

'LOVE FROM ABOVE'

(Fullness of Joy through Biblical Fellowship in Christ)

Studies in 1 John

'Come-Union'

Occasionally I watch television preachers from the States. As I listen and *'test the spirits'* (with the *Scriptures and prayer*) prompting them to utter what they preach, I'm either blessed or bothered in my spirit every time. The other day I was watching a popular modern preacher who sometimes has good things to say which motivates the new wave of *millennials* coming to faith in Christ. But his racing around on stage and jumping around the front rows is a more than a little bit too flamboyant in my opinion. And as for his attire and deportment – well, let's just say 'it's not my style'. I overlook a lot of that because ordinarily the message is pretty good, biblical, and very applicable to the young believers he is trying to teach God's Word the best he can.

But, I couldn't believe my ears when in the advertising of his latest video offer and other slick commercials about *Elevation Church (the ministry he leads)*, he recruited all long-distance viewers to join a television membership of his church. *'Stay at home and watch me; order the latest video series and just send your tithes and offerings to the address on the screen, etc.'* seemed to be his sales pitch (*today, it is important to not only 'test the message' but also the big commercials sure to come near the end of the program*).

The Spirit in me was instantly disturbed, not by the message, but by the unbiblical soft-sell promotional that undermined God's biblical concept of His church as a *body of believers (not a remote viewing audience)* who gather physically, fellowship with each other and give where they worship weekly. It is impossible to fellowship with your TV set or radio! Will that celebrity, personality preacher baptize you, serve you communion, counsel you personally, visit when you're sick, do your weddings and funerals, etc.?! Every true Christian is expected to become a faithful part of a tangible biblical church family where Christ is exalted and the Bible is learned and obeyed, not a huge remote religious business somewhere else that you only watch on television from a distance and mail in your tithes and offerings! No! Church is supposed to be God's place for His people to connect with others as they **'come'** for spiritual **'union'** with other dedicated believers in the area where they reside.

In this day of increasing isolation and impersonal existence due to cell phone addiction and other mind-mesmerizing devices, we don't need additional depersonalization challenges for a local church body of Christ to overcome. **Hebrews 10:24-26** is still God's command:

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth..."

Yes, there are valid reasons to not join in faithful connection with a family of believers near where you live – maybe you're sick or even a shut-in who can't leave the house, or perhaps you must occasionally work on a day the church family is meeting. But certainly, the Bible is replete with admonitions to assemble with the plenary group of disciples as often as you can – failure to do so is symptomatic of *last days* defection and apostasy (*1 Timothy 4:1-2, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:3, etc.*).

Most churches, even good ones, have discontinued week-day ministries due to members opting for other things they see as more important than God and His people. A single, brief Sunday morning service is sadly typical of many people today (**SMORE** = *Sunday Morning Only Religious Experience*). Some people now even chose to call their kitchens and living rooms their *home church* causing further disconnection and demise of a biblical pattern for church, missions' endeavors, and other functions of a NT church.

And now comes the *television church* promoting totally disconnected membership and stewardship. Sadly, this is the reason for, as one minister put it: *'Sermonettes by preacherettes for Christianettes'* will cause the weakness and demise of Christians and churches in the last days before Jesus returns (*Rev. 3:14-21*).

'Come' + **'union'** is the idea of church – **come** together as often as possible for worship, fellowship and ministry; these things give us **union** in the Lord. Praise the Lord you have **come** to CBF today! We pray that you will feel **union** with the Savior and others here who are part of this church family. Those who have **come** are celebrating their **union** with God and His people in **communion** today. If you have **come** to Christ and by faith in Him have been put in **union** with God at the cross, join us at the Lord's Table today as we remember the great cost Jesus paid for this **'come-union'** we have with Him and each other. *PtL*

The Power of Love
ΑΓΑΠΗ
agape
(Transforming Everything by God's Love)
1 John 4:7-21

Posturing Christ in Your Church
(*'agape'* always on display in our midst)
Building up His 'body'
Vs. 7-11

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Presenting Christ in Your World
(*'agape'* in visible action wherever you go)
Telling others His message
Vs. 12-16

"No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another God abides in us and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God... We have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

Perfecting Christ in Your Heart
(*'agape'* transformation of who you are)
Submitting to His Spirit
Vs. 17-21

"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, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen how can he love God Whom he has not seen? And this is the commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."