

Gritty Love

1 Corinthians 13: 13 says, "Faith, hope and love, the greatest of these is love." Why?

Faith is powerful. Faith in God can move mountains. Faith in God's word brings great confidence. Without faith it's impossible to see God.

Hope; it inspires us to believe for a brighter future. Hope encourages us to believe the best is yet to come and that there is more for each of us. Hope is all about a God who says he is able to do exceedingly more than we could ask think or imagine.

But love is the greatest because LOVE compels us to action. It compels us to action because it compelled Jesus to action. Repeatedly the scriptures says that Jesus was moved by compassion.

In His earthly ministry the Bible is full of accounts of Jesus being moved by compassion. Compassion of course is a consciousness of other people's distress together with a desire to alleviate that distress. Compassion is both love and the desire to relieve a person's suffering or pain. Compassion will often times lead us into the suffering of others, their brokenness and their darkness.

Love is a powerful thing. In God's vocabulary compassion translates into gritty love.

- Gritty love is tough, resolute, and strong enough to withstand adverse conditions.
- Gritty love is brave and determined willing to walk through the darkness to reach the furthest soul
- Gritty love can be heroic, fearless and willing to confront injustice in the darkest places
- Gritty love is unwavering, tenacious and it perseveres even when darkness pushes back
- Gritty love is what causes us to wade into the blackness of others to bring light.
- Gritty love motivates us to touch the untouchable. It's gritty love that compels us to ignore fear to reach out to the furthest hearts. It's gritty love, directed by compassion that gives us the courage to sit with those in distress, sickness and mental illness.

Application: When Jesus was moved by compassion He moved courageously into the realm of gritty love. His love was demonstrating His nature; His very own character. Jesus was True Grit. His church is called to be True Grit in the world today! Are willing to love like Jesus loved?

Jesus was constrained by love, it compelled Him and controlled Him. He did things no sane person would do when compassion seized Him. This kind of gritty love brings healing, sight to the blind, the ability to walk for those would are crippled. But it also led him into darker more sinister situations.

We the church so need this kind of love to characterise our move forwards in our city. Jesus loved those who would impact His reputation, He loved those who other saw as morally compromised, He loved those who were unclean, diseased and stigmatised by society. But Jesus love led into darkness as we would maybe we would not want to speak about.

Application: Remarkably Jesus' gritty love moved Him into another area we would prefer to ignore. We ignore this area because many of us are ignorant of the Bible truth but more often than not we ignore this area because we are afraid.

So let me start, Jesus was no stranger to the Devil. Jesus had known Lucifer in the eternity of Heaven and watched as God the Father cast Lucifer to the earth. Satan took with him a third of the angels in this incredible rebellion. These angels became demons and their main or chief directive is to destroy every vestige of God's image in humanity.

In the days of Jesus as it is today in many parts of the world the talk about demons bring people to a sense of mortal fear. People are frightened by the thought of evil spirits. Whether it is modern day Thailand or ancient tribes in Papua New Guinea – people have a sense of dread about the unseen spirits of this dark world.

We would prefer to not have to talk about this subject as if it challenges our intellectual sense too much. We would prefer to ignore this topic as it doesn't have a sufficient scientific foundation. We don't want to be seen as fanatics or member of a cult. We prefer the rational scientific and the provable than talk of spirits.

But however you would like to define this area, the scripture are full of passages about evil spirits, a real and actual Devil and clearly the power these spirits can exert upon a human being.

The gritty love of Jesus Christ compelled Him to confront even the darkest, most horrible and the scariest of situations. I have a biblical account for your consideration. This is an account of a father bringing his little boy to Jesus to receive freedom from the effects of an evil spirit.

Mark 9: 20 – 27, “So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. “Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” ““If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” ***The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out.*** The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.”

Jesus identified a “deaf and mute” spirit in the boy and set him free from its influence over his life. Powerful. Jesus set many people free from evil spirits. The influence of evil spirits can caused people all sorts of emotional, physical and spiritual conditions. But the root cause is a demon.

Today we don't tend to diagnose emotional and mental anguish as evil spirits. Our very sophisticated modern world would never regard a person as having ***a demon***. We have as members of our church in the health profession. We have psychiatrists, as well as mental health nurses, we have doctors, counsellors and others in the health and mental health profession. I hope this message today will generate good discussion not fearful dialogue.

Without diminishing the reputable work of intelligent and professional people the health profession the scriptures is undeniable. Demons exist and Jesus' gritty love compelled him to boldly walk into this dark sphere and fearlessly confront these evil spirits. It is recorded that Jesus took authority over them and cast them out of individuals in turn setting them free. Most of us are unaware of the unseen realm around us. Most of us don't want to know about this realm.

Possession is not the only way an evil spirit can influence you. There is oppression, there in influence, there is attacks against us and there is harassment. Let's not forget temptation! **Matthew 6:13** says in the Lord's Prayer, “And lead us not into temptation, but ***deliver us from the evil one.***”

Possession is extreme. But the enemy of our soul has many weapons designed to distract us from our life, destiny and mission. Firstly, the Devil lies! His stock in trade is deception. He has the ability to speak to us but he never speaks truth – it is always spiked with deceit.

2 Corinthians 11:14 says it clear enough, "... for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."

When Jesus brings salvation into our lives when we receive Him as our Lord and Saviour the bible declares that we have been set free from the things that control us.

John 8:36 says, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

In **Luke 4: 18 - 21** there is an account of where in a synagogue Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah and read these words, "'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'" Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Galatians 5:1 says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

But many feel like a yoke of slavery has burdened them. Remember there are a number of influence that bear down upon us as the human race. There are the world, the flesh and the Devil – often times referred to as the three enemies of our soul.

- **The world** seeks to squeeze us into its mould by us adhering to supposed cultural norms, societal trends, and the values of the world as it marches to beat of fashion, media and music.
- **The flesh** – those desires that rise up within us that seem to have a life of their own. They are cruel and seemingly relentless in their desire to destroy us under the guise of satisfying us.
- **The Devil**, already said, whose design is to destroy as vestige of God's image in us.
- Gritty love wades into this territory to bring light and revelation of God's word of truth.
- Gritty love marches in with instruction on godly disciple and training teaching us to keep the works of the flesh subdued and under control.
- Gritty love is willing to work with people influenced by the powers of darkness.
- Gritty love is willing to expose the works of darkness and set people free from the lies of the Devil.
- Gritty love is willing to sit with others and tell them the hard truths about the devils lies and deceit against them. Gritty love is willing to challenge lie and confront it with the truth.
- Gritty love is willing to confront faulty thinking inspired by the value systems of the world around us.

Gritty love fearlessly goes where no one want to go to confront the power of evil spirit declaring the truth, the power and the authority of Jesus Christ over every spirit of darkens this world has ever seen.

Gritty love is willing to work with people who are broken and burdened down by the evil of the day. Gritty love is willing to listen to the stories of abuse, exploitation, cruelty, neglect and mistreatment knowing it is not a nice thing to be doing. It requires gritty love and courage to work with those whose minds are bent and maybe broken. This kind of love is not for the faint of heart.

We are not seeking to take the place of doctors and mental health professionals. A counsellor may actually help you work through the jumble of emotions and experiences. Certain kinds of drugs can actually bring healing and correct imbalances in brain functions. But never let us ignore the spiritual truth that says Jesus can set you free. Not all mental oppression can be cured by drugs and counselling, sometimes we need to use the power of prayer.

Many are influenced by dark powers and don't even know it. Many are burdened down by the oppressive nature of evil and are unaware. Jesus came to ***“proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”***

The greatest freedom you can experience is the freedom of forgiveness. This is what happens when we trust in Jesus. Our sins are forgiven us and the weight of guilt and shame removed. He gives us a new life and fresh start. The old is gone the new has come. This experience is so monumental that it is actually a seismic shift in our lives. Jesus compares it to being “born again.” A new life, a fresh start.

Many people tell a story of being totally set free from mental assaults. Many tell the story of feeling emotionally healed by Jesus when He comes to live with them. Again I am not saying we don't need doctors and maybe even a drug regime. If you are currently being treated by a physician do not discontinue your treatment. But may I encourage you to receive prayer? As Christians called to love the Jesus way may we be willing to offer prayers in the name of Jesus.

Just as Jesus was raised from the dead so we experience the same quickening power. We actually walk in resurrection life and declare every spirit of darkness defeated by Jesus. Jesus give us victory over the forces of evil around us and over us. This means we can walk through life as victorious winners. It doesn't mean we never face troubles it just means we now have God's word to trust in and the presence of God's Holy Spirit to guide us, empower us and help us through.

Remember the 3 Hebrew lads who were thrown into a fiery furnace? God didn't put out the fire. He just put Himself in there with them and they came out without even the smell of smoke. It's not about God stopping all the things that look bad; it's about who is in there with you. It's about who now lives within you!

1 John 4: 4 says this to encourage us, “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”