

# The Storm (Sacrifice) author unknown

**After a few of the usual Sunday hymns, the church's pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and, before he gave his sermon that evening, he briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening.**

In the introduction, the pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest childhood friends and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the church and share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service. With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak. "A father and son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific coast," he began, "when a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high, that even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized." The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in his story. The aged minister continued with his story. "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life – to which boy he would throw the other end of the life line. He only had seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian and he also knew that his son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the

torrent of waves. As the father yelled out, "I love you, son!" he threw the life line to his son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night.

His body was never recovered. By this time, the teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister's mouth. "The father, he continued, knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son's friend. How great is the love of God that he should do the same for us. Our Heavenly Father sacrificed His only begotten Son that we could be saved. I urge you to accept His offer to rescue you and take a hold of the life line He is throwing out to you." With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair as silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a



brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal. Within minutes after the service ended the two teenagers were at the old man's side. "That was a nice story," politely stated one of the boys, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian." "Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face. He once again looked up at the boys and said, "it sure isn't very realistic, is it? But I'm standing here today to tell you that story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His Son for me. You see, I was that father and our pastor is my son's friend." 

## Love - The Most Effective Tool

by Joseph Hovsepien

**Isn't it wonderful that the powerful force behind the gospel of Jesus Christ is love?**

The most important element in the building of Christ's Church is very simply love – something we often take for granted.

Love is the essence of God's nature; the perfection of human character and the ultimate power in the universe. Love is also the Church's most powerful tool. Unfortunately, we sometimes don't possess, let alone use, this effective instrument. Christians ask God for all kinds of great gifts but neglect love. Spiritual gifts are wonderful, but love is the greatest of all gifts.

Churches that seek supernatural experiences more than Christian holiness and growth very often end up divided, confused and carnal. The church of Corinth had this problem. The Apostle Paul deals with the question of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 because this was their main preoccupation. He closes the chapter with these words:

*"...covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way."* 1 Corinthians 12:31  
Paul then devotes a whole chapter to teaching about love. He made three main points.

# Power, Love and Discipline

by Joseph Hovsepian

**There is a misconception in the world that believing in God, heaven and hell, and life after death and following Christ's teachings faithfully, is a sign of weakness and the result of being timid, fearful, insecure, unhappy and not very intelligent or, as many would say, "wimpy."**

Little does the world know that it is completely the opposite. The born-again believer no longer relies only on his own strength and abilities but, being connected to the source of all power, wisdom and love, enjoys the supernatural pleasures and gifts that come from God through His Holy Spirit.

*"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."* (2 Timothy 1:7,8)

Here the Apostle Paul is talking about the Holy Spirit, who indwells the true believer. The Holy Spirit does not generate fear in us, but rather He brings power, love and discipline. Every believer needs all three.

God gives us, through the Holy Spirit, a spirit of power. Unlimited strength is at our disposal. The Apostle Paul is writing this letter to Timothy while he is in prison and is about to be martyred. Now, does Paul sound like a timid man? Not at all! When a religious leader, sitting safely in his ivory tower sends a letter, or writes a book telling people not to worry or be afraid because they will be protected by the Spirit... that is theory. But when someone who is in prison and about to unjustly die, writes that...

that is power; that is a real manifestation of power, that is experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit... not just talking about it. Through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, the believer can serve and live without fear, persevere patiently, suffer triumphantly and even die with dignity.

God has also given us a spirit of *love*. It is our love for God that drives out all fear and makes us willing to give ourselves to Christ, whatever the cost may be. *"...the fruit of the Spirit is love..."* (Galatians 5:22)

Our love for Christ, for the Word of God, for other believers and for the unbelievers comes from the Holy Spirit. *"...the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us."* (Romans 5:5)

In fact, it is our love for our fellow man that makes us willing to endure all kinds of persecutions and abuses and to repay them with kindness. If you are filled with the Spirit of God, then you know what I am talking about.

The Holy Spirit also gives us *discipline* and self-control. We must use discretion and not act rashly or foolishly. No matter what the circumstances, we should act carefully and "keep our cool." This kind of discipline does not come easily or naturally. Our nature says, "Act quickly", and then our responses are usually based on our emotions rather than on logic or love.

Our best example of someone demonstrating all three characteristics – power, love and discipline – is, of course, Jesus Christ. But many others have followed in His footsteps. The question is, "Are we as the Church and as individuals walking in His footsteps? Are you experiencing the Holy Spirit's power, love and discipline in you?"

If yes, praise the Lord. If you're not sure or don't know how to receive this power, remember Jesus' words:

*"...ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you..."* (Acts 1:8)

And we receive the Holy Spirit only by being born-again, through the new birth. ☑

**Through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, the believer can serve and live without fear, persevere patiently, suffer triumphantly and even die with dignity.**

## Love Is Essential

Many people desire the gift of preaching or teaching, both of which are good. However, the Bible points out that even if one could speak like an angel, if he had no love, he would be a useless sound. Preaching without love is just making a noise. Praying without love is just empty speech. Giving without love is just a ceremony.

Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. *"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him. Feed my sheep."* (John 21:17) Although Peter had given up everything for Jesus, it was his love that was required more than anything else.

## Love Is Effective

Love is patient and kind; it doesn't burn with jealousy. Envy is a terrible sin! Love is not boastful or proud. It isn't rude or self-seeking. It is forgiving – in other words, it doesn't remember wrongs. Love doesn't delight in seeing others suffer. It always protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres.

If you can replace the word "love" in the phrases above with your name and end up with a truthful statement about yourself, then you are effective as a Christian. You are "successful" in reaching others with the love of God.

## Love Is Eternal

Love never fails. The original Greek says that love will never stop existing – unlike all other gifts. Why? Because God is love and God is eternal!

Let's ask God to give us the ability to love. As Paul said to the Corinthians, *"Follow after love, and desire spiritual gift..."* I Corinthians 14:1. ☑