a carpenter for thirty years, then He launched His ministry in Nazareth. He later moved the ministry base to Capernaum. For the apostle Paul, the gifting and desire to preach was always in his blood but his early attempts were failures as he was strongly opposed by the Jews (Acts 9:20-25). Paul had to wait another nine years before a door opened to him in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). After Antioch, he had to be prepared to enter a travelling ministry phase which sometimes took him away for years. He had a sense that Ephesus was where one of his last phases was to be and after fulfilling all his customary routines, he based in Ephesus where his ministry flourished powerfully (Acts 19). Each phase of the perfect Will of God is sometimes accompanied by different manifestations of the Holy Spirit, with differing associations and friendships – but with some friendships remaining a constant throughout a lifetime, geographical relocations, differing working environments or business or jobs or ministry, and even differing revelations and understanding of the doctrines of God and the Bible (but always in line with the Bible, otherwise it is completely outside the Will of God). One must be prepared for a complete paradigm shift in order to stay current in the Will of God for one's life and the Will of God for the planet earth today. Yesterday's manna and revelation seen in the light of biblical truths revealed today can look like complete errors. How strange does the doctrine of head covering for women look in today's modern church? Or the slavery advocates and ministers of churches of the pro-slavery era? Each of us must continue to make progress in fulfilling God's perfect Will for our

individual lives and in the world at large. Be prepared to pull out old roots and replant them in a fresh new environment.

There is no safer place anywhere on earth or in any job or profession, than to be in God's perfect Will. Nor is there any other greater love, peace and joy, than doing God's perfect Will. May we all be able to say like Jesus, "Father, we have finished your work that you have given us to do" when we complete our life's work here on earth (John 17:4).

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.05

Walking in the perfect Will of God

Dearly Beloved

The Perfect Will of God is not revealed all at once to each one of us. Generally, it is a walking path of discovery. There were glimpses of the path that the apostle Paul should take in his life when he was first converted. The Lord spoke to him of his future ministry (Acts 26:16-18). His future calling was also revealed to Ananias who prayed for him on the third day of his conversion (Acts 9:15). Yet, when he tried to start preaching the only reception he got was an attempt to kill him (Acts 9:20-23). He had to be hidden for another nearly ten years before it was the ripeness of time for his ministry to start (Acts 9:23, 30; 11:25-26). During his time of waiting on the Lord, the apostle Paul visited Arabia and the apostles in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:17-18).

In Paul's life, we see that he had to be internally and spiritually prepared. He also had to wait for circumstances to be ready with everything in its proper place. The city of his launch of ministry was not to be Tarsus, his home town, nor Jerusalem but Antioch, which became his headquarters for three missionary journeys – in the sense of him returning always there to give a report of his journeys. Sometimes, in many of God's ministers, they could be in the wrong place or city and their ministries can never launch forth. Tarsus was Paul's home town but it was not the right place. Jerusalem was the logical choice, being the headquarters of the move of God in Acts 2, but it was not the right place either. Antioch was the right place but it was not ready for another nearly ten years so Paul had to wait. There is such a thing as a right place, a right environment in which one is given the opportunity to launch forth in the perfect Will of God. Some people live and die without entering into the perfect Will of God in their lives because they are either too comfortable in the security of their home town environment or they are too fearful to leave all behind and take a step of faith in a new place.

For those who are called to the business and professional area, note that both Joseph and Daniel had to be stripped of everything that they knew before they were used by God to progress in their own right. Daniel was a prisoner of war and Joseph was sold as a slave. Their future in God's perfect Will lay in them being taken away from their homeland and comfort. God created a new environment of favour for both Joseph and Daniel and despite the many challenges they both faced (death and imprisonment), they made it through with God's anointing and gifting. For Joseph, his gift of

administration and interpretation of dreams brought him the opportunities to function in his special call. For Daniel, his gift of wisdom and grace brought him the opportunity to stand before the king and promotion to the highest office in Babylon. The right place, the right city, the right country; these are all part of the equation to the path of God's perfect Will.

Being in the right place does not mean that one automatically gets into the perfect Will of God. One can die in obscurity (Paul), or in prison (Joseph) or by execution (Daniel) if one does not take the opportunities that open up in the place or city of one's destiny. Being in the right place or city or country just means that one is in the place where opportunities open up for the function of one's anointing, gifting or talent. There is no such thing as automatic promotion. It requires faithfulness and boldness to enter into the opportunities God provides. Nor does it mean that there are no temptations or trials (definitely no bed of roses here). Paul must have struggled through his Jewish traditions and theology to get deeper into the revelation of Christ. Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife and falsely accused. Daniel was amongst the wise men destined for death when he asked for more time to interpret the king's dream. No one escapes temptation and trials; neither in the poor house nor in the palace. Everyone will be tested and tried and have their personal wilderness before they are given opportunity to walk into God's destiny for them. Even Jesus had to go through the wilderness to be proven and tested before He launched His ministry.

The most important thing to understand is that one must be in the right place, right city and right country in order to take part in the opportunities that God will open up for the function of one's gifting and talent given by God. If you discern that you are already in the right place then be on the lookout for the opportunities that God brings to you. Every opportunity will require that you exercise faith for without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Sometimes an opportunity exists but it is not what you expect. Even when circumstances seem to be going backwards naturally, if you are doing right before God, it is actually going forward. To Joseph, the temptation by Mrs Potiphar was handled with righteousness and grace; yet he was imprisoned for doing right with no one believing him (Genesis 39:19-21). He was tempted not once but constantly by Mrs Potiphar on a daily basis (Genesis 39:10). Joseph had built a good life for himself by then and could have had a secret affair with Mrs Potiphar but instead, he chose righteousness and paid the price of false accusations and imprisonment. It must have been traumatic to lose all that he had built up over many years and go to prison for something he did not do. It seems to be going backward in his life. Yet he was going forwards spiritually for he was a better man to have passed the test of temptation. Outwardly, he seemed to be going backwards but inwardly he was progressing in the development of his

character. Only God could have arranged a rendezvous for him to meet the butler in prison.

In prison, it was important that Joseph did not give in to despair and discouragement when circumstances seem to be against him. If he had, he would have sat in his prison cell and rotted. Instead, Joseph once again made himself useful and his administrative skills were once again called upon. If he had not been faithful in prison to the opportunities God opened up for him there, he would not have had the meeting with the butler and the baker. He had to have the authority and freedom to walk about in prison and visit the other prisoners. Such authority and freedom came because Joseph continued to take every opportunity given to him to do good and do right. Everything that was done in prison was done by him (Genesis 39:22-23). God can only open the doors for us, we must arise and do it ourselves (by His gifting, talent and anointing that He has placed within us, of course). How many opportunities have God's people missed because of their discouragement, despair, fear or simply lack of faith and boldness to walk through the open doors? Hundreds, thousands, and possibly millions, because if all of God's people lived in God's perfect Will the church today would be greater than it is now.

Even when we need to develop boldness and faith to enter through the doors God opens, we must learn to say 'No' to the wrong doors first before God opens the right door for us to say 'Yes.' No one escapes temptations or trials that lead to the higher spiritual promotion in God. Joseph had to say 'No' to the illegal doors that the devil tries to open for him. If Joseph had yielded to Mrs Potiphar and lived a secret life with her, it would not be long before Mrs Potiphar plotted to kill Mr Potiphar and have Joseph replace him as her husband. Such devilish promotion only leads to sin, unrighteousness and ultimate destruction both in this life and in the next.

Daniel was tempted to be like all the other Jewish boys who were allowed to feast at the king's table (Daniel 1:5-8). For someone brought as a prisoner of war and a slave, having seen only starvation and destruction, such would have been the opportunity of a lifetime to eat, drink and be merry. To live one's life in a strange new country, with strange new customs and strange new foods and forget the sorrows of the past for after all Israel had been destroyed, the temple gone and nothing remained of all of his childhood dreams; these would be the wrong open doors that the devil opened to Daniel and his friends. Who would not be so discouraged, down and despairing as to indulge in what the devil offered? In fact they might have experienced the trauma of seeing their own families killed and slaughtered in front of them. Which child or youth goes through war without becoming a victim of trauma and guilt? And the wars of Nebuchadnezzar were by the

sword (no bullet or instant kills) which was messy and bloody. The Babylonians were known to torture and make people suffer before they were killed.

Besides that it is highly possible that Daniel and his friends were castrated and made into eunuchs. Isaiah prophesied that Babylon would take the young men of Israel and make them into eunuchs (Isaiah 39:7). And Daniel and his three friends were brought under the charge of Ashpenaz, the chief of the eunuchs (Daniel 1:3, 7-10). It is highly likely that Daniel and his three friends were mutilated and robbed of their manhood. Such traumatic experiences would have totally destroyed most youths and reduced them mentally and spiritually to a slavery mindset. What Daniel and his three friends went through is beyond our emotional and mental comprehension. Yet, they still sought to please the Lord. They had nothing left but the dignity of their faith in Yahweh God. How many people in Daniel's situation would have given up on God? In fact, all of the other young Israelite people except Daniel and his three friends. In spite of it all, Daniel and his three friends were in the perfect Will of God in the right place for them to blossom. They suffered for the sins of their nation but they still had faith in God and sought to please Him. Saying 'No' to the delicacies of Babylon was their way of retaining the dignity of their faith in God when everything else around them had collapsed.

Walking in the perfect Will of God involves entering the right doors that God opens. It involves taking on the opportunities God gives. However, none of the doors God opens will involve a compromise of God's Word and commandments. Do not ever enter any door or opportunity that involves a compromise of God's written Word and commandments. They are false promotions that will lead to destruction. They might look good outwardly like the fertile valley to Lot but its end is the destruction and robbery of everything you own and achieve. Lot even lost those things he had before Sodom and Gomorrah. Entering the illegal doors will lead to a total loss of even what you had before the door opened. Watch and wait faithfully for the right doors and opportunities.

On the other hand, when God opens the door, don't let your own emotional cowardice, emotional comfort zone, or your fearfulness rob you of the one and only opportunity for spiritual and natural progress in God. Some are fearful to walk into God's promised land because of their emotional bonding to the wrong people or their fear of offending people. They want the same old lifestyle and the leeks and garlic of Egypt. They are fearful of change. They are fearful of rejection. Others are fearful to walk into the promised land because they fear the giants in the land.

It must be made clear to all that in the end, you lose more, if not everything, if you do not continue forward in walking in the perfect Will of God. You cannot keep that which you have gathered if you remain in a plateau. Spiritual growth is the destiny for us all. Choose the wrong paths and you endanger everything you hold dear. Not to choose and allowing circumstances and others to choose for you is also going to endanger everything you hold dear. Not choosing is a choice. It is a choice of not obeying. The only safety in God is His perfect Will and not His permissive Will. It is far better to be in the promised land with giants to conquer than to be either in Egypt with Pharaoh or in the wilderness of familiarity.

Beloved, the message of God rings loud and clear, seek the perfect Will of God always. Walk in love but your love for God must exceed and excel all other loves, including your natural families. You do an injustice to your own loved ones if you do not walk in the perfect Will of God; for when the reckoning comes for being in the permissive Will, your destruction and sufferings will also be theirs. If you truly love them, you have to love God and Christ first. Then your light and blessings will also be theirs. The way of the perfect Will leads to greater spiritual life, light and love for you and all your family. The way of the permissive Will leads to darkness and destruction. Blessings both spiritual and natural await those who walk in the perfect Will, though in the short term it might be costly to the natural. Destruction and total loss awaits those who walk in the permissive Will in the long term, though in the short term they seem to protect what they have. You can never keep what God did not give, and you can never get what is assigned for your destiny if you do not follow Him.

What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? Obedience is better than sacrifice. Let the Lord be your Shepherd and you will always lie down in green pastures besides still waters. Let the Lord lead you, even through the valley of the shadow of death, and you will find a table prepared for you with goodness and mercy for each day of the rest of your life.

Choose the doors wisely and love all greatly always. My prayers are with you unceasingly.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.06

The apostle Paul and the perfect Will of God – part 1

Dearly Beloved

Paul the apostle was the foremost writer of the New Testament besides the four gospels. The understanding of the permissive Will of God and the perfect Will of God is a New Testament revelation (Romans 12:1-2) although it was also present throughout the Old Testament in many examples like the Israelites (stories of them imperfectly dying in the wilderness instead of entering the land of Canaan and of them choosing to be a kingdom like all the nations around them). In fact in the Old Testament, there was almost blindness to the work of the devil such that many of the destructions of the devil are attributed to God as per the book of Job. This phenomena we have in the English translations is because we do not have a 'permissive tense' like they have in the Hebrew, where a verb is used not to show the object of the action but the permissive will of the action; for example, it is acknowledged in the same chapter of 1 Chronicles 10 that Saul fell on his own sword and died for his unfaithfulness to the Lord but at the same time saying that the Lord killed Saul (1 Chronicles 10:4, 13-14). The other record of the Amalekite killing Saul was more a continuation of his suicide attempt where Saul still had some life in him after falling on his own sword and asked to be finished off (2 Samuel 1:9).

Let us start by having a modern story of the perfect Will versus the permissive Will of God. From our understanding of the story of Kenneth E. Hagin and the permissive versus the perfect Will of God (I Believe in Visions by Hagin), we note that in the first vision the Lord told him that he had entered the perfect Will of God (functioning as a prophet) in 1949 when he left his pastorate and starting the travelling ministry. The Lord told Hagin that he had been in the permissive Will of God for the past fifteen years. In those fifteen years, he had pastored churches for twelve years and had been in the travelling ministry for three years (chapter 2 in *Come Up Hither* of his book, page 49). The Lord also told him that one of the reasons many ministers die prematurely is because they are in his permissive Will; with many of them living their entire lives without entering into the first phase of their ministries. Imagine being in the ministry and living and dying without entering into His perfect Will!

Later on in chapter seven of his book (chapter 7 *A Hospital Visitor*, page 96), Hagin in 1959 had an accident when he slipped and fell on his right elbow while conducting a revival meeting and ended up being taken to the hospital. The Lord Jesus visited him and told him that it was the third time

that He tried to speak to him and that Hagin had been in the permissive Will of God for two years already. If the Lord had not allowed (note: permissive tense – all that steal, kill and destroy is still the devil – John 10:10) the accident to take place, Jesus could not arrest the attention of Hagin. If the accident had not happened, Jesus told Hagin that he would not have lived past 55 years (at that time Hagin was 42 years old). Imagine the mercy of the Lord letting him live another fifteen odd years in the permissive Will before dying physically!

During both times that Hagin was in the permissive Will (first fifteen years until 1949 and two years before 1959), a total of 17 years, he had been doing good things. The permissive Will of God is still the good and acceptable Will of God but not perfect (Romans 12:1-2). He had been preaching, counselling, helping the body of Christ and teaching people the Bible. It is not like he was living in sin which would be living completely outside of God's Will. I have asked the Lord about the perfect Will of God in regard to His people and the Lord says that not many of His people are actually living in His perfect Will. And this included many of His ministers! This is sobering thought and it has led me, in this series 5 of the devotional talks to speak about being in the perfect Will of God (please re-read and meditate on the other five devotionals before this). Imagine - many people including God's fivefold ministers could be living in the permissive Will of God for decades and not know it!

What exactly did Hagin do or did not do that caused him to remain in the permissive Will? One has to be in the right place at the right time doing the right thing to be in the perfect Will of God. In his first twelve years, Hagin was a pastor in various churches but it was not God's perfect Will for him. When he left for travelling ministry for the next three years, he was more obedient but yet not in the perfect Will of God. Apparently, he was teaching and conducting revival meetings during that time. Yet, that was not enough, it was still permissive Will. It was when Hagin moved into the function of the prophetic that he was in the perfect Will of God! Functioning in the pastoral and teaching was not enough! In the two years before 1959, Hagin was travelling and functioning in both the office of a prophet and a teacher but he was prioritizing the teacher before the prophet – by being disobedient to the gift of prophecy which God gave to him to deliver to individuals and at meetings. Thus a lack of prioritising the functions of a spiritual office can also lead to being in the permissive Will of God! I wonder how many ministers and churches are faithful in their prime mandate. And how many are diversifying into mandates that are not their first calling. Just because one has the gift, talent or finances does not give one the permission or the commission to do anything outside of God's perfect Will.

The perfect Will of God involves being faithful to the prime spiritual offices that God has called us to be and to do. This includes not just fivefold ministers but also professionals and businesses which are called by God to natural spheres of influence and anointed by God. Just as Aholiab and Bezalel were anointed to work in craftsmanship (Exodus 31:2-6), today God can anoint doctors, lawyers, businessmen and women, architects, engineers, artists, managers, housewives, drivers, etc. to cause them to be skilful in their profession. The key to the perfect Will is to do only the mandate of God's call in our lives and to function faithfully in the gifting of the Spirit which He has placed in our lives. We must not grieve nor quench the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). To grieve is to do something which the Holy Spirit does not want us to do and to quench is to 'not do' what the Spirit wants us to do.

The apostle Paul was completely not in the Will of God before he met Jesus but he had a zeal to be a leader and thought that he was serving God through Judaism (Acts 22:3). Paul's prime mandate was to be an apostle to the Gentiles although he had a side call to testify before the Jews and kings (Acts 9:15; Galatians 2:7-8). He was first and foremost an apostle to the Gentiles. Each time he tried to preach to the Jews, he stepped into the permissive Will and things got difficult. There were not many Gentiles converted yet in Acts 9 and Paul's preaching resulted in threats to his life by opposing Jews (Acts 9:23-24). Paul had to wait upon the Lord until there was an opening to the Gentiles. This came about when Barnabas approached Paul to go to Antioch where a great many Gentiles were converted (Acts 11:19-25). Paul entered in the perfect Will of God at that time. His ministry bloomed and prospered.

About a year or so later, the Holy Spirit commissioned Paul and Barnabas to the apostolic work (Acts 13:1-3). Paul by custom and tradition always went into the synagogue of the Jews first (Acts 13:5; 17:2). The Jews were always the thorn in Paul's side every time he ministered in the synagogues. They stirred up opposition to Paul in Antioch of Pisidia, even rallying the prominent men and women in the city and expelled Paul from the region (Acts 13:50). At Iconium, the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned the minds of the brethren against Paul (Acts 14:1-2). The whole city was divided with part siding with the apostles and part with the Jews. When a violent attempt by the Gentiles and Jews was made against Paul and his team, they fled to Lystra and Derbe. The Jews from Antioch and Iconium came all the way to Lystra and persuaded the people to stone the apostle Paul. He was dragged out of the city supposedly dead (Acts 14:19). It is highly probable that Paul died and was sent back again to finish the work of God; and probably also the point where he had his third heaven experience. Although such glorious potential martyrdom is an

encouragement to all of us, Paul continued to suffer the rest of his life from the wounds and scars that afflicted his physical body causing him great discomfort (Galatians 4:13-14; 6:17; 2 Corinthians 12: 5, 10). In my opinion, I believe that Paul understood divine health and the physical sufferings he had were the result of the abuse of the physical body which he received via physical persecution (2 Corinthians 11:23-25). Could Paul have avoided all this? It is not up to us to judge but it is suffice to say that it is God's perfect Will for all His saints and ministers to enjoy divine health and freedom from sicknesses and diseases; including those called to martyrdom (John 10:10).

We need to say a few words about physical sickness, suffering and deformities so that each of us will not at the same time be self righteous and condemn others who are sick into the category of the imperfect Will or even outside God's Will. I admire ministries like Joni Eareckson Tada and know that God will continue to use many who have undergone great physical sicknesses, pain and suffering who kept their love for God throughout without receiving their healing. It would be unjust for us to say that such are only doing the imperfect Will of God. Good can still come out of all endurance of sickness and diseases and it is not always personal sin that leads to such sufferings (John 9:3-4). People like Nick Vujicic, the man born without arms and legs, are an inspiration to all of us. Great character indeed comes from great suffering. Definitely in his case it is not personal earthly choice and cause. Human society since the time of Adam's fall has produced great physical suffering of the innocent, if not death. We need to leave room in our theology that not all suffering is attributed to personal choice nor make it into too simplistic explanations that we judgmentally condemn all who suffer into the category of the imperfect Will. What we can do is this: we should not judge what the imperfect Will is nor allocate it to personal earthly choice but we can keep advocating what the Bible shows to be the perfect Will of God of His divine health and life. To those born with incurable ailments or handicaps (mentally or physically) and those suffering in various physical areas, I know from my Spiritual World experience that some are destined to receive supernatural miracles and others are destined to have great stories of courage and love to tell for all eternity. Whatever it is should never prevent us from loving Christ, loving God and loving others – which is the most important thing in life (1 Corinthians 13:13). To learn how to love is the most important thing on earth and our eternal destiny. So the parents of children born autistic or physically disabled, be comforted in God, for as long as your story is a story of great love in difficult situations, you would have succeeded eternally.

Nevertheless, we need to just study the life of the apostle Paul in context and look at all the perfect Will of God and the permissive Will of God in his

life. In my opinion, it is possible that Paul's zeal for the Jews had many times almost got him and his team killed when he should have stayed with the Gentiles. Likewise, we can never say that it was God's will for David to commit adultery with Bathsheba but we know that God foresaw all things and must have included that possibility when He predestined Solomon to rule after David. Without the fall, there would be no existence of Solomon. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out (Romans 11:33).

We will continue the second part of this talk next week, for it is long enough, but keep pursuing always the perfect Will of God in your lives and be obedient to God as best as you know.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.07

The apostle Paul and the perfect Will of God – part 2

Dearly Beloved

We saw how in the Fatherly Talk 5.06, that there were two times when the Lord spoke to Hagin about being in the perfect Will of God (I Believe in Visions by Hagin): the first time when Jesus said that Hagin entered the first phase of his ministry after 15 years in the ministry (twelve in pastoring and three in travelling ministry) and the second time when he was in hospital recovering from a broken shoulder. The gist was that Hagin was called to be a prophet teacher and every time he strayed from his original call, he was in the permissive Will. Every minister has to be obedient to the precise fivefold call that God has for them; even those who stand in more than one office have to place more emphasis on the prime fivefold call in their life.

In the apostle Paul's life, his prime call was as an apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:9). He was a gifted teacher and an evangelist (preacher). He stood in three offices: apostle, teacher and evangelist (1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11). He was in the teaching ministry and evangelistic ministry in Antioch when Barnabas brought him there (Acts 11:26; 13:1). It was only when he was launched into his apostolic ministry after a season of prayer and fasting that Paul entered the full plan of God for his life (Acts 13:2-3). Kenneth Hagin struggled with the prophetic office at first because many people would rather hear him teach than hear him prophesy. Paul was an excellent teacher but his prime call was apostolic even though he was the foremost teacher in the book of Acts and throughout the New Testament. Following one's prime call does not diminish all the other callings that God has for our lives, in fact it actually increases it and establishes every other Holy Spirit gifting and calling that we have.

Like the apostle Paul, sometimes we all struggle with our traditions, cultures and customs before we understand and accept God's perfect Will for our lives. Maria Woodward Etter struggled with the culture of her time (which did not allow women to minister) before she fully entered the evangelistic call in her life. She was criticised and opposed but she paved the way for other women ministries. Paul had a passion for his own people, the Jews, and had a custom to always go to the synagogues first to preach the gospel (Acts 17:2; Romans 9:1-3). The prime opposition to his call and ministry came from the Jews. From the very first testimony of his conversion and preaching, he was vehemently opposed and his life threatened (Acts 9:23-24). In his first missionary journey, it was the Jews who opposed and stirred up trouble for Paul (Acts 13:50). Not only did they drive Paul out of the city

of Antioch, Pisidia but they also followed him to Iconium and persuaded the multitudes to stone him leaving him for dead (Acts 14:19-20). After his first missionary journey, Paul testified that the Lord had opened the door to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).

Sometimes, when we are having difficulty and opposition, we need to examine ourselves whether we are in the perfect Will of God or in the right area. Opposition will still come even when we are doing the perfect Will of God and one should not conclude that the road of ease is an indication of God's perfect Will. **Circumstances should never be the test of whether one is in the perfect Will of God or not!** Otherwise all that Paul suffered in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33, would be in vain. Jesus did say that we will receive persecution in this world (John 15:23-25). There are two types of difficult circumstances: one which we receive as a result of persecution because we are doing the Will of God and the other because we are completely out of God's Will. May God help us discern the difference between them! Some key differences between these two types of circumstances are the following:

1. God is not silent when you are in the perfect Will of God; He still speaks with you.

God spoke to Abraham after Lot left him – God had told Abraham to leave his kinfolks behind and Abraham was not 100% obedient until circumstances forced the issue (Genesis 13:14). Abraham experienced thirteen silent years when he decided to have Ishmael. He was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael and the next time God spoke to him was when he was 99 years old (Genesis 16:16-17:1). If God is silent in your life, I recommend that you seek the Lord in fasting and prayer to check whether you are in the perfect Will of God. Remember that emotional bonding and sympathies can lead you out of God's perfect Will. People don't just necessarily walk into God's permissive Will, they slip into it many times through allowing human sympathies and emotions to lure them away or delay their obedience to God's perfect Will. When it comes to God's perfect Will, human sympathies and emotions must be cut without mercy or you may physically die in disobedience and regret eternally (Matthew 6:24; 24:10; Luke 14:26). This does not mean that one is irresponsible to their family duties but rather that, having fulfilled their family duties and responsibilities, one must not allow them to determine one's own destiny in God. Friendships can either bless you or curse you, so choose your friends and fellowship carefully (Psalms 1:1). Jehoshaphat was always giving sympathy to his emotional bonding with the king of Israel who was related by marriage to him (2 Kings 3:7; 2 Chronicles 19:1-3; 20:35-37). He was a good man but he suffered great loss and died because of

human sympathy and emotions. No matter how much wisdom Solomon had, he was no match for the bondage of human emotions that pulled him down to idolatry and disobedience because of his marriage to godless women (1 Kings 11:1-14).

2. God's favour is still in your life; God's covenant blessings still flow.
Joseph was placed in difficult circumstances (sold as a slave, thrown into prison) but God's favour was always in his life. He was well provided for in every new situation and became the fountainhead of blessings flowing wherever he was (Genesis 39:3-5, 21-23; 41:37-46). God will always prepare a table for you even in the presence of your enemies if the Lord continues to be your shepherd and you walk in God's perfect Will even through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:5-6). If your hardship of circumstances and environment does not include the table which the Lord has prepared for you, I recommend that you fast and pray to check whether you are still in the perfect Will of God. If you are in God's perfect Will, God will even provide for you in the wilderness like He provided for the Israelites and Elijah. But if you are not in God's perfect Will, there is no provision even if you live in the garden; whatever you have is through great strife and toil.
3. Your heart is filled with joy and peace as you flow in God's perfect Will.
The apostles were beaten physically and told not to preach Christ but they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:40-41). Paul was beaten with rods and five times received thirty-nine stripes but he took pleasure in his infirmities (2 Corinthians 11:24-25; 12:10). In prison, he was in such a state of joy that he told the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4). Jesus fills us with great joy even in the midst of tribulations (John 16:33). The peace of God that passes understanding garrisons our heart and mind whenever we are in God's perfect Will (Philippians 4:7-8).
4. Supernatural strength, supernatural protection and supernatural signs and wonders accompany your obedience to God's perfect Will.
God always vindicates His people. Right and wrong are not things that need to be settled by arguments and dissertations. Heaven is always on the side of truth and justice. The just must learn to live by His faith (Romans 1:17). As God vindicated Moses and his call before Aaron and Miriam, God will always vindicate those whom He has sent (Numbers 12). One need not defend one's call but only

obey it. It is God who calls and sends and it is God who defends those whom He has sent. No one can steal or take away the call of God on your life or the spiritual position that God gives and appoints you to. Thus, every fivefold minister should not be insecure in their call when others rise up for it is God who establishes each gifting and call. King Saul was so insecure that he resorted to carnal ways to protect his kingdom from David. In doing so, he lost more than his call; he lost everything. It is God who removes and raises up kings and empires (Daniel 2:21). God told Joshua that He would exalt him before all Israel (Joshua 3:7). God resists the proud and exalts the humble (1 Peter 5:5). Fame and influence comes from the Lord and one should be faithful to the position of influence that God gives. Those who are insecure around gifted people are those who are insecure in their own calling. If you know what God called you to be and to do, then just keep obedient to God's perfect Will. Anyone who opposes that will be opposing God. When it is God who appoints and sends you, those who reject you reject God who sent you (Luke 10:16; John 13:20). Those who despise you, despise God. What a privilege to be in the perfect Will of God.

In his second missionary journey, the Jews were envious of Paul and raised up opposition against him (Acts 17:5). They falsely accused Paul and gathered evil men and a mob against him. Paul kept trying to go to the Jews in the synagogues but finally concluded that he would now go to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6). Finally, Paul was able to accept his true call and anointing – an apostle to the Gentiles. From then onwards, he entered into a different phase of ministry. Only when we accept our true calling and spiritual office, can we enter fully into the function of God's ministry gift upon our lives. In spite of the opposition, the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul and told him to continue in his ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:9-10). When Paul accepted his true calling, Jesus moved mightily in his life and put a shield around him; such that he need not flee Corinth like he fled other cities. He planted the Corinthian church and in Acts 19 (third missionary journey) moved on to Ephesus and planted a church there. It was only when his ministry was completed at the end of three years that God permitted opposition to rise to the level that Paul had to move on (Acts 20:1). Even then, Paul could have stayed on if he wanted to, as the uproar had ceased.

Beloved brethren, we all are what we are because of the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10). Every gifting and office that God places us into are but the result of His unmerited favour. To God be all the glory. We must, however, be obedient to the calls and gifting in our lives. Do not let anyone tell you what you must do or mustn't do. You will answer in eternity for your own life here. We do need to check our lives constantly to determine

whether we are in the perfect Will of God and obediently functioning in the gifting of God. All I can say is that of the 6.7 billion people on earth, the percentage of those actually doing the perfect Will of God is very small. And of the thousands of millions of Christians on earth, the percentage of those living in the perfect Will of God is small. And of the millions of fulltime ministers of God today, the percentage of those doing the perfect Will of God is small. Of course, many have not even discovered or entered into the first phase of their ministry and life for the lack of training and teaching. But many do know in their heart of hearts that they are not in the perfect Will of God; for these, the time is short for their repentance. For others who sincerely seek and desire to do so, the mercy of God gives them many opportunities to respond but only within a specific window. We are dealing with life and death issues here and also eternal issues with eternal rewards; let us seek prayerfully with fasting always to do God's perfect Will.

May God continue to give each of you beloved ones the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to discern His perfect Will in your lives.

In Christ's love

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.08

Doing the Perfect Will of God

Dearly Beloved

We have understood from the past few Fatherly Talks how important it is to remain in the perfect Will of God. What is involved in doing the perfect Will of God? We will take a few Bible examples to learn from.

It was the permissive Will of God for the Israelites to want to be a monarchy like other nations around them (1 Samuel 8:5-22; 12:16-25). It probably was God's perfect Will that one day they would be a kingdom otherwise God would not have given them rules for kings during Moses time (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Even though it was God's permissive Will for Israel as a nation to have a king but, as an individual, Saul was functioning in the perfect Will for his life when he was chosen to be king. It was God who chose him and not him who chose that path. It would be most unjust for us to say God chose the permissive Will for Saul. Thus, taking the position that despite all the imperfections of the nation that it was God's perfect Will – at least in his life time – for him to be king, we can see how Saul moved from the perfect into the permissive Will.

The failures of King Saul that led him from the perfect Will into the permissive Will:

1. He did not take time to establish his kingdom upon the Word of God. Saul never did follow after God's heart and was not a lover of the Word of God. He was supposed to copy a set of God's laws for himself but did not. Only God establishes and removes kings and Saul should have had this ingrained within himself through the Word (Daniel 2:21).
2. When Saul moved in the anointing of his office of king, there was a mixture of human emotions that were negative (1 Samuel 11:6). It is the human element creeping into the spiritual anointing that pollutes and defiles the anointing even when at first the results are obtained. Ministers who are not continuing to live lives which the Spirit can anoint (even though they were once anointed before) begin to try to imitate by human emotions and programs the anointing of the Spirit and become open to deceiving evil spirits. After giving in to much disobedience and jealousy, Saul became oppressed by demons (1 Samuel 16:14, 15).

3. Saul stepped into a spiritual office which he was not called to. He was only anointed to be king but in trying to be a priest, he went into the permissive Will (in the Old Testament, there were three anointings – prophet, priest and king) (1 Samuel 13:9-15). It was possible that he did it out of pride. At that time, he had already reigned two years in Israel and had an army and kingdom organised. He claimed that he did it because Samuel was delayed and the people were scattering (1 Samuel 13:11). No amount of human reasoning, even that of need or circumstances or empathy or sympathy, can qualify one to step outside of one's call and spiritual perfect Will domain. God accepts zero reasons for transgressing an office. There are no sympathies or reasons good enough to bend the rules of God's anointing and call. We all must keep only to that call which God has for us. There are no emotions deep enough nor any reasons good enough to disobey God's perfect Will and calling. King Uzziah tried to be a priest and died a leper (2 Chronicles 26:16-23). No matter how great our ministry success and how big our ministries grow, it is dangerous to do something outside our calling. William Branham died early because he tried to be a teacher when he was only called to be a prophet evangelist. Kenneth Hagin nearly died when he tried to reverse the priorities of his calling as a prophet teacher.
4. Saul made harsh rules and lacked love and understanding for people in the carrying out of his kingly authority. In forbidding the people from eating until he was victorious in his conquest, Saul drove the people to desperation and eating raw meat with blood (1 Samuel 14:24-32). Blind zeal is as dangerous as no zeal. No anointing should function without the attribute of love and care for people. Without love, faith and tongues and prophecies and charity are nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Hagin mentioned of ministers who had not walked in love in their lives and the Lord gave him prophecies to warn them that they would die if they didn't change their ways in diet, money matters and lack of love for brethren (page 113, *I Believe in Visions* by Hagin). Many ministries have become dry and empty because they like the power and authority but they have no development in love. Their gifts become empty and ineffective.

5. Saul did things opposite to what the Lord commanded him to do. When he spared King Agag, it was when he completely crossed the line and God would no longer shine His face favourably upon Saul (1 Samuel 15:1-35). There is a line which when crossed will render us permanently and irreversibly outside of God's grace and favour (Galatians 5:4). Some people live too near the border of that line. Others cross it too often challenging God's grace and mercy. All do it to their own physical death and many to their eternal damnation like Judas Iscariot. God's mercy and grace are enduring but there is a place where people in their own hearts shut themselves out of God's love, mercy and grace. Pharaoh was such a person whom God in the end, after the sixth plague, declared that He would use him as an instrument to show His judgment (Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:17). Hagin was told by the Lord (when Jesus appeared to him in the first vision and told him that he had entered into the first phase of his ministry) that faith obeys His Word whether it be the written Word or the voice of His Spirit. Jesus said that he did obeyed the Spirit and left the church for travelling ministry but He did not do what Jesus told him to do in the Spirit (implying functioning in prophetic gifts) (Page 49, I Believe in Visions by Hagin). Being in the perfect Will takes being obedient to leaving the church and also doing what he was supposed to do as a prophet. It took him another three years (all up 12 years in church ministry and 3 in travelling ministry) before he started obeying the prophetic gifts of the Spirit. We need to all hear not just where or what we are not to do but also where and what we are supposed to be and do.
6. Saul did not respect other anointings but instead tried to kill David (1 Samuel 18:11-12; 19:1). Anointings come from God and not men, to disrespect an anointing given by God is to disrespect God Himself. David on the other hand, respected Saul's anointing and refrained himself from killing Saul (1 Samuel 24:6). Jonathan, Saul's son, respected David's anointing and call and was willing to abdicate his natural inheritance kingship right and let David be king in his place (1 Samuel 23:17). Jonathan should have made a stand and chosen no longer to be with King Saul and his fleshly exploits, even though Saul was his father. By continuing to associate with a condemned man in the sight of God, Jonathan also died with the condemned man. It is important to know that when God calls to

separate, one must not allow human emotions and sympathies to separate between light and darkness, spirit and flesh. To not do so will mean that we die with those in darkness or in the flesh. It is God's perfect Will for all to live long and prosper except those destined to be martyrs.

Another biblical figure we can see descend from the perfect Will of God into the permissive Will is King Solomon. Solomon was not himself a product of a perfect Will and situation. David's adultery with Bathsheba caused the death of the first illegitimate child in their union (2 Samuel 12:22-23). With David's repentance and legal consummation of his marriage to Bathsheba, God gave them a child, Solomon. Solomon was beloved of God (2 Samuel 12:24). Solomon started well when he took over from King David with the Lord blessing him and establishing his reign (1 Kings 3:13-14). However, Solomon descended from the perfect Will of God into the permissive.

Solomon's entrance into the permissive Will was as follows:

7. Solomon disobeyed all the warnings given by the written Word of God about what the king should not do (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). He multiplied horses, he returned to Egypt by marrying the Egyptian princess, he multiplied wives (he had 700 wives and princesses and 300 concubines – 1 Kings 11:3), he multiplied silver and gold for himself, and he was very hard with the people such that they rebelled when he was dead (1 Kings 12:4). In spite of the good things which he did like building the temple, Solomon did the very opposite of everything the Word of God tells a king not to do. Most likely he did not meditate on the Word regularly although he did repent when he was old. No matter how anointed a fivefold minister is, getting outside the realm of the Word of God in practice and doctrine is asking for trouble. The written word of God is our only source for doctrine, reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Moving outside of God's Word is the most dangerous thing anyone can do and abdicates God's grace and protection over our lives.
8. Solomon walked into doing evil when he was old because he opened himself to living in the flesh (1 Kings 11:4-6). Such evil of worshipping other gods would have been inconceivable in his youth but too many years of permissive will and flesh leads finally to false religion and false worship. At first the permissive Will is the result

of human self and flesh but eventually it becomes an instrument of the devil himself to lead others into the path of great destruction.

The way to walk in God's perfect Will is to always obey the written Word of God, obey the prompting of the Spirit and to walk in holiness and love. The love of money, human emotions and sympathies and wrong relationships with others walking in the flesh will always lead one further and further outside of God's Will. The only inoculation is to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds and souls and strength and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Only when our heart is so full of the Word, of the Spirit and of love can we have no more place in our hearts for anything else within us. It is only when we lose our first love that we start losing everything else. It is only when we lose our first love that we lose our fear of God in our lives and cease trembling at His Word.

Let the love of God, the Word of God and the Spirit of God always fill our entire lives and being.

In Christ Jesus

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.09

The Perfect Will of God in David's life

Dearly Beloved

King David is one of the most important figures in the Old Testament with over two entire books devoted to his life and works: part of 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. Every other king after David was measured by what David did and it was through what he did that King Solomon managed to bring Israel to its fullest peak in fulfilment of Deuteronomy 28:1-14. No study on the permissive and perfect Will of God is complete without looking at David's life.

The first mentioned of David was after Saul's continual disobedience to God in walking into His permissive Will (1 Samuel 16). Was David God's first choice? Many people seem to think so but only in eternity can we see the predestined plan of God completely. God's predestination includes His foreknowledge of all of men's possible choices. Despite his failures, David did a superb job as a king but that in itself does not justify the conclusion that he was God's first choice; otherwise, God's promise to Saul having his descendants as kings would have been hollow (1 Samuel 13:13).

David entered into God's perfect Will for him to be king when Samuel anointed him as king (1 Samuel 16:1-13). From that day onward the kingly anointing operated in his life. The progress of David into kingship was a long winded path blocked at times by the choices of other people:

1. David's skill in playing music brought him into close proximity to Saul but he was not noticed until a national crisis resulted. It is during a crisis that doors open for men and women of God to arise as problem solvers through the anointing of God (Genesis 41:37-45; 1 Samuel 17:11). An innocent sending of lunch to his brothers brought David into national prominence through the slaying of Goliath (1 Samuel 17). We do need to point out that it was David who took initiative at the opportunity given. If he had not spoken out against Goliath, the opportunity for him to slay Goliath would not have been given to him. We have a responsibility to create our own opportunities to progress in God's perfect Will through our free choice. God can only provide the environment; our inner nature and walk with God must arise in the opportunity given. David had defeated the lion and the bear and his sense of God's covenant for

God's people gave him confidence to speak out against allowing Goliath to persist in taunting the people of God. He was misunderstood by his own brothers and was not physically endowed to even wear battle armour but on the inside, David was bigger than any other Israelite. The most important aspect is that David was willing to lay down his life for what he believed in. Given the opportunity to challenge and defeat Goliath, he did not hesitate a second. His taunting of Goliath showed his confidence in God when he declared that he would defeat Goliath and all of the Philistines (1 Samuel 17:45-47).

2. David's success over Goliath opened a door for him to serve under King Saul (1 Samuel 18:2). The anointing of David to be king would have flowed smoothly if King Saul had not been insecure. David had married into the royal family and Jonathan as the royal heir would have passed on the throne to David (1 Samuel 23:17). Instead, King Saul was jealous of David (Saul forgot that he himself was nothing until God gave him the throne) and tried to kill David many times. In the end, David fled and lived the life of a fugitive beginning at Adullam cave (1 Samuel 22:1). His kingly anointing drew men around him to serve under his leadership (1 Samuel 22:2). Not everyone liked David and he was betrayed by Doeg the Edomite (1 Samuel 22:9, 22); he was potentially going to be betrayed by the city of Keilah, a city which he helped and saved (1 Samuel 23:1-13 – he fled by revelation before they could betray him); he was despised by the rich and powerful people like Nabal, even though he had protected Nabal's men and flock (1 Samuel 25:2-3, 10-11); and he was hunted by King Saul and his army constantly. Most people would have given up on the anointing to be king but David continued to be a ruler over his band of men. He had opportunity to kill Saul twice but he would rather be king by God's hand rather than by his own hand – what a contrast of character between him and Saul. He also knew what the anointing of God could do and respected the anointing of God upon others, even that of his enemies who lived in God's permissive Will (1 Samuel 24:6; 26:9). He knew God was his source of kingship and not men.
3. I believe that David entered into God's permissive Will when he tired of running from Saul and allied himself with the Philistines (1

Samuel 27:1-3). He had to live a double life and a double lie – he killed the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites behind their back and lied that he raided Judah to King Achish who had given him shelter (1 Samuel 27:8-12). When he was accepted by King Achish, it was the second attempt of David to flee to the Philistines. In his first attempt, he was nearly killed and had to pretend to be a mad man to escape with his life (1 Samuel 21:10-15). His second attempt was tolerated by God – when we persist in the permissive Will, God will allow it but David had to live a double life telling lies to his benefactor. In the end, it was at Ziklag, the place provided by King Achish that David and his men experienced the greatest grief and turmoil in their lives when the whole city was wiped out and their families captured (1 Samuel 27:6; 30:6). David’s army nearly disbanded there for some spoke of stoning David. For the first time, there was strife and division among his people (1 Samuel 30:6). Never before have you heard of an entire group of men, including David, who wept until they had no strength to weep any more (1 Samuel 30:4). God could have spared them such traumatic grief and turmoil if they had not lived in Ziklag. God had protected David in the caves and He would have continued doing so. Moreover, only God knew that it would be a short time before David was king. Although David managed to come up out of the potential disaster through his relationship with God, only eternity could reveal the emotional scars that resulted from the sad episode at Ziklag. What changes to their character personality (through their constant double life of lying and emotional turmoil) and their relationship with their wives (some of whom were likely to have been raped), and their sons and daughters who experienced capture (some could have been raped) could only be known in eternity. It is never good to be in the permissive Will even though the mercy of God may help us to get out of it. Kenneth Hagin lived with the constant discomfort in his arm, others have lost babies, sons and daughters and spouses, some have lost their wealth and inheritance, and others probably lost an arm, a leg or an eye with emotional scarring for the rest of their lives. No one comes out of living in the permissive Will the same person. In later life, David’s emotional scarring came to the surface in his dealings with his son Absalom, in his inability to relate back to Michal and in his adultery with Bathsheba when he had many other

good wives like Abigail. His emotions became the weak points in his otherwise exemplary life that nearly destroyed his kingdom.

4. When David was anointed to be king over the tribe of Judah, he was beginning to function in his anointing in the perfect Will of God (2 Samuel 2:4). The delay in him becoming king that was not caused by his personal choice but by the choice of others worked to his advantage. He had forged an army from the Adullam cave through the years as a fugitive that was like none on earth. His mighty men and army were to be greatly feared by all others (1 Chronicles 11; 2 Samuel 17:8-10). When there is a delay in the perfect Will of God not by our own choice but by the choices of other people, the delay will only strengthen us. When the delay is caused by our own lack of initiative when the environment is created for us by the angels of God, then we pay for our own lack of obedience. Who knows what positive things could have happened if Abraham was willing to follow God and leave all when God first called him before he was in Haran? (Acts 7:2-3). Perhaps his father, Terah might have been converted from idolatry and lived to see God's blessings on his son, Abraham. Instead, Abraham's emotional bonding to Terah either hastened Terah's death or delayed him unnecessarily until Terah died before he started to obey God (Genesis 11:32; 12:1-3). Only eternity can measure what was the loss that resulted from Abraham's lack of obedience to the first call. Abraham's entrance into the permissive Will in fathering Ishmael and even blessing him, has today resulted in countless millions of lives in conflict and possibly cause the last and greatest world war that will be fought on planet earth in the Israelite and Arab conflict. The disobedience of the Israelites during Moses' time in crossing the Jordan the first time resulted in a delay of forty years and the entire extermination of the generation that came out from Egypt except for Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:26-38). Who knows how many innocent wives and fathers died because of the disobedience of the tribes of Israel? Only eternity can count. In some prophetic events planned by God for 400 years since Abraham's time, there were no second chances. The Israelites relented and wanted to cross over when they heard God's extreme punishment for disobedience but God was no longer with them and they were defeated (Numbers 14:39-45). Whenever the

delay of entrance into God's perfect Will is caused by others outside of our control, the grace of God strengthens us through the delay and we come out stronger. Whenever the delay of entrance into God's perfect Will is caused by our own decision or lack of boldness, the price paid is severe.

5. There was still a delay in David reigning as a king over all of Israel caused by the unwillingness of Abner to submit to David's authority and anointing. But David grew stronger and stronger while Abner grew weaker and weaker (2 Samuel 2:8-11; 3:1). Many innocent lives were wasted because of Abner's pride. During the long war of seven years and six months, many unnecessary enemies were made. Joab's brother Asahel was killed by Abner and the enmity between them grew into hatred and murder (2 Samuel 2:23, 22-30). Throughout all this time Israel knew that God had said that David was to be king, they knew the word of the Lord (2 Samuel 5:2). The reluctance to obey, led by Abner, caused the loss of great generals like Abner and Asahel plus the thousands of innocent soldiers who fought the wars for the feuding generals. The problem of complete entrance into God's perfect Will here was not caused by David but by others and David's hand grew stronger and stronger.

6. Finally, when all of Israel finally yielded to the word of God that David was to be king over them, Israel began to reach the peak of its predestined greatness under David. David administered over the whole of Israel, making Jerusalem its capital, organized the priesthood, the army and all the various parts of the kingdom and all the enemies of Israel were defeated under David (2 Samuel 8). His administration created all the order that, inherited by Solomon, brought Israel into its greatest power and greatness (1 Chronicles chapters 22 to 29). When we helped people into the perfect Will of God and also stay in God's perfect Will, the blessings of God reach national and international proportions.

In studying the life of David, we learn that doing God's perfect Will is not easy especially if our life and call depends on the decisions of others and the proper environment created by God. Nevertheless, when the delay is not caused by our own disobedience, we always come out

stronger and better. On the other hand, if the disobedience is caused by our own lack of compliance, the cost to us and all the lives benefiting from our obedience can be severe.

Always seek to walk in God's perfect Will.

In Christ Jesus

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.10

David and the perfect Will of God Part 2

Dearly Beloved

We saw the progress of David into the perfect Will of God with some twists and turns in the previous Fatherly Talk; some caused by him and some caused by others. The performance in God's perfect Will continues throughout an entire life and there will always be free will opportunity to get into the permissive will of God. A life is not completed until one leaves this physical body and graduates into the continued progress in the spiritual world. After David was fully established in God's perfect Will and the whole of Israel came under his anointed kingship under God, there were still many tests that came into his life.

1. David flowed in to the fullness of God's perfect Will when he did a series of things which showed the reason why God had chosen him to be king: he conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital, he brought the ark into Jerusalem, he completed the defeat of all of Israel's enemies and he organised all the areas of administration in the temple and in his kingdom (2 Samuel 6; 8; 10; 1 Chronicles 16; 25-27).
2. His many successes brought him great confidence and after he built a house for himself, his love for God brought forth the desire to also build God a house (2 Samuel 7). This was a good desire and born out of genuine and sincere love for the Lord. Even Nathan the prophet, when consulted by David, told David to go ahead; it was naturally the most obvious and logical extension of all that David should do for the Lord. However, some obvious things and logical progressions are not necessarily God's perfect Will. Nathan was told by God to inform David that it was not His Will to build His house. How could David and Nathan not know it at first? It was a good thing, David had the resources and power, God's pieces of furniture in Moses' tabernacle needed a good place. It was even born out of a love for God and not something selfish. David had after all built himself a house and wanted to ensure that God had something better than himself symbolically. Not every good thing, not everything we love to do for God or that which is even born out of a love for God is God's perfect Will for our lives. It was a good thing that David had a

Nathan. Imagine if David did not have a Nathan. Would David have been able to hear God? I don't think so. The times when it is hardest to hear God are when we are already emotionally involved (not necessarily a bad thing) with whatever it is we desire to do. David's salvation from falling into the permissive will was his fellowship and consultation with Nathan the prophet. It was also a good thing that Nathan's relationship with David was such that he could disagree with David – he was not a Yes man who stamped approval on every idea David conceived. There is always safety in the multitude of counsel (Proverbs 11:14).

Many men and women of God at the top of their ministry have completely no one at their level to consult with. David was a king and Nathan was a prophet. In the Old Testament, there was the threefold ministry (prophet, priest and king). It was a good thing that David maintained his ties with the threefold ministry and did not work alone. In the New Testament we have the fivefold ministry (Ephesians 4:11). Many men and women of God called to the fivefold do not work closely with or consult their peers in the fivefold ministries. The only people they have, especially if they are a large mega ministry or church, are people who serve under them fulltime but who do not stand in the fivefold. From one success to another, they slowly move into areas outside of God's perfect Will thinking that if it is done out of love for God it is sufficient protection. I am sure that when Kenneth Hagin walked into God's permissive Will as a teacher prophet instead of a prophet teacher that he was still sacrificially serving God out of love. It was probably because of his love for God that God allowed the accident of a broken shoulder to happen to him to arrest his attention. All things do work out for good to those who love God but sometimes it is through twists and turns before we are perfectly lined up with God. Just as we cannot do what we want with our spouses just because we love them (we need to respect them enough if we truly love them to do with them what they would like and desire and not just what we like and desire), we cannot just do what we want for God just because we love Him. We need to respect and honour God enough that we ask Him what He actually would like us to do. To David's credit when he was told that it was not God's perfect Will for him to build Him a house, David immediately complied and went into the tabernacle to spend some quality time with God. God was pleased that David loved Him to such an extent as to think about Him and rewarded David with the blessing of a dynasty after him.

3. Sometime after David had all things around him established and he had leisure time to spare, he was tempted by lust for Bathsheba and sinned against God (2 Samuel 11). One sin led to another and he plotted and instigated the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, and married her. Everything outwardly looked calm and good but inside David had fallen away from a holy relationship with God. It took the rebuke delivered by Nathan the prophet through a parable that brought David to repentance (2 Samuel 12). There were judgments and consequences for the sin which David brought upon himself and his household. The child died and some future dire circumstances were predicted. David was under the law and suffered all the full impact of the judgment of the law. Under grace in Christ Jesus, the cross of Jesus absorbs the blows of all our judgments that we deserve. Nevertheless, it is no excuse to walk against God's commandments and bring about a situation of God's permissive Will. In movies of time travel, we see how when people travel into the past to change it, they unwittingly change the future timeline which might not be as good as the previous timeline. David made a change in his future timeline through walking into God's permissive Will. No doubt the word of God and the Spirit of God through prayer will continue to bring about God's predestined plan but entrance into the permissive Will requires much intercession to finally get back on track with God's predestined plan. All things are possible with God even much more in the dispensation of the grace of God.

David, however, did suffer much pain and anguish when the future judgments predicted came upon him. Could he have prevented them? Based on the account of the postponement of judgment on Ahab by Elijah when Ahab humbled himself, I believe that it was possible (1 Kings 21:20-29). And if Ahab's son had also repented, it would also have been possible to avert it. We need to understand this through the concept of what I call the 'speed of sin versus the speed of righteousness.' Imagine time as a geographical space; when sin occurs, it is like an egg dropping to the ground. The egg breaks and spills its contents across a large space proportional to the velocity of its impact. So every sin spills into the future proportional to its degree and affects the future. However, just as a broken egg can be wiped up from the floor, sin spilled across generations can be wiped

out by each generation repenting when the tendencies or temptations created by previous generations come around. Each generation has the free will to resist and say No. Of course, our ancestors through their lives either make life easier or more difficult for us but no matter how difficult it is, we all have the free choice to make the right choices to come out of a path the previous generation takes.

4. In bringing forth the ark into Jerusalem, David failed the first time because he did not consult the written word of God on the method of bringing the ark. An innocent man died and David was upset and angry at the Lord for a national celebration had been prepared (2 Samuel 6:3-9). He experienced a mixture of emotions – upset, anger, fear, etc. No amount of emotions can go against the written Word of God. Nor do good intentions or a love of the Lord in bringing the ark into Jerusalem justify violating the written Word of God. David had to learn his lesson that God's Word is exalted above His name (Psalms 138:3). When he heard of God's blessings on Obed-Edom, David once again continued with his plans to bring the ark of God into Jerusalem but this time in accordance to God's written Word (1 Chronicles 15:11-26). The perfect Will of God never contradicts God's written Word. No matter how well-intentioned a person's heart is (even out of love for the Lord) it never justifies any actions that are not in accordance with the written Word of God. At some point in his later years, David in pride wanted to number the Israelites (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21). David should have done two things, he should have consulted the Lord as to whether it was His will to number them and secondly, he should have offered a sacrifice and redemption offering to God when the Israelites were numbered in accordance to the written Word on numbering the Israelites (Exodus 30:12). By not doing so, a plague resulted exactly as the written Word predicted. In the end a sacrifice still needed to be offered to God with repentance (2 Samuel 24:10, 25). Nevertheless, seventy thousand innocent lives were lost in the plague. Moving outside the written Word of God is moving outside the perfect Will of God. Every Christian, minister and church must always examine their motivation, actions and methods by the written Word of God continually. At no time should anyone think that they are above the written Word of God. To do so is at the peril of one's own life and the innocent lives of many more.

There are many important lessons we can learn from David's life in regard to walking carefully in God's perfect Will. David was a man who loved God dearly. He was not a perfect man with weaknesses in His life but he was definitely a man after God's heart (1 Samuel 13:14). His continued wandering into the permissive Will of God after his kingdom was established was due to his lack of restraint of his own lust and pride and his lack of consultation of the written Word in some of his desires to please God and do right. No matter how anointed we are, how famous we are or how well established and powerful we have become in the eyes of the world (in God's sight everyone is still but a speck and no better than one another), we need to know that no one is above the written Word of God and that no justification of love in our hearts for God in our actions makes anything we do the perfect Will of God. It is only the perfect Will when it is born in God's heart and in line with His written Word. Only obedience to both the spoken word of God personally to our lives and the written Word of God can bring about the performance of God's perfect Will.

May God give us ears to always hear what the Spirit says to the churches and also a heart that trembles at both His spoken and written Word (Isaiah 66:1-2; Revelation 2:7).

In Christ Jesus

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.11

Major hindrances to doing the perfect Will of God

Dearly Beloved

We have been considering various people in the Bible and analysing their lives in their performance in the perfect Will of God. There is a common thread which runs through showing some of the major areas that each experienced that either hindered or delayed them from obeying the perfect Will of God. They are as follows:

1. Family members, relatives or loved ones who do not walk close with God.

Abraham's father was an idol worshipper (Joshua 24:2). Abraham had his first call before he dwelt in Haran (Acts 7:2). The Old Testament records that it was Terah who took Abraham and Lot to dwell in Haran (Genesis 11:31). This shows the great influence that Terah still had over Abraham in spite of the fact that God had spoken to leave his kindred folks and branch out on his own. Abraham waited until Terah died before he obeyed God. And even after he obeyed God and left for Canaan, he took his deceased brother's son, Lot his nephew with him, probably out of emotional bonding and obligation. The result was strife in Abraham's household until Lot left them (Genesis 13:5-11). Some might argue that Lot benefited from his association with Abraham but history tells us that he ended up losing everything, including his wife and all his belongings (Genesis 19:30-38). He would have fared better left in Haran. God knows all things and all possible future occurrences. Such great loss to Lot would have been avoided if Abraham had obeyed God against his emotional attachments. Remember that God is always smarter than us and He knows all things. His commandments might not be palatable to our intellect or emotions, but He is always right. The good intentions that Abraham hoped for Lot nearly wrecked their relationship (if Abraham had not been generous to Lot in their herdsmen dispute there would have been a permanent misunderstanding between them over worldly goods – strife over worldly things have wrecked many good and godly families) and ultimately caused Lot to lose even what he had gained, including the death of his wife.

When Abraham and Sarah entered into God's permissive will by conceiving Ishmael through Hagar, Abraham found it hard to let Ishmael go (after all it was his own blood and flesh) and God had to tell Abraham to do so (Genesis 21:11-12). Already strife was beginning in the home between Sarah-Isaac and Hagar-Ishmael. Only God knows what other future circumstances He had saved Abraham from by making him go against his emotions and releasing Hagar and Ishmael from their family.

Moses' delay in circumcising his sons nearly led to his early death (Exodus 4:24-26). Apparently his wife Zipporah disapproved of circumcision and Moses failed to do so, which very nearly led to his early death before his mission to Egypt could even commence. It would have been inconsistent of Moses to represent the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant to the Israelites when he and his family did not follow after the circumcision required of Abraham's followers in the Old Testament (Genesis 17:9-27). Zipporah, of course, was not a Jew and found such customs strange, alien and repulsive to her upbringing. It was only when Moses was dying that she relented. God probably would have raised another person if Moses had died in the wilderness before he began his ministry.

The corruption of Samuel's sons spurred the Israelites to their secret desire to want a kingdom like all the other nations around them (1 Samuel 8:1-6). The Israelites were wrong in their pursuit but so was Samuel in making his corrupt sons judges when they were not qualified nor anointed to be so. Samuel subconsciously took on the same flaws of his adopted guardian Eli the priest, who was condemned for not restraining his sons from corrupting the temple (1 Samuel 2:12-17; 22-36). Even though Samuel was not the seed of Eli, his being brought up by Eli caused him to inherit the same blind spot and weakness. Eli and Samuel's emotional empathy for their own families resulted in the anguish of the entire nation. When it comes to God's word and His perfect Will, there is no compromise. Even Aaron was told not to weep when he lost his two sons in strange fire lest he himself die (Leviticus 10:1-7). Imagine the great personal grief and loss he felt but he had to reign in his emotions in deference to the anointing oil of God.

David's emotional grief for his rebellious son, Absalom, nearly lost him the loyalty of his mighty men and his army (1 Samuel 19:1-8). It was this same emotional blindness that had allowed Absalom to flourish in the first place (1 Samuel chapters 13 to 15). Solomon was completely blinded by his emotional bonding to his wives such that

he started worshipping idols just to please them (1 Kings 11:1-6). An entire nation was lost and divided because of the emotional bonding of one king.

For this reason, Jesus always placed the Word of God and the Will of God first before family and friends (Matthew 12:50; Mark 3:35). This is not to say that family and emotional bonding is unnecessary, one should always be faithful to one's spouse and be especially responsible and caring for one's own family when one is a believer in Christ. For the success of one in taking care of the family will enable one to succeed in taking care of the household of God (1 Timothy 3:4-5). And family members can serve the Lord together well like Moses, Aaron and Miriam. The main point is that when it comes to making a decision for the entire family especially in God's Will for one's life, one must take the lead and allow God's Word and His Will first place in one's life. To do so would actually preserve the family and all its blessings. To do otherwise would be to endanger the entire family and would result in the loss of all things. Emotions should not be allowed to be blind spots which cause short sighted vision. No one loses when they follow God although in the short term, at first, it looks like a short term loss but in God it always results in a long term gain for oneself and the entire family. Never allow the emotional ties or a loved one's short sightedness to hinder the pursuit of the Will of God for your life. If you truly love them, love God first and they will always be blessed because of your obedience.

2. Wrong reasoning and the sub-conscious thinking that one is smarter than God.

Abraham and Sarah thought they were helping God along when they conceived Ishmael through Hagar. It only resulted in more grief and agony for their entire family. Although the Bible records that it was Sarah who actually asked Abraham to do so, Abraham was blamed by her for the whole episode (Genesis 16:5). You can never please a loved one in the flesh or merely by emotions alone. Such things are passing and will not establish a strong and solid relationship. Because of this one transgression, Abraham and Sarah had many quarrels and misunderstandings between them constantly for many decades until Hagar and Ishmael left. Both of them thought they were smart to answer their own prayer's desire to have a child but when something is not of God, it will not bring blessing. It will instead bring quarrels, heartache, strife, etc. into the home. They both would have been saved from much anguish if they had just chosen to wait on God and let God work in His way and in His time.

David learned a severe lesson that one cannot improve on God's methods or God's Word. An entire nation's day of rejoicing was brought to a standstill when the cart they made for the ark of God proved insufficient resulting in the death of an innocent man in public (2 Samuel 6). In the midst of all their consulting, they forgot to consult the written Word of God (1 Chronicles 13:1; 15:13). I don't think anyone intentionally thought they were smarter than God but they just neglected to talk to God and ask Him what He thought. Good intentions are no protection against the violation of God's written Word.

Saul's intention to preserve the legacy of his dynasty by killing David was pure evil (1 Samuel 20:31). He ended up even trying to kill his own son (1 Samuel 20:33). No evil person was born evil overnight. It is a gradual process of descending into self pity and then self preservation (1 Samuel 18:9-10). Every good person without God can be the most hideous evil monster on the planet when they become selfish and self-serving. Ahab was a weak man whose marriage and emotional bonding to Jezebel caused him to be one of the most evil kings in the whole Bible (1 Kings 16:30-34). Jezebel was an unbeliever who constantly pursued and destroyed all that worshipped the true God (1 Kings 19:1-2). Jezebel was unprincipled and took whatever she wanted. Evidence can be seen in the way she plotted to take Naboth's vineyard for Ahab (1 Kings 21:1-16). Ahab just depended on the plotting of Jezebel and succumbed to all her scheming and plans. Ahab took sin lightly and allowed Jezebel to lead him in everything (1 Kings 16:31; 21:25). Jezebel completely did not believe in Yahweh God and killed all His prophets and plotted and schemed her way through everything (1 Kings 18:13; 21:14). Jezebel thought that she was smarter than God (that she could out manoeuvre and get rid of God) but ended up being eaten by dogs (1 Kings 21:23-24). Evil may at first seem to reign but there is a God who watches the earth and all evil will destroy itself and those with it. Whatever goodness there was in Ahab (as shown by his repentance after Elijah rebuked him for Naboth's vineyard) was completely destroyed when he married Jezebel. His friendship with Jehoshaphat led to Jehoshaphat's early death. Things might have been different if Ahab had married a strong godly woman.

The two common threads of allowing our emotions and our own minds to dominate us in the discovery of God's Will have been historically the greatest failings of good men and women of God. God's thoughts are not

our thoughts and His ways above our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). At all times, the way of the Spirit will seem foolishness to the carnal mind (1 Corinthians 2:14). The folly of smart people is their self-reliance on their intellect rather than on hearing God's voice. The folly of the foolish is that they do not read the Word and place their reliance on others rather than God.

In the end, the question to ask in knowing God's Will is 'What did God say to us?' Nothing more and nothing less will do. Complete obedience to His spoken word. Always seek to do God's Will and have implicit obedience to His voice and the leading of His Spirit.

In Christ Jesus

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.12

Walking in love, walking in the perfect Will of God

Dearly Beloved

How do imperfect people walk in the perfect Will of God? We are told to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). In cross reference, we deduce that Jesus implies that we be merciful and loving as the Heavenly Father is merciful and loving. Perfection thus derives from love within and not by works without. We are, of course, destined to be perfected in Christ without spot and wrinkle and grown into the maturity of fullness in Christ (Ephesians 4; 5:6). No one grows perfect in their outward ways without first becoming perfect in their heart and mind. Perfection is from the inside out and not from the outside in. And perfection cannot be achieved without an impartation from the life of God for only perfection can produce perfection. Walking in the perfect Will of God involves perfection of heart, perfection of mind and perfection of ways (includes methods). For this reason Romans 12:1-2 speaks of the consecration of the body and the renewal of the mind in doing God's perfect Will. Chapter twelve of Romans continues from the previous chapters which clearly outlined the importance of the new life and love received in Christ (Romans 5:3).

In order to walk in the fullness of God's perfect Will, one needs to know where to begin. The first place to begin is to walk in love. This is only the beginning and not the end, for there are those who are well intentioned in love but who still enter the permissive Will; example, David who built a cart to transport the ark, with well intentioned purpose of wanting to please God. Nevertheless, his love for the Lord always came through for him despite his many frailties. Although being well intentioned does not excuse one from the lack of knowledge or ignorance of God's ways and methods, it does bring a certain level of protection despite some areas of permission by God of circumstances which one has to reap for the ignorance. It is far better to have one who is well intentioned but whose methods are imperfect than one whose intention is evil but whose methods are impeccable.

Walking in the true love of God towards God and towards others will in the end lead one to the perfect Will even if one does not start well. Most people who are in the permissive Will are there because of the imperfection of their intentions and motivation in their lives. Thus the first place to start in examining oneself to draw into the direction of God's perfect Will is to examine the heart.

1. What is the core motivation and centre of our beings?
Are we doing what we do because of self-preservation? Self preservation has to be released. One must die to self in order to find life (Matthew 16:24). Are we doing what we do out of a reaction or a premeditated action? If it is a reaction, it is best to talk it over first with God our Father in prayer. And if there is no love, peace and joy in our reaction, then it is better to wait until we calm down first. Sometimes circumstances and people stir us up the wrong way but we must always immediately take time to pray and find our equilibrium in God.
2. Who will benefit from the actions that we take in our lives?
It does not profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul (Mark 8:36). We are here on earth not to just live for ourselves but to learn to love God and to learn to love our fellow human being. All the capacities and talents we have or skills acquired through education and training are for the purpose of being a better blessing to those around us. In the process of being a blessing we ourselves are blessed. Like water running through a stream, it keeps itself fresh and does not become stagnant because of the constant flow from the source to the sea.
3. Is our ultimate end the glorification of self of Christ?
Our ultimate destiny is that we become conformed to the image of Christ. This is our destiny and our daily meditation. The apostle's life was successful because he acknowledged that the life he lived was not his but Christ in him (Galatians 2:20). Only Christ matters and nothing else. It is far better to become more Christlike in this life than to accumulate all the wealth and fame in this life.
4. Are we dependent on the wisdom of God or the wisdom of men?
While on this earth, the things of the Spirit will always seem foolish to the natural man. The carnal mind does not subject itself to God neither can be. It is paramount that we learn to not lean on our understanding but rather to trust in the Lord with all our hearts (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

5. Are the Holy Spirit and the angels of God our reliance and strength or are we dependent on self and others?

It is foolishness to lean on the arm of the flesh (2 Chronicles 32:8). Some trust in chariots and some in horses but we will trust in the name of the Lord which is our high and mighty tower (Psalm 20:7; Proverbs 18:10). We have been told constantly that we can do nothing without the Lord or His Spirit, yet people continue to depend on their own strength (Zechariah 4:6; John 15:5).

The discovery of God's perfect Will involves moving in love in whatever we are doing. Despite all our imperfection of understanding and imperfection of methods, walking in love will eventually lead a person into the perfect Will of God. There is a measure of protection when the motives are pure. Usually God immediately speaks forth when one is walking in love but misses God's perfect Will. David's intention to build God a house was immediately corrected overnight by God through a word from the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 7:4-5). Not only did God correct him, God even pronounced a blessing over his household for his expression of love towards God (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

David was not a perfect man but when he turned to God, he was willing to pay the price of love. During the time of repentance for numbering the Israelites, God spared Jerusalem and David was told to build an altar to the Lord in the field where the plague stopped (2 Samuel 24:18). Although Araunah would have given the field free to David, David replied that he would not worship God with that which cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24). David knew that when one loves God, there is a price for love. True love is sacrificial love. This was a part of David's character that God loved and in spite of his imperfections, preserved David.

As a believer in Christ, God has already given to each one the ability to know His Will. It began with the love of God shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). This great gift of God's love in our hearts will produce the following if we yield to it:

- The right motivation to serve God.
There is only one reason to serve God and worship Him, and that is that we love Him with all our hearts, all our minds and all our strength (Matthew 22:37). There are many times when the people of God loved God with only part of their heart (losing their first love) while serving Him like the Ephesian church (Revelation 2:4). The Lord calls for repentance when such occurs because He demands our whole heart and not just part of it. After all, God the Father did give us His whole love and not just part of it. He spared not His own son,

Christ Jesus, in redeeming us to His glory (Romans 8:32). How can we ever give Him anything less? God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son (John 3:16). It is criminal ingratitude to give God anything less than our whole hearts and lives.

- The sensation of peace to guide and confirm our decisions and direction

Peace has been considered a way or road or path. The road of God's perfect Will is always a road of peace. Not ordinary peace but the peace which only Christ can give in our hearts which garrisons our heart and minds (John 14:27; Philippians 4:7). If we walk in love, He will guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:79). All the fruit of the Spirit flow forth from and are actually different aspects of the fruit of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Galatians 5:22-23). Walk in the true love of God and peace results.

- The confirmation of joy when we are doing and have done God's perfect Will.

It is the will of God that we experience the supernatural joy from Jesus when we are walking in His perfect Will (John 15:10-12; 16:24). Even though they were persecuted and beaten up for witnessing for Christ, the apostles were filled with joy (Acts 5:40-41). The joy of the Lord does not depend on our outward circumstances. It is the outflow of doing God's perfect Will. Paul and Silas were beaten up and chained in Philippi but their joy overflowed in hymns and praises to God such that a miraculous earthquake set them free (Acts 16:25-34). Only in the presence of the Lord is there fullness of joy (Psalms 16:11). When we walk in God's perfect Will, the presence of the Lord is always with us and it gives us joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter 1:8). Paul in prison wrote to the Philippians an epistle full of joy despite his hardship for he was in God's perfect Will (Philippians 1:4). Peter exhorted Christians under persecution to rejoice in the Lord with exceeding joy for God's glory will be revealed in them (1 Peter 4:13). Our Lord Jesus told us to rejoice and leap for joy when we are persecuted for our reward in heaven is great (Luke 6:23). When we walk in God's perfect Will born out of a true heart of sacrificial love, the joy of the Lord is beyond any experience on earth.

Let us pursue love towards God and towards all around us as we seek to walk in God's perfect Will; for of such is birthed the true path of love, peace and joy for the rest of our earthly life, until we enter the joy of the Lord in eternity. No one knows everything about all of God's Will for their lives but

all of us know that it is the right way to walk in love towards God and towards all mankind.

May the eternal and unconditional love of God our Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ be your daily experience.

In Christ Jesus

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.13

Our ultimate destiny – Christ likeness

Dearly Beloved

As we consider the progress into God's perfect Will, we need to know that though the paths of works that God has designed for us to be might be different, the goal is always the same – to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). The ultimate goal of Jesus is not just saving us from an eternity of hell but rather the glorification in Him by becoming sons (and daughters) of God. Jesus came to bring many sons to glory, to bring forth the manifestation of the Sons of God (Hebrews 2:10; Romans 8:19). The transformation process begins in stages:

1. We first must receive the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:14-21).
Only that which is born of the Spirit can be spirit (John 3:3). The transformation is not from outwards in but rather from inwards out. The glory is not just revealed upon us but is revealed in us (Romans 8:18). Yielding to the Christ within is the key in this life (Galatians 2:20). The apostle Paul speaks of this yielding to the eternal weight of God's glory which renews the inward man day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16-17). This yielding process involves yielding to the love of Christ within (2 Corinthians 5:14). There is glory within us and this glory is Christ in us (Colossians 1:27). It is not so much we becoming like Christ but rather it is Christ becoming us – the Christ life growing within us and taking us over. We can never be like Christ no matter how hard we try, we have to have His DNA within us transforming us to be exactly like Him.
2. We must see Him (in the eyes of our inner man) to be transformed to be like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:18).
As we behold Him so are we transformed. This beholding process is not easy on the natural realm as it involves seeing the invisible (2 Corinthians 4:18). David in the Old Testament has a part of this process correct when he said that he foresaw the Lord always before his face (Acts 2:25; Psalms 16:8). The ability to constantly look at Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith is an important part of the race of life (Hebrews 12:1-2). In the Old Testament, we are told of the power of beholding and seeing. Eve looked at the forbidden fruit and saw that it was pleasant to the eyes and desirable (Genesis 3:6). Lot's wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). In Moses' time everyone bitten by a serpent had only to look at the bronze serpent to be healed (Numbers 21:8-9). Jesus used the

same analogy in referring to His sacrificial death on the cross (John 3:14; 12:31-34). This implies that all who look at Jesus on the cross will be healed and saved. Paul speaks of looking at those things which are invisible (2 Corinthians 4:18). What are those things which Paul looked at? Paul was looking at the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:6). Paul saw the glory of God as Moses saw the glory of God and was transformed. Moses was transformed by his vision of God's glory (Exodus 33:18-33; 34:29-35). Paul speaks of beholding the glory of God greater than that which Moses saw (2 Corinthians 3:8, 16-18). It is the desire of Jesus that we behold His glory (John 17:24). Behold the glory of God and you shall be likewise transformed! This is a progressive beholding from glory to glory.

3. We are linked in Him – He in us and we in Him (John 15:5); as He is so are we (1 John 4:17).

Life is a union with Christ. It is not a perfection of creeds or works, it is a breathing, living and dynamic union with Christ. In a remarkable way, we are simultaneously seated in heavenly places with Christ even while our physical bodies are on the earth (Ephesians 2:6-8). This concept is difficult for those who think of the universe in terms of space and dimensions. In the Spiritual World, space and dimensions are only a subset for expression and not the true reality. There is no distance between consciousness in God. The true reality of the Universe is not that it is made of space, time and energy but rather that it is made of love, consciousness and life. There are expressions of time, space and energy but these are subsets to the true reality. True reality is love and light. God is love and God is light (1 John 1:5; 4:16). In God we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Love transcends time and space. The love of God in the Spiritual World is felt in the physical world and all the worlds of God's creation. The light of God is the energy source of all life and consciousness (John 1:4-5). It permeates all space and time where life and consciousness exist. Thus we are in Him and right now seated in heavenly places in Christ. We need to bring our consciousness to live in, from and through the consciousness of Christ seated on the throne (Colossians 3:1-4). No matter how long we have been Christians (or how new we are in Christ), the key to ALL of Christian life is purely the development of our union in and with Christ. Thus the most important thing in life is not what we can do or what we can achieve but rather how we are able to respond to all of the things this life throws at us with Christ likeness. For example, it is more important to show forth Christ's love than it is to get ahead of someone else; it is more important to

reflect Christ's kindness than it is to get your own way; it is more important to relate to everyone in love than it is to possess the whole world. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? In every situation of life (family, work or ministry), the most important day to day activity is to be able to bring forth the Christ-life from within us.

The progress in Christ likeness begins in us beholding Christ in various stages:

- Beholding Christ on the cross of Calvary.
There is no greater display of love than when Christ gave Himself for us on the cross. There is no greater display of love than when God sent His son to die for us on the cross (Romans 5:7-8). Like the Israelites looking to the brazen serpent, we need to look at Christ on the cross and see ourselves there in His humanity. We died with Christ and our old man was crucified with Him (Romans 6:5-9). All of sin is dealt the death blow on the cross of Calvary when Christ became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Meditate on the cross of Christ each day when sin beckons you. Meditate on the cross of Christ when you feel the world trying to grow strong. We have been crucified with Him on the cross (Galatians 2:20). It is not just Christ who died on the cross, we need to reckon and see that we died, too. By the cross the world has been crucified to us and we to the world (Galatians 6:14). All of Satan's powers and temptations have been crucified on the cross. Sin and sins have been judged and condemned, nailed to the cross of Calvary. If we still feel any sin or worldliness, it is because we have not stood and beheld the cross of Calvary and taken in the whole vision within ourselves. Keep standing there at the cross and behold until all sin dies within you as the reality of sin being nailed to the cross of Christ hits you. Let it move you, touch you, transform you. If sin beckons look to the cross; if the world beckons look to the cross; if the devil beckons look to the cross. For at the cross, sin, the world and the devil have lost all their power over you.
- Beholding Christ at the right hand of God.
Jesus is at the right hand of God, our Intercessor and High Priest (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14-16). Behold Him as the Author and Finisher of your faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). Behold Him as seated at the right hand of God and you sitting together with Him (Ephesians 2:6). When Jesus was raised from the dead, so were you. When Jesus was seated at the right hand of God, so were you. You are not of this earth any

more but born into heavenliness. See the glory of God in Christ Jesus seated at the right hand of God.

- Behold Christ as the King of kings and the Lord of lords.
The apostle John saw a vision of Jesus in His glory and fell at his feet as dead (Revelation 1:11-17). This is Jesus who received back the glory which He had from the Father before He came to the earth (John 17:5). John had a glimpse of this glory of Jesus as from the foundation of the earth (John 17:24). It is important that we learn in stages to behold Christ starting with Christ on the cross but ultimately we must no longer see Christ as human flesh, we must know Him in His full glory (2 Corinthians 5:16). One day the world will see Jesus as He is in His full glory on a great white throne (Revelation 20:11; Acts 17:31). The glory of Christ is brighter than the sun and set amongst many thrones for His Throne is the throne of thrones (Revelation 20:4, 11; 22:5). Imagine the face of our Lord Jesus Christ in His full glory beings so powerful that all heaven and earth flee away at His face (Revelation 20:11). We will one day see His face in all His glory and His light shall light us up forever and ever (Revelation 22:3-5).

Beloved brethren, grow in your estimate of Christ and His full glory. Many people don't really know who Christ is. They think they know Him but they don't. If one truly knew Christ, one would fear and tremble at each mention of His name. The whole spiritual world trembles and shakes at His glory and presence. One day every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is the Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). Those who speak of His name lightly know not the power of Christ nor have they been to the spiritual world. If you truly see Him in all His glory, you will never more be the same. No one can see Christ and come away the same.

May the light of the knowledge of Christ shine in your hearts and give you a glimpse of His glory.

In Christ Jesus

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.14

The commandment to love

Dearly Beloved

Christians do not really have the option not to walk in love as it is a commandment that Jesus Christ left with us through His disciples. Jesus said that as He had loved us, we are to love one another (John 13:34). We all know that Jesus gave His life for us on the cross, so we are supposed to be willing to die for one another in the Lord. Although there are testimonies that we hear once in a while of Christians giving their lives for another, such are so rare that one is regarded as heroic in such acts. It is supposed to be the 'norm' in Christianity! Those who have been in Christ long enough have probably their share of stories of how Christians behave like non-Christians to one another and to others. What has happened to Christianity? Why is love so lacking in many churches? There could be many reasons but perhaps we can highlight some of them:

1. We have replaced the greatest commandment to love with other priorities.

In many churches today the most important thing seems to be learning how to be a success. This is the driving goal of the leadership and also instilled upon the followers. While we recognize the need of being successful both in the spiritual and the natural realm, it must never replace the greatest commandment to love one another. We need to restore the commandment of Jesus to love into its rightful place at the centre of every church and every Christian heart. We were born out from the love of God the Father, through the love of His son into a loving relationship with God and with all around us. Let us never forget that in all of religiosity and church services, the greatest commandment is and will always remain that which tells us to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). This is more important than our programs and activities. If we succeed at everything else but fail in love, we fail for eternity. Love is everything in heaven and all of the spiritual realms of God. God is love (1 John 4:16).

2. We need more leaders of love to produce disciples of love.

The problem with love is that it cannot just be taught but must be caught by example and experience. If God did not send His only begotten Son to us, we would not have known that God loved us that much (John 3:16). If Jesus had not laid down His life for us while we were yet sinners, we would not have known the greatness of His love

for us (Romans 5:6-7). Love must be demonstrated and not just intended and spoken (Romans 5:8). Jesus intended that His disciples would continue the lasting demonstration of God's love for others through their lives by giving us His new commandment to love (John 13:34). In fact our Lord Jesus said that it is the ONLY means and method by which everyone will know that we are His disciples (John 13:35 – By THIS shall all men know that we are His disciples!). Sadly, through two thousand years we have replaced the sign of discipleship with our other man-made creeds and doctrines. We need to return again to the original sign and method by which all will know that we are truly the disciples of Jesus – that we love like He loved. No other disciple understood the love of Jesus as closely and affectionately as the apostle John. John wrote in His epistle that just as Jesus laid down His life for us, we need to also be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16). Yes, beloved ones, those who received John 3:16 must continue on and practice 1st John 3:16. The world does not need more leaders, rather the world needs more leaders full of the same love that Jesus had. The church does not need more apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers, rather it needs more fivefold ministers filled with the same love that Jesus had. The church and the sheep will never learn to love unless the leaders themselves learn to love. We need more leaders of love rather than leaders of doctrine or faith or power. For all the doctrine, faith and power will come to nothing without the love of God (1 Corinthians 13:1-2, 13).

3. We need to see people through the eyes of God's love.

The only thing preventing us loving people that we find hard to love is that we have set in our minds an image of their ugliness of character or soul. Such images could have come from cultural prejudices, family prejudices, bad experiences or warnings from others who also have bad experiences and ugly images of such people. Thus in our human mind we see some people as good, some as bad and some as ugly. We naturally find it hard to love such people because we have no relationship with such people and seek to keep it that way. Although it would be true that we cannot always work together or fellowship closely with some people because of differences of methods, beliefs or character, it should not prevent us from feeling God's love towards them in our hearts. We must always have the ability of God to be loving to all no matter who they are. True agape love is not based on who people are, it is based on who God is. Human love is based on who people are but God's love is based on His very nature and being to love – for God is love (1 John 4:16). Human love is conditional but God's love is unconditional.

God did not love us only when we were good or beautiful in His sight. While we were yet sinners, God loved us and Christ died for us (Romans 5:7, 8, 10). We were ugly, sinful, even enemies of God and yet He loved us and washed us clean and made us His children. If God has loved us in such a manner, surely we cannot love anyone with any lesser standard than that by which we have been loved. We need to love as God loves and see as God sees. Don't allow your human heart and human mind to stop the agape love of God from flowing through you. Open your spirit heart and let the love of God flow through you. The first thing that took place when we were born again was the shedding and overflowing of God's love in our hearts (Romans 5:5). Let that love already placed within our heart help us to see beauty in ashes, hope in darkness and faith beyond impossibilities. Even in hell, the love of God cannot be stopped (Romans 8:38-39). The vilest creatures in hell are there not because God did not love them, they are there because they did not receive the love of God so freely available to them. We are not able to love not because God could not love through us; rather we have shut our hearts from the love of God flowing through us (1 John 3:17).

4. Love is a commandment

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not suggest that we love one another; knowing our infirmities and human frailties, He made love a commandment (John 13:34-35). Like a loving Father who dispenses necessary medicine to a dying sick child (where the medicine does not taste nice), the Father commands that the medicine of love be continually dispensed because He knows that it is the only way for the child to be healed and whole. Likewise Jesus, knowing our natural dislike of people who are not good to us or ugly in character in our sight and our ease of not walking in unconditional love, placed before us a commandment to love one another the way He had loved us. The only other option is to walk in disobedience and not to love others. We have a choice to obey or to disobey and nothing in between. Everyone who does not walk in love is walking in disobedience! It is a commandment! Walking in love will bring all the blessings of the law because walking in love keeps every commandment of the Old Testament that produces the conditions for health, wealth and spiritual life (Deuteronomy 28:1-2; Romans 13:8-10). Christ has paid all the penalty of the law in order that His grace of blessings might come upon us (Romans 5:17; Galatians 3:14-15). The method by which all the blessings of Christ are received is through faith (Romans 4:16; 5:1). Yet why do so many Christians not receive all these blessings? Such blessings are not automatic; they are conditioned upon faith being energized by love (Galatians

5:6). God cannot force us to love Him nor can He force us to love one another. Love cannot be coerced. We must by free choice choose to love God and love one another! God can provide the power, the means and the method to enable us to love but we must choose to love. He does not rob us of the free choice to choose. God did provide us with the power to love for He has shed (Greek word – poured) His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5). God did provide the means to love, for He has given His Holy Spirit to empower us to love (Romans 5:5 – by the Holy Spirit given to us). God has provided us the method to love for He has given us all of us ministries and gifts by which we can serve and love one another (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Yes, all the ministries of God and every office and service of God available in the body of Christ were purely given as a method by which we could express our life's destiny in love towards God and others! They were not given that we might lord over one another but that we might live and die for one another (Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:42; Luke 22:25; 1 John 3:16). When the disciples fought with each other to be at the right hand of God and to be greater over one another, Jesus clearly stated that He Himself came not to be served but rather to serve and to give His life to others (Matthew 20:28). Sadly in our modern churches, ministries and offices have become positions of pride and pomp rather than that of servitude. We have become no better than the Pharisees who used their religious positions to better themselves and to enrich themselves. Woe to those who devour widows houses, exploit the poor, deceive the sheep and are lovers of money rather than lovers of God and people (Matthew 23:13-29; Luke 16:14). Jesus condemned all such to hell (Matthew 23:33).

Those who neglect the love of God and true love towards all are neglecting the most important foundational and fundamental principle of Christianity; the greatest and most important of all the commandments of Jesus. Anyone who does not walk in love walks in darkness (1 John 3:14). The apostle John even went as far as to say that such do not even have eternal life in them (1 John 3:15). Not everyone who comes and says 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven for Jesus said that they have not done the Will of the Father (Matthew 7:21). The Will of God the Father and the Will of Jesus our Lord is that we love God and love one another. Anyone who says that they love God and does not love another is a liar for one who loves God truly loves one another (1 John 4:20-21).

Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God (1 John 4:4).

In His love

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.15

Agape love is sacrificial unconditional and unmerited love

Dearly Beloved

The concept of love that our Lord Jesus Christ came to bring is not just a feel-good love but a sacrificial love. There is nothing wrong with the feelings for love but it is also the expression of a willingness to sacrifice oneself that is inherent in the concept of agape love. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). Jesus demonstrated His love for us by dying for us on the cross (Romans 5:6-8). And we are exhorted that true love is laying down one's life for another (1 John 3:16). Yet it is not just the concept of sacrifice that is in agape love for in the concepts of family love (Greek word *storge*) and in friendship love (Greek word *phileo*), there are also concepts of a mother or parent sacrificing their life for the children and friends sacrificing their lives for one another. In true agape love, the sacrifice is made towards one that is not worthy of receiving that love (Romans 5:6-8, 10). The sacrifice of a parent for a child is that of a blood relationship (for the child or loved one represents the continuity of the family) and the sacrifice of *phileo* love is that which many friendships have earned or become to one another (it is a love merited upon and by the friendship). True agape love loves those without any merit for love or deserving of love. To such a high command, Jesus has called us (Matthew 5:43-48). How could we in our human form be able to express such love?

1. Firstly, we already have the example of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 3:16).

Love is more caught than taught. We see love and act love. Many unloving people in this world are as they are because of the limitation of how they were themselves loved (or mistreated and hated). Through the years they have developed warped personalities of hate, anger and selfishness until perhaps they come to understand the love of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ for them. Love begets love and hate begets hate in this fallen world. Even the best of us who came from loving families and homes are still limited by the perceived conditional human love that comes through. Our hopes and prayers are towards those of us who did not come from such loving families. Our salvation to be like God lies in us meditating and fully comprehending His great love for us and the example of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 13:12-15). Of all the Bible knowledge that we acquire, every Christian must thoroughly understand the life, words, and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. His life and story (as

recorded in all the four gospels) must be ingrained into our hearts and minds. There is no life greater and purer than the life and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to continually behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 3:1). Until and unless we understand the first place of Jesus Christ in all the Scriptures we cannot understand the Scriptures (John 5:39). The Pharisees had the Scriptures but they did not see the Lord in the Scriptures and became cruel and unloving (Matthew 23:23). It is also possible for the church to do all the right works and doctrine and yet lose its first love for the Lord (Revelation 2:4). In this life, we will never be perfect in doctrine or practice but we can always be perfect in love as the Father is perfect in love and mercy (Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:36).

2. We need the energizing of love (Galatians 5:6).

It is not possible to just love by following an example. We need the same love energy and life that Jesus had to infuse us. At the time when we were born again, the love of God was poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5). It is this energizing love that Paul testifies of that propelled him to do all the works of God (2 Corinthians 5:14). The apostle Paul was not one who could have won a beauty contest for he speaks of himself as one whose physical form does not inspire reverence (1 Corinthians 2:3-4). Paul's letters were powerful but his physical presence weak (2 Corinthians 10:10). Paul was described in the apocrypha as one who was small in size, bald with a large nose, eyebrows joining and crooked legs (Apocrypha – Acts of Paul). He would not have won a beauty contest but he would have won the crown of sacrificial love. His love for the Lord and people drove him to endure 39 stripes five times, beatings with rods three times, stoning, shipwreck, hunger and thirst (2 Corinthians 11:24-27). When he wrote his epistles many times he wrote with tears flowing from his eyes (2 Corinthians 2:4). He preached with tears of love flowing from his eyes (Acts 20:19, 31). His epistles were written that his hearers would know the love that he had so abundantly for them (2 Corinthians 2:4). Our ability to receive this energizing of the love of God within us is directly proportional to the strength of our spirit man (Ephesians 3:16-20). As the Word of God is the only source of nourishment for the spirit man, to abide in His Word is to abide in His love (John 15:9-10).

3. We need to know the joy and pleasure of agape love (John 15:10-12).

If there were no pleasure in eros love, humans would not have continued in such. If there were no pleasure in friendship love,

friendships would not be formed. Paul speaks of the refreshing of friendship and fellowship (1 Corinthians 16:18; 2 Corinthians 7:13; 2 Timothy 1:16; Philemon 7, 20). All the various forms of love (eros, storge, phileo) have their various areas of pleasure experienced by those who flow through such love. In a more powerful way, agape love produces the most powerful of all inner joy and pleasure. It is at the same time a peace that passes understanding and a joy unspeakable (Philippians 4:7-8; 1 Peter 1:8). Humans indulge in sinful pleasures of eros love (which rightly belongs only in a marital relationship) which lasts but for a moment; if they could only know the joy of agape love which lasts for eternity. Many Christians have not experienced the joy and pleasure of agape love because perhaps their sacrifice was motivated by things other than love (perhaps motivated by a desire for fame, recognition, obligation, etc.). For it is possible to give one's body to be burned and all of one's worldly goods to the poor and yet have no love (1 Corinthians 13:3). Walking in the true agape love of God makes one stronger as the pleasure and joy of the energizing of such love becomes the one and only consciousness. Our Lord Jesus might have prayed the whole night before Gethsemane; and He prayed till the sweat drop blood and His tears flowed with vehement crying (Luke 22:41-44; Hebrews 5:7). But when He gave Himself up for us and walked the road of the cross, He was filled with the supernatural joy of the Lord (Hebrews 12:2). The outward bitterness and pain of the cross was overcome by the joy that was His in His supreme agape love sacrifice for us. It was this joy that He now shares with us (John 15:11).

We cannot in ourselves find the power and strength for agape love. It is only found in God who is the source of all the energy for agape love. We cannot express agape love in our own strength for we can only express it as we tap on the supply of such love from the heart of God the Father Himself which flows through our Lord Jesus Christ to us. Thus, only a one to one relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself can give us the power and energy of such love. No church or any leader no matter how good can give us such; for the only one person who has died for us is not the church or any good leader in the church of God but it is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is not enough to just know about Him but it is important to know Him. How can we know Him more?

By allowing the following to grow in our lives:

- Praying in the Spirit building ourselves up on the most holy faith keeping ourselves in the love of God (Jude vs 20, 21). This includes

both prayer in the spirit and also all manner of prayer which will make us dependent on our Lord Jesus Christ and not on ourselves. I know that there are those who claim to pray much in the spirit (tongues) who do not show much love in their lives but if one genuinely prays in the seeking of union with God and the seeking of God's heart, one can literally feel the heart of God when deep in the Spirit.

- Recognising that when we are weak than are we strong (and not the reverse) (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Air flows to a vacuum and water from higher ground to lower ground. The love of God flows from the heart of God to wherever a person is of a humble and contrite heart. The presence of God contains the love of God for God is love and God will make the presence of His throne and home in any heart that is contrite before Him (Isaiah 66:1-2; John 14:21-24). God draws near to all who draw near to Him (James 4:8). The only reason why God has not drawn near is because people have not drawn near to Him.
- Seek God and you will find love; seek to love and you will find God; for God is love (1 John 4:7-21). We do not have to wait for the day we have to die for another person nor do we have to wait until we are greatly blessed to be a blessing to others. Right now, in whatever capacity we have in God small or great, we need to seek to love others with whatever we have in time, money or acts. In times of crisis, it is those who are already doing the best with whatever little they have who will be doing great and mighty sacrificial acts. It is unlikely for one who is not faithful in little to be faithful in much. Great faith does not grow overnight and neither does great sacrificial love. If we cannot tolerate the small sacrifices of love on a daily basis, how can we be willing to sacrifice our all when the occasion demands it of us? Seek to love others even right now in whatever way God enables you through the giving of your time, friendship or blessings to help. And as you give more love, you will find more love flows into your heart in a never ending stream from God's own heart.
- Meditate everyday on the love of God and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 4:19). Never let one day pass by without meditating on God's love and the love of Jesus for us. Thank God each day for the love that He has for us. And live a life of love towards all no

matter how hard it seems. Be unconditional in your love towards others as God has been to you. Be not like the ungrateful servant whom the king forgave but who could not forgive others (Matthew 18:21-35).

The reason why we are saved is that God would have us to be His children who are in His full image. We are called to be like God for we have been created with that image in our destiny. The greatest thing that you would have done in this life which will shine in eternity is measured by the acts of love in your life. The meaning of life is to love. To love is find true meaning in life. We were made to love God. We were made to be creatures of love displaying love to one another. Love is our beginning and our eternity. It is the sum and goal of true Christianity.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.16

The role of the *dianoia* in agape love

Dearly Beloved

God will never ask us to do something which we are not enabled to do. Thus when Jesus gave the commandment to love, we need to assume the fact that we do have the capacity to do so. This is specially enabled in the New Covenant as it is a New Testament provision that is totally different from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament it was an eye for an eye a tooth for a tooth (Exodus 21:24). Vengeance was allowed for accidental death with the provision of the city of refuge. We need to explore this great change in the commandments from the Old Covenant to the New to appreciate all that has taken place within us.

Even in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus showed that with His coming, there is now a new level of living not available to the old. He increased the capacity to keep the law and raised the standard of conformity to the law:

- The law of adultery was raised to conformity of the heart and mind and not merely outward restraint (Matthew 5:28).
- The law of murder was raised to dealing with anger and not just restraint from killing (Matthew 5:22)
- The law of 'eye for eye and tooth for tooth' was raised to love your enemies (Matthew 5:44).

At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus raised the bar of doing good and loving people. He included loving even our enemies and doing good to all no matter the state of their heart or condition of their response (Matthew 5:43-48). Jesus expected that we are able to keep these higher standards in the New Covenant that He instituted. Not keeping and living at this higher level is equivalent to the foolish man building his house on sand as opposed to the man who built on solid ground (Matthew 7:24-27). This illustration is spiritually powerful. In both these illustrations, the house could even have been outwardly the same but it was the foundation that was different. The foolish man did do something and was not just sitting down doing nothing (he was building his house). Yet all his efforts were in vain for lack of a foundation.

The standard of Jesus is that our righteousness would exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). At the same time, the Bible tells us that no one is righteous and there is no one, except Jesus, who could

keep this higher level of righteousness through love (Romans 3:10). Thus we have the gift of righteousness imparted through faith in Christ (Romans 4:1-12; 5:17). This righteousness is, of course, both energized and the result of the love of God imparted into our lives (Romans 5:1-10; 8:37). This righteousness is imparted and not acquired. It changes us and not we who change to acquire it. Its tangible flow is the love of God for keeping the law of love keeps all laws, which is righteousness personified. Righteousness is perfect conformity to the law and love fulfils the law, thus love and righteousness are directly related (Matthew 5:17-20; Romans 13:10). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus began with righteousness and ends with love and perfection (Matthew 5:20, 44, 48).

How is this gift of righteousness and love established into us by impartation? The new covenant is basically the writing and putting of the law into our hearts and into our minds (Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:16-17). Of all the various Greek words for 'mind' the word that is used especially here is the word '*dianoia*' which refers to the visual part of the mind (Ephesians 1:18 – the eyes of the *dianoia*; also translated 'imagination' in Luke 1:51). When the Lord Jesus spoke of loving the Lord with all our heart and all our mind, the word that is used is the Greek word '*dianoia*.' It occurs in all three gospels (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). When the Old Testament passage where Jesus quoted from is examined comparatively, we find that the Old Testament passage in Deuteronomy excludes the word 'mind' from the list of parts which we love the Lord God with (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 – Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength). This addition by Jesus in explaining Deuteronomy points to the special role that the *dianoia* plays in the New Covenant. The '*dianoia*' was not fully operational in the Old Covenant because the spirit of man was alienated from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18). With the born again experience of the New Covenant, the life of God now flows within our spirits (Romans 8:10, 15-17; John 3:16; 1 John 3:9; 5:11-12). In speaking of this life of Christ within us, Apostle John declares that God has given us a '*dianoia*' that we might know Him (1 John 5:11-13, 20).

If the '*dianoia*' plays such a key role in the New Covenant, how exactly does it operate particularly in the area of love? The operation of the *dianoia* within our lives would lead us to the following:

1. We would see others the way God sees them.

Humans usually look at the physical characteristic of a person and not the heart. Even the prophet Samuel himself almost thought that Eliab the eldest son of Jesse was the next king because of his handsome appearance and height (1 Samuel 16:6-7). God told Samuel that man looks at the outward appearance while God looks at

the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Eliab internally was a judgmental person who had a heart that accused people without provocation or true facts. In 1 Samuel 17:28, he wrongly and unjustly attacked David the younger brother with the following accusations:

- a. He wrongly claimed that David came down to them of his own accord when it was Jesse who sent David to them.
- b. He had anger against David perhaps feeling that his little brother was outdoing him or having some long lasting anger issues that exploded over every little provocation.
- c. He accused David of leaving the job of taking care of the sheep when it was Jesse who called David to make the trip.
- d. He belittled David by referring to his normal household job as taking care of a few sheep. From David's point of view, it seemed like a very tough job fighting off bears and lions.
- e. He falsely claimed that it was David's pride and insolence that was behind David's questioning of why no one dared to fight Goliath. The truth was that it was not David's pride or insolence but rather that it was David's great faith in God. How mistaken Eliab was!

For a person like Eliab to react in such a terrible way instead of supporting his younger brother, David, there must be something really, really wrong with him. God said that He had refused him (1 Samuel 16:7). Imagine what it must have felt like to elder brother Eliab when God bypassed him and chose and anointed little baby brother David to be king in their family home that day. Whatever he had against David would have increased the boiling point of his anger and jealousy towards David. Eliab completely had the wrong heart, the wrong attitude, a bitter and angry soul. The only good thing he had left was his good looks and height which perhaps might appeal to many humans but certainly to God it was a big fat zero.

2. We would see the potential future and not the pimpled past or the problem present.

Every human being born on earth has strengths and weaknesses which they inherit both through genetics and upbringing plus environment. The good and bad choices we have made have brought us to the point where we are. Thankfully to the Lord that for most of us, despite our humanity and poor choices sometimes, overall we have had a reasonably good life or at the least we are still alive and in the fight, even if for some barely surviving and for others some

measure of peace and contentment. No one is perfect and all of us have made mistakes. By God's grace we are still in the race and in the fight of faith because we have continued believing in our bright future hope or others have also believed with us for a bright future hope. If we had given up the walk of faith, none of us would have been around today. We empathise for those who are no longer with us in Christ or have backslidden or have lost their lives. But the fact is that any single one of us had the choice to give up many, many times; yet we pressed on because we believe in our dreams and visions or others who believe in our dreams and visions have helped us.

At all times, Christ Jesus our Lord and God our Father never ceased to believe in us or to help us. Why is this so? Because God sees our future and knows what we can be in Him. He loved us while we were yet sinners and enemies of His ways (Romans 5:10). He walked with us through the valley of the shadow of death and through the vale of tears. He went with us where others feared to follow. He never gave us up. Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword have cost us many friends and well-wishers but God stayed through with us and loved us through it all (Romans 8:35-37). He did it because He knew of our potential and what we could be for He created us! He will always be our Father though it pains Him at times when we sin and grieve His heart (Genesis 6:6; Acts 17:23-29). He see beauty while others see ugliness. As God has loved us, so let us love as God our Father and Jesus our Lord have loved (John 3:16; 15:12-13; 1 John 3:16).

Let the eyes of our understanding (*dianoia*) be so flooded with the light and love of God that we can see humanity through His eyes. Indeed as the song goes, 'Everything is beautiful, in its own way.' It is a beautiful world with beautiful people, if we choose not to look just at the physical but at the spiritual and the potential of each person, of every nation and of the entire world.

May God give us the love power to see beauty where the world can only see ugliness; and may God teach us discernment to avoid the ugliness of sin where the world sees false beauty.

In Christ's love

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.17

To love one is to love many

Dearly Beloved

When the Lord Jesus was speaking about the two greatest commandments (to love God and to love one's neighbour) and He had elicited the correct answer from a learned lawyer of His time, He was asked the question as to 'who was one's neighbour?' Jesus answered by giving the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:27-37). Our neighbours are those who are in our immediate vicinity and circumstances of life. It is an indictment on the priest and the Levite who passed by on the other side in order to avoid helping the man lying by the roadside (Luke 10:31-32).

Our love for God is measured by our love for people; for if we truly love God, we will love those whom God loves (i.e. everyone). The apostle John even goes as far as to say that anyone who claims to love God but who does not love others is a liar (1 John 4:20-21). And this love is expressed not just in word or tongue but in deed and truth (1 John 3:17-18). The difference between not walking in love and walking in love is the difference between light and darkness (1 John 3:14). The true sign of one who has truly been born again is that one would walk in the love of Jesus Christ. For this reason Jesus, in giving His commandment to love, said that by THIS shall all men know that we are His disciples if we love one another (John 13:34-35). If we were to ask Christians whether they would want to walk in darkness outside of God's kingdom, they would most likely answer 'No.' Yet many of such would not take a moment's hesitation to be unloving, cruel, uncaring and inconsiderate of others. And some even would plot and plan evil unto others, calling their plans justifiable because of their self-righteousness and campaign against what they perceive to be sin and evil in others. Such 'holier than thou' attitudes are what have brought the downfall and shame to Christianity throughout the two thousand years of Christian recorded history. Modern Christianity is filled with stories of the unloving and judgmental attitude of the organized church. This is not to say that there are none who walk in love; there are but they are too few in number and we need a revival of love to change the attitudes of the organized church.

Learning to walk in love starts somewhere and the first place to start is always in our home and in our ministry and workplace. It is essential that every spouse, every sibling or parent or children learn to walk in unconditional love towards one another. It is a shame to Christianity that the number of marriages broken down amongst Christians are as many (if not more) than those who do not claim Christianity as their faith. Of course,

such breakdowns are not always the result of both parties for there are many situations where indeed, it is the sin and unfaithfulness of one party with the other being the victim. Nevertheless, it is important that one always carry the love of God in one's heart. No marriage should descend into bitterness and fighting resulting in enemies made of one another. No relationship in ministry or work should result in two people in Christ becoming enemies of one another. Of course, if one party chooses not to walk in love, such amicable kindness to one another might not be possible. But it would still be possible for the one party with the true walk in Christ to bear the afflictions of the other who chose not to walk in love. The stronger one in love must bear the one who walks lesser in love (1 Corinthians 8:9-13; Romans 14:21; 15:1-2).

If such a commandment seems difficult to some, let them remember the example of Jesus on the cross. True Christianity is not 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' True Christianity is being willing to take up the cross and follow after Jesus. What is the cross? The cross is the place where you choose to take upon yourself all the afflictions of those who do not walk in love. The cross is when you choose not to retaliate against evil but you absorb the blows of evil and give out only unconditional love. When people spit against you, when they scold you, when they hit you, when they persecute you, when they misunderstand you, when they revile you, when they isolate and ostracize you – and you respond only with the love of Christ within you, this is TRUE Christianity. Yes, you choose to respond in such manner EVEN when you have the power to annihilate such people whether through natural strength or power or through the help of others who could assemble themselves to your defence. Jesus had the power to annihilate every single person who afflicted Him at the cross (more than twelve legions of angels at His command) and yet He chose to bear the cross for us, showing us the perfect way. Evil cannot be conquered by natural means (it can only be temporarily restrained at times through wars fought by men or by force of law). Evil can only be conquered by the love of God. If you use evil to conquer evil, you yourselves would have become a greater evil. This is the true doctrine and gospel of Jesus Christ. True Christianity conquers by love and martyrdom. The cross is more powerful than guns and nuclear bombs. Great is the eternal reward of those who walk in love and die at the hands of their persecutors.

The question is then asked as to the limits of such sacrificial love. As far as running a country and nation is concerned, the governmental systems of the world require that evil is temporarily restrained and thus all governments have to run based on the law and issue punishment for wrong doers (Romans 13:1-7). But as far as the way we run our personal life, it is much better to suffer loss than to be the avenger (1 Corinthians 6:7). I know that it

seems foolish, stupid and even weak to many who do not understand this powerful concept of love overcoming evil. Even more so for those who suffer material loss or loss of reputation through the evil acts of others. There is a balance of requirement to allow the governmental law system to restrain and punish evil by us being honest and upfront in reporting evil to authorities – with the motive of ensuring that a particular evil is kept restrained and the perpetrators kept behind bars. But no government can get into the heart of an individual to teach them to love and forgive. Only the gospel of Christ can deal with the heart and bring forth forgiveness within the heart of a victim that has suffered much evil.

We must also remember that if evil succeeds not just in robbing one of reputation or material things but in creating unforgiveness or damage to a heart of love, it has succeeded eternally. We must not allow evil to succeed eternally even if it seems to succeed temporally. One day all evil will be eliminated when Christ comes in judgment of all men. Every evil act of mankind will have to be accounted for at the judgment seat. In the meantime, we must never, ever allow evil or wrong to rob us of the heart of unconditional love towards all. There is nothing more precious on planet earth than a soul and heart that is filled with the love of God and has its nature set in the unconditional agape love of God. It is more precious than silver, gold or diamonds. Don't let the enemy steal such a heart or change it. Such a heart is a heart close indeed to the heart of God.

The key is to learn that love has the power to absorb the acts of evil and turn them into something good. As long as our love for God remains strong, all things will indeed work for good (Romans 8:28). In the history of Christianity, we have seen how it is love that changes the perpetrators of evil. Saul was transformed from an evil judgmental Pharisee into an apostle by the prayers of a loving disciple, Stephen (Acts 7:59-60). Many throughout church history have been touched and transformed by the complete sacrificial love of those in Christ. The greatness of true Christianity is in our ability to love like Jesus loved. Perfect love has cast out fear throughout the two millennia of Christianity and will continue to do so.

We must believe in the power of love as much as we believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the power of the Word and in the power of the Name of Jesus. Love is more powerful than all the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 13). When you walk in love, you are not walking in weakness rather you are walking in the most powerful force in heaven and on earth (and also shake the whole of hell). It takes a stronger person to refrain from giving 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' It is the weak who have to resort to natural and carnal means to get their way. It is the foolish who

think that they can possess the world by evil methods and conquest. The truly strong shall conquer by love and the meek shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

Now it is understandable that although one can walk in love towards all, one cannot work with all or fellowship with all because of differences of methods and differences in motivation. We still have to choose carefully our ministry partners and our fellowship (Romans 16:17-18). Our love needs to grow in discernment (Philippians 1:9). However, in choosing carefully one's friends, fellowship and partners one must always have a heart filled with only thoughts of love and kindness towards all. Our mind needs to be filled with loving thoughts and our heart completely empty of bitterness, anger or unforgiveness (1 Corinthians 13:5-6). Our enemies might be blind and deaf to our forgiveness and love towards them but our thoughts of love can reach them deep in their spirits or hearts where there still might be a hint of godliness or goodness in them. Think only loving thoughts towards all.

And of course, those who live within the circle of our daily lives, to these we must first exercise our love. Our neighbours are those in the circle of our lives and not those far away. The secret to growth in love is that when you succeed in loving one difficult person along your life's path, that same capacity that you developed in loving that one person becomes the capacity to love all the millions and billions of others like them; for through loving one person, a greater capacity to love is ingrained and imparted into your life. Your victory to love one becomes the same power to love others everywhere. Conversely, your lack of love for that one person around you becomes a stumbling block to your capacity to love others everywhere; your inability to love one person near you becomes a scar in your heart that will remain wherever you may go and wherever you may be. You learn to love the world, like God so loved the world, one person at a time. When you have succeeded in loving those around you, you will succeed in loving the world like God does.

Life is an experience. It is filled with millions of tastes, smells, sights, sounds, wonders and delights both of natural, soul and spirit. The greatest and most powerful experience in life is to be able to love another person and then more people and then the world. It is an experience that transcends time and eternity. It is the highest experience possible on the earth. God is Love. We were made in God's image. We were made to love as God does. Love is our highest existence and our main reason for existence. The meaning of life is Love.

May God increase His love in each of your hearts.

In Christ's love

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.18

Flowing in the love of Jesus

Dearly Beloved

When Jesus gave His commandment of love to His disciples, He called it a new commandment (John 13:34-35). How was it a new commandment when the law can be summarised into the two great commandments of love? (Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27). The key difference that made it a new commandment was that Jesus said to love AS He loved (John 13:34). The commandment to love can never be fulfilled with our own love and strength. It has to be Jesus in us that loves and not our own selves. Allowing Jesus in us to flow in His love through us would in time transform us until our very natures would be like His. This is our destiny and the very reason why we were created, to love as God and Jesus loved (Romans 8:29). Thus the new commandment to love requires that we learn to flow in the love of Jesus. It would not have been a new commandment if it was just an understanding of the requirement to love God and love our neighbour. The newness part is that this is achieved not by our own strength but by the power of Jesus' love within us.

This flow of the love of God and Jesus through us began when we were first born again, with God pouring His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5). We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Understanding this principle (that the new commandment is not our love but the love of Christ through us), we must first be recipients of love in order to give love. If we were recipients of human conditional love then that would be the only capacity that we show; if we were only recipients of hate, then only hate would arise in our hearts towards others. We are what we have received and experienced in our lives. No human family or parent can give the love that only God our Father and Jesus Christ has shown. Thus, in our walk of love, the first step is to completely and totally know the love of God in our lives. This has to be in three areas: we need to intellectually understand the basis of God's love for us (that it is unconditional love not based on merit), we need to experientially know this love, and we need to visually have biblical images of this love replace any other wrong images of what love is.

The love that God showed to us was while we were yet sinners and enemies of God (Romans 5:8-10). The question of us being good enough for His love was never an issue at the beginning of our relationship with God nor will it ever come into the picture no matter how long we have been in Christ. Yet many Christians wrestle with thoughts and feelings of being unworthy of God's love. There is nothing wrong with knowing that we can

never earn or merit His love. It is only wrong when we refuse to accept His love. Feeling unworthy of His love is a natural human feeling which even the apostle Paul felt when writing one of his last known epistles, even going as far as to call himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:13-15). In fact such feelings and knowledge should lead us to appreciate how much He has forgiven us and enable us to love Him even more. For whom much is forgiven, there is much love; for whom little is forgiven, there is little love (Luke 7:47).

Since thoughts are in three dimensions (visual, intellectual, emotional), it is important not just to know of Christ's love intellectually but to know it experientially in our emotions and also to have engraved in our hearts the right visions and images of what true love is like. Only when we have this threefold area of God's love in our lives will we truly be able to say we know God's love. Many Christians know intellectually that God loves them but they have no images of God's love written in their *dianoia* nor any experience of God's love affecting their emotional mind. The reception of God's love here is incomplete.

For this reason, Paul continued to pray for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to open the eyes of the *dianoia* of the Ephesian Christians (Ephesians 1:18). His prayers for them continued until they became rooted and grounded in the love of God (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Some Christians might ask what are the biblical images of God's love? One of the first things that the love of God does is to remove all the wrong concepts and images of love that we have stored in our memories - images of the limited love of conditional love, imperfect images of human love, etc. To some the images are not formed yet but all they see is a light that shines upon them. There is one vision and image of love that all of us need to see clearly within our mind's eye; that is the image of Christ on the cross dying in love for us. We need to be completely immersed in His crucifixion, in His resurrection and in His enthronement. The purpose of the crucifixion, the resurrection and the enthronement of Christ is for us to be completely identified with Christ to experience this love of God (Ephesians 2:4-7). This vision and this image alone is what will transform our lives in experiencing the love of God. We need to know what it is like to be crucified WITH Christ (Galatians 2:20), to be raised up and seated TOGETHER WITH Christ (Ephesians 2:5-6). It is not just an intellectual concept, it has to be an experiential knowing of Christ from the cross to the throne!

How does one move from an intellectual concept to one of an experiential knowledge of Christ from the cross to the throne? The Holy Spirit is the key. The Holy Spirit has the ability to allow us to experience the love of

Christ on the cross and the power of His resurrection. Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to change our understanding of the whole concept of suffering. Instead of suffering becoming something to be tolerated, it becomes an opportunity to be identified with Christ for in a miniscule measure, it is our little cross (compared to Christ's cross). The apostles took delight in suffering for Christ, for it was another opportunity to identify with Him on the cross (Acts 5:41). Peter speaks about the continued suffering for bearing the name of Christ as an opportunity to partake of Christ's sufferings (1 Peter 4:13). Such identification with Christ on the cross would produce the glory that is to be revealed. The apostle Paul spoke of his sufferings for the Colossians and how he identifies it with the afflictions or sufferings of Christ (Colossians 1:24). Every time, we are reviled, rejected or persecuted becomes an opportunity to identify with Christ (Luke 6:22-23; John 15:18-21).

How do we view all these doctrines of suffering from the faith and Pentecostal perspective? We should see that those in Christ become a powerful Holy Spirit filled love sponge that can absorb every blow of evil and give out only the love of God. Every time you feel irritated or reach your limit, it is only because you have reached the limit of your own love. The sufferings for Christ allowed by God are but part of the growth process in our love! When someone close to you or near you (whether it be family or friend) does something that causes you pain or hurt, true love responds with kindness and mercy while the flesh would like to respond in self demonstration and self righteousness. If you find this type of response hard (that is responding in the love of God), then each time you feel the hurt or pain, meditate on the cross of Christ and absorb it as Christ absorbs the blows of the wicked on the cross. Remember that He felt your pain plus all the pain in the world that you and I can never comprehend. At the very moment when Stephen was dying from stoning, his physical body was in pain and I am sure his soul would have felt the anger and rejection of the people who persecuted him, Stephen was not looking at them. Stephen was looking at Christ! He saw heaven, he saw the glory of God, he saw Christ. And his last dying breath was one born of the love of God like Christ at Calvary – 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin' (Acts 7:55-60).

Has anyone reading this been close to the point of death in your suffering? Remember that Christ suffered and died, Stephen suffered and died, and yet out of their lips came forgiveness and love. We know that Christ could do it but what about Stephen? Stephen could do it because he kept his eyes on Jesus and allowed the same love of Jesus to flow through him. The apostle Paul declared that the love of Christ constrained him to gave his own life for others (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Paul constantly had the vision of Christ

dying on the cross because of His great love. The cross and the resurrection were the forefront consciousness of Paul (2 Corinthians 5:15-21).

I believe that many people do not know the love of God for themselves because they have no comprehension of the cross or of the resurrection. They only partially experienced it intellectually but have no true experiential lasting vision of the cross, the resurrection and the throne. We need to identify with these three experiences of Christ until it is in our daily consciousness. For in them is the fullness of God's love revealed both in the past, in the present and in the ages to come (Ephesians 2:4-7). This is the image of love that must be seared and ingrained into our daily consciousness above all images. Our *dianoia* must contain these experientially. Once this image is written in our hearts and in our minds, the intellectual aspect of understanding these and the emotional aspect of knowing these truths will fall into place.

In the book, I saw the Welsh Revival by David Matthews (Published 1951 by Moody Press), the author spoke of one of the greatest desires of Evan Roberts, and that was to be given a taste of Gethsemane (page 41, chapter 6 – A Glimpse of Gethsemane). At the peak of the Wales Revival, Evan Roberts fell to the floor of the pulpit like one mortally wounded, while tears flowed incessantly, his physical frame shook under crushing soul-anguish. Evan Roberts experienced the agonies of Gethsemane. There was an awesome presence of God in the church that day. When the author left the church that day, he found that he had been there ten hours and it felt like ten minutes. Christianity is not just doctrine and theology, it is an experience of God. Love is not just a doctrine or theology, it is an experience. For an experience to occur, we need to give time to God and wait in His presence. There is no greater vision than the vision of the cross, the resurrection and the throne. Each of these experiences must be a part of our lives.

Love is more caught than taught. It is not something that we can acquire through church attendance or seminars. It is learned by example and the greatest demonstration of love is that of Christ giving Himself to us. It cost God dearly to love us. It cost Christ His life to love us. Love is suffering when it is given to those who know not how to love. Yet it must be continuously and persistently given. For only unconditional love can break through the veil of darkness and evil that surrounds the hearts of many lives. Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). Bear in mind that to reach perfection of love, the giver of love (which is God and our Lord Jesus Christ) gave themselves sacrificially and unreservedly. Believe that perfect love can cast out fear. Walk in the confidence that love will win in the end for it is the highest way and many times the only way. And the good news is that love can be imparted to us by a vision of the cross of Calvary. As

Moses lifted up the bronze serpent and everyone who looked were cured of all their poison; so as Christ was lifted up on the cross, all who look and see Christ will have the poison of selfishness emptied out and be filled only with the life of love.

Love with the love of Christ which is imparted through the vision of the cross, the resurrection and the throne.

In Christ Jesus

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.19

The Suffering of Love

Dearly Beloved

I was meditating on the love of God throughout this week and realized that all our tears are caused by love. For example, we know that humans cry when they are sad or hurt but behind the sadness or hurt is either the parting (temporal or permanent) of a loved one or the loss of a loving relationship (rejection). Sorrow only came after the fall of mankind and will be eliminated in heaven (Genesis 3:16; Revelation 21:4). Imagine living in a world (heaven) where there is no sadness or tears. Only in perfection of love can such be possible.

We can examine scientifically the experience of sorrow but let us take some Bible examples to prove the point that all tears and sorrow are related to love (or the loss of it). There are implications of sorrow expressed in various places (eg. in the deaths of people) but we take only those where there is a direct mention of weeping or tears:

1. Hagar wept for she had just experienced rejection (partly her fault for despising her mistress) and alienation from Abraham's family plus the potential loss of her child, Ishmael, whom she loved (Genesis 21:16).
2. Jacob had just left his home, possibly in his mind permanently, and having experienced rejection from his brother, lifted up his voice and wept when he saw Rachel (Genesis 29:11). He must have missed his mother, Rebekah who loved him exceedingly (Genesis 25:28). Loss of love and the finding of new love in Rachel brought forth tears to Jacob.
3. Joseph missed the love of home and father exceedingly and asked about his father when he saw his brothers (Genesis 43:27). He had some love for his half brothers but when he saw his brother Benjamin, his family love was stirred and he rushed into his chamber to weep (Genesis 43:30). Joseph experienced anguish of soul when he was torn away from his family and sold by his brothers (Genesis 42:21). He especially named his son Manasseh (meaning *making forgetful*) because it took until he had a family in Egypt for him to forget all the loss of love of his family in Canaan (Genesis 41:51). Joseph suffered the loss of family love and especially his

father's favourite love over him when he was rejected and sold by his brothers; he must have cried many tears. When the possibility of love loss to at least be partially regained in his brother Benjamin, he was moved to tears. Indeed, we cry when we lose love and we cry when we find love. Love is the true reason we cry.

4. It is natural to cry at the loss of a loved one but when Aaron was freshly anointed for the Old Testament priesthood, he lost his sons Nadab and Abihu in one day at the temple sacrifice (Leviticus 10:1-3). Moses did not forbid Aaron from crying but he forbade him from leaving the tabernacle and joining the funeral of his sons lest he dishonoured the anointing oil upon him and died (Leviticus 10:6-7). Aaron was so sad that he and his remaining sons could not eat of the ritual sacrifices commanded of him (Leviticus 10:19). Aaron suffered the loss of love – the loss of his sons whom he loved dearly. Aaron refrained from food but in modern times some people are the opposite and turn to the love of food when they lose love as if in a sub-conscious manner, the eating of foods they love would replace the love they lost. Aaron lost the love for and of his sons and it led to the loss of appetite for food. Sometimes people who lose love start losing the love for other things around them as well. Humans react in both extreme pendulums when they lose love – they either channel their lost love to the loss of interest in all things they love or they subconsciously try to gain back the lost love by seeking to gain things as if they are a replacement of love lost. All the strange behaviours of human characters can be explained by these two extremes: an attempt to parallel the lost love by losing interest in all things or the opposite attempt to gain lost love by accumulating things, friends or environment to subconsciously gain back lost love or to hold on to what little of love that is left, even if it is temporal things or circumstances. Humans were made to exist in an environment of love – receiving love and giving love. For that reason, any changes to this environment, whether it be a temporal loss of love or a physical permanent loss of love through the home-going of a loved one, will produce a measure of suffering and tears.
5. David was a man of great passion and love. Even though his own son, Absalom had tried to kill him, David still could not refrain from weeping uncontrollably when Absalom died (2 Samuel 18:33). He was in an emotionally fragile state for he had experienced the

rejection of his son in his attempt to betray and overthrow David as king. He lost the love of his son and this loss of a love of a child for the parent is one of the most painful any parent (father or mother) can experience. His son died without reconciliation and that loss of love became physically permanent for David. David lost the love of and from his son and it almost cost him the loss of the love of his army. In this imperfect world, we must accept our losses and continue living. Those who fail to do so become permanently disabled in their heart. There is physical disability which some people suffer from birth while others in life but such people continue on to be heroes in the eyes of God and in their own eyes and their loving families because they are wrapped in an environment of love. In society, those who overcome great physical disability and triumph over them are highly admired because they are an inspiration to others. However, such people would not have been able to do so without the loving help of others. Others are born mentally disabled and yet when placed in an environment of love are able to excel to a great extent. The worst is that of the disability of the heart of love. That is when the heart cannot accept the loss of love and drowns itself in extreme behaviour of the pendulum in rejecting all love for people and things or in settling for the shallow love of things or people. Not only will they experience the loss of love greater but they will also create new losses of love which will further damage their already crippled heart of love. Thank God, that King David was refrained from his excessive sorrow and did not suffer the further loss of the love of his loyal subjects.

Having established the understanding that all human suffering arises from the loss of love, we need to understand that when God chose to create and love us, God also suffers each time we reject His love and walk in our own way. The heart of God was literally torn when He grieved over the state of mankind in the years before the flood (Genesis 6:6). If God could weep, the statement 'God grieved' would be equivalent to God shedding tears. Why did God grieve? After all, if a child made a plasticine toy and it broke, a child can rub it all together and start again. How much more God the creator of the universe! God grieved purely because He loved us. When one chooses to love, one potentially puts oneself in the position where that love can be rejected (loss of love) or where that love can be responded to with love (gain of love – joy).

God did cry! Through His son, Jesus when He was manifested in the flesh. Jesus was a man of tears (Hebrews 5:7). He was also known by people as the prophet Jeremiah because He was known to shed copious tears (Matthew 16:14). When He saw Jerusalem the last time as He approached it in His final days, He lamented over the city crying ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets and stoned them, how I would have gathered the children like a mother hen gathering the chickens under her wings’ (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34). In other words, how Jesus longed to hug the whole of His people in Jerusalem in spite of her rejection of His love for them. God the Father suffered because He loved us. Jesus suffered on the cross for our sin because He loved us. The Holy Spirit is grieved and suffers because He loves us.

To love is to suffer the potential of the loss of love. Yet it is better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all. It is the fear of rejection of love that prevents many people from walking in love towards others. Having been hurt so much, they choose to no longer love to their eternal loss. It is because of rejection that people fear to love God and trust Him with their entire lives. Having not seen unconditional love amongst humans, it is difficult for them to believe that God so loves us unconditionally. Also people have wrong concepts of the nature of God, which is why they don’t love God dearly. God will never and cannot ever reject you for God is love (1 John 4:16). You cannot flee from the presence of God’s love. If you ascend to the heavens, He is there and even if you make your bed in hell, He is there (Psalm 139:7-9). We must be persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). There is no way God will ever stop loving us and there is no place we can go where His love cannot reach us. It is always us who reject God’s love.

But if we choose to always respond to His love, we will find love everywhere. But remember this, to love is also to suffer the potential of loss of love from others but never from God. So if there is any one whom we should always keep loving, it is God. Once divinely connected to a permanent state of love in God and towards God, we will find an everlasting supply of love. For we will never suffer the loss of love from God and this truth in itself should sustain our ability to love throughout our entire lives. It should undergird every pain and suffering that we need to endure when we choose to love unconditionally.

The greatest, yes indeed, the greatest is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

In Christ's most precious love

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.20

The Sacrifice of Unconditional Love

Dearly Beloved

When you love someone, it will cost you something to express that love. Love without sacrifice is only admiration from a distance, lust for selfish possession, or mere sentimentality. For this reason Jesus said that one ought to love one's neighbour as oneself (Matthew 22:39). And John the apostle says that one cannot say one loves God without loving one's brother (1 John 4:20). A lawyer who understood the brilliance of Jesus' summary of the law in love towards God and man tried to reason the practical aspects of love away by asking, "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). That was when Jesus spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-37). Jesus then asked in regard to the priest who walked on the other side, the Levite who walked on the other side and the Samaritan who helped the poor injured man on the road, "Which of these three was neighbour to the man who fell among thieves?" The answer provided was 'he who showed mercy' (Luke 10:37).

It cost the Good Samaritan time, money and effort, to help the poor man by the roadside. He was not related to the man in any way and Jesus purposefully used the Samaritan knowing that Samaritans and Jews don't get along (similar to Jews and Arabs today – the story would have been likened to a Jew helping an Arab or vice versa). Love is free but love costs much to the one who gives love. It cost God everything to give His love for us through His son Jesus; it cost Jesus everything of His life to love us. You can give without loving but you can never love without giving. Normal giving is just giving something you have but love-type of giving gives a part of oneself with each act of love.

We learn to love by loving one person at a time. Because we are not omnipotent nor omniscient, we must grow by learning to love one person at a time. Most of the time that first person is a father or mother but sad are those who are orphans. For this reason, God loves orphans and widows for they have no one to love them and no one to love; and those who take care of these are blessed by God (Psalm 68:5; James 1:27). As humans we learn knowledge one step at a time, and that also applies to learning to love. We learn to love by loving one person at a time. When we succeed in giving out unconditional love to one person, there is a stamina and muscle we develop to give that same measure of unconditional love to everyone else we meet in life. After we succeed in giving unconditional love to one person, God will bring more and more difficult people across our paths to give us opportunity

to learn to love them with unconditional love. With each level of difficult person we learn to love unconditionally, we progress higher spiritually and acquire the same stamina and ability to love those at that level of difficulty. The greatest is to love even our enemies who hate us and wish us ill, for then, and then only shall we be perfect (Matthew 5:43-48).

The relationship of parent to child and child to parent is one of the first love relationships we enter into this life (and for those who are orphans, adopted parents). For this reason, God enshrines the sacredness of the parental and child love relationship in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12). It is not honour alone that God is after, rather it is agape love developed between child and parents. For when we love our parents, we will honour them. And this is a commandment that carries the promise of long life (Ephesians 6:1-4). Why do you think long life is linked to this love relationship between children and parents? What is life? Life is given that we might know love and know God through all that we experience in our lives. The promise of long life is linked to this commandment because the art of learning to love is first acquired when we love those who brought us into this life. If we fail in learning to love our parents who give us physical life, how can we learn to love God who gives us spiritual life and all life itself (spirit, soul and body)? Failure to learn to love and honour our parents would short circuit something deep within us that carries the life force. It would extinguish and shorten the life force within us thus shortening our life. This life force is love.

Many of the problems that people have in learning to love their friends, spouses, children, and every other type of people around them stem from the problems that they have in learning to love their parents or the failure of parents in pouring agape love into their lives. For this reason, in the revival of God, it always involves the turning of the hearts of the parents to the children and the children to their parents (Malachi 4:6). It is not just the worship and the word in the church that pleases God but it is the restoration of love between parents and children that pleases God (Colossians 3:20). The inability of many people to relate well to authority figures arises from the lack of love development for their parents. The inability of many people to love and interact with their spouses arises from the same lack of development.

By hook and by crook, some people make it to adulthood in spite and despite the lack of development in love between children and parents. Their next phase of love development comes when they either relate to their spouses and their friends. A critical love 'university' is entered when people marry their spouses and start a shared life between two persons seeking to be one flesh. This is another area to learn to love unconditionally but many

people fail to do so. And their failure to love their spouses would spill into an inability to relate to all other people and the rest of the world; with many being crippled for life. Because this aspect of learning to love one person at a time is so important, and God knowing that after learning child-parental love that the next level is to learn to live as one with one's spouse, God also enshrined the holiness and sacredness of the marriage relationship into the ten commandments (Exodus 20:14, 17). Learning to love one's spouse will help one to understand the love between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-30).

The first phase of learning to love one person at a time is child-to-parent relationship. The second phase of learning to love one person at a time is spouse-oneness relationship. The third phase of learning to love one person at a time is parent-to-child relationship. All these relationships in their human form help us to grow in love within our own beings and such developments become the basis by which we learn to love everyone else in the world. For those who are called to the single life, the phases can be acquired through adoption, extended families, friendships, church fellowships, etc. Sometimes our lack in the early development of love in our lives is strengthened by friendships or acquaintances who complement or are opposites from us. A miracle of love is brought forth when we learn of the love of God our Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ. An encounter with God's love can heal all the lack of love in our lives as God sheds His love abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). God's perfect love for us can cast out all fear in our lives for we loved because He first loved us (1 John 4:17-18). There is a healing and boldness in our heart to love everyone else once we are touched by God's love (1 John 4:16-17).

None of us had a perfect upbringing nor a perfect relationship with other humans, including our friends and spouse. For this reason we need the healing of our broken hearts by the anointing that is upon Jesus (Luke 4:18). He is indeed near to those who have a broken heart of love and want and desire to love again (Psalm 34:18). The reason everyone who finds it hard to love other people unconditionally is because, within themselves, they have a heart that is broken in some areas and in need of repair. A broken heart will only lead to more broken hearts. Only a heart healed and repaired by the love of Christ can love unconditionally and bring healing to others (Psalm 147:3). We all came to Christ with a heart needing mending and we must allow Him to love through us again. Choosing to stop loving people is choosing a path of darkness. We must always choose to love even if it is a difficult road that requires much sacrifice. A true parent will be willing to give his or her life for their child. A true spouse will be willing to die for their partners. Love is giving and giving is sacrifice. To love is to sacrifice

oneself at the altar of love for the object of one's love. Our first love must always be God but when we truly love God, we will love everyone else.

The greatest struggle in our lives is the struggle to keep loving from deep within our heart. When we win the battle of love in our hearts by allowing love to flow, we will win the battle of life. To love is to live. Not to love is to die even while the body keeps on existing. It is only true love that can give joy and satisfaction in life. And there is no greater joy than to sacrifice our lives and become the personification of love to those around us and to all of the world.

It is during the deeps of the decade of blood (1996 to 2006) that I learnt that no matter how broken one is, one can choose to love again; first your spouse and family, and then the rest of the world. We learn to love one person at a time. Start now no matter where you are. The road forward is the road of love. The road out of your dire straits is the road of love. I wrote the poem below at some of the darkest moments when the light of God's love shined through, I hope it helps you to learn to love again no matter what you have gone through:

Healing of the broken heart

*When love relationships end
Whether slowly or suddenly
The feelings are the same
The heart is broken in a thousand pieces
And the world around looks so different*

*Like the world has lost all its colour
Like living in a black and white TV
Things that make us roar with laughter
Now feels so dry and empty
Music that so inspires
Feels so hard to sing
Things that used to bring joy
No longer have the same effect
Fellowship we so desire
Has lost its close feeling*

*Pieces of the heart still cling
To love once experienced
Oh to be in love again
To share the heights of emotions
Pieces of the mind still dream*

*Of times of sweetness and shared bliss
One wonders whether one can love again
Or find another so close
To share the joys of love and closeness
With a fellow human being*

*It is so hard to let go
Of the highs of love once shared
It feels like time has now stood still
And the music has all faded
Yet the world still rushes by
And life beckons us to move on
The movements of our body
Are like walking in water
It is so hard to keep going on with life
The body performs the duties
But the mind and heart are far away
Still moving and experiencing
Each precious piece of memory and passion*

*The heart does heal with time
With a lot of gentle care
In time the world is filled with colours
And we can feel again
The joys of loving and being loved
Once again we can smell the flowers of spring
And once again we can feel the joy of laughter
For the heart that was broken a thousand ways
Has been healed and is whole once again*

May God always keep you loving through all circumstances. When you have conquered all people and all circumstances with the love of God, then you have become like God.

In the love of Christ Jesus

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.21

The love of God is the glory of God

Dearly Beloved

Of all the prayers prayed in the Bible, none in my mind occupies the most significant place as the prayer of Jesus in John 17. This prayer was prayed before Jesus went to Calvary yet it covers the whole church age and in a sense, eschatologically, sets in concrete the fact that one day, the church of Jesus Christ all through the ages, of every tribe and tongue, of every culture and language, of every denomination and governmental style will be one! Of course, since Jesus prayed this prayer, we can expect that it will definitely come to pass. We highlight certain portions of this prayer which is in line with our theme of God's love. Jesus prayed for the following:

1. That the unity of the believers in Him would become like the oneness of the Father, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit (John 17:21).
2. That the glory that He had with the Father would be given to us *that* we may be one as He and the Father are one (John 17:22).
3. That the church would be made perfect in one, that the world may know that God sent Jesus and that God the Father loved us as much as He loved Jesus (John 17:23).
4. That we may be where Jesus is and behold the glory which Jesus had before the foundation of the world (John 17:24).
5. Jesus had declared to us His Father's name that the love with which the Father loved Jesus may be in us and Jesus in us (John 17:26).

The Scripture clearly says that we are to be made perfect in one. This oneness will come because the glory that Jesus had is given to us. It is the glory which makes us one and not our oneness that brings the glory. What is this glory? In the Old Testament, when Moses asked to see God's glory, God's glory passed by through the Lord proclaiming His mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, goodness and truth – all qualities of God's love for us (Exodus 33:18; 34:6-7). The Lord constantly affirmed His love towards the Israelites (Deuteronomy 7:7-11). The New Testament is a new testament of glory, which is also a new testament of the love of God (John 1:14; 3:16). We are changed into the same image of God from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). God is love therefore the image of God is the image of perfect love, which is the image of Christ (1 John 4:8; Romans 8:29, 39). The greatest is love (1 Corinthians 13:13). It is obvious from all these Scriptures and many more, that the glory of God and the love of God are

two sides of the same coin! They are the very substance from the person and presence of God. To grow in love is to grow in the glory of the Lord! When love is perfected, the glory of God would also be perfected in our life.

In Ephesians chapter 3, Paul's prayers for the growth of the spirit man began with a prayer for the inner man to be strengthened so that the presence (or glory) of Christ might be increased in us (Ephesians 3:16-17). The dwelling of Christ within us is directly related to our growth in love, culminating with the fullness of God's presence within us (Ephesians 3:17-19). There is indisputably a direct link between the love of God and the presence or glory of God. Our final transformation in this life is that the glory of God would be seen upon us (Isaiah 60:1; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Since the glory of God and the love of God are one and the same, this final transformation is also speaking about our perfection in the love of God.

What does it mean to be perfect in love (1 John 4:18)? It means that we are exactly like Him in glory and nature. When Jesus prayed that we might be one by the glory that will be revealed to us, the glory He spoke of is the love of God from the foundation of the world (John 17:22, 23; Ephesians 1:4). When we are perfected in love, our heart beats with the heartbeat of God, our mind flows with the mind of Christ and our souls resonate with the compassion of Christ. We are perfectly one in Him. It is not our love but the love or glory of the Father that transforms us.

When we walk in this measure of oneness love, we will be able to demonstrate all the works of Jesus and greater works (John 14:12). We dwell in the secret place of the Most High when our hearts are set in love towards Him (Psalm 91:14). We are shown secret things which God does not show any others because of this perfection of love in Him (1 Corinthians 2:9). The love of God (the glory of God) within us would have made us accustomed to the brilliance of His light of glory and we can behold what others cannot behold. The goal in this life (for our soul) is thus to become a lover of God. Love and glory can only be received in measures and is a step by step process (2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 3:14-21). Knowing that we all are refracting different measures of love and glory directly proportional to our own inner soul transformation, we should also learn to walk only in the degree of light and love that we have received. It is possible to overstrain our physical muscles through too much exercise. It is also possible to overstrain our spiritual and soul muscles through walking beyond our faith level, beyond our love level and beyond our glory level. From glory to glory He is changing us with grace upon grace (2 Corinthians 3:18; John 1:14).

Walking in the perfect love of God is also complete freedom from consciousness of sin with just pure consciousness of God (Hebrews 10:2). The consciousness of God, of course, also includes the consciousness of His love flowing to and through us. This perfect flow is achieved by all believers at various moments in their lives. The key is not to just have it for a moment but as a life style and default consciousness. From the Spiritual point of view, we are also shining at our brightest when we are at our most loving (for the love of God and the glory of God are one and the same substance). At the peak and height of this same love and glory is also the peak and height of the greatest signs and wonders. In the book of Acts, the love of God in the Jerusalem church peaked at the point when they were one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32). Everyone was so moved by love that all things were shared in common and there was no poverty in their midst (Acts 34). It was at this height that a simple untruth caused the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). The light of glory was so strong in the church in Acts that even the shadow of Peter passing by brought healing to all who came (Acts 5:15). The Scriptures also record that everyone was healed (Acts 5:16).

Understanding that the love of God and the glory of God are one is paramount to flowing in the miraculous and in signs and wonders. The more love we have, the more glory we demonstrate. Even more important from an eternal point of view, to the degree that we have been transformed into the glory of God, to that degree will we be able to live close to God in eternity. Even on earth, when our spirits and souls are filled with the glory of God, a heavenly presence will always reside around us. All demons and even Satan himself is afraid of the glory and the love of God. Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

Where do we begin in this walk of perfect love? We begin by loving others, including our enemies, like Jesus did. Then will we be perfect in mercy like our Heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:36). Learn to love those around you and those who are in the circle of your life's path. Give love to all for that is the true path to glory. Christians who walk not in love do not understand this path and are mere believers but not disciples. By THIS shall all men know that we are disciples of Christ, that we love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34-35). There are many believers but not many disciples. The only mark of being a disciple of Christ is LOVE. Signs and wonders, power gifts, success, prosperity, provision, etc. are all side effects and not signs. The one and only mark that Jesus said that will differentiate those who are HIS DISCIPLES from those who merely believe in Him is the mark of love. Loving our neighbour is loving those who happen to be along our life's path. We do not have to traverse sea and land to demonstrate God's love to others. We do so right now by loving those

who are in our immediate circle of life and then also those further out in our life's path. The Good Samaritan did not ask for, nor did he look, for someone along the road to care and love; the poor man attacked by robbers happened to be along the same road he took (Luke 10:33-34). Both the Levite and the priest on that same path purposefully changed the side of the road they were walking to avoid helping the poor man (Luke 10:31-32). There are none more blind than those who will not see. For the Levite and the priest, they chose not to see or know the poor man lying along the roadway. They were a disgrace to their Levitical and priestly heritage for they were supposed to be the cream of the religious crop. Similarly, ministers and Christians are a disgrace to the Lord Jesus Christ whom they proclaim if they do not walk in the love of God. In trying to follow their ten thousand spiritual and religious commandments and rules, they neglect the most important commandment of them all – love one another as Jesus loved us.

Knowing that we grow in love and glory by degrees, Christians should not feel too discouraged if they find themselves not walking perfectly in love all the time. Be patient with yourself and others as God is patient with you and others. Yet, the desire and the urge to do so must be the strongest desire we ever feel for the pursuit of God is achieved by the pursuit to walk in love. The answer to every prayer, the key to every open door, the breakthrough moment for every area is found in one main principle – love God with all of your entire being and let His love flow through your entire being for those around you. Feel His heartbeat of love. Meditate on the love of Christ through His life as recorded in the gospels. See every breath of Jesus and every thought of Jesus as one filled with the fullness of love; for Jesus is indeed love personified. The glory of Jesus when He walked on earth was powerful because His love was powerful.

In the depths and pain of His cosmic redemption death and atonement for us on the cross, Jesus took time for a very personal matter – the taking care of His mother by the apostle John (John 19:25-26). There is always time for love whether it be to one or to an infinity of God's creation. If we don't take time to love, to grow in love and to be loving; we have missed the most important point to all of this life. Growing in love and growing in the glory of God are priorities that we must schedule our time for. We will always give time to what we deem the most important in our lives. Understand that Jesus left us one great commandment, and that is the commandment to love one another as He loved. We must take time to cultivate that into our lives and schedule, starting with those around us.

May the love of God in Christ and the glory of God from the foundation of the world be your daily experience.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.22

O How He loves us

Dearly Beloved

One of the most simple but beautiful words in the Bible is the word ‘so.’ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). The word ‘so’ has been used 224 times in the New Testament of which about 174 times it has been translated as ‘so’ in the KJV Bible. It originates from the Greek word ‘*houto*’ which means ‘*in this manner.*’ Literally, ‘THIS!’ (with emphasis). It is to highlight the extent of God’s love for us that ‘THIS (*He did!*)! By giving us His only begotten Son.’ This emphasis is also carried on in the following sample passages:

Romans 5:15 But not as the offence so also is the free gift...

Romans 5:18 Even so by the righteousness of one...

Romans 5:19 So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Romans 5:21 Even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Imagine 224 times the word ‘*houto*’ has been used to emphasize a particular point and act. While the English language uses phrases like ‘very, very’ or exclamation marks, the Greek language uses this emphasis to express the depth and width of an act or condition. Like Paul expresses in his prayers, the width, the length, the depth and the height of God’s love that passes understanding (Ephesians 3:19). If you ever thought that you have understood God’s love, then you have only understood your own limited knowledge of the meaning of love for God’s love will always be BEYOND our understanding! What is the meaning of the width, the length, the depth and the height of God’s love? We could try to express it as wide as the ocean, as long as time, as deep as the bottomless pit and as high as the heavens yet it would still be greater than all these phrases and expressions.

If our eyes were open to the Spiritual World now, we would be able to see the numerous angels whom God assigns to help not just His covenant people but also those who do not know Him and those who even hate Him through their ignorance. For God indeed makes the sun to rise over the evil and over the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:45). I am constantly amazed whenever I see the many angels that are

helping people who couldn't care less about God or others, yet God still loves them and cares for them night and day. He holds the whole world oh so gently in His loving hands. And whenever He couldn't prevent man's own recompense for his own evil or bad choices, there are none who feel the grief and pain more than God Himself. Oh if you could only see the grief He bear whenever evil or destruction happen to any one man or woman even when they do not know Him. He is indeed the Father who feels the pain of all His creation (Genesis 6:6; Romans 8:23).

Hear the heart cry of our Father God in the following verses when Israel turned away from God:

Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.

Hosea 11:3 I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them.

Hosea 11:4 I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love,... I stooped and fed them.

Hosea 11:8,9 How can I give you up, Ephraim?...My heart churns within Me, My sympathy is stirred... I am God and not man...

Many times when we read the Bible, we only hear what we want to hear but we do not hear the full truth. If we only could hear the grief of the Lord each time a human suffers. If we only could hear the love song of the Lord that rings right through the Bible. If you were ever grieved by the suffering of mankind at any point in the Bible and at any point in human history, think about what the suffering of God must be like! It was the preachers of old who like the Pharisees have painted a picture of an unforgiving, bad tempered God. They have not correctly portrayed the true heart of God. It is the preachers who are bad tempered and self-righteous and not God. It is the preachers who delight in punishment with glee and not God. God was suffering with every human pain, with every human tear, with every human loss and with every human heart ache.

It was Moses who was angry at the people and struck the rock the second time and not God (Exodus 20:10-12). It was Jonah who was exceedingly displeased and angry when judgment did not fall on Nineveh and not God (Jonah 4:1). It was the Pharisees who were filled with rage and anger when a poor paralysed man was healed on the Sabbath day and not Jesus (Luke 6:10-11). It was the Pharisees who would rather people remained sick on the Sabbath day than have them well and not Jesus. The Pharisees were angered

at Jesus for healing on the Sabbath and Jesus was angered and grieved at their hard heartedness for lack of love and compassion to the sick and suffering (Mark 3:5). The Pharisees plotted to destroy Jesus while Jesus planned to die for the world (Mark 3:6). It was the Pharisees who cast out from the synagogue a man healed of blindness rather than accept the miracle of healing (John 9:13-34). It was the Pharisees who would go so far as to plot to kill Lazarus rather than accept the loving Jesus in raising him up from the dead (John 11:36; 12:9-10).

We do not deny the fact that God does have the right to judge and be angered at our sinful ways but at all times, deep in the heart of God there is always the creator's fatherly love for His own. Vengeance is NEVER our right, it is God's (Romans 12:19). We humans do not have the capacity to exercise judgment or vengeance correctly. We always err when we take it into our hands to call down fire on the innocent. What do we profit if our enemy is dead? Another soul would have been lost to hell fire. We only profit when our enemy is turned to God and heaven gains a new convert. God has not delegated the authority to exercise vengeance. Knowing our easy lack of love, shallowness of perception and quickness to self-righteousness, God has kept that right to Himself. For He alone truly loves, truly cares and truly knows the beginning and the end of all human hearts; and thus can judge correctly. We must keep watch for the nature of the Pharisee that is within each of our flesh, and we can so easily condemn ourselves when we condemn others. God help us when that happens for then we would have become a brood of vipers to whom the condemnation of hell belong (Matthew 23:33); being sons of hell we make others twice the sons of hell (Matthew 23:15).

The crux of the issue is that the Pharisees have religion without love. Religion without love produces fanatics and suicide bombers. And this applies to Christianity as much as it applies to any other religion. May God save us from:

Religion without love

Worship without passion

Service without sacrifice

Prayer without surrender

Charity without heart

Work without life.

We become what we believe; we are transformed by what we see. If we cannot believe that God has unconditional love than we will never have unconditional love. If we cannot have a vision of a loving God without fear or favour then we can never be a loving person. Sadly, many Christians are brought up by fear more than by love, by threats more than by motivation, and they end up exactly like those who hurt them. The thing that they never want to become, they do become. For fear is as much an attractive force as love. Only in perfect love can fear be truly cast out (1 John 4:18). We can respect and love God without fearing Him in the wrong way. Every disciple of Jesus had the privilege of leaning on Him and becoming the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23). The bosom of Jesus belongs to Peter, James, Andrew, Bartholomew and every other disciple whom Jesus loved and called. It did not belong only to John the apostle. Yet, only John laid claim to the bosom of Jesus because he was not fearful of Jesus but rather he was confident of Jesus' love for him. There is a wrong fear that is paralysing and self-defeating and there is the fear of God that emboldens a person. It is our own fear that keeps us from being close to God and not God who keeps us from being close to Him. We are told to come boldly to the Throne of Grace because we all tend to be cowardly when we approach Him. This ungodly fear will only be eliminated when we feel comfortable in the presence of God; when we are supremely confident in the greatness of His love for us. Not that He loved us but that He SO loved us and will never ever reject us.

How much does God love us? He loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). He loved us so much that He demonstrated His love toward us that while we were sinners, Christ died for us; while we were enemies of God, Christ gave Himself for us (Romans 5:8, 10). He loved us as much as He loved Christ (John 17:23). Imagine the greatness of the love of the Triune God flowing between the Godhead. That is the same measure of love by which He has loved us. No wonder nothing in hell, earth or heaven can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:39).

The end result of God's love towards us is that we love one another AS He loved us. We can only love others in direct proportion to us having been loved by God and others (1 John 4:19). Those who have successfully integrated the love of God within them are able to love others AS He has loved them (John 13:34-35). The measure by which we love people is the measure of our true quantity. If we find ourselves reaching limits in which we can love others, than we simply have found those exact areas in which the Father's love has not reached our hearts yet. Open more to the love of God and let it fill those secret rooms and chambers in our heart. We do not grow to love like God overnight but we grow to love like Him as we let Him

love through us. It is not our love but His love in us (John 17:26). Note how the measure of love within us is directly proportional to the indwelling Christ within us (Ephesians 3:17). Let more of Christ fill your thoughts, your heart and your being and proportionally your love will grow to the same measure of Christ within.

The bosom of Christ belongs to you (John 13:23-25). You are the beloved of God. You are the disciple whom Jesus loved. Christ is in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). The Father loves you as much as He loves Christ (John 17:23). The bosom of the Father belongs to you. You are seated together with Christ in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6-7).

You are greatly loved

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.23

The loveliness of every soul in God's eyes

Dearly Beloved

In order to comprehend the width, length, depth and height of God's love we need to be able to see through God's eyes and heart. All our ability to love has been limited by our experiences in this life (from foetus to adulthood). Until and unless we break free from our own experiential limitations, we will never be able to fully comprehend God's love.

God is the Father and Creator of all life, all souls and all spirit beings. There is a tenderness that one has when one is the source and creator of life. A tiny, tiny measure is seen in the sacrificial love that parents have for their children. In the eyes of many mothers, if the most wicked criminal were their own son, he would still have some qualities worth redeeming. The ability of parents and lovers to see good in the object of their love is beyond comprehension. In the eyes of God, every human soul has some good qualities and beauty yet unlocked. For God has seen the end of all evil in our future and thus dares to allow evil to exist alongside good. We humans find it difficult to keep a loving attitude towards the most hideous of human monsters who show evil in their lives especially when they destroy millions of others. Yet God alone can see some good there that He still would have sent His son if they were the only ones left in the world.

God loved us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8). We were not just sinners, we were enemies in the sight of God (Romans 5:10). We were evil and sinners in His sight, yet He loved us! Many of us cannot understand this unconditional love of God in the same way that Jonah did not understand God's love and mercy. The Assyrians were the most wicked and evil of all the people who had conquered Jerusalem. Some of their deeds according to historians were the skinning and flaying of people while still alive, killing babies and children, pregnant women pierced alive with the sword, and various other methods of evil and torture that are not even imaginable in our modern days. Their wickedness came right up to the throne of God (Jonah 1:2). Yet God sent Jonah to warn them and when they responded to Jonah's preaching and repented, God forgave them. Jonah hated them so much that he did not take delight in God's pardoning them and God had to teach Jonah through a plant (Jonah chapter 4). Many of us would have been displeased with God and even angry like Jonah was (Jonah 4:1). This is how we feel towards all those evil people in our recent history. Jonah would rather die than see them forgiven by God (Jonah 4:3).

Many Christians feel what they call righteous indignation such that some extreme ones have even advocated taking the law into their own hands. Foolish ones, how can they make a right with two wrongs? Others advocate that the law severely punish and remove such dirt life from the face of the earth. Now I do realize that this imperfect planet needs the law and a system of good government that deals severely with lawlessness in proportion to its wickedness (Romans 13:1-7). It is only right that for society and civilization to exist and grow to its height, the evil and the lawless must be dealt with and put away. Such principles are righteous and right and even applied in the Spiritual World where God banishes and imprisons spirits that disobey (2 Peter 2:4; Jude v6). However, there is a big difference between God meting out judgment and humans judging. With God His anger is only on the surface to show His displeasure but His heart is always full of love. With humans, the anger is deep within (sometimes the only force felt) and most of the time there is a complete absence of love.

Judgment in condemnation and vengeance is NOT our right. We are told not to judge and that vengeance is the Lord's (Matthew 7:1-3; Romans 12:19). This is not referring to judgment of things, teachings and prophecy (1 Corinthians 2:15; 14:29; Philippians 1:9), it is referring to judging and condemning another human being eternally. For everyone makes judgments in life and situations in order to make the right decisions. We judge things, situations, doctrine, practices, etc. but not people. Only God has the right to judge people eternally. Those who work as judges or magistrates would have to do their jobs righteously but none of them are eternal judges. Only Christ is the eternal judge of finality (Acts 17:31). Even an earthly judge, being human, can feel disgust or some anger at the crimes, evil and lawlessness that they judged but then at the end of the day, they must not judge based on their feelings, they must judge based on the law without fear or favour. Feelings of anger at other humans can be real but we must never let the sun go down on our anger (Ephesians 4:26). This both means never to let the anger become our attribute but to let it pass quickly before the day is out. Our attribute should always be love, love and love.

Love feels disgust at sin and evil and even anger but love is not the natural attribute feeling for us. Neither is God's anger and hatred of evil His attribute. Jesus loved righteousness and hated lawlessness (Hebrews 1:9). Yet, the attribute of Jesus is never hate, only love, love and love. The great difference between humans and God is that humans completely lose their love for those who are evil in their midst. God never loses His ability to feel and show love to those who are bad and evil. The Lord Jesus Himself showed great love to Judas even when He knew that he was dishonest and going to betray Him. And if the Lord Jesus had not kept loving Saul who was kicking at Him and persecuting His disciples, we would not have the

story of Paul the apostle. Stephen, filled with love, prayed that Saul and the others responsible for his death would be pardoned (Acts 7:60). Stephen was so full of love that they saw the glory of God on Stephen for his face shone like an angel (Acts 6:15). Stephen saw the glory of God and was experiencing 2 Corinthians 3:18 (Acts 7:55).

It is only natural for us to feel hatred towards evil and disgust at wickedness for we were made to only see beauty in righteousness and holiness. It is however not right for us to feel such feelings to the entire abolition of all feelings of love towards any creature of God. Should the feelings become part of our character, then we have actually allowed ourselves to become imperfect. How could God keep having love for all His creation even in the midst of such terrible evil and wickedness?

1. God can see the potential while all of us have given up.
2. God still feels ownership over His creation while we are totally divorced from evil.
3. God knows the future and will keep on reaching towards His creation until all is perfected.
4. God's love has no end but ours has an ending.
5. God's love is unconditional while ours is conditional.

We must raise our ability to love to the level of God. We must acquire the ability to see beauty where all is ashes, to see good where all is evil, to see love where all is hate. Only then can we love as God loves. Also what we are able to see is limited by who we are. A covetous person will notice others who are covetous. A greedy person will see greed in others. A proud person will see only pride in others. What we notice most in others are the things that we secretly treasure in our selves. Also what we hate within us is also that which we tend to see and hate in others for love and hate are closely linked in its ability to attract the similar things within us. What do we love? What do we hate? We become conscious of what we love or hate. Negative emotions are as powerful in their ability to manifest as are positive emotions. What we like in ourselves, we will also like in others; what we love, we will love in others; and what we hate, we will hate in others. Our very ability to love and relate to others is equal to the same ability that we have relating to ourselves. We are limited by our very own selves and not by God. Thus we must cast aside all these limitations that grow into our lives through the natural mind and flesh and take on the limitless quality of the Spirit of God.

How can we be perfect and loving like God unless we also find the power of love within us even when we are drowned with raw emotions of hate

towards sin and wickedness? Never ever let the sin, evil and imperfection in others around you rob you of the ability to keep a loving attitude towards them. Instead let love always be your default attribute. Then will we be perfect like our Heavenly Father is perfect. We must seek to find good where there is only evil, love where there is only hatred and joy where there is only pain and suffering. The day we can discover these, then are we on our way to becoming more like God. Never ever, ever, let hate, bitterness, disgust and all such negative feelings become a part of our natural and default attributes. To do so is to have lost the greatest battle for personal transformation.

If God's love is even in the lowest hell, surely we can experience His love anywhere else in this present life no matter how bad it seems (Romans 8:38-39). Look for love and you will find it. Look for beauty in others and you will see it. Look for attachment to them by love and you will feel the love that God feels for them. Every soul who has come to this earth is lovely in the sight of God. Even one of them would have been worth more than the whole world (Mark 8:36). They are all precious to God. God still feels connected to each soul in the same way that we feel connected to our physical body. We would not cut off our own hands or our own legs, thus God would not cut off His love to any of His creation no matter how imperfect they seem to be.

Let us feel and see this unconditional love that God perpetually has with His own creation. God is patient, kind, longsuffering, joyful – all the attributes of love. He feels this love intensely towards each one of us as much as He feels it towards all His creation. We need to grow in our intensity of God's love. Let there never be a moment when love does not breakthrough.

Keep meditating on the purest and final display of love in Christ. Meditate on the supreme picture of love – Christ at Calvary. Always know that the glory of God, the power of God and the wealth of God flows only through the pathways of love with all discernment-Philippians 1:9.

In Christ Jesus

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 5.24

The power of God's love

Dearly Beloved

We know the greatness of God's power and presence as shown throughout the Bible. We also know that all that God has ever done throughout the Bible was due to men and women of faith. For without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Yet behind all the power of His presence, the power of faith is the power of love. Love is the energy which energizes faith (Galatians 5:6). When Paul wrote about the spiritual gifts, he spoke of a more excellent way (1 Corinthians 12:31). All the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit need to be channelled in the right way. Power in itself is not useful unless it is harnessed. Raw power in the natural realm, whether it be fire, electricity, water, nuclear, etc. is practically useless until it is channelled to produce the right results. The principle of the anointing is manifestation, understanding and channelling or impartation. When we have a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, we need to understand what it is and means and after understanding, we need to have the love of God to apply it. It is this last area which many Christians fail in. They have done all the prayer and fasting and meditation until they receive a manifestation. It took them time to understand the manifestation but through the study of the Word, the understanding came but alas many do not have enough of God's love to channel the power of the Holy Spirit. The love of God is the force that harnesses all the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and brings edification out of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the fivefold offices. Without love, tongues are but sounds, prophecy and understanding mysteries is as nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). Paul calls love a more excellent way. We need to know the way of the Holy Spirit.

What is involved in knowing the more excellent way? Way involves methodology and application. In all of life, all theories and inventions boil down to one thing and one thing only if it is to be beneficial – its method of application. Through the love of God, we can understand the unfathomable way of the Holy Spirit. It is not so much a formula or a set pattern method as it is to feel and know the heart of God. One who has a sense of God's love would have a sense of what is the right thing to do in any situation especially when the Holy Spirit manifests. For the preacher, a sense of what God wants to do in each meeting or each message; for the business person, a sense of what to do in a project or opportunity that opens along one's pathway; for the professional, a sense of what creativity will fit the song (musician), painting (artist), food (chef), etc. That all important sense of 'what to do in application of a truth or revelation' comes only through the

sense of God's love. We only discover the specifics to a way when we are filled with God's love as much as we are filled with God's truth.

One reason why spiritual methodology is in the sense of God's love is because it is flowing out of a deep, deep spiritual intuition. It is not the soul that can apply the method properly but the spirit of man within him. And this application will be imperfect if it has to flow through the limitations of the soul. When things are done perfectly, they always flow from intuition. This is true in the natural as well as in the spiritual. Try playing music by method and you will get stuck but when playing by an inner intuitive flow of music, the composition or tune or song just fits correctly. Try playing badminton or tennis by step by step robotic method and you will never get into the 'flow of optimum performance.' For optimum performance in anything, it has to rest deep within our intuitive sense rather than just our cognitive sense. This same principle applies to all creative and spiritual work, especially the ministry of God in the church. We need to tap upon our spiritual instincts that come through love rather than through our intellect. The intellect is more an observer and appreciates the flow of work being done instinctively.

The New Covenant is such that God desires that all of us will have the law of God written and put into our hearts and our minds (Hebrews 8:7-10; 10:16). The impartation will be so powerful that the Bible declares that none of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother saying 'know the Lord' for all shall know the Lord (Hebrews 8:10). Now why is it that in two thousand years of Christianity we still have not got the church to such a perfect state? The reason is that we are trying to achieve this by intellectual process rather than by the impartation of love. If the church has to achieve perfection only through the intellectual process another ten thousand years will not be enough. God has designed a system by which we will all instinctively know what the Lord wants to do and what the Lord feels – flowing in His love. This love was imparted into our hearts on the day that we were born again (Romans 5:5). And instead of teaching Christians to learn to yield and flow in this love of God in their hearts, the historical church has been trying to get Christians to know how to do God's Will by the intellectual process. A horse does not have to intellectually learn how to run, it does it from day one. If we truly learn to yield to this powerful love of God shed abroad in our hearts, we will know what to do in every area of our Christian life! It will be spiritually instinctive.

The only thing that holds back Christians from flowing in the love of God, with their new nature born of the Spirit of God, is fear. We are afraid to let go. We demand that we intellectually know before we move. If such were the case, there would not have been Scriptures like Proverb 3:5, 6 that says,

‘Trust the Lord your God with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding but in all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.’ We are not putting down or minimising the importance of intellectual training and renewal of the mind. There is a place for that but we need to emphatically tell all Christians that within themselves is the power of God’s love that will harmonize with their hearts and enable them to know the right thing to do in every situation. That means that for each of us, whenever we are in a situation that needs God’s guidance, all we have to do is spend time meditating on the love of God. As we do so, we release the flow of God’s love within us and when we are filled with God’s love, we will know what to do. For God is love and His voice of love will easily be heard in a heart filled with love. Love is the key to God’s perfect Will in every situation. And many times we have to trust our heart and not our mind, especially when the heart is filled with God’s love. Contrarily, when the heart is not filled with God’s love, it becomes a deceitful heart that cannot be relied on or trusted. For out of the evil heart will proceed evil (Matthew 15:18). That is why it is so important to teach on God’s love until we are filled in our hearts and minds with the love of God. It is a very powerful position that Satan and demons are afraid of. The thing that the devil and demons are most afraid of is the love of God. It has the power to banish their very presence (1 John 4:18). Fill your spirit, soul and body with God’s love and you will be filled with power beyond your imagination.

The epistle of 1 John is an epistle of love, yet it speaks of the anointing within which is so powerful that one does not need anyone to teach us because it teaches us all things (1 John 2:27). This anointing within is the result of His life, His light and His love within us (1 John 2:10; 3:14). John even goes as far as to say that we have the seed of God within us (1 John 3:9). Surely this seed of God within us, when released, will cause us to walk in God-likeness. The overall theme is again that of yielding to the new nature of God within us, which is the nature of love. This new nature of God’s love within us teaches us all things and guides us through all situations.

The love of God is the most powerful force on earth for it is the base for all other forces and energies of God and it is also the end result and goal for all energies and forces (1 Corinthians 13:13). It is because of God’s love for the Israelites that all the mighty works of the Old Testament in protecting them was demonstrated (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). This would have included all the power demonstrated in taking them out of Egypt, the power of the Lord over nations mightier than the Israelites, the grace to even stop the sun and moon in their orbits just to let the power of the Lord defeat all the enemies. It is this same love that flowed through the Father to send His son Jesus to us and that flowed through Jesus in all His miracle working power. At the

highest point of the power of God in the book of Acts, it was also the highest point of love demonstrated (Acts 4:33-34). It seems like there is nothing in heaven, earth or hell that can withstand against the love of God. We are only more than conquerors through the love of God (Romans 8:37). Many people cannot imagine that love is a power. The Bible says that the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet (Romans 16:20). Now who could have imagined peace to be so powerful? And peace came from love and is one of the fruit flowing from love (Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 13). Imagine how powerful love must be!

The only one possible barrier to the love of God is human free choice to reject that love. However, even in such an atmosphere, the love of God is still the only power that can persuade and woo us unto God. It won our hearts and minds to God while we were yet sinners. God did not wait for a response, He showed and demonstrated the power and extent of His love. We don't need a thousand arguments to reason people to God, we only need one reason – an act or demonstration of His love. God did not send a thousand angels nor a million lightning bolts to convince us to follow Him. God did one supreme sacrifice of which we have no answer – He gave His love. He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32).

The peace of God is so powerful that it garrisons our heart and our mind (Philippians 4:7). It is so powerful that God demonstrating His peace can crush the devil under our feet (Romans 16:20). The love of God is even more powerful as it is the very root source power of peace. It completely regenerates our inner nature and gives us a new nature, an anointing, inputs a new law within our heart and our mind. It not only crushes Satan, it casts him out and eradicates all memories of his very works and presence. Satan cannot exist in an atmosphere of God's love. The love of God is the greatest and the most powerful force in the Universe. It is so powerful that one of us alone cannot comprehend and receive it in fullness. It takes the whole body of Christ together to taste a portion of the width, the length, the depth and the height of the love of God (Ephesians 3:18).

Our prayer for each of you is that God would strengthen your inner man with might that Christ in all the fullness of His love and power may dwell in you mightily such that you would be filled with the fullness of God.

In Christ Jesus

Peter Tan