

Empowered by Love (1 John 4:12-21; Mark 12:29-31; Ps 131:2)



1. Life of Torment or Life of Boldness?

'Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.' (1 John 4:17-18)

- A. Two lives are contrasted: 'fear-based life' vs 'love-based life.' The inner condition of the two contrasting lives is described: 'life of continual torment' vs 'life of boldness and confidence.'
- B. I cannot think of a greater blessing than this - having great boldness in the day of judgment. Life empowered by love gives your great boldness in the day of judgment! Why? Because it is the only standard by which God will measure your life on the day of judgment. It is God's golden measuring stick (c.f. Rev 21:15).
- C. *'The first of all the commandments is: Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. The second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.'* (Mark 12:29-31 c.f. Deut 6:4-9)

C.f. Matt 22:37-40 – 'The first and great commandment...On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' There will be nothing left of any spiritual reality if you lose these two love commandments.

So, what does it mean to be empowered by love?

2. The Four LOVE Chambers of Our Heart

Think of the love of God as a river flowing in your heart in 4 stages (Matt 22:37-40; 1 John 4:19). The love of God must flow through all four chambers of our hearts for us to be fully empowered.

Chamber A. 'God loves me.' [Inflow]

The divine inflow of God's love begins when I am born again. (1 John 4:15)

Chamber B. 'I love God.' [Outflow]

I return the love to God and I want to live for God's glory. The right response to God's love is to love God back with all my heart, soul, mind, strength. This is worship. (c.f. Jn 14:15)

Chamber C. 'I love myself.' [Inflow]

I accept myself and am at peace with who I am. Self-rejection is an increasing problem today.

The overflow from Chamber A. 'God loves me and Chamber B. 'I love God' results in Chamber C. 'I love myself' being flooded with love. This leads to us forming a sense of healthy self-identity with: Security (a sense that I am unconditionally loved), Self-worth (a sense that I am deeply valued - both cherished and worthwhile, and Significance (a sense that there is meaning and purpose to my life) [Selwyn Hughes].

Self-worth: *'I am not what I think I am. I am not what you think I am. I am what I think you think I am.'* An unhealthy identity causes deep ongoing inner pain in our heart, prone to depression, lack of motivation for living, negatively comparing with others (jealousy), performance orientation, unreasonable desire to please others, etc.

Actions that arise out of feeling insecure; unworthy; insignificant (to meet my need from others) will always lead to deeper problems. No man can fully satisfy our deep inner thirst, but only God.

Chamber D. 'I love my neighbour.' [Outflow]

I turn loose the overflowing love in the Chambers A, B & C of my heart toward others. It starts in our will by faith and then it is followed by action. *'If someone says, 'I love God,' and*

hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?’ (1 John 4:20)

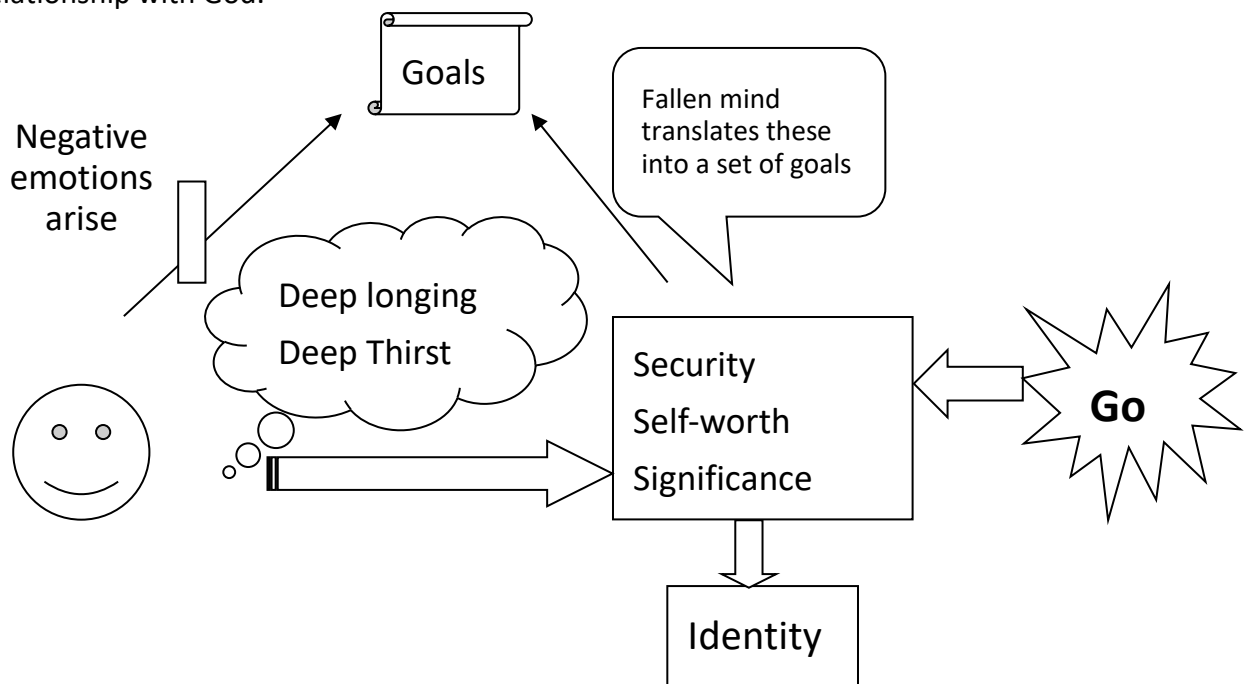
This is the Outflow Checkpoint to know if indeed the love of God is real in our heart. It is not possible to love God and hate our brother at the same time. (C.f. John 13:34-35) The Lord has given the world a right to judge the church, based on whether Christians love one another or not. (Francis Schaeffer)

3. Quieted in God’s Love

Ps 131:2 – *‘Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.’ ‘Yes, my begging has been stilled.’ (LBT)*

A. Before the fall when we were in an unbroken relationship with God, these basic needs of our personality were fully met in God (perfectly secure, significant and worthy in our relationship with God). However, after the fall, our relationship with God was severed, leaving a huge unfulfilled vacuum in our souls. This became an ‘unquenchable thirst’ in our soul, and this thirst cannot be denied.

Our *darkened mind* from the fall unconsciously translates our unfulfilled desires – the deep thirst in our soul - into a ‘set of goals’, and we pursue them in the faulty belief that in reaching these goals we will find life, i.e., fulfillment and happiness. But we can only meet our deepest needs in our relationship with God.



B. Following 3 groups of negative emotions is the result of some obstacle on the road to our goal – the goal we believe we have must get to in order to experience happiness and fulfillment.

- **Group 1** – anger, irritation, resentment, frustration, contempt, etc. [Blocked Goal]
- **Group 2** – anxiety, worry, apprehension, pressure, stress, etc. [Unsure Goals]
- **Group 3** – Guilt, shame, embarrassment, self-pity, etc. [Unattainable Goal]

There is nothing wrong with setting personal goals, but when a sense of personal ‘integrity’ or ‘intactness’ depends on it, we are misplacing our dependency. And it will inevitably lead to problems.

C. 3 Facts of Life: (Dr Larry Crab)

- (1) Everyone is deeply thirsty within their soul.
- (2) Everyone longs and seeks to have their thirst satisfied.
- (3) Any attempt to satisfy that thirst outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ will lead to problems.

‘We live dangerously when we try to find worth in what we do rather than in who we are in Christ. Our identity must be in God.’

D. Babies before and after feeding:

- Before feeding – constant begging for attention, love, approval and affirmation.
- After getting his milk – so satisfied and falls asleep.

Before being weaned the baby primarily relates to the mother as the means of fulfilling his own needs. After being weaned the child can relate to his mother as a person and enjoy her.

4. Do you believe and rely on and put your trust in God's love?

1 John 4:16 – 'And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God.' Or 'And so we know and rely on the love that God has for us. (NIV) Or 'and we have put our trust in his love.' (NLT)

A. The love of God was most perfectly demonstrated in the cross of Jesus Christ (Rom 5:6-10):

- (1) Christ died for us when we were without strength – *hopeless and weak* (Rom 5:6).
- (2) In due time Christ died for the ungodly – *most unattractive* (Rom 5:6).
- (3) God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners - *wicked and deserving of punishment* - *Christ died for us* (Rom 5:8).
- (4) *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life* (Rom 5:10).

God's love is self-giving in nature, unconditional, and there are no strings attached to it. The reason why God loves us is not in us, but within God. (C.f. Deut 7:7-8)

B. Scripture to meditate on: 'As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.' (John 15:9)

How do we abide in His love? 'If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.' (John 15:10). Which commandment? 'This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.' (John 15:12)

Let the love of God flow through all the four chambers of your heart.