

GOD IS IN CONTROL

Preamble:

Over many years, God has been moulding and shaping Living Grace Community Lutheran Church in to a body of believers whom He wants to join Him in the work that He is doing in reaching out to the poor and needy in the City of Toowoomba. He has put His love in our hearts through drawing us into a closer relationship with Jesus our Saviour. He has given us a love for each other that is rarely seen, even among His people.

God has chosen to put us to the test to see if we measure up to His standards which are total obedience to His commands. ***Love one another as I have loved you.*** God sent His son Jesus to suffer and die for the sins of the world; so when God says to *love as I have loved you*, this would seem impossible for us to do. But God does make it possible through **the Power of the Holy Spirit who leads us to the foot of the cross to have our sins forgiven and to be made holy to be like Him** so we can measure up to our Father God's standards.

As God tests us, we feel very uncomfortable, and God has allowed satan and our own sinful flesh to be part of the test. When we come through this period of testing, and we will with the help of the Holy Spirit, and we pass the test by 100%, then God will allow us, (Living Grace Community Lutheran Church) to join Him in the work that He is doing.

How exciting to think that God would even think of including us to be His voice, hands and feet to bring the good news of the love of God through Jesus who died for them, to the poor and needy who have never known love – especially the love of Jesus. But, **we have the love of Jesus in our hearts** that we can let shine on the lost.

During the last 5 weeks, as I have gone through much suffering from the side effects of treatment for cancer, God has come to me in a special way which I feel has been the greatest experience of my life. I have had mostly unbroken fellowship with Him through study and meditation in His Word, and through Christian books, and through different Bible commentaries, and through talking to Him direct, allowing Him to speak His words into my heart, which He has done in a mighty way.

Firstly, He had to speak to me about the wrong hang ups and problems within myself. Then without asking for it, he has put it heavy on my heart as a word from Him Himself which He wants me to speak to Pastor and the members of Living Grace Community Lutheran Church. If I had a choice, I would rather not have to do this, but I believe God has commanded me to do so, and I have to obey.

I do this humbly as His mouthpiece to our community. **I speak this word to you in the name of Jesus - with whom I have a close relationship.**

Erwin Bruggemann
August, 2008

GOD'S WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO LIVING GRACE COMMUNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

God says: I am in control.

John 3: 8

*The wind blows where it wants to. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. That's the way it is with everyone who is **born of the Spirit**.*

Being filled is something done to us rather than us doing something. We are commanded to seek it, but we cannot make it happen. Our part is to **allow the Spirit to fill us**, by being available and obedient and ready for whatever He may want to do. Be open to God, and the blowing of the wind which is the Holy Spirit in your life.

Ezekiel 37: 6b

I will put my breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

This is not about an 'it', **it's about a 'Him'**. God's power comes in the package of a person, **the person of the Holy Spirit** – who we need to respect and call on in the right way. Don't go looking for the power of God; **look for the person of God**, for when you do, He will come – just as Jesus promised.

Philippians 3:10

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like Him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

We cannot dismiss these demonstrations of supernatural power, or confine them to a narrow band of time or people, or say that this was just for those days. The power of the Spirit is always available for the simple reason that the **Person of the Holy Spirit** is always available. Today don't be afraid of God's power, but be expectant of receiving His power, just as He promised – it really is quite normal.

Zechariah 4: 6b

'Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit', says the Lord Almighty.

The Flow from Within

John 7: 37 – 39

*On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, **'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from him.'** By this he meant the spirit whom those who believed in him were later to receive.*

When Jesus said that we should expect the spirit's life to flow from within in verse 38, **this is something we are meant to experience, not just think about.** He wants us to know the Spirit's presence, joy, prompting, gifts and guidance – yes! Even as we pray today! If you have never experienced that promised flow of the spirit, why not ask Jesus to release him within you today?

Acts 19: 2-6

and he asked them, "did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Baptism with Fire

Matthew 3: 11-17

*"I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. **He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.***

This text tells us that Jesus would baptise not with water but with fire. Isn't this what we need? A fiery baptism that will purify and melt us into a right relationship to each other so that when the pressures come upon us, we will not break, but only bend. Life is rarely broken from without, it is broken from within. Our lives must be so solid from within that we can stand anything that happens without.

1 Peter 1: 6-9

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

*Peter mentions trials and suffering several times in this letter. All believers face such trials when they let their light shine into the darkness. We must accept trials as part of the refining process that burns away impurities and prepares us to meet Christ. As gold is heated, impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off. Likewise, our trials, struggles, and persecutions refine and strengthen our faith, making us useful to God. Instead of asking, "Why me" we should respond to suffering with a new set of responses: (1) Confidence that God knows, plans and directs our lives for the good. It's hard to calculate sometimes, but God always provides his love and strength for us. God leads us towards a better future. (2) Perseverance when facing grief, anger, sorrow, and pain. We express our grief, but we don't give in to bitterness and despair. (3) Courage because with Jesus as Brother and Saviour, we need not be afraid. He who suffered for us will not abandon us. Jesus carries us through everything. * taken from Life Application Study Bible.

At Living Grace, we have a very unique Body of Christ made up of from people from all walks of life. We have people who come from past generations of followers of Christ as well as new comers who have only just got to know Jesus as their Saviour. We have conservative people from very structured backgrounds and people who feel the total freedom to show their feelings wherever they are, and we have people who are at different stages of their faith walk with their Saviour. We have people who are conservative and reserved by nature, and at the other end we have people who are charismatic by nature. God made us all for His pleasure and He is in control of our destiny.

Now He has drawn us together in **the Body of Christ 'His Church' with Jesus at the head of the body**. We are all special parts of the body and we all have a special part to play. If one part stops to function, the whole body can't work properly. If many parts break down, then the whole body comes to a standstill. The way to keep the body healthy is for all the parts to **support each other through the head who is Jesus**.

We all have different gifts, given to us by our maker and this might be from the gift of being kind to others to one of the special supernatural gifts, it may be prophetic or healing or being the Pastor, but whatever gift we have **we need to support each other** in using the gifts and abilities that God has given to each of us. We need to love each other just as Jesus loves us.

Where Love Starts

Romans 5: 1- 8

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because **God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us**. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us**.*

Our greatest fear is the fear of not being loved, **and only love – love with a capital L can cure that**. Faith is a by product of love – a result of invasion of divine love into our hearts. The moment I begin to love God's love, at that moment I love others with His love. I love God with the love of God and I love others with the love of God. Once we believe that God loves regardless, then that love lets us love in return.

1 John 4: 19

We love because he first loved us.

His love generates love in me.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, **but Christ lives in me.**

His love in our Hearts

1 John 3: 16 -18

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.

You are not afraid of people you love, you are afraid of people you don't love. God's love will come into our hearts if we let it come in. **Perfect love drives our fear. And perfect love means the love of Jesus.**

1 Corinthians 13: 1 – 13

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. **Love never fails.***

*But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. **But the greatest of these is love.***

*In Chapter 12, Paul gave evidence of the Corinthians' lack of love in the utilization of spiritual gifts; chapter 13 defines real love; and chapter 14 shows how love works. Love is more important than all the spiritual gifts exercised in the church body. Great faith, acts of dedication or sacrifice, and miracle working- power produce very little without love. Love makes our actions and gifts useful. Although people have different gifts, love is available to everyone. * taken from Life Application Study Bible

Embraced by Jesus love to embrace others with His love.

Acts 20: 35

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

So when we have a chance to be of service to others we let Jesus love come in so we can love others. To love we must first be loved, to serve, we must first be served. Jesus offers to do this to us and for us if we let Him in. **When we let Him in then we are released from ourselves.** We see love at its highest when we see it wrapped up in the life and ministry of Jesus.

John 13: 12 – 15

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

John 13: 34 -35

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. **As I have loved you, so you must love one another.** By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

One of the most dangerous happenings in the church today is the movement away from the Person of Christ to the principles of Christ. When we take the principles of the Christian faith and marginalise the person – the Lord Jesus Christ – then we take the stream not the source, the rays, but not the sun. Apart from the person of Christ, the principles would mean something else.

Ephesians 4: 31 – 5: 2

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. **Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.***

The Divine Shepherd

John 10: 11 -16

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Connected to the Vine

John 15: 5

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

When we are attached to the vine in complete surrender to Jesus, then He gives us tasks and responsibilities and opportunities to do things for others that we thought ourselves incapable of.

Our Reason for Living

Revelation 1: 5 -6

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. **To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.***

* Many hesitate to witness about their faith in Christ because they don't feel the change in their lives has been spectacular enough. But you qualify as a witness for Jesus because of what he has done for you, not because of what you have done for him. Christ demonstrated his great love by setting us free from our sins through his death on the cross. * Life Application Study Bible

Are we ready to obey Him? To love one another as He has loved us?

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation by water and the word (Baptism)
From heaven He came and sought her to be His Holy Bride
With His own blood he bought her
And for her life He died.

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