

The Path to Glory

Grace Ozioma Onotu

# Perfect Love: The Path to Glory

The eternal beauty of growing in the love of God—and how to be an instrument of love in a decaying generation

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, and God in Him. — 1 John 4:16

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#### **Preface**

This book is born out of a heart burdened by seeing the church of Jesus Christ in a state of mediocrity and mundaneness. Yet, I am hopeful that it will rise to its highest call of loving God and humankind. Love, being the driving force into eternity, must be given its urgent attention and its due place in our teaching in this end time. It will help us get ready for the return of our bridegroom: Jesus Christ. As the potential spotless bride of Christ, the church cannot afford to have a superficial relationship with God and His creation. Superficiality does not make us real and authentic; it cannot bring us into the fullness of our call as God's royal priesthood and a holy nation.

To fulfill our call as His kings and priests here on earth and to consummate our relationship with Him in the marriage supper of the Lamb, we must develop a deep love relationship with God as the work of His hands. Love flows from us to His creation by fulfilling His purpose for creation. If we do not understand God's eternal love for us, we will not be able to respond to Him—or have enough faith in Him who is invisible yet active in our lives.

As I watch people go about their activities within and outside the church environment, I see a whole lot of differences between their attitudes as part of these two settings. People come to church raising holy hands, looking pious,

and blessing the name of the Lord; however, in their homes, their respective businesses, and society at large, their utterances, relationships with others, and decisions made in their places of service and authority do not reflect the values of Jesus Christ.

So much disunity among believers and church leaders exist that one wonders what went wrong or what happened to the legacy and words of our Lord Jesus Christ. We hear of atrocities and abominations among Christians. One wonders if such things should be named among us, which I believe should be a concern to anyone that genuinely loves the Lord. However, the people of the world are watching us; we are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-14). Where did we get it all wrong? What happened along the way? What can we do to arrest the schisms, the indifference to one another, and the unrighteous acts in the church in order to affect the world positively for the Lord? As children of God, we are pilgrims here on earth, as David rightly said (Psalm 119:19–20). Though we are in the world, we are not of this world. We have a destination, and that is to spend eternity with the Lord. Sometimes, I think we read the Bible convincing ourselves that we believe all that is written there; however, in reality, our hearts are full of doubts. That is why it is so easy to behave like people of the world.

We are pilgrims here on earth to change the world for good so that Christ will come to us and return us to our homeland: a place prepared for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. How do we retrace our steps to the very foundation of our faith, which is the love that God has for humankind that made Him give His only begotten Son to save us and reconcile us to Himself? We have been so carried away by what to eat and drink, which house to live in, and building empires for ourselves that we have forgotten God's commandments.

It is not possible to serve at God's altar as His priests without love for Him and His creation. Our ministrations to Him as His priests must be born out of love. As we stand before Him on behalf of our nation, community, friends, and loved ones, we need love in our hearts to intercede without a judgmental attitude. As kings who will reign here on earth, we need His love in our hearts to rule in alignment with His will and to serve our generation in the fear of the Lord like David, as testified to in Acts 13:36:

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption.

How David was able to serve his generation in the will of God is found in 2 Samuel 23:2–3:

"The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, 'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." These were his last words before he died. This is what one of my mentors, Dr Steve Ogan, calls "righteous rulership through divine relationship."

No wonder God says in Acts 15:16-17:

"After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD,

even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things."

Without love, we cannot serve in the fear of the Lord, because power corrupts. Therefore, love is the only virtue that can put authority under God's jurisdiction without anarchy or abuse of power. We will talk more about this in the following chapters.

The core message of this book is that only the love of God can make us reign triumphantly here on earth and prepare us for eternity. Further, only the love of God can grant us internal freedom, destroy lust, and help us to walk with integrity and purity of heart; thereby preparing us daily to become the spotless bride of Christ, worthy and qualified to be united with Him in eternal marriage.

Only love can take us to that place of heavenly mindedness and eternity consciousness, as we wait for the return of our bridegroom who will qualify us to be partakers of the New Jerusalem, where according to Revelation 22:3–5:

"And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no light there: they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever." Praise God! Amen.

I sincerely believe that God is calling His people back to the biblical concept of love in order to conquer the world in these last days; that the message of the kingdom will reach all the nations of the earth in preparation for the return of our King Jesus Christ. This message will also help us to find solutions to the majority of the problems on earth. Only love can heal the nations of the earth. It is the only thing that cannot fail, because where love is, God is.

#### Introduction

This book expounds on the love of God and the capacity of every believer and follower of Jesus Christ to love as He loves by being an epitome of love to a decaying society. It also relates how the love of God should reflect in our relationships with God and our fellow human beings—and how to grow in the love of God.

It encourages us about the need to endure to the end in following the Lord and obeying His commandments. There is a reward for enduring to the end, according to the book of Revelation.

Perfect Love: The Path to Glory, I believe, will impart us afresh with the Spirit of love to overcome all that is not of God in our lives and society. It will help us to see that our very end is to be like God. If that is the goal, then we must become what the Bible says: that God is love.

If we heed the biblical concept of love, the Holy Spirit will always be there to impart it to us and also enable us to be kingdom love practitioners.

God bless you.

## **Chapter One**

# The Triumphant Life of Living and Walking in God's Love

The subject of love has been a vital issue for a long time especially in the twenty-first century. Many words have been spoken and written about it; yet, the world grows colder without love. We experience heartlessness, brutality, murder, heartbreak, and war everywhere. Even in the Christian fold, we do not see much difference. We see churches rise against one another, and brothers and sisters lying to and cheating one another. The church is meant to be the epitome of love—a living example to people in the world. This has led to confusion and worldly principles about this subject in the church.

Jesus said we are not of this world even though we live in this world (John 17:14–16). This is a very serious message to us as people of God. In everything we do and wherever we find ourselves, we need not forget Jesus's statement. We are the regenerated ones, born of the Spirit of God. We are the ambassadors of heaven. The immortal Spirit of the Living God dwells in us. The people of the world are not regenerated in the Spirit, and so, have no capacity for the things that are of God. Because of this, nothing that comes from the

world gives life.

In the body of Christ today, so many things are going wrong. Teenagers and adolescents are lost to drugs, sexual lusts, perversions, and ungodly relationships. They also experience ungodly interactions on the phone, internet, and television. Families experience divorce and lack a heart for God. In Europe and other parts of the world, churches have turned into monuments and tourism sites. The hearts of the people have departed from God.

The devil has subtly crept in to displace our first love: Jesus. He gives us the power to love and live as He did when He walked on the earth. The devil knows the power and influence we will have if we give to the Lord much of the time we spend on all electronic devices and ungodly relationships. That is why he, the devil, would hardly sit and watch people serve God without misleading them.

Many are going down the road of hellfire all in the name of civilisation and what some call modern Christianity. There is no such thing as modern Christianity; instead, but a refusal to detach ourselves from the ways of the world, so we bring them along with us to the church.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are His ambassadors among foreign people and should not partake of their culture and forsake or amend heavenly principles to suit us. We are pilgrims here on earth; we are heavenly dwellers, and our end is to be with the Lord. For this reason, we are to attune our minds with the mind of Christ by renewing our minds daily as we study His lifestyle from His word. In doing so, we can begin to think and act like Him. Our definition and practice of love must be scripturally based—not based on the views of people of the world. Therefore, we should not refuse to take advantage of the regenerated Spirit in us to grow in love and be like Jesus.

Irrespective of where we were born, come from, or what our past has been, the scriptures cannot be changed to suit us, because God's standard is not the same as the world's. Bringing the world's concept of love into the kingdom of God will never profit us or make us Christlike.

Jesus Christ is the epitome of love. While He walked on earth, He was love personified. This helped Him fulfill His mission of healing, deliverance, and generosity with no scandal or atrocity in all His relationships with both males and females. He triumphed over temptations and brought reconciliation between God and humankind on the Cross of Calvary. He expects this to be our testimony: to triumph over sin and the wickedness in the world. He knew no sin but was made sinful for us because of His love for us.

Colossians 2:6–15 gives us a picture of what Jesus did for us on the Cross of Calvary. Read with me: "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily: and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcised of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiving you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed

principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."

From the above scriptures, we see that if we are not built and rooted in Christ, it will be easy to be manipulated in the world, to be tossed around by the traditions of humankind and be enslaved. If we do not know the truth of what is freely ours, we will walk in darkness and will never live a victorious and glorious life. We have been raised with Christ from terrestrial to celestial, and that is the place of love, where God dwells; a place of no sin, no sorrow, because Christ has nailed every contrary handwriting of requirements against us to the cross—every sin, sickness, poverty, and condemnation has been judged. We may ask, "If Christ has done all these things for us, why are we still living defeated and broken lives? Why does so much hatred and fear of the future exist? Why do church people still commit suicide?"

I believe that our hearts have departed from the Lord—our first love. Even when we claim to have surrendered all to Him, many things—such as materialism, career, marriage, money, titles, and position—still contend with the love of God in our hearts. This was the case with the Israelites; God became angry with them. In our generation too, things are deteriorating so fast that one begins to understand why Jesus asked a vital question in Luke 18:8b, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

Jeremiah 2:11-19 says,

"Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory, for what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be very desolate" says the Lord. "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns broken cisterns — that can hold no water. Is Israel a servant? Is he a homeborn slave? Why is he plundered? The

young lion roared at him, and growled; they made his land waste; His cities are burn without inhabitant. Also the people of Noph and Tahpanhes have broken the crown of your head. Have you not brought this on yourself, in that you have forsaken the LORD your God, when He led you in the way? And now why take the road to Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or why take the road to Assyria, to drink the waters of the River? Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing, that you have forsaken the LORD your God and the fear of Me is not in you," says the Lord God of hosts.

When our hearts depart from the Lord, we become empty. We search for satisfaction where there is none. We do things that attract curses and problems in our lives. Without God, life is full of crisis, hopelessness, and desolation. We begin to scheme for love in the wrong places, yet the place of God cannot be replaced by any other. This is why Jeremiah 2:33 asks, "Why do you beautify your way to seek love? Therefore you have also taught the wicked women your ways." The New Living Translation puts it this way: "How you plot and scheme to win your lovers. The most experienced prostitute could learn from you!"

You will agree with me that this is the state of Christ's church today. I am sure someone is wondering what I mean by this. The truth is that many of us proclaim our love for God, yet we would not cross certain boundaries for Him. If it is our earthly sensual relationships, we could do anything to keep a husband from running away. We could go the extra mile to ensure success in our careers, but when it comes to God, we say that God understands. Everything we desire—including that husband or lover we want to keep by all means—and every other thing that is competing with the love of God in our hearts, can indeed be achieved if we

understand that it is only in the love of God that we can achieve them without sweat, if we would abide in God's love. No matter what we do to beautify our ways in searching for love, there is no truer or greater love anywhere outside God.

Men and women who do not love God cannot genuinely love themselves; in turn, that makes it difficult for them to love others. What do I mean by this? If people love God, they will understand the principles of God guiding their lives, and they will adhere to them. In adhering to God's principles, they find a purpose and how to fulfill it. In doing that he makes his life fulfilling, which is the ultimate of self-love. But people who do not love God do not abide by His commandments. They do things that they think are right and pleasurable, yet they are detrimental to his life. This is why the Bible says, "There is a road that seems right to a man, but the end leads to destruction" (Proverbs 14:12).

We are a people appointed for God's praise to show forth His glory, as we read in Jeremiah 2:21: "Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?" God is asking us this question today. How does God feel when He sees us pervert His original intention for creation? That the people He created to have dominion over all things now subject themselves to behaviour such as lying, armed robbery, disobedience to parents and authorities, bestiality, homosexuality, and cheating? God has feelings, and it hurts Him when we disobey Him and do things wickedly. I do not know what the state of your heart is. But what I do know is that as individuals, we know how far we have departed from God or are distracted from His love. Let us examine our hearts in order to return to the Lord. The Lord desires an intimate love relationship with us; this will spur us to absolute obedience and dependence on Him. He is a great Lover to have, and only in Him can we have a triumphant life full of joy indescribable. God calls on every one of us today as He speaks from Jeremiah 4:1–2:

"If you will return, O Israel," says the LORD, "Return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved. And you shall swear, 'the LORD lives,' in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; The nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him they shall glory." That is a call to our place of glory in life. It is a call to return to the Lord with all our hearts, and we shall never be moved. What a triumphant life we are called into!

The road of love is a path less travelled because not many people love to take this path to glory; it involves a lot. But it is a call to spiritual growth and maturity to those whose spirits are synced with God to birth his purpose on earth. These people are absolutely abandoned and yielded to Him; their lives are no longer theirs but possessed by the Spirit of God. They let go in the hand of faith, trusting God every step of the way that He will lead them through this world into eternity as they act as His instrument of love.

What is a triumphant life? Living and walking in God's love is a life that will reign here on earth transcending eternity, a life that will be among the saints spoken of in Revelation 21:2–5. "Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all

things new." And He said to me "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

# How Can the Love of God Make Us Triumphant in Daily Living?

We can live triumphant daily in the love of God by being conscious of Who God is—His sovereignty, and eternal nature and the eternal life He has given to those who believe in Him. The Bible says that God has poured His love into our hearts through His Spirit (Romans 5:5). Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has put eternity in our hearts.

He put eternity in our hearts and shed His love abroad in our hearts so that love will guard us through our daily living eternally. What is eternal life? It is the life of God at work in the life of a believer. It is also called the Zoe kind of life; this is what enables us to live a godly life here. If He has already put eternity in our hearts, we are to be living the kind of life that exists from eternity to eternity—as God does. Oh my God! We are not to wait till we die before we start living a godly life. A heavenly lifestyle is meant to be our lifestyle here in the world. We are heavenly dwellers, the Bible says. We are seated with Christ in heavenly places far above principalities and power. Beloved, this is who we are. This is the life we are to be conscious of daily to be victorious on earth as believers. No wonder the Bible says that we are to be perfected in love so that we may have boldness on the Day of Judgment. Because as He is, so are we in this world (1 John 4:17). If we are as Christ is in this world, then we are entitled and should live the kind of exemplary life that He lived while on earth.

In Ephesians 3:14–19, Paul the apostle wrote to the Ephesian Church, praying to God on their behalf. Read with me in The Living Bible:

"When I think of the wisdom and scope of his plan, I fall down on my knees and pray to the Father of all the great family of God—some of them already in heaven and some down here on earth—that out of his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you the mighty inner strengthening of his Holy Spirit. And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love; and may you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; and to experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it. And so at last you will be filled up with God himself.

From the above scriptures, we read the prayer of the Spirit of God through the apostle Paul to the church. We see that the most important factor that enables us to operate in the fullness of God is our ability to comprehend and live in the love that Jesus Christ has for us. This will be impossible without us. As individuals, being rooted and grounded in love. In Ephesians 3:16, Paul the apostle wanted all people to have the power to understand how deep the love of God is. This is why he prayed that the Spirit of God would strengthen them in their inner selves. It is only by the Holy Spirit that our hearts can be enlightened and rooted in the great love of God. When we can comprehend and come to terms with the depth of God's love, to accept it and to live in it, then we can be filled with the fullness of God. To be filled with the fullness of God is our ultimate desire as His children; from this scripture, the prescription for attaining the reality of this desire is in our ability to comprehend, live, and walk in this divine love.

The Bible says in Colossians 1:19, "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell." This was expounded

upon in Colossians 2:9–10: "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily: and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

If all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily, that means everything in God and the Holy Spirit dwells in Him bodily. The same Christ described in Hebrews 1:3: "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, upholding all things by the word of His power." Then we see the in-depth implication of being rooted in the love of God because the scriptures cannot be broken. If we abide in love, we abide in God—and God in us. There is no way anyone would have a deep understanding of this and settle for a lesser life. A life lived and walked in love is a triumphant life—far above principalities and powers. If Jesus Christ is the head of all principalities and powers and we are complete in Him, we understand that love is a powerful force of the Spirit. The devil cannot stand where there is an outpouring of love.

Brothers and sisters, I enjoin that we read this book with an open heart and receive the message as an open letter from heaven to enter into our rest and place in God.

The devil fights the hearts and minds of people every day, deluding them that no one loves them, thereby making them do all manner of things against God and their fellow humans. If only we knew, not just in our knowing but having the power to grasp and understand God's love towards us, then we will do anything to live in it and not believe the lies of the devil.

Some time ago, a young cousin of mine who stayed with us suddenly began to behave in an unusual manner in school. My siblings became worried about her change in attitude; they were scared she might become wayward. Initially, I kept my peace and did not want to involve myself,

having considered that the intervention of my mum, dad, and younger sister had not been able to achieve much. The situation got worse, and everyone seemed to leave her to herself. I became worried because I suggested that she stay with my parents—and I brought her there. My mum wanted her out of the house because she felt she did not comply with her rules and regulations.

All hope seemed lost, as everyone-except one of my younger brothers-no longer cared about what she did, since they did not see or expect any visible positive change. One day, the Holy Spirit ministered to me: Do not watch the enemy snatch her destiny away. At that point, I knew I had a task; it hit me that God did not, by chance, use me to bring her to the house; He had a purpose for me in her life. An older friend of mine advised me not to be aggrieved towards her as the others were. My friend encouraged me to use wisdom and the love of God. I gradually interacted with her as if I were not aware of how badly she was behaving, or how careless she had become. I grew closer to her; I began calling her more often than I had been, and I sent her text messages. I told her how much I love her and how much God loves her as well. The more I did this, the more open she became towards me. I prayed with her, counselled her, and interceded for God's intervention.

Within a short period, I spoke with my parents and siblings. By God's grace, I was able to convince them that things were not as they thought. The confusion intended by the devil was squashed by God. She returned to the house a totally different person, in spite of her mistakes. Unknown to me—and while all this was happening—she had given her life to Jesus Christ, a conversion from Islam. The enemy was not happy about it and was attempting to undermine her new faith. At the end of the day, she was not just wel-

comed into the house, but was accepted with her new faith as a Christian until she moved out of our house. This was a hard task because all my family members are still Muslims. I was the only Christian in the family before her conversion. Two days after this victory, the Lord showed me that the enemy was after the girl's place in the kingdom of God.

My cousin later told me she behaved that way because she thought no one loved and cared about her anymore. My people thought she was rude and unbearable. The enemy created an unnecessary contention by planting his evil seeds of thought in her mind; however, the love of God that is above every principality dethroned those thoughts and brought them into the obedience of Christ.

I do not know what your situation is like. I do not know whose love has failed or is failing you, but there is a love that does not abandon; there is a love that is eternal, glorious, and powerful. It is the love of God. If you feel that no one loves you, be foolish enough to believe that the invisible, all-powerful, and all-wise God loves you with an everlasting love, and that you are the apple of His eye (Deuteronomy 32:10; Zechariah 2:8). If only you will believe these words, your life will be radically changed. You will be delivered from the lies of the enemy.