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God's love – Pt 3 – God's love is perfected in us when we show charity to our brethren.

In our previous study we established that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart of a believer by the Holy Ghost, and His love is perfected in a believer when they keep God's word and love their brethren. What does it mean in practise for a believer to love his brethren and perfect God's love in him? He begins with faith, and adds virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, which culminates in charity – which is the bond of perfectness.

Scriptures upon which this teaching is founded.

The love of God is perfected in a believer when they love their brethren. For a believer to love his brethren, giving all diligence he must add to his faith:

1. virtue and knowledge.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge" (2Pet.1: 5).

The word "virtue" only occurs in the New Testament and for a meaning within our context let us consider 2Pet.1: 3, "According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue". Hence virtue is linked to godliness, or moral excellence. And we add to our faith virtue and knowledge of God.

2. temperance, patience and godliness.

"And to knowledge temperance...to temperance patience; and to patience godliness" (2Pet.1: 6).

The word temperance means self control. So believers add self control, then patience, and then godliness – which is holiness.

3. brotherly kindness, and charity – the bond of perfectness.

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2Pet 1: 7) – c.f. – "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col.3: 14).

We add to godliness kindness toward our brother and to brotherly kindness we add charity, which the scriptures affirm we are to do fervently towards our brother (1Pet.3: 8).

Additional comments on our three points.

Brotherly love is clearly made up of kindness ("be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love" – Rom.12: 10), but as we have seen from 2Peter there is more that makes up brotherly love, including "fervent charity among yourselves" (1Pet.4: 8) – which is the bond of perfectness. Only when we perfect fervent charity to our brethren therefore, is God's love perfected in us.

Applying the teaching to our life today.

It is easy to feel discouraged after learning about charity toward our brethren (according to 1Cor. 13: 3-8), and then striving to implement it, only to find that it is not so easy, it is not natural.

Question to think about.

How does a person whose flesh is uncharitable hear these words of God and suddenly perfect God's love in themselves by showing fervent charity to his brother?

My answer to our question from the scriptures.

A believer does not instantaneously show charity upon learning of its truth, so be not discouraged if you struggle to do so, because implementation of charity follows a series of steps that begins with our faith, and to that we add virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and then we show charity to our brethren – the bond of perfectness. Each of these steps is added to the previous "line upon line" (Is.28: 10) with God's help. And remember the end goal is to show forth God's love that is perfected in us when we show charity to our brethren. Amen!