

Let There Be Love

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Chapter 1

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,
and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass,
or a tinkling cymbal.*

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1 Corinthians 13:1

The Language of Love

The Bible has much to say about love. Over and over the word “love” is used from Genesis to Revelation as if God were trying to say something special and incredible to mankind, as indeed He is.

- John 3:16 declares that *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will never perish but have everlasting life.*
- John said, “*We love Him because He first loved us.*”

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul declares that Christians should love one another for the first evidence of a saving work of grace in the heart is love. If a Christian has no love, all else will profit nothing.

- Love lies at the very foundation of Christian character. We are “*rooted and grounded in love.*” (Eph. 3:17) Love is the path in which all true children of God are found for they “*walk in love.*” (Eph. 5:2)
- Love bonds believers together. We are “*knit together in love.*” (Col. 2:2)
- Love offers protection during the dark days of spiritual warfare for believers are to put on “*the breastplate of love.*” (1 Thess. 5:8)
- Love is the fullness and the completeness of the Christian character for the believer is “*made perfect in love.*” (1 John 4:18) And there is more.
- Love is declared to be the fulfilling of the Law. (Rom. 13:10) The Christian who expresses love is most like the Father when love is shown for the Bible says, “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:8,16)

Because God is love, He wants believers to know and enjoy that Divine attribute. In a thousand ways and with ten thousand voices God has been shouting to mankind, “*I love you!*” But for some strange reason man has not heard the gospel message distinctly. Even when God took upon Himself the form of a man and personally demonstrated authentic love, people misunderstood and they tried to kill Love. At first hatred seemed to be successful, but even death cannot destroy Love (Song of Sol. 8:7) and so it was that Love walked out of the grave. What did Love have to say?

- Love said, “*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*” (Luke 23:34)
- Love said, “*Come unto me and I will give you rest.*” (Matt. 11:28)
- Love said, “*Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*” (Rev. 3:20)

The Power of Love to Transform

In order to demonstrate the importance of love God once took the most sinful of all men and transformed him completely. The Church knows him well as the apostle Paul. When we first meet him, he is presented as Saul of Tarsus in the pages of Holy Scripture. He is a young man with fire in his veins and hatred in his heart. The emotion that burned within Saul was not immoral lust nor unbridled ambition but religious zeal. He would later write, “*I had a zeal for God*”, but it was not according to knowledge. (Phil. 3:6 cp. Rom. 10:2)

Though he was in a spiritual state of darkness, Saul thought he had the light of knowledge and the truth of the gospel. As a member of God’s chosen people according to the flesh, Saul was brought up to believe that all Gentiles were dogs and all Jews were the apple of the Lord’s eyes and His constant delight. (Prov. 8:30)

As a mother will fight to protect her children, as a man will go to war to protect his home, so a religious zealot will defend the doctrine he holds dear even with weapons that wound. Saul combined the best of intentions with the worst form of unholy passion and logic. The end result was that Saul began to persecute the Church of Jesus Christ. It did not matter if the disciples of the Lord were a woman or child. He would search every village and town in Palestine to hunt Christians down in order to arrest them. He would consent to their death when possible as in the case of Stephen. (Acts 7:58-60) Saul burned with passion in the name of Jehovah. He truly believed that the Lord God of Israel would use him to destroy the Followers of the Way who believed that the Law could be set aside with all of its rituals and ceremonies.

Finally, on the road to Damascus, God graciously put a halt to the religious madness. Manifesting Himself in Divine glory, the Lord of Heaven and Earth revealed Himself to Saul. With a voice of kindness, Love spoke. The Divine summons penetrated the silence. “*Saul! Saul! Why persecutest thou Me?*” (Acts 9) Love asked a question that had to be answered. And the heart of Saul was changed and became responsive because of Sovereign grace.

History records just how responsive the heart of Saul was to the gospel for he spent the rest of his life trying to right the wrong he had done to the Church. The Messenger of Meanness became the communicator and the embodiment of love. The great transformation came because Sovereign grace changed the heart—and that is significant. Students of human behavior know that there are people who are sweet and kind by nature while others are aggressive and strong willed from the moment of birth.

However, when it comes to conversion, and when it comes to expressing Christian love, the natural disposition is not the issue. The issue is how much of the love of God fills the soul and expresses itself. Strong willed people and those who are stern by nature or those who have been made harsh by experience can still be the most gentle, the most caring, and the most kind of humans when there is Divine love at work in the heart put there by redemption, worked out by sanctification, and enhanced by the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Love Transcends Time

The challenge and the calling for the Christian is to live within the sphere of love in order to be an effective representative of God. The objective is to win souls to the Savior despite initial hatred and hostility, as Monica experienced with her wayward son, Augustine. While her son was breaking her heart by his wicked lifestyle, Monica loved him still for Christ's sake. She never stopped praying and hoping and pleading that God would bring him to faith.

Monica needed great faith for her marriage was a spiritual and personal ordeal. Her husband Patricius was Roman. He was of the middle class, employed in the Roman administration of the village. He was a pagan in faith and he was a page morals. Monica chose to endure his infidelities and his outbursts of temper. Her faithfulness produced eternal rewards for just before his death in AD 370, Patricius was baptized. While this manifestation may be very unusual, it is certainly a wonderful illustration of the extent Christian love can go when a serious attempt is made to live out the ethics of the Christian life.

Many years ago, a pastor of a small Pentecostal congregation in the hills of Pennsylvania happened to see a newspaper article about some young people who were being tried in New York for the senseless murder of a cripple boy in a wheel chair. The pastor felt compassion, not only for the victim, but also for the boys who had committed the murder. He wanted to help but he did not know what to do. However, acting upon an inner impulse he decided to drive to New York City and attend the trial. David Wilkerson was not able help the young people on trial but he found thousands of other desperate kids on the streets of New York. Love compelled him to stay and see if he could help out the tough guys such as Nicki Cruz leader of the Mau Mau. The Cross-and the switchblade met and the Cross-won. A lesson is observed: whether in the 1st, the 4th, or the 20th century when the love of God is unleashed in the hearts of people it becomes such a conquering force that crucifixion cannot kill it, beatings cannot break it, nor can immorality or murder quench it. God wants Christians to love and so the Holy Spirit moved Paul one day to pick up his pen and write:

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels
And have not charity, I am become as sounding brass,
Or a tinkling cymbal*

The Context of 1 Corinthians 13

The motive for Paul to write 1 Corinthians 13 was the abuse of spiritual gifts in the local assembly. The apostle was pressing home the point that despite all the diversity of spiritual gifts, love is the greatest. This does not diminish the necessity or the excellencies of other spiritual gifts. It merely puts everything into a proper perspective. The Church of Christ needs apostles, prophets, teachers, and workers. The Church needs individuals who can govern properly, give graciously, and work behind the scenes quietly. The Church even needs those who can speak in tongues or other languages. But most important of all the Church needs people who will love others.

An Innate Capacity to Love

As he writes, Paul seems to assume that the ability to love already lies within the regenerated heart and for good reason. As man was born in the flesh with the inherited nature of the First [and fallen] Adam, so when he is born of the Spirit he inherits the nature of the Last Adam. One of the great results of redemption is that a new heart of flesh is given to the believer, which means that in the renewed will, intellect, and emotions there is tremendous capacity to love. In addition, God has given the Holy Spirit to produce love. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.*” (Gal. 5:22)

The Tension of Love

When an opportunity comes to love and that opportunity is passed up, the Christian is often grieved because the Holy Spirit is grieved. The Spirit is grieved because loving is natural to the new nature. The Christian is actually going against his new nature when he is not loving in a given situation which is why tension sets in. The natural man, the unconverted person does not have such tension. And so those who are in the flesh can write what they want and say what they want without any scruples. However, once a person is converted, the philosophy of life changes because the heart has been changed. When the Christian begins to act like he once was, there is conviction, there is distress and anguish of soul because the integrity of the soul is being violated. At such times, there is only one solution and that is to repent and change. There is no other alternative really for Paul says that without love a person speaks and sounds like a brass organ. There is a lot of noise but not much else.

The Tenderness of Love

One day, a woman was pushed roughly through a crowd and thrown down into the dirt before the feet of Jesus. There was a tremendous amount of noise. Men with strong voices bellowed forth the thunder and lightening of Mt. Sinai as they told Jesus, *“Master this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?”* (John 8:4,5). It is a good question. What does one say to someone who has been caught in a terrible transgression.

- Some people express moral outrage.
 - Others shout words of condemnation.
 - Most shake their heads in amazement.

“But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifed up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst” (John 8:6b-9).

Have you ever wondered what it might be like to be alone with God having been caught in the act of a great sin? What will He do? What does He do? Does He lash out with verbal words of condemnation? Does He annihilate the soul in justified holy anger? What does God do? And what does a person do when left alone with God and their sin? Really, there is only one thing to do and that is to be still and be silent and see what will happen.

When a soul is still it may be that it will hear the sweetest voice with words of mercies. *When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more*" (John 8:10-11).

How many Christians would be as gracious as Jesus with a woman caught in the very act of adultery? How many Christians weep over the world that will soon perish? Until we learn to weep again, until we learn the language of love, we have yet to know what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 13:1 when he writes, *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels And have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, Or a tinkling cymbal."* The challenge to every Church and to every Christian is to learn a little bit about love.

*While the souls of men are dying—
for a little bit of love;
As the children too are crying—
for a little bit of love;
Stand no longer idly by
You may help them if you try,
Go then saying,
'Here am I'—
with a little bit of love.*

Chapter 2

*And though I have the gift of prophecy,
and understand all mysteries,
and all knowledge; and though I have all faith,
so that I could remove mountains,
and have not charity, I am nothing.*

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:2

The Power of the Presence of God

It was an age of miracles. In symbolic language there were signs in the earth amidst blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke. The sun was turned into darkness and the moon into blood. Sons and daughters prophesied, young men saw visions, and old men dreamed dreams. The Spirit of God was poured out upon all flesh. It was an age of miracles. When the Holy Spirit was given in greater measure He came with ordinary and extraordinary gifts as well as common gifts.

The Gifts of Common Grace

The common gifts of the Spirit are those gifts that are recognized and used by all men, both the godly and the ungodly. For example, generally speaking men are religious. Most people might not be regenerated or righteous but there is a religious dimension to man. Even in the USSR there are religious elements reflected in what happens when a child is born, a couple is married, and before a military battle is fought. In each case there is a moment of devotion offered—to the state! The religious fervor of the Mormon, the follower of Buddha, the devout Hindu, and the conscientious Jew acts as a stabilizing factor in society and is a token of common grace. Imagine for a moment a world devoid of religious elements. There would be no sensitivity to the soul and spirit. Such a world could not last for long because the evils of the human heart would know no boundaries. Bloodshed and violence would reign supreme. Other signs of common grace bestowed upon the godly and the ungodly include common sorrow and common gratitude.

Extra-ordinary Gifts of God's Grace

But in contrast to how God operates in the affairs of mankind as a whole are the ordinary and extra-ordinary gifts of the Spirit which are special and unique to the people of the Lord. The extra-ordinary gifts of the Spirit include the gift of tongues of miracles, of prophecy, and of knowledge. These gifts are called extra-ordinary because they are not normally given in the ordinary course of God's providence. When these gifts are given there is a great privilege to recognize. Jonathan Edwards comments, "*It is a great privilege to live in the enjoyments of the outward means of grace, and to belong to the visible Church; but to be a prophet and a worker of miracles in the Church is a much greater privilege still. It is a great privilege to hear the Word which has been spoken by prophets and inspired person, but a much greater [privilege] to be a prophet, to preach the Word, to be inspired by God, to make known His mind and will to others.*"

Men of Unusual Abilities

- **Moses.** Throughout the course of human history God has singled out certain individuals to be the recipients of extra-ordinary gifts. Moses was such a person. While still an obscure herdsman on the backside of a desert God revealed Himself. Moses saw a bush burn and not be consumed. Then he heard God speak and his life was changed forever.

Like Moses, you and I must hear God speak personally if we want to live extraordinary lives. One reason why so much preaching falls upon dull and deaf ears is because men and women are not listening for the voice of God through humble but natural elements. But if the words of God ever break forth, life will be forever different. Moses was made to be a prophet, a priest, and a presenter of the Law of the Lord. Because of that great privilege granted to him, rivers parted, plagues fell upon people, and two million people were prepared to create a new nation.

- **David.** David had great privileges bestowed upon him. Trading his sling for a harp and a pen, David was used of God to write some of the most inspiring Psalms in all the world.
- **Daniel.** In like manner Daniel knew something of the extra-ordinary privileges of divine mercy. When the nation of Israel fell to the Babylonian army in 586 BC, Daniel and his friends were not butchered as many others. They were taken to the king's palace where great mercy and favor was bestowed upon him. Being a young man of high moral standards and spiritual insight, the godly ethics of the youth captured the imagination and attention of the Queen. Hear how the Queen of Babylon speaks to Belshazzar about the young people from a foreign land. *"There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers;¹² Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation"* (Dan. 5:11,12).
- **The Apostles.** Moving from the Old Testament era to the New it can be observed that the apostles were granted a measure of extra-ordinary gifts and for good reason, the Church is built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself bring the chief corner-stone (Ephesians 2:20). So it is a great privilege to receive the special privileges of divine favor. Moses and David, Daniel and the Twelve Apostles are honored and exalted for the special place they have in the history of the Church. And yet, Paul writes that despite being the recipient of extra-ordinary gifts, if there is not love, such a person is nothing.

A Clear Message Communicated

The message is clear. Power is no substitute for love. Position is no substitute for love. Spiritual privileges are no substitute for love. And something is understood. The ordinary influence of God the Holy Spirit working out love in the heart of the most humble saint, is a far more excellent privilege than any extra-ordinary of prophecy, tongues, knowledge, or even the ability to relocate mountains. This thought is so powerful, seekers of signs and wonders often overlook it. The most obscure and humble saint in the most remote village of the world is greater in the sight of God than Moses, Elijah, or David if there is love in the soul. Several reasons make this true.

Love is Greater than Gifts

First, love is part of the essence or nature of God and of the man created after the likeness of God. For a person to love is for him to be like God in his nature. It is no remarkable thing for God to give extra-ordinary privileges to men so that they can heal the sick, raise the dead, or divide waters. To some degree God given extra-ordinary gives to men of science, medicine, and technology. But for God to transform the soul of a person so that he is new in nature, in the divine economy of things, that is a miracle. For God to take an angry person and make him calm and gentle, for God to take a rebellious soul and make it submissive, for God to take a self-centered life and turn that life around to be concerned for others, that is a miracle of the greatest magnitude. In comparison all else is nothing.

Second, love is greater than the extra-ordinary gifts because it requires more the movement of the Holy Spirit in the soul. A person may be like Saul who was numbered among the prophets, a person may be like the magicians in the court of Pharaoh with the ability to duplicate divine miracles, a person may be like Balaam with ability to curse nations, but if God is going to subdue a soul steeped in sin there has to be a mighty movement of Divine sovereignty.

Flesh does not come easily upon dry bones to readily receive the spark of Divine life in order to live again. There must be a great movement of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. Therefore, when God's people love it is a sign that the Lord has come to a place in glorious redemptive power.

Then third, love is greater than the extra-ordinary gifts because the spiritual image of God consists in being holy—like the Divine. The royal command comes, *“Be ye holy for I am holy.”* But holiness can easily be lost within the Christian community by acts of religious carnality. The carnal man wants to foretell future events. Jesus said, *“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:”* (Matthew 12:39). The spiritual man is instructed not to seek signs but humility. *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil. 5:6-8). Despite the power of omnipotence at His disposal Jesus had a humble mind. The Lord had a loving mind and a heart that was centered on others. Therefore, to love as Christ loved is to experience a measure of grace that surpasses all of the extra-ordinary gifts in excellence.

The Danger of Seeking Wrong Gifts

Now a word of caution needs to be sounded in the Church today for this generation. Many in the local assemblies are placing stress upon extra-ordinary gifts while minimizing love and common courtesies. The Bible reminds us that it is possible to have extra-ordinary gifts without love, which is just another way to say that it is possible to be religious without salvation. Judas Iscariot is certainly in that class of people. Christ tells us that many in the day of ultimate judgment will hear the fatal words, “*Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you*” (Matthew 7:22,23). The workers of iniquity include those who preached the gospel and baptized people and performed religious works in the name of Jesus. Because it is possible to be involved in the miraculous in an inappropriate way, Jesus said, “*Do not rejoice because you can cast out devil but because your names are written in the Book of Life*” (Luke 10:17). While individuals are happy to receive one of the extra-ordinary gifts of the Spirit, the greatest blessing is found in loving others.

A Shocking Sight of Self

Because of the undue emphasis by some on extra-ordinary gifts, it is good for the Church to look inward once more—and be shocked. Sometimes a look inward can be painful when a true sight of self is glimpsed. It is a traumatic experience to expect to see in the soul beauty and grace only to have the Word of God shine its gospel light and reveal that which is ugly. The mind is suddenly surprised at reality much like northerners were surprised during the early days of the Civil War.

A Spiritual Lesson from the Civil War

When the Civil War began in 1860 it was called The Picture Book War. As the Southern troops advanced on the northern capitol a battle broke out at Manassa Junction. A large part of high society from Washington, DC dressed up in their finest garments and went to the battlefield for a picnic. What they saw that day sent man and beast running away in terror. Suddenly live shells began to burst around the spectators. The people had come to be amused but found themselves in a flight for their personal safety. As bullets whizzed by civilians were killed. Bombs burst and limbs were torn from bodies. The pretty picture people had expected to see was in reality a drawing from the depths of the damned. The heart can be like that. As a Christian looks for love in his own heart it may very well see something else such as self-centeredness, emotional indifference, hatred, and simmering rage.

A Miracle in the Making

But it might also be that a person can look inside the heart and behold a miracle of the Holy Spirit who always leaves signs of His visitation.

- There is the sign of lingering concern for others. Do you care?
- There is the sign of being amicable. Are you easy to get along with?
- There is the sign of forgiveness. Do you hate?
- There is the sign of submission. Are you willful?

The Bible says that while man looks on the outward appearance God is looking on the heart. The Bible teaches us that without love we are nothing. The world might pay us homage. On May 1st the Russians honor Lenin and Joseph Stalin and other leaders of the Russian revolution of 1917. But anyone who has read the biographies of these mass murderers will know they had no love for anyone but themselves. Before God, they are nothing. And we can be nothing before God without love as well. Now let us know love. Let us love one another for love is of God.

Chapter 3

*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,
and though I give my body to be burned,
and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:3

The Importance of a Proper Motive

One of the most fascinating studies to engage in is the study of human motives. Motives are what drive people to do what they say and do. Motives become extremely important when interpreting behaviour. That is why people ask almost instinctively when a questionable behaviour or deed is done, "Why?" "Why did you do that?" "Why did you say that?" "Can you tell me why?" We want to know the motive and for this reason. "Men are more accountable for their motives than for anything else" said Archibald Alexander. Certainly this is true in a court of law. Let the defense prove that a violent or unreasonable crime was committed without malice aforethought and the person might be acquitted no matter how vicious the deed. Henry Ward Beecher noted that, "God made man to go by motives."

What Moves the Mind of God?

Part of the reason for this is that motives reflect the essence of God. The Bible reveals that God works according to motives, which influences His will. Would you like to know what motivates God and what is His will? Then first believe that every believer can know the will of God. In fact, it is commanded. Romans 2:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind; that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Jesus said "unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). When we ask God why He wills something done the answer is threefold.

The Love of God

God wills according to a holy and wise purpose which is to reveal Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 3 Paul writes that he was saved in order to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: " (Eph. 3:10-122). Because of Christ the Christian can see how wise and holy God is. Because of Christ the believer can see an eternal purpose revealed. Because of Christ the saint can see the will of God manifested. God wills because of love. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There are many passages that exemplify the love of God. Over and over God tells man, "I love you." "I love you." Of national Israel it was said, Zech 8:8 "And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God in truth and in righteousness." Jesus promised, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth

them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

A Holy and Wise Purpose

God is motivated to act by love according to a holy and wise purpose. God wills according to Divine pleasure. For example, in the matter of salvation Ephesians 1: 5 reveals that selected souls were “*predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*” John 14:21. When a soul is saved God is pleased. Therefore, God is motivated by a holy purpose, by love, and by divine pleasure. There are other motives, which drive God to act in a certain way but for now the point is established that God operates according to fixed motives, and so should those who are made in His image. Paul says that the supreme motive for the Christian man must be love. A person might give away all his money to feed the poor, a person might give his body to be burned in religious zeal, but without love every good work is rendered meaningless.

Zeal Without Love

In Philippians 3 Paul shares how zealous he was as a Pharisee. Like other Pharisees Paul boasted of his goodness. Nevertheless, despite his zeal Paul had no love and therefore his religion was meaningless in the sight of God. The Bible teaches that nothing can make up love's deficiency. A once popular song says, “*What the world needs now is love, sweet love. That's the only thing there's to little of*” What a person does and why something is done is not separated in the sight of God. A person's attitude and actions are united before the Lord *for the LORD seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart* (1 Sam. 16:7). When God sees worthy activity knowing individuals are motivated by unworthy impulses He speaks of the activity as not being acceptable in His sight. A disturbing question is asked in Isaiah 1:12, “*When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? ”* God demands an honest answer. Isaiah “*To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? Saith the LORD. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats ”* The implication is clear. Religious and social duties performed without proper love relationship is ultimately repulsive to God.

The Need for Self-examination

Here then is a passage that every Christian can use for self-examination. As religious duties are performed the heart must ask of itself, “*Am I sincere?*” Church leaders can examine themselves. Pastors can ask themselves, “*Do I love my people?*” “*Do I love money or ministry?*” “*Do I long for holiness?*” “*Do I love lost souls?*” Deacons can ask themselves, “*Do I love to serve? Do I long to help others?*” Sunday school teachers can examine themselves in like manner. Every Christian can search their heart for love as they give, attend the services, or give “*a cup of cold water*” to someone who is thirsty.

Signs of Sincerity

One evidence of Christian love is sincerity. Sincerity involves four components.

- **Truth.** Psalm 51:6 “*Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*”

- **Freedom.** Love is not a duty but an inner delight. God is freely chosen for who and what He is. Holiness is freely longed for.
- **Integrity.** The word integrity speaks of wholeness. It is hard to have a heart wholly for God. King Saul had no heart for God—if the truth were told. King Solomon had a divided heart for God. King David has a whole heart for God. The Psalmist said, “*I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works*” (Psalm 9:1). Psa 119:2 “*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*”
- **Purity.** 1 Peter 2:2 “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*”

Chapter 4

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind”

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:4

Twin Pillars of Love

In 1 Corinthians 13:2 Paul teaches that love is far more excellent and important than any of the extra-ordinary gifts of the Spirit. Love is more important than social concern or extreme acts of self-sacrifice. Without love a person may have the gift of prophecy or knowledge. Such a person may remove mountains, feed the hungry and clothe the needy. A person can even give the body to be burned. But without Christian love all these good and noble elements are nothing in the Divine economy. That is the supreme importance that God puts on having right thoughts, right attitude, and right actions. To make the Church understand what the right attitude and actions, are the apostle states very simply what the twin pillars of love are as he writes *“Love will suffer long, and is kind.”*

Conflict for Christians

The reference to love suffering long is a reference to the evil or injury received from others. I wish it were different but as long as we are in the flesh we shall hurt and be hurt by others, especially when the Christian life is sought to be lived. We will be unkindly criticized without just cause. We will be deliberately misunderstood. We will be pressed into a personal mode. If someone has never offended you, cheer up, things are going to get worse. One man said that he cheered up and sure enough, things got worse. No matter how hard we try not to offend others it will happen. A thoughtless deed, an inappropriate response, ruined expectations, unfulfilled dreams—in countless ways a person can be offended. The normal reaction when offended is to lash back. This in turn creates its own turmoil and the emotional and verbal war is on. Because of sin man is emotionally and morally out of control; because of sin man is hypersensitive; because of sin, man is ready to kill and fight without cause.

Sin in the Sanctuary

Since June of 1975 I have been able to travel in many states and have spoken in a number of Churches. Wherever I go I see something that should disturb all Christians and that is the lack of love. People are hypersensitive. People are handling their feelings in such a way that the least negative comment or slight is an excuse to be angry. Pastors are leaving the ministry in record numbers each month because the emotional pot of people is boiling over. A Lutheran pastor once told me that there are over 500 Lutheran parishes in need of Shepherds. CNN has reported that Catholic seminaries cannot find enough men to be priests; many are serving two congregations.

The Origin of Bad Behavior

There are two fundamental reasons for congregations in Christendom being in disarray.

- **There is the justification of bad behavior without protest.** It is one thing to say *“I want to do wrong and I will do wrong”*, it is something else to say, *“I do no wrong.”* As long as Christians justify that which is an abomination in the sight of God the

world will stay away from the Church in droves. Why go to Church to be hurt when the boss will do it on Monday morning?

- **There is the lack of a biblical self-image.** Many Christians do not have a self-image of being a loving person according to 1 Corinthians 13. To help all Christians at all times, the apostle Paul sets forth what the heart must be like. The heart of every believer should pray

*“Saviour, like a Shepherd lead us,
Much we need Thy tender care;
In thy pleasant pastures feed us,
For our use Thy folds prepare.
Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are;
Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.”*

Jesus has bought the Church with His own precious blood so that Christians can be conformed into His image.

The Suffering Savior

The suffering long of vile offenses is forever associated with Jesus. In Matthew 11 the Saviour invites all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him for rest as He adds, *“I am meek and lowly in heart.”* God will have His people meek for the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and long-suffering (Gal. 5:22). In Ephesians 4:1,2 the apostle exhorts, *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love;”*

Christians Who Have Endured Injustice

While the gospel exhortation to love is easy to state, it is not so easy to live out the ethics of this Divine mandate. There are many ways a Christian might be wronged.

- **Laban and Jacob.** The father in law of Jacob failed to fulfill promises and commitments made. He deceived Jacob in a marriage contract, changed his wages several times, and tried to rob Jacob of the blessings of God. For many years Jacob endured the mental and emotional hardships of this tumultuous relationship.
- **David and Saul.** For a long time David endured the treachery and madness of King Saul. Many times while in the king’s presence Saul honored David and spoke well of him. But suddenly his mood would change and an evil spirit drove Saul to seek the destruction of Israel’s young champion.

- **Paul and the people of Corinth.** The great apostle had to endure much personal slander. After his visit to the Church at Corinth, someone in the congregation began to stir people up against God's servant. It was said that Paul was a coward, bold in words but weak in person. It was said that Paul did not care much about the Church when he cared deeply.
- **Job and his friends.** The friends of Job were ready to believe the worst about him without question. Hearing of Job's suffering they came to visit with a prejudiced religious mindset. It was their considered and collective opinion that Job had committed a great evil in secret and now he was being punished for it. What they wanted was for Job to openly admit the wrong he had done.

In each of these situations the child of God suffered long. Jacob endured the greedy conniving Laban. David bore with the emotional instability of Saul. Job argued long with his friends instead of sending them away in exasperation. We say again, there are many ways for the saint to be hurt by others who possess a selfish spirit, a domineering disposition, irrational reactions to an idea, or attributing false motives. The list is long. Nevertheless, charity will suffering long.

What Suffering Long Means

To suffer long means something specific.

- **To suffer long means to accept injuries without retaliation.** For the Christian revenge is not an option. Rom 12:19 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*
- **To suffer long is to make a conscious decision to be patient.** In Luke 21:19 Jesus articulated this spiritual principle in relation to the pending destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus warned that the Holy City would be compassed with armies. There would be signs of the coming destruction.

When the signs began to appear His followers need not fear nor lose their peace of mind. *"In your patience possess ye your souls."* Make a conscious decision to accept the will of the Lord not matter how difficult the moment might be.

It is possible to have peace despite the pressures of life, it is possible to be long suffering but only if there is a fundamental commitment to be different because of Christ.

Why Endure a Spirit of Suffering Long?

There are several practical reasons for cultivating a spirit of long-suffering.

- **A watching world will notice the difference Christ can make.** D. L. Moody was once told that *“The world has yet to see what God can do with one man who is totally dedicated to him.”* Moody replied, *“By the grace of God I would like to be that man.”* And for his generation he was.

In the Chicago area many in the world watched Moody and called him Crazy Moody because of his holy zeal. Moody was mocked by many for his lack of formal education and his peculiar manners. But he endured the public ridicule and finally won many skeptics to Christ.

- **The heart comes to understand the long-sufferings of God towards sinners.** While many souls come to Christ at an early age, some linger long. And yet God still saves all that call upon Him.
- **The soul is strengthened and spiritual maturity is manifested.**

Two Suffering Saints

- **Stephen.** In the book of Acts we read the tragic but glorious story of Stephen. Stephen felt the rocks breaking his bones and still he prayed, suffering long with the sinners who were killing him. *“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”* Then Stephen died. From his stony graveside his soul arose to walk afresh with the Lord who stood to welcome this martyr home. A saint died but the chief of all sinners who was present that day did not forget and by God’s grace he too was converted.
- **Paul.** Saul of Tarsus became the apostle Paul who then suffered long with sinners like him such as a coppersmith named Alexander who did Paul much harm.

May we all hear Jesus say afresh, *“Come and learn of me. I am meek and lowly.”*
May we take to heart what Paul teaches, *“love is long suffering.”*

Chapter 5

“Love is ...Kind”

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:4

*My life shall touch a dozen lives
Before this day is done—
Leave countless marks for good or ill
Eve sets this evening's sun.
So this the wish I always wish,
The prayer I always pray,
Let my life help the other lives
It touches by the way.*

Designed by the Divine

From the moment of creation man has been in need of fellowship. The Bible says that when God created man He placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate the ground and keep the animals. It was an honorable and thrilling assignment demanding wisdom in the midst of wonderment. But as Adam watched the animals he noticed how so many paired off by instinct. The variety of shrills and cries indicated a means of communication but Adam had no one to fellowship with. Adam had no one to share the long hours of the day. There was a part of him that was incomplete.

Lonely is the Heart

Understanding his loneliness God caused Adam to go into a deep sleep. Then, with a measure of divine energy God tore from Adam's side a rib and from that flesh and bone and blood God created or built a woman. Matthew Henry notes, *“That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved. Adam lost a rib, and without any diminution to his strength or comeliness (for, doubtless, the flesh was closed without a scar); but in lieu thereof he had a help meet for him, which abundantly made up his loss: what God takes away from his people he will, one way or other, restore with advantage. In this (as in many other things) Adam was a figure of him that was to come; for out of the side of Christ, the second Adam, his spouse the Church was formed, when he slept the sleep, the deep sleep, of death upon the cross, in order to which his side was opened, and there came out blood and water, blood to purchase his Church and water to purify it to himself”* (Gen 2:21-25; see Eph 5:25-26).

A Marriage for Man

Now Adam had a companion. Now Adam had a soul to love and a body to express love to. It was a marriage made in heaven. It was an expression of Divine wisdom and kindness. At first Adam and Eve were themselves kind to each other. There were words of tenderness and expressions of love. If a measure of disagreement came up holy emotions suppressed any tendency to disrupt the relationship.

But then one tragic day all the peace and serenity was shattered for sin had found a way to penetrate the soul of man. Now man knew both good and evil with evil becoming more and more pronounced. One of the first verbal indications that something was wrong came through the tongue.

Shameful is the Tongue

Fallen man began to criticize and blame God for giving him such a woman. Fallen man used his tongue to tear his wife down instead of protecting her and building her up. The pattern continues today. One of the quickest ways to discern the spiritual state of a person is to listen to what they are saying. As it was said to Peter so it can be said again, *“Thy speech betrayeth thee”* (Matt. 26:73). And what people are saying to one another is shameful while it is being justified. There is the matter of being *“honest.”* Individuals pride themselves on being brutally honest. To be sure, there are times when the difficult things have to be said. Paul spoke very plainly to the people at Corinth. But hear the apostle as he agonizes and wrestles with the words he has to say. 2 Corinthians 2:4 *“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you”*.

Having a Heart of Agony

Paul’s agony of heart is far different from that of the individual who glories in being a *“forthright person”* without regard to the emotional well being of the person they are addressing. It has been noted that people who like to think they are calling a spade a spade are more often treating people like dirt. Colossians 4:6 instructs believers, *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man”*. People can live for a long time and be better off for not hearing some of the *“honest”* positions given in the name of being forthright. Generally speaking, people would rather know kindness of correction than brutal honesty. Kindness is best expressed with being tactful in what is said which in turn demands sensitivity to how something is said.

A Sensitive Saint

The story is told of John Wesley who was traveling with one of his lay preachers to have lunch with a parishioner. The lay minister was a man of plain manners and was quite unconscious of the restraints of good society. While talking with the beautiful daughter of the host the good preacher noted that she wore a number of rings which violated the customs of the Methodist societies. During a pause in the meeting the *“honest”* lay minister took hold of the young ladies hand and said to John, *“What do you think of this sir for a Methodist’s hand?”* A moment of silence suddenly fell. There was immediate tension in the air. A person spoke his mind and a young girl turned red with needless embarrassment. With a quiet and benevolent smile John Wesley said, *“The hand is a beautiful hand.”* Church tradition might have been violated but of far greater insult was calling undue attention to it. The girl was deeply touched by the kindness John Wesley demonstrated. If you and I as a Christian desire to be kind to each other then we must become sensitive to our attitudes and actions and how our words affect each other. We must care enough about being kind to think ahead how the words we say will affect others.

Love's Searching Look

If there is any doubt how our words are affecting others look at the bodily reaction. Does the face brighten or grow cloudy with fear and apprehension? Is there a smile or a sullen expression of self-defense? Is the sound of our voice welcomed or a warning? Even a dog will crawl away from the harsh tones of a master. Are humans not better than dogs?

Why Kindness Should be Cultivated

There are several practical reasons why kindness is to be cultivated.

- **To be kind is to love.** It is a terrible mindset that believes a person can be loving and yet unkind in words and deeds. It simply is not true. Therefore remember,

*If any little word of ours
Can make one life the brighter;
If any little song of ours
Can make one heart the lighter;
God help us speak that little word,
And take our bit of singing
And drop it in some lonely vale
To set the echoes ringing.*

- **To be kind is to treat others in the same manner.** There is a spiritual law fixed in heaven and recorded in God's Book that as we treat others so shall we be treated. Galatians 6:7 "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*" Here then is good reason to speak good words, encouraging words, kind words to one another. Good and kind words are like bread cast upon the waters. Kindness will return kindness. There was once two boys working their way through Leland Stanford University. Their funds got low and an idea came to one of them to engage Paderewski for a piano recital, and devote the profits to their board and tuition. The pianist's manager asked for a guarantee of \$2,000. The boys proceeded to state the concert, but to their horror found out the proceeds only totaled 1,600. The boys sought the great artist and told him their story. They gave him the entire 1,600. And a promissory note for 400. Explaining that they would earn the amount at the earliest possible moment. "*No, boys, that won't do.*" Then tearing the note, Paderewski returned the money to the boys and said, "*Now take out of the money all of your expenses, and keep for each of you 10 percent of the balance for your work, and let me have the rest.*" The years rolled by. Then World War I came and Paderewski was found with others striving with all might to find food to feed thousands. There was one man in the world in particular that could help and he did. Many of the starving people of Europe in general and Poland in particular were fed. After the Great War was over Paderewski journey to Paris to thank Herbert Hoover for the relief sent him. "*That's all right, Mr. Paderewski,*" was Mr. Hoover's reply. "*Besides you don't remember how you helped me once when I was a student at college and I was in a hole.*"

- **To be kind is to be like Jesus.** In the gospel record are many of the mercies of Christ. But the record is not complete. John notes, *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).*

The Kindness of Christ

One of the kindest moments in the earthly ministry of Jesus is recorded in John 21:3-17. To set the stage, Simon Peter had gone back to the fishing business. Simon had quit the ministry. Why? Because he was ashamed. He had denied the Lord three times. How can the Lord use someone who had failed him so terribly? So Peter quit the ministry. Then came Christ in quiet gentleness. *“Children, have you any food?”* He asked. And the anglers called back, *“No!”* Peter was not aware of who was calling out to him. Breaking the stillness of the silence in the early morning dawn Christ called out with a suggestion that really amounted to a royal command. *“Cast the net on the right side of the boat and ye shall find it.”* Oh my soul, how did Jesus know that? Because He is Lord. He is risen from the dead and He is Lord. Therefore, let every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The fishermen, including Peter, complied with the instructions and suddenly they were not able to draw in the net for the multitude of fish they caught. As the men worked to haul in their catch a sudden insight flashed in the mind of John. *“Peter”*, he said excitedly. *“It is the Lord.”* When Peter heard that he stopped working. He stood up. He looked towards the shore. And suddenly Peter plunged into the water to go as fast as he could towards Love for it was Love that had called out. It was Kindness that had spoken, and who will not listen to the voice of Love? Who will not heed the commands of Kindness?

Cessation of Cruelty

The cruelty that Christians display must stop. The dripping blood of Christ at Calvary says it must stop. The teaching of the Bible says it must stop. The deep longing of individual hearts to hear kind words says that cruelty must stop. Let there be love in the hearts of Christians. Love is kind.

Chapter 6

*“Love...envieth not, love vaunteth
not itself, is not puffed up,*

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:4

A Favorite Son

Like other children born to couples late in life Joseph was somewhat spoiled. Perhaps it was because his parents favored him that Joseph learned to be open with all to whom he spoke. This ability to share would be his greatest strength and part of his fatal weakness. It is interesting that not many Bible commentators think that Joseph had any weaknesses. In fact some conservative Bible students have sought to prove that Joseph, as a type of Christ, is presented sinless in Scripture. Perhaps that is going a bit too far with typology. While it is true that Joseph represents the work of Christ in many ways it is also true that he sinned.

A Dreamer of Dreams

As presented in Genesis 37:1-11 Joseph steps onto the stage of human history as a seventeen year old youth who knows he is favored at home over all others. He knows his father will protect him against his brothers at all cost. Perhaps it is that knowledge that prompted Joseph to speak to his brothers in such a way that aroused anger—and by so doing he certainly sinned, for love does not provoke to anger. The way in which Joseph antagonized his brothers was by sharing with them a dream he had. To the ancient oriental mind dreams were very significant. People believed that through dreams the gods spoke to men. In principle they were not wrong. Therefore, the subject of dreams was of great interest and went beyond speculation into seriousness.

The Voice of God

One night Joseph had a dream and the God of the universe spoke to him. In the dream Joseph and his brothers were in the fields binding the harvest sheaves. While the work progressed and the stacks were being set there was a movement among the sheaves. As if they had suddenly come alive Joseph saw the sheaves of his brothers bowing down to him in honor. Upon reflection Joseph discerned the implication of his dream and decided to share his dream with his brothers, perhaps in jest, certainly in immaturity. It is not hard to see Joseph walking up to his brothers working in the harvest fields with a coy smile upon his lips. *“Levi, Judah, would you like to hear what I dreamed last night?”* He might have asked. It would have made no difference if any of the brothers had said, *“No”*, Joseph was going to share. The initial reaction of the brothers after hearing the dream was amazement. They were amazed not only at the implications of the dream that elders should honor youth but that Joseph had the audacity to share. It is not hard to believe that Joseph was not very sensitive to body language for the Bible reveals that he had a second dream which he also decided to share.

A Grand Destiny Displayed

In the second dream Joseph saw the sun and the moon and the stars bow low before him. Upon reflection, the implications were apparent. Joseph took the dream to mean that his parents would one-day bow low before him. All of this dreaming and bragging was too much for the older brothers of Joseph. Hating him already for the favored place he held in the heart of his father, the brothers now had a pretext to treat Joseph roughly—he had dishonored their parents by suggesting they would bow low before him. Of course, the hatred in the hearts of the brothers was the envy they had of Joseph.

Hatred in the Heart

Envy is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others. It may be a friend or family member. It may be a neighbor or an old acquaintance. It may be someone known or unknown but there is displeasure with the success of someone else. As the Scriptures are examined on this issue several key concepts emerge.

First, envy is generally associated with evil in the Bible. In Mark 27:11 the Scriptures record how Jesus stood before Pilate. Christ had done nothing wrong and the ruler of Palestine knew that He was an innocent man. Pilate also realized that for envy the Sanhedrian had delivered Jesus to him for execution. In fulfillment of Romans 1:29 the members of the Sanhedrian had been divinely given over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not proper *“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers.”* Envy is evil.

Second, the expression of envy excludes love. 1 Corinthians 13:4 says simply enough that love does not envy. A casual reading of Genesis 11 indicates that the brothers of Joseph had no love for him whatsoever.

Third, the manifestation of envy leads to other sins. The envy of the brothers of Joseph over his favoritism led them to sell him into slavery. And the selling of Joseph into slavery was a modification of the original intent that was to kill him.

The Evil of Envy

So serious is this sin of envy that the Christian would do well to guard his heart against this sin. Three things will help.

First, it must be understood that a Christian spirit will not allow the exercise and expression of envy. Though this monster resides in every fallen child of Adam it need not be stirred up and allowed to roam. The Christian who would be loving will be quick to detect the first stirrings of sin and by an act of the sanctified heart stand in self judgment of this unholy attitude. The sincere Christian will strive to not allow envy to break forth in full expression.

Second, the Christian who would love and not envy will mortify or put to death the very disposition of the heart to envy. This means that every effort will be made to rejoice in the prosperity of others. Romans 12:15 commands believers to rejoice with those who rejoice. The envious person is really a selfish person and so comes under divine condemnation. The apostle exhorts in Romans 13:13 that we *“walk honestly, as in the day...not in strife and envying.”* He blames the Corinthians as being carnal because there was envying among them (1 Cor. 3:3). Titus 3:3 teaches that envy is one of the vile sins that Christians lived in before their conversion but since Jesus came into the life, envy is to be confessed and forsaken.

Third, the envious person loses nobility of soul and becomes a petty person. Part of pettiness is a compulsive drive for equality with or superiority over others. The truth of the matter is that no people are equal—ever. The quest for equality of status is logically impossible and a theoretical nightmare when attempted. Nothing in life is equal if by equality one means “*the same as*”. In the Church of Corinth envy was a problem. The end result is stated in 1 Corinthians 1. There were divisions and factions in the body until Elders became Elders, Deacons became Deacons, and the spiritually gifted minister according to their abilities. The conclusion is this. When people esteem others better than themselves, when people rejoice in the advancement of others, when Christians realize individuals are not equal though all are valuable and important there is a measure of relaxation.

The Loveliness of the Lord

Part of the beauty of Christ is that He never expressed envy at what others had. The Son of Man had no where to lay His head but He never denounced those who did. The Lord received the grace and charity of others without ever worrying where His next meal would come from or how the Father would provide. Every Christian can be like Christ. God has given people to one another in society not to envy but in order to love. Therefore, let there be love in our midst when word comes of how well others are doing. Let us cultivate a Christ-like attitude in this matter. Let envy be recognized for the sin it is so that love can prevail. Let there be love. Love will not envy others in material or spiritual matters.

The Doctrine of Envy

1. Envy is a self-destructive emotion.
 - *Job 5:2 “For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one.”*
2. No one should ever be envious that the strong will man or woman seems to get ahead in life or have their own way. Such people are never loved, rarely respected, and always bring relief when they are gone.
 - *Proverbs 3:31 “Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.”*
3. Envy is an emotional cancer that eateth at the bones and then spreads to touch everything else.
 - *Proverbs 14:30 “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.”*
4. The way to combat envy is to guard the heart and live in the fear of God.
 - *Proverbs 23:17 “Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.”*
5. No one who gets in the way of an envious person can survive the relationship.

- *Proverbs 27:4* “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?”
6. The evil of envy will perish like all other forms of sin.
 - *Ecclesiastes 9:6* “Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in any thing that is done under the sun.”
 7. There is coming a day when national envy shall cease.
 - *Isaiah 11:13* “The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.”
 8. When righteousness returns to a nation the sin of envy will be confessed.
 - *Isaiah 26:11* “LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.”
 9. In justice God remembers the envy in the heart and renders a righteousness judgment.
 - *Ezekiel 35:11* “Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee.”
 10. It was for envy Jesus was killed by members of the Sanhedrian.
 - *Matthew 27:18* “For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.”
 - *Mark 15:10* “For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.”
 11. It was for envy that Joseph was sold into slavery.
 - *Acts 7:9* “And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,”
 12. It was for envy that the Jews hated Paul.
 - *Acts 13:45* “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.”
 - *Acts 17:5* “But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.”

12. The evil of envy in the heart is listed with the vilest deeds of the flesh.
 - *Romans 1:29* “Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,”
13. It is interesting that what drives some individuals to preach the gospel is not a sense of a divine call but envy.
 - *Philippians 1:15* “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:”
14. Many religious arguments and doctrinal differences spring from envy instead of honest inquiry. Intellectual competition is rampant among religious people.
 - *1 Timothy 6:4* “He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,”
15. Paul confessed to being an envious man at one time.
 - *Titus 3:3* “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.”
16. Only once in scripture is envy associated with a positive thought and that is when the Holy Spirit envies the world’s friendship over the heart.
 - *James 4:5* “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?”

Chapter 7

“Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

~~*

1 Corinthians 13:4
(cf. Numbers 12:1-16)

Introduction

It is the will of the Father that His children be clothed with humility. Dr. A. B. Simpson once wrote on this matter in this way. *“Humility will save you from self consciousness. It will take away from you the shadow of yourself and the constant sense of your own importance. It will save you from self-assertion and from thrusting your own personality upon the thoughts and attentions of others. [Humility] will save you from the desire for display, from being prominent, from occupying the center of the stage, from being the object of observation and attention, and having the eyes of the world turned upon you.”* John Bunyan said, *“He that is down need fear no fall he that is low no pride; he that is humble ever shall have God to be his guide.”*

The meekest man

The life of Moses is the story of one of the most remarkable men that has ever lived. Jews, Christians, and Moslems respect Moses. His life can be divided into three equal portions of forty years (Acts 7:23, 30, 36):

- his life in Egypt
- his exile in Arabia
- and his leading of the new nation of Israel.

The Birth of Moses

Moses was born c. 1520 BC and, according to the ancient historian Manetho, the birth took place at Heliopolis. According to Josephus the birth of Moses was foretold to the Pharaoh by the Egyptian magicians and to his father by a dream. At the time of his birth a royal decree was in force commanding all male Hebrew children to be killed as soon as they were born.

- *Exodus 1:10 Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.*
- *Exodus 1:16 And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.*

God Fearing Women

Despite this official sanction of infanticide the mother of Moses feared God. She would not let anyone harm her infant. Jochebed would rise up today to condemn modern women who pay men to take the life of their babies for no other reason than inconvenience. One of the most obscene facets of modern abortions is that the procedure can be charged to a credit card. Because she feared the Lord, Jochebed was moved by faith to take her babe boy and hide him until the child grew. Then, still moved by faith, she put Moses in a small boat or basket of papyrus—perhaps from an Egyptian belief that the plant was a protection from crocodiles which swam in the Nile River. As another safety feature, Jochebed appointed her daughter Miriam to stay near the baby in the basket and watch over him. In the providence of the Lord it was not long before the Egyptian princess came to the river to bathe. The princess may very well have been the future famous queen Hatshepsut, ruler of Egypt.

Touched by an Angel

Discovering the babe Moses who, no doubt, was pinched by an angel to cry at just the right moment, Moses was adopted by royalty where he was “*educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds*” (Acts 7:22). This is a very interesting passage because the popular concept of Moses is that he stuttered. However, it is possible when Moses told God he was “slow of tongue” it was simply a lame excuse for the Bible states plainly that Moses was “*mighty in words.*” The truth of the matter is that Moses was one of the most brilliant and most gifted orators that have ever lived. But it would be many years before Moses would be able to exercise his leadership gifts for Moses had to learn a measure of humility. Moses also had to learn something else, he was not an Egyptian.

A Discovery of Self

The Bible does not reveal how Moses came to know he was a Hebrew. Perhaps his mother told him what happened at the earliest age possible with the understanding that he must be very careful. What is more certain is that Moses longed to identify with his people. Seeing them abused and in bondage, the heart of Moses was moved to help in whatever way he could. One day Moses saw another Hebrew was being afflicted. In a moment of passionate identify, Moses rose up to defend his brother against injustice. A strong man himself with righteous anger Moses struck the Egyptian who was hurting another and killed him. The first thought that passed through the mind of Moses was that the Jewish people would be grateful for what he had done. Perhaps they would even rally behind him. He was ready and willing to lead a slave revolt against Egypt. However, Moses had not considered what God had in mind, for Moses did not know the Lord personally and intimately.

Failure in the Flesh

The plans of Moses faltered and failed. Fear replaced the sudden surge of misguided faith in what the Hebrews were willing to do to find freedom. It was in fear that Moses fled to the land of Midian. What a sight that was. The political heir to the throne of Egypt was suddenly transformed into a fugitive from justice and a tender of sheep on the backside of a hot burning desert. He who was mighty in words and deed could speak to the sound of silence. A man can learn to be meek in such circumstances.

Remade in the Land of Midian

It was in the land of Midian that God left Moses not for a day or a month but for forty long years. God left Moses until Moses became “*very meek, above all the men upon the face of the earth.*” It was not that Moses had been humiliated as much as that Moses became humble. It was necessary that Moses learned humility because in spiritual matters those who lead will be the target of the most unjust criticism that the serpentine venom of the human tongue can produce. In Numbers 12 an illustration of this truth is set forth.

A Spokesman for the Sovereign

Over forty years has now passed. God has appeared to Moses and appointed him as the anointed spokesperson for the Hebrews. Appearing once more in the courts of the ruler, Moses after a series of plagues, persuaded Pharaoh to allow the children of Israel to move to a new land in Canaan.

Constant Criticism

Once safely in the dessert the Hebrews began to manifest their moral and spiritual depravity. Worse of all, they manifested an ungrateful heart towards the Lord by murmuring. Oh how the Israelites loved murmuring about anything and everything. They did not like the food. They were unhappy with the harsh traveling conditions. Some wanted to return to the security of slavery. The criticism of the people was petty as individuals took every opportunity to misinterpret and misrepresent what God was doing through Moses.

- When Pharaoh’s army pursued the people Moses was charged with bringing the nation into the desert to die.
- When food was the same day after day the people complained that it was not tasty enough.
- When the water supply ran low Moses was again accused of trying to kill everyone.

When Enough is Enough

Is it any wonder that God told Moses to step aside and He would destroy the complainers? But Moses, being a man of great grace, did not step aside. Instead he stood in the gap and asked for Divine mercy to be shown to the people. Did the people appreciate what Moses did on their behalf? Some certainly did not for we read that Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses (Num. 12:1). It is interesting the Bible mentions Miriam first as if she were the instigator. Initially Miriam and Aaron seemed to be angry with Moses for having married an Ethiopian woman but the real issue was something else reflected in the form of their criticism. It was directed at the leadership abilities of Moses. *Numbers 12:1* 1 “*And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.*”

Unauthorized Ambition

While Miriam might not have wanted Moses to marry the Ethiopian woman, what really bothered her was the prominence of leadership Moses enjoyed. In short, Miriam and Aaron were jealous. Moses was the God ordained leader of the Hebrews and Miriam could not stand it. With contempt in her heart and sarcasm in her voice Miriam asked, *“Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?”* It is not hard to discern that Miriam wanted to be a leader of others. Miriam wanted the power and prestige of guiding over two million people. Miriam wanted people to come to her for advice and counsel. But in order for that to happen Moses had to be discredited. The tragedy of Miriam is that she was willing to discredit her own brother in order to enhance herself. Miriam was willing to build her happiness on the unhappiness of someone else. It is not hard to see Miriam moving from group to group asking innocently, *“What do you think of Moses? He is too demanding isn’t he? He always has to have his way doesn’t he?”* If Miriam had been honest she would have said, *“I hate Moses! Who does he think he is? He is not the only one that God talks to!”*

The Wrath of God

Tragically the Bible reveals that many people were listening to Miriam, but heaven was also listening. Numbers 12:2 says, *“And the LORD heard it.”* What God heard did not please Him. In fact it made Him angry and in His anger God did three things.

- **God took Miriam, Moses, and Aaron aside.** *Numbers 12:4-5 And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. 5 And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth.*
- **God spoke plainly to Miriam and Aaron.** *Numbers 12:6-8 6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. 7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. 8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*
- **God displayed His anger.** *Numbers 12:9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed.*

Why God was Angry

Notice what made God angry. It was not the interracial marriage that upset the Lord, but the audacity of Miriam and Aaron to make Moses look bad before the people. God moved away from the negative, critical, jealous, spiteful, vindictive people who, by attacking Moses, attacked God. He moved away in anger. When the Lord moved away in Divine fury He sent Divine justice for when the glory cloud departed (Num. 12:10) Miriam was leprous. As the instigator and source of the problem Miriam was judged. She who had puffed herself up was exposed as being a leper.

A Gracious Reaction

What is precious is the reaction of Moses. Moses might have rejoiced at the judgment on his critics. Moses could have walked away and left his sister to suffer in her flesh with leprosy symbolic of a just judgment for stirring up the trouble she did. Moses might have been happy. But Moses was not going to build his happiness on the unhappiness of someone else and so he cried unto the Lord. *Numbers 12:13* “*And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.*” Here is greatness of soul. Here is grace in action. And God was willing to listen to Moses. The divine discipline given to Miriam was reduced. *Numbers 12:14-15* “*And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. 15 And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.*”

Instruction in Righteousness

Since all events recorded are for instruction in righteousness it is profitable to learn the lessons of this narrative.

- There is great sin in promoting self at the expense of someone else.
- God listens to our conversations. God hears every word spoken and holds us accountable for what we say.
- Leaders must be gracious when dealing with others, even those who oppose them. Moses did not argue the point with Miriam as to whether God spoke to others besides himself for that was not the real issue. The issue was who was in charge and that place belonged to Moses though he did not flaunt that.
- No one can hurt God’s appointed leadership without His approval.
- Love does not seek to advance itself.

Chapter 8

“Love...doth not behave itself unseemly,”

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:5
(cf. 2 Samuel 9:1-13)

The Essence of Love

Biblical love involves right attitudes and right actions. There is a holy combination of the two and for good reason. It is possible for a person to act in a loving manner and yet have an unhealthy and ungodly attitude towards another. It is also possible for a person to love another individual in the mentality of the soul and yet treat them badly. Biblical love unites right actions with a right attitude. The man, the woman, the young person who would be a Christian must endeavor to be a loving person. It is not an option. It is a Royal command. The apostle John wrote, *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:14-15)*. On this matter there is no compromising. A person who will not forgive, a person who nurtures a root of bitterness, a person who verbally and or physically abuses another person does not have a genuine love of God in the heart, for the Lord does not act in such a manner towards His creation. *“He that love not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8)*. The character of God becomes the standard to measure attitudes and actions by. When that is done the soul is elevated to new heights of achievements. We say again, Biblical love involves right attitude and right actions. A righteous attitude is manifested in patience, kindness, and humility.

The Quest for Integrity

Right actions are displayed by conducting one's self with integrity even in the most difficult situations. From the life of David comes a beautiful example of love with the happy blending of a right attitude with the right actions. The setting for the story is found in 2 Samuel 9. In context, King Saul is dead. He, along with his sons Jonathan, Abinadad, Melchishua, has been killed by the Philistines at the Battle of Gilboa. The Philistines were a powerful military people. From the isles of Greece they had come to settle and to conquer the land identified with their name, Palestine, Land of the Philistines. When the Hebrews moved into the region under Joshua a blood bath began as the land was contested. The people of Palestine and the people of the Land of Promise became mortal enemies. There were moments of peace but the Philistines were confirmed enemies. As king, Saul fought the Philistines in an effort to subdue them as a people and unite his own nation. To a large degree Saul was successful in his military and political objectives until he became insane with jealousy over a shepherd boy named David. It was obvious to all that David was an exceptional man. After he defeated Goliath in hand to hand combat his name became a household word. Being a handsome man, the eyes of the king's daughter rested upon him with favor and before long a royal wedding took place. The people of Israel rejoiced and sang songs of praise to David saying,

*Saul has slain his thousands
but David his tens of thousands.*

King Saul became jealous and his jealousy produced an emotional madness. In inexplicable anger Saul tried to kill the bold and gifted young Shepherd from the hills of Judea but was himself sentenced to die under divine discipline. Saul died the sin unto death.

Great Grace

Following the death of Saul, David became king, not immediately, but soon afterward. God gave to David great grace in the sight of the people and on the field of battle. Before long Israel had conquered her traditional enemies: Philistia, Moab, Zobah, Syria, and Edom. The Lord preserved David wherever he went. *“And David reigned over all Israel, and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people”* (2 Sam. 8:15).

Searching to Show Kindness

While David was fair to all, there was one family he was gracious to and that was the family of Saul. Usually when an ancient monarch came to power he would immediately consolidate his power by eliminating any potential rival to his throne especially if they were a legitimate heir. The reason why King Herod wanted to kill Christ was because Jesus was a legitimate heir to the throne of David while Herod was merely a political appointment. Death or banishment was not uncommon treatment for rival political figures. Rather than destroy the members of the house of Saul, David sought to show individuals loving-kindness. One day while speaking to a chief aide David asked, *“Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”* (2 Sam. 9:1). Jonathan was once David’s closest friend. The friendship was unusual in that Jonathan was also Saul’s son and heir to the throne which meant that he should have been David’s enemy. However, there was a wonderful union of two hearts in friendship love. There was no jealousy. Jonathan already knew that David would one-day rule over Israel. Is it any wonder then that David sought to find a way to repay his faithful friend? And so it was that Saul’s last surviving son was sought and found. His name was Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was a cripple.

Feasting at the King’s Table

Early in his life a nurse was carrying him. In the excitement of an impending battle within the capitol the nurse fell with the child in her arms. The legs of the boy were broken and never mended properly. Before David, Mephibosheth could not stand. Nor could he kneel in a bow of dignity as royalty visiting royalty. He was helpless before his sovereign but not without grace for the Bible says that he fell on his face before David in reverence. But David did not leave Mephibosheth prostrated for long. David spoke gracious words to the cripple man before him and beyond that David acted out his soul’s great love. *2 Samuel 9:7 “And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.”* In matchless grace David

- restored to Mephibosheth the family inheritance
- commanded that the land restored be tilled for Mephibosheth and
- invited Mephibosheth to feast at the king’s table.

A Picture of Christ

As a type of his greater Son, the Lord Jesus, David typifies what Christ does for His own. When a sinner bows before Christ and recognizes his absolute sovereign reign, the Lord of Glory lifts the soul up and gives many gifts of Divine grace.

- There is a spiritual inheritance to enjoy to include a home (John 14:1), a blessed hope (Titus 2:13), and inner happiness (Matt. 5-7).
- And there is more. There is the joy of sweet communion through prayer and the breaking of bread.

*Jesus has a table spread
Where the saints of God are fed
He invites His chosen people
“Come and dine:”*

*With His manna He doth feed
And supplies our ev’ry need:
O ‘tis sweet to sup with Jesus all the time!*

*“Come and dine,” the Master calleth,
“Come and dine!”
You may feast at Jesus’ table all the time.*

*He who fed the multitude,
Turned the water into wine,
To the hungry calleth now,
“Come and dine.”*

~*~

David did not have to speak kindly to the son of a vanquished foe. David did not have to act in a loving manner towards an obscure cripple, but he did and we must ask how. “*David, how were you able to treat Mephibosheth so kindly?*” “*David, what nobility of soul made you able to do this?*” And the answer is this. David could act in a gracious and loving manner by words and deed because he had a heart for God. David viewed all of life as the portion distributed by a wise and sovereign God. Had God raised up Saul? Then Saul would be given all the honor and respect the office called for.

Help in Showing Honor

For those who recognize they have a problem with authority figures perhaps this thought will help. Honor is to be given to others and not always because a person is necessarily worthy of the honor, but because God has ordained whatsoever comes to pass as per *Romans 13:1-2* “*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*”

Silence of the Saint

As far as the Biblical record goes not once did David speak ill of or slander Saul even when it was obvious that Saul was cruel and insane with jealousy leading him to act in an irrational manner.

First, David learned that it is better to be the object of temporary injustice than to seek to discredit or overthrow without proper cause ordained authority. For Americans in general, culturally speaking, this is a hard lesson to learn for our nation was born in blood and violence and has been violent to the present hour. And yet, as Christians, if we are not careful we will be among those of whom Jude wrote (Jude 8) and be known as “*filthy dreamers [who] defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.*” Peter writes of individuals who “*walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities*” (2 Peter 2:10). It was because David feared God and recognized His sovereignty to place in authority whom He would, that David could be gracious after become king.

Second, David could be gracious in words and deeds because he never considered himself to be Saul’s enemy. Saul might think of David as his enemy but David need not think of Saul in the same manner.

Finally, David could love in words and in deeds because he cultivated a mindset of kindness and not cruelty. The Bible says that out of the abundance of the heart man speaks (Luke 6:45). Saul’s heart was given to jealousy and suspicion, evil and self-will. David’s heart was full of gratitude to God for His constant mercies and manifest goodness and so David said to Mephibosheth in essence, “*I am going to take care of you. I am going to make sure you and your families are never hungry again. You shall feast at my table all the days of your life.*” David’s greatness of soul becomes the spiritual objective of Christians today. The apostle John wrote, “*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*” (1 John 4:7).

Chapter 9

“Charity...seeketh not her own.”

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1 Corinthians 13:5

One of the great men of the Bible is Abraham. He is first introduced in Genesis 11:26 as the son of Terah. *“And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abraham, Nahor, and Haran.”* According to Joshua 24:2 Terah worshipped heathen gods. From a family background of idolatry Abraham was called to serve the true and living God. The pilgrimage of Abraham can be traced from Ur of Chaldea to Haran and from Haran to Canaan. After arriving in the Land of Promise a famine arose forcing Abraham to move to Egypt. It does not appear to have been a wise choice because when Abraham was made to move out of Egypt he took two items that would prove to be a hindrance and a curse.

First, there was the Egyptian named Hagar. Hagar would one produce a son for Abraham only to be despised by Sarah. The results of the unholy alliance reach into the 21st century manifested by the continual hostility between the Jews and the Arabs.

Second, Abraham brought from Egypt many cattle and much silver, and gold. While wealth is not evil, the love of money is. For this reason ministers are commanded to *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life”* In the narrative to be read, the prosperity Abraham enjoyed became a point of contention because the herdsmen of Abraham’s nephew Lot could not get along with the herdsmen of Abraham.

Lot is present as a nephew of Abraham and as a contrast in righteousness. This pattern of bringing together two men of widely different character is found frequently in the Bible. We read of

Cain and Abel,
Moses and Pharaoh,
Saul and David,
Abraham and Lot.

A.W. Pink has observed, *“In almost every respect Lot compares unfavorably with Abraham.*

*Abraham walked by faith, Lot by sight.
Abraham was generous and magnanimous; Lot was greedy and worldly.
Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God;
Lot made his home in a city that was built by man and
destroyed by God.
Abraham was the ‘father of all who believed’;
Lot was the father of those whose name is a perpetual infamy (Moab
and Edom).
Abraham was made ‘heir of the world’ (Rom. 4:3),
while the curtain falls upon Lot with all his possessions
destroyed in Sodom and
himself dwelling in a cave” (Gen. 19:40).*

It takes time to fully reveal what a person is like for in the passage of time, pressure points arise which reveal the content of character—or lack of the same—in the soul. In the Biblical narrative of Genesis 13 a situation arose and a decision was made that had far-reaching repercussions.

The difficult situation came about over the grazing of cattle owned by Lot and Abraham. In an arid land where pastureland is limited there is bound to be tension when resources grow scarce. However, where there is faith there need not be tension. Tension arises when two people want something and are determined to have what they want at the expense of the other. But *love does not seek her own*. Consider how possessing an attitude of unselfish love works itself out.

First, not being selfish brought a sweet spirit to the situation. Genesis 13:8 “*And Abraham said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.*” With these words Abraham brought not only a new spirit to the situation but rational thought at well. The Hebrew reads, “*for we are men brethren.*” “*We are not children,*” says Abraham, “*that we should quarrel over insignificant details.*” In the light of eternity which cow eats what grass becomes very insignificant. “*We are not enemies,*” said Abraham. “*We are brethren.*”

The implication is that brethren or members of the family are not to fight. Ideally that is the divine design. Sin has marred every facet of human relations so that a Cain will kill an Abel, but that is not God’s purpose of the home. God has designed the home to be a safe haven from a hostile world.

In the spirit of family harmony Abraham continued to speak with the voice of a wisdom that was pure, peaceable, and easy to be entreated. Abraham pointed out how land was still available. *Genesis 13:9-10 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.*”

The solution to the problem called for relocation. There had to be a physical separation for that was preferable to continuing conflict. Because of the exceedingly sinfulness of humanity it is sometimes the best solution that a separation takes place. In the sphere of separation there is opportunity for a new beginning along with peace and gentleness.

The proposed solution, which Abraham suggested and Lot accepted, was witnessed by a watching world. The Bible says that the strife between the herdsmen of Lot and the herdsmen of Abraham had been observed by the Canaanites and the Perizzites who were also dwelling in the land. And since that was the case, the solution to the situation must have become known to them. The principle, by way of application, is apparent: the world is watching to see how Christians handle conflicts.

The world is watching and waiting to see if there is a disconnect between the rhetoric and the reality. Christian reality is rooted in a genuine unselfish love. Abraham manifested unselfish love when he gave Lot first choice in where to settle, knowing full well Lot would chose the best area for himself. According to legal and social rights, Abraham should have had first choice of the land, but Abraham surrendered in grace his right for the cause of unity. This was a remarkable display of virtue and fulfills the exhortation of *Philippians 2:4*. “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*” There are other passages which teach the same.

- *1 Corinthians 10:24* “*Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.*”
- *Romans 15:2* “*Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*”

- *Galatians 6:10* “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

It is possible, of course, when an unselfish spirit is manifested, others will take advantage of the moment. Lot did. Lot lifted up his eyes and began to gaze upon the various regions. His eyes came to rest on the most fertile land “*And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. 11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. 12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom*” (*Gen. 13:11-12*).

There is a lesson in this section of the Biblical narrative: you can take a person away from Egypt, the place of worldly things, but you cannot take the world out of the person. The world, the flesh, and the Devil are most forgiving when a person wants to leave the Land of Promise (Palestine) and return to the Land of Bondage (Egypt). While Lot moved to embrace the path of his choice Abraham moved in different direction. It was a more rugged direction but infinitely more righteous.

By modern standards, Lot’s decision to look out for number one would be applauded. By the mindset of today, Lot would be commended for taking advantage of an opportunity to have the best. Surely, he was the brightest person, between himself and Abraham in financial matters. The world today would cheer his opportunity for self-advancement. But the world would be wrong for the narrative is not yet completed.

While Lot went to speak to the leaders of Sodom and Gomorra, Abraham went to find God. *Genesis 13:14-16* “*And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: 15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.*”

There is a wonderful lesson here: God honors those who honor Him. God will reward the man, the woman, and the child who lives out the ethics of the kingdom of heaven and seeks to exercise Biblical love. The Lord will take care of His own.

- If others want to be mean spirited and contentious, let the Christian’s heart be ruled by a spirit of selfless love that does not seek its own.
- The ethical standard of the Christian faith can astonish a watching world.
- Let others go to the world if they must, but let the Christian return to a lesser place in life to go to the highest heavens in communion with God.

In the final analysis Lot was a selfish man.

- He was selfish with his choice. He wanted the best portion for himself.

- He was selfish with his emotions. Jonathan Edwards wrote, “*Selfishness is a principle that contracts the heart, and confines it to self, while love enlarges it [the heart] and extends it to others.*”
- Lot was selfish with his resources. He was determined to keep all that he could get for himself. Such a spirit does not belong in the heart of God’s children or His Church. Grace giving characterizes the Christian who has a proper spirit about all that is done.

*Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare.*

*2 Corinthians 8:5 And this they did,
not as we hoped,
but first gave their own selves to the Lord,
and unto us by the will of God.*

*What can I give Him?
As poor as I am;
If I were a shepherd I’d give Him a lamb;
If I were a wise man I’d do my part;
But what can I give Him?
I’ll give Him my heart.*

Let us not be selfish with our time, our talents, or our resources. Let there be love.

Chapter 10

“Love...is not easily provoked”

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:5

cf.

Luke 15:11-32

By the age of 33 Alexander the Great conquered the known world of his day. Unfortunately, Alexander never conquered himself. Cletus, a close friend of Alexander and a general in his army became intoxicated and ridiculed the emperor in front of his men. Blinded by rage, quick as a cat Alexander snatched a spear from the hand of soldier and hurled it at Cletus. Through he had only intended to scare the drunken general the aim of Alexander was accurate and the spear took the life of a childhood friend.

Deep remorse followed his anger. Overcome with grief and guilt Alexander tried to commit suicide with the same spear but was stopped by his men. For days Alexander lay sick calling for his friend Cletus, chiding himself as a murderer. Alexander the Great conquered many cities but he never conquered himself.

There are others like Alexander. They do many things to help people but they are self destructive in the matter of being angry or easily provoked. The tragedy is that a spirit of hostility is acceptable to the Christian community without question.

In 1986 when I first moved to Pennsylvania, a Deacon of a large Church board of over 20 members would tell me, *“Stan, the Deacons here fight and fuss. We twist and turn each others collars but when the meeting is over we go out and have coffee.”* I did not believe that was possible. After two Board meetings I agreed that the Deacons did fight and fuss but they also alienated one another. They prayed in a superficial manner and then moved on.

What is socially acceptable in the modern Church remains unacceptable to the Lord who has taught that love is not easily provoked. The Lord would have His people live in peace but peace can only prevail when love rules the heart. In the absence of peace there is no love. In the presence of anger, there is no love.

In the gospel of Luke chapter 15, the story is told of a family situation where there was no peace of heart because a spirit of anger prevailed. The story centers around two brothers. One had acted in a very foolish way. In an irresponsible manner associated with youth the younger son asked for his portion of the family inheritance. It was given in great reluctance. Soon the young man announced he would be leaving home.

The tears of a mother had no effect upon him.

The pleas of an elder brother failed to placate him.

The counsel of a godly father availed nothing.

Like Adam in the Garden of Eden the only point that mattered was for the will of rebellion to prevail. And so the deed was done. The young man left home. But before long the younger son found that his sudden wealth was gone and he was alone in the world. A little more time passed and he was in a desperate state of utter destitution.

Then, after feeding pigs for a while the young man came to his senses and decided to return home in humility. The decision was made and the journey back to wholesomeness began.

Home is where there is
a world of care without,
a world of strife shut out,
and a world of love shut in.

The young man would go home. But home was also where the elder brother lived. At least two good qualities can be noted about the Elder Brother.

- He had remained faithful to do what was decent and right.
- He had never transgressed his father's commandment at any time. *"The Law said, Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."*

As commendable as these characteristics are, there was a spirit in the heart of the Elder Brother that was just as evil as anything his Younger Brother had done. In particular there was a spirit of anger. At first, it seems that the anger of the Elder Brother was justified. It certainly seemed that way to him for when his father asked him what was wrong he gave an immediate and passionate answer. *"And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf"* (Luke 15:29-30).

After reading these words it might be concluded the anger of the Elder Brother was indeed reasonable, sensible, and defensible. Such is the nature of sins of the heart that they appear just the opposite of what they really are: self-centered, self-serving, and without a sense of altruism.

The father heard the defense of the anger of his Elder Son but did not agree with his thinking which produced his feelings of anger. The wisdom of the father is wonderful for he was brave enough to challenge the inward corruption of the soul. Such was the nature of the love of the father that he did not want to lose another son to sin's corruption.

Sin is subtle. If it does not ensnare the soul by way of licentiousness behavior it can work like acid on the heart and consume it by way of pseudo righteousness. Consider more closely the sin of the Elder Son rooted in a false worldview.

First, there was the problem of comparative righteousness. The Elder Brother compared himself to his Younger Brother and felt very good about himself. However, if the Elder Brother had compared himself to the Law of the Lord, his own heart would be exposed as full of corruption with the worms of pride,

jealousy,
bitterness,
and resentment.

Second, the Elder Brother failed to consider that regardless of the behavior of the Younger Brother, doing what is right is its own reward. A son is supposed to be obedient. A child is supposed to live according to a proper moral code. It is right to do these things whether there is a reward or not.

Then third, the Elder Brother failed to realize that the father is sovereign in his own household and can do with all things as he seems best. His father did have the power to exact justice or show mercy in the same. His father had the right to dispense of the family

resources as he saw fit just as one day the Elder Brother would have the right to administer his own household as he saw proper.

Finally, the anger of the Elder Brother was not justified after all because it was essentially a selfish anger. The Elder Brother was not interested in objective righteousness but only how his righteousness promoted his own self interests. He did not say, *“Father, your son and my brother offended the God of heaven. He broke the law of the Lord and tried the patience of the Most High God. That is why I am angry. I am jealous for the glory of God.”* No, the anger of the Elder Brother was concerned about his reputation, his accomplishments, and his faithful conduct.

In the end, the anger of the Elder Brother cannot be justified as most expressions of peevishness and anger expressed in life cannot be justified. It is that point that must first be grasped if the soul is ever to deal seriously with this particular sin. As long as anger is seen to be something that is justified because it is being provoked within the heart by the attitude and actions of others, there is not going to be much hope for change. The truth of the matter is that, in light of the Bible, most anger is rooted in a selfish moment. The soul says to itself,

“I have been offended!

I have not been consulted.

I have been ignored.

My will has not been respected.

My honor has been violated.”

So what happens next? Our spirit of anger is spread to others making them feel defensive, irresponsible,

depressed,

And angry in turn.

A vicious cycle begins.

In the Garden of Eden we find that

Adam in shame and anger blamed Eve for his plight,

Eve in turn blamed the serpent,

and the serpent if he had been allowed to speak
again would have blamed Satan.

The cure for caustic emotions is learning to love and love is not easily provoked. If you want to know if you are a loving person ask yourself this question: *“Am I easily provoked?”*

The question is not, *“Have you been a good son?”*

The question is not, *“Have you been a moral person?”*

The question is not, *“Have you worked hard and honored your
parents?”*

The question is, *“Are you easily provoked.”*

There is great irony in the story. The Elder Brother, who thought himself so right, was in reality so very wrong and in essence no different than his Younger Brother. Now the Elder Brother must find a way to humble himself and to say *“Father, your wisdom is better than my world view. Your thoughts are higher than my thoughts and your ways are better than my ways. Forgive me father, for I have sinned.”*

When the story closes we do not know how the Elder Brother responded to the words of his father. Of greater importance is how we are going to respond.

“Will we continue to justify our anger?”

Will we try to control this beast that rages within our heart?”

The Elder Brother thought he was controlling his anger by withdrawing himself. He did not go into the house. He did not speak to anyone. He was dealing with it in his own way. But silence is not the way to deal with anger. The Bible has another way according to *Ephesians 4:31* “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*” Colossians 3:8 teaches the same concept. “*But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*” The biblical way to deal with anger is not

by retaliatory silence,

nor emotional ventilation,

nor self-serving justification,

but by simply putting it off much like we take off a piece

of clothing.

We put anger off by putting aside the thoughts that give it life and by putting on holy concepts such as the nature of God and the righteousness of the moment.

The Bible never honors the Elder Brother.

The Bible never commends the Elder Brother.

The Bible never agrees that the attitude and actions of the Elder Brother are proper and are to be emulated. Just the opposite. The point of the story is that we do not want to be like the Younger Son except in repentance and we do not want to be like the Elder Brother in retaliation. We want to be like the Father who dealt with each son and each situation according to infinite wisdom. Matthew 5:48 *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Chapter 11

“Love...thinketh no evil”

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:5

In hushed whispers the stories started to circulate in Jewish towns and cities in Palestine. It was said He was the son of a Roman soldier.

It was said He was a drunkard.

It was said He was a glutton, gorging Himself
on fine food while His disciples went hungry.

It was said He was in league with the Devil and the source
of His great power with people was Satanic in nature.

It was said He was willing to commit suicide and spoke often
of dying.

It was said He was ambitious wanting to be a king
Himself and overthrow the established Roman government.

It was said He belittled His mother and fought with His
brothers claiming His followers were His true family.

The problem with these accusations leveled against Jesus Christ is that they were not true. There was no evidence for any of these charges. Nevertheless, the reports were believed by many because truth was sacrificed upon the altar of slander.

When truth is sacrificed, so is love, which is why the Church above all others must be anxious to know the truth and then to speak the same at all times. In this manner the believer represents the Lord who is the embodiment of all truth. Jesus said, *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”* The Disciples of Christ want to know the truth.

The apostle Paul tells the Church in a practical way how to search truth and at the same time demonstrate love. *“Love will not think evil of others,”* says Paul. And because love will not think evil of others important relationships will be upheld. When fellowship between two people does break down there is usually a pattern that is followed.

- **First, there is a willingness to believe a measure of evil about another person.** Perhaps it was a casual comment that was heard that set the thought process to work. Perhaps it was a deed done that was considered offensive. Because an act was offensive the mind became ready to move into the next phase.
- **In this second phase sinister motives are ascribed.** That evidence does not exist for what is ascribed to a person is of no consequence.

- **The third step to assure the breakdown of a relationship is to verbalize a private opinion and bring it into the public forum.** An open verbalization mixed with passion can make a person's hostility sound reasonable. It also serves to reinforce the initial thought of evil and interpretation of a person's behavior.

In the Church of Corinth this vicious pattern was being repeated. Paul wanted the cycle of behavior leading to broken relationships to cease. *"Do not think evil about others,"* said the apostle. *"Love will not mediate on evil. Love will not believe the worse apart from objective proof."* There is a fictional character named Melanie in the wonderful movie *Gone With the Wind*. Melanie is so pure, so sweet, and so gentle in character that she cannot think badly of anyone. When reports come of the attempts of her cousin Scarlet to woo her husband from her, Melanie dismisses the rumors with grace and dignity. To her dying day Melanie thought no evil of anyone. There are good reasons why love will think no evil of others.

- **To think evil of someone without justification is destructive.** It is self-destructive and it is other destructive. This truth is reflected in the Fall of man. In the Garden of Eden one day slithered Satan. Capturing the attention of Eve, Satan suggested a wicked image of God. *"Ye, hath God saith, Ye shall not eat of every tree?"* (Gen. 3:1).

The implication was clear. For some reason God was holding back something from Adam and Eve. Despite all the goodness of God demonstrated to Adam and Eve, the suggestion of Satan found a willing reception to believe something evil.

Sensing victory Satan, quickly moved to the second phase to destroy the positive relationship between God and His creation by ascribing to the Lord a motive for His prohibition on eating from every tree in the Garden. *Genesis 3:5 "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."* It was the suggestion of Satan that God did not want Adam and Eve to be more like Him. And the irony is that is exactly what God did want. God wanted Adam and Eve to be confirmed in righteousness and holiness. That confirmation would only come after a testing for obedience. But Satan took what God wanted, twisted the Divine intention to serve His own purpose and made righteousness appear ugly and evil.

The tragedy is that Eve entertained the false image of God and then she embraced the validity of the motive that was ascribed to Him. What the Serpent said made sense and so Eve defied the commandment of God and became a partaker of evil. In that moment she died in her spirit. Her fellowship with God was cut off. Eternal damage was done.

The self-destruction act hurt Eve and it would hurt others as well for Satan was not finished with the woman. Satan was not going to rest until he, through the woman, enticed Adam to think evil of God and violate His commandment.

- **To think evil of someone without justification leaves a person defenseless.**

During the presidency of Ronald Reagan, Casper Wineberger was Secretary of Defense. He was falsely charged with committing many crimes in connection with "Iraq-gate" but was proven innocent on all accounts. At the end of the process Secretary Wineberger spoke to the news media and posed a haunting question. *"Where do I go to get my reputation back?"* he asked. There was no answer.

- **To think evil of someone without justification is to be more like the Maker of Iniquity than the Master.**

Jesus said to a group of Pharisees one-day who had slandered Him in public (John 8:41), *“You are of your father the devil and the lust of your father you will do”* (John 8:44). According to Christ, what drives men and women to think evil of others reflects an image of Satan. Therefore, the Christian must guard the heart and counter evil with love. Specifically, there is to be a love that does not believe or think the worse about others.

Chapter 12

*Rejoiceth not in iniquity,
but rejoiceth in the truth;*

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:6

In his excellent work *Charity and its Fruits* Jonathan Edwards argues that the understanding of this verse is rather simple: true saving grace in the heart will produce a holy life. When a person is converted, argues Edwards, there will be instilled in the soul a natural revulsion to that which is sinful. There will be a new natural love for everything that is good and spiritual in the soul of the saint. “*Love will not rejoice in iniquity but will rejoice in the truth.*”

Since the moment of creation when man was made in the image of God there are things in life which are morally right and wrong. While many may question what is right and wrong, it is not necessary. God has provided a divine standard by which to live.

- Men are not to worship false Gods.
- Men are not to make graven images of God.
- Men are to remember a Sabbath day and keep it holy.
- Men are not bear false witness.
- Children are to honor their mothers and fathers.
- Men are not to steal.
- Men are not to kill.
- Men are not to commit adultery.
- Men are not to covet.

The moral standard is simple and straightforward. Truth is what God says and obedience brings happiness and blessing.

Unfortunately something has happened to complicate the simplicity of life. God’s Archenemy, who desires to be like God, has come to counterfeit righteousness in order to attract a following and establish a rival kingdom. The Bible reveals this Archenemy of the Eternal God to be an angel by the name of Lucifer.

Once Lucifer was the highest of God’s heavenly creation. He was made intelligent, beautiful, cunning, and fiercely ambitious. One day pride was found in his heart. An inward look at the wonderful attributes he possessed led to a downward fall as Lucifer made a secret decision to challenge God for the supremacy of the universe.

The angelic challenge continues today. All of mankind is caught up in the revolt against God’s authority. Through the Federal Representation of Adam, mankind was brought into the cosmic battle. Initially, it seemed that Lucifer would be able to carry out his coup. Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God and side with that part of creation already in revolt against established authority. But God did not give up. He asserted His sovereignty in such a way that both justice and mercy could be displayed. Mankind was judged on the same day as the fallen angels represented by their Federal leader, Lucifer but there was a difference in the judgment. Mercy was mixed with justice and extended to mankind while only justice was exacted on the angels. In time the promise of Genesis 3:15 was realized. At Calvary Satan bruised the heel of the Savior

but the Lord crushed the serpent's head. The Cross-of Calvary has become the focal point of human civilization.

On one side of the Cross stands all
true believers from Adam to the present hour.
On the other side of the Cross-stand all unbelievers.

On one side of the Cross-are all that love the truth.
On the other side of Calvary stands all that love themselves.

A great battle is being waged because both parties are trying to win converts. Lucifer is as zealous in his zeal to win back or keep souls given over to his kingdom as those who preach the gospel of redeeming grace.

The warfare rages. The battle grows hot. Both sides have a powerful arsenal to rely on. Lucifer has the tool called Iniquity on his side. It is a stunning weapon of spiritual warfare. Iniquity is a weapon more destructive than the atom bomb which ended WW II, for Iniquity can destroy both body and soul.

The word "iniquity" denotes "*a condition of not being right whether with God, according to the standard of His holiness and righteousness, or with man according to the standard of what man knows to be right by his conscience.*" By nature man is not right with God because he is born physically alive but spiritually dead. Theologians call this condition "*natural depravity*" or "*original sin.*"

A person sins at the earliest moment possible because the individual is by nature sinful and properly a child of wrath. *Ephesians 2:3* "*Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*"

Sin has touched every facet of the soul of every person's will, emotions, and intellect. *The Baptist Confession of Faith* summarized the condition of the natural man with these words. "*Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them whereby death came upon all: all becoming dead in sin (Rom. 3:10; Rom. 5:12) and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.*"

While man is a sinner by nature he is also a sinner by choice. Men delight in their corruption—if the truth were told.

- A Charles Manson sends out his death squads because he relishes in the power to control and hurt others.
- A Timothy McVeigh dies with his eyes wide open in defiance because he thrills at the thought of retaliating against a government he grew hostile towards.
- A Willie Horton rapes and murders a woman as soon as he is set free from a Massachusetts prison because he delights in iniquity. On June 6, 1986, convicted murderer Willie Horton was released from the Northeastern Correctional Center in Concord. Under state law, he had become eligible for an unguarded, 48-hour furlough. He never came back.

* Horton showed up in Oxon Hill, Maryland, on April 3, 1987. Clifford Barnes, 28, heard footsteps in his house and thought his fiancée had returned early from a wedding party. Suddenly Willie Horton stepped out of the shadows with a gun. For the next seven hours, Horton punched, pistol-whipped, and kicked Barnes - and also cut him 22 times across his midsection.

* When Barnes' fiancée Angela returned that evening, Horton gagged her and savagely raped her twice. Horton then stole Barnes' car, and was later chased by police until captured.

* On October 20, 1987, Horton was sentenced in Maryland to two consecutive life terms plus 85 years. The sentencing judge refused to return Horton to Massachusetts, saying, *"I'm not prepared to take the chance that Mr. Horton might again be furloughed or otherwise released. This man should never draw a breath of free air again."*

- Illicit sensual affairs of the heart flourish because there is a delight in forbidden fruit and excitement in living on the edge of discovery.
- People open their mouth to curse and speak in an abominable manner because there is sense of empowerment.
- The person who speaks their mind without any regard to social sensitivities does so because their voice will not be denied.
- The person who drinks finds pleasure in alcoholic beverages as surely as the person on drugs in an altered state of consciousness.

The dark secret is that people do love iniquity. The Bible concedes that there is pleasure in sin – for a season (Heb. 11:25). Only by a new birth can the nature of the heart be changed so that there is no rejoicing in iniquity but rejoicing in truth. But what is “*truth*”? The word is used in a variety of ways in the Bible.

- Sometimes the term “*truth*” refers to the true doctrine of Christianity in opposition to false doctrine.
- Sometimes the word speaks of the knowledge of the foundational doctrines of the faith. Jesus promised that His followers would be able to know the truth. *John 8:32* “*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*”
- Sometimes the word truth refers to faithfulness. *3 John 4* “*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*”

The person who loves with a biblical love is the person who does not rejoice or delight in sin, but finds pleasure in holiness. Jonathan Edwards speaks words of wisdom when he writes, “*all true grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life.*” There are two reasons why this is the case.

- **A holy life is the aim of eternal election.** Ephesians 2:10 “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*” Ephesians 1:4 states the same thought. “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*”
- **A holy life is the grand design of discipleship.** Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:16 “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*”

Holy fruit only comes from a holy life. The apostle Paul understood this concept and taught the Thessalonian Christians that God had not called them unto uncleanness but unto holiness. *1 Thessalonians 4:7* “*For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*” Therefore, as Peter exhorts, let the Church “*be holy in all manner of conversation*” (1 Peter 1:5).

In summary,

if the purpose of eternal election is to make men holy,

if the grand design of discipleship is the same leading to holy fruit from a holy life,

then it must logically follow that a holy life comes from *loving* the truth.

Here then is the Scriptural position on the whole matter at hand. A person can either love iniquity or love a life of truth. However, no person can love iniquity and the truth at the same time.

Turning back to the concept of the pleasure principle, it has been shown that Iniquity offers much enjoyment—for a season. What is forgotten is that truth also offers pleasure, which is why it is said that love will rejoice in truth. In fact, so intense can the pleasure principle be in acts of holiness that the physical appetite is suspended. This point is illustrated in the life of Christ in John 4:31-35.

While the disciples were in town buying food Jesus had been leading a woman into the sphere of faith. When the disciples returned they offered food to Jesus “*saying, Master, eat. 32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. 33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? 34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. 35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*” For the Christian who would enjoy the pleasure associated with righteousness the exhortation comes, be a soul winner.

Then again be a prayer warrior. One of the most enjoyable moments in the soul is to recognize that prayer is being answered. When the voice has been lifted up to heaven, when the cry of the soul has traveled across space to the ear of God, when prayer has been offered that moves the hand of God and it is obvious that what was asked for has been received then rejoice. Rejoice! Rejoice!

As there is joy in a life of soul winning efforts and effectual praying so there is joy in a life of kindness. There is a wonderful emotion that can be enjoyed when kindness is shown, when a helping hand is extended, and when there is the giving of one's soul to someone who needs help. And there are other ways to release the pleasure principle associated with truth:

- giving the place of honor to others rather than seeking it for one's self;
- being content with what one has;
- being willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel;
- submitting to God's will;
- and obeying the will of the Lord the moment it is known.

The pleasure principle associated with loving the truth and walking in the sphere of the same will last longer and bring more joy than any sinful pleasure which only lasts for a season and then leaves a residue on the soul of shame or guilt and if not that, something far worse—a spiritual callousness.

When the heart becomes callused, truth is distorted and values are betrayed. In 1988 two whales were trapped on a beach. Thousands of dollars were spent over several days to save the whales and return them to the water. Over that same time period 12,000 babies were aborted. The point is this: there are passions in the heart.

The heart will love something. It will love either iniquity or it will love the truth. Biblical love does not love iniquity but the truth.

According to God the loving person is the individual who is living a holy life manifested by kindness (verse 4a), humility (verse 4b), good behavior, calmness of spirit, generous thought, an abhorrence to evil, and a passion for godliness. And now the question comes by way of application: *“Is truth loved? Or is there rejoicing in iniquity?”* Jonathan Edwards would ask Christians today to examine their hearts along the same lines he asked his own generation. Answer if we dare these probing inquiries.

- ◆ *“Has your supposed grace such influence as to render those things in which you have failed of holy practice loathsome, grievous, and humbling to you?”*
- ◆ *“Do you carry about with you, habitually a dread of sin? Is there a healthy fear of self-distrust?”*
- ◆ *“Are you sensible of the beauty and pleasantness of the ways of holy practice?”*
- ◆ *“Do you hunger and thirst after a holy practice?”*
- ◆ *“Do you greatly desire that you may know all that is your duty? And do you desire to know it that you may do it? Can you pray with Job, ‘That which I see not, teach thou me.’ Adding, ‘If I have done iniquity, I will do no more?’”*

If any Christian is to love with a biblical love there must be no rejoicing in iniquity but a rejoicing in a life of holiness.

Chapter 13

*“Love...Beareth all things, believeth all things,
hopeth all things, endureth all things.”*

~*~

1 Corinthians 13:7

A child is put into the hospital with severe pain. Mom and dad anxiously await the news. Finally the doctor makes his report. The tests are in and the news is not good. *“Your child has a blood disorder, leukemia. The treatment is expensive and painful.”* The news is shocking and yet mom and dad immediately commit themselves to bearing whatever burden is necessary for the welfare of the child. There is a reason for this commitment. It is called love.

The scene shifts from a hospital to a home in the suburbs of a city. It is early in the morning. A drunken husband sits in an ugly stupor in front of the house. In the front room of the house sits a frighten wife and mother of three children. The children are asleep while their mother rocks quietly in the rocking chair. Her gaze is fixed on the figure in the car. She is afraid, for her husband is abusive when he is drunk—and that is often. The mother knows that if her husband tries to come into the house she will have to find a way to get the children away from him and to a safe place. She should call for help but there is no phone. Maybe the drunken sot will not sober up for a long time.

The mother watches and waits. Suddenly she grows tense. Her husband is getting out of the car. He is stumbling across the yard. The screen door is opened and now he is on the porch. Murmurs of profanity can be heard just outside the main door. The atmosphere is alive with raw emotion. There is a banging on the front door with a fist. The stillness of the night is broken. The children inside the house are all wide-awake at the sound. They know immediately what is happening. It is all too familiar.

The children gather around their mother who is standing up now by her rocker wondering what to do. She feels helpless. She feels powerless. There is no phone. Her children are small and she is no match against her husband. There is a pause and then the shattering of glass. A fist comes flying through a windowpane in the door. Fingers uncurl to find the lock to open the door. The drunkard has found a way to come home.

The mother rushes the children out the back door and tells them to flee into the darkness to a neighbor's house and call the police. She will stay behind as a decoy. She will put herself in harm's way while her children escape. Why? There is an answer. It is called love.

The scene moves once more from the hospital and from the home back into human history to a special spot outside the city of Jerusalem in the land of Palestine. The place is called Calvary because some people think the area looks like a skull. Calvary is a place of death by execution. One day the Romans brought three men to Calvary to die. Two were guilty of serious crimes against the state but the other one was innocent. His name was Jesus.

The crowd that gathered looked in amazement at the bloodied figures crucified on the cross. They were hideous to behold. Blood covered their naked bodies. For some strange reason spectators taunted the Innocent One. People could be heard talking to one another about Him. *“He saved others, why does He not save Himself?”*

To that general inquiry there was no answer. The people of Palestine could not understand. It was common knowledge that the Man in the Middle on Calvary's hill had the power to heal the sick and raise the dead. Even nature was under His control. He spoke to the winds and waves of the sea and they obeyed His voice. "*How could He hang here in open shame?*" There is an answer. It is called love. Later it would be written, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). 1 Corinthians 13:7 says that love "*Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*"

With three brief illustrations the scope of biblical love has been presented. The love that "*beareth all things*" is the love that will endure emotional and financial burdens, move to protect the innocent from harm, and pass through the punishment of divine fury. Love is willing to suffer. Whenever the subject of pain and suffering is approached a great mystery is entered into for we do not fully understand its proper place in the universe. We only know that suffering comes in many unwelcome forms. Suffering may come in the form of a childhood shattered by shocking incidents leaving lifelong emotional turmoil in the soul. Suffering may come in the form of a sudden sickness. And if not physical illness, suffering may appear in the form of involuntary poverty, loneliness, a broken heart, an unhappy marriage, divorce, depression, disease.

In the midst of the sorrow and grief the heart cries out to God "*Why? Why me?*" Dr. Joseph Parker was the pastor of the City Temple of London from c. 1874 until his death in 1902. He writes in his autobiography that up to the age of sixty-eight he never had a religious doubt. Then his wife died and his faith collapsed. "*In that dark hour I became almost an atheist. For God had set his foot upon my prayers and treated my petitions with contempt. If I had seen a dog in such agony as mine, I would have pitied and helped the dumb beast, yet God spat upon me and cast me out as an offense – out into the waste wilderness and the night black and starless.*" While personal problems multiply and heaven turns a deaf ear to cries of agony, the Bible offers no immediate satisfying solution to the problem of suffering whether that suffering is natural or moral in the form of judicial judgment. Nevertheless, there are several observations that can be made about the place of suffering in God's universe. Theologian John Stott suggests the following thoughts.

First, according to the Bible suffering is an alien intrusion into God's good world and will have no part in His new universe. There is coming a day when all human suffering will cease. Satan will then be cast into the Lake of Fire while heaven and earth shall be restored to its pristine glory. Suffering was not part of God's original design and it will not last.

Second, the presence of suffering is due to sin. Sometimes the punishment for sin is divine in nature and is well deserved. The children of Israel were warned of this possibility in such passages as Deuteronomy 28:58-60. "*If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; 59 Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. 60 Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee.*"

Sometimes the pangs of suffering are personal and are self-inflicted. The person who indulges the mind in sensual matters, real or imaginary might know the stabbing pain of a guilty conscience or worse, psychological bondage. The person who has a violent temper will know the pain of broken relationships. Those who enter into an illicit relationship will experience the hardening of the heart or worse the death of conscience. In light of what souls are able to do to themselves is it any wonder that John Newton talked about God's amazing grace?

*"T'was grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved."*

Sometimes the suffering a person endures is undeserved such as when a child is not wanted or appreciated, and so they suffer. The poor and hungry often suffer from economic injustice inflicted on them. Refugees suffer from the cruelties of war. Car fatalities are often the result of drunken drivers. In many situations the innocent do suffer.

Then third, suffering is due to human sensitivity to pain and that is many times good. Nerve endings have to hurt if the body is to protect itself. Those with certain forms of leprosy wish they could suffer or feel pain for the absence of pain poses a greater danger to health. Sensitivity of suffering produces a measure of sympathy towards the plight of others.

There are some that argue all suffering is either an illusion or is meaningless and has no place in the plan of God. Jesus would disagree. Christ spoke of some pain as being for God's glory. By the death of Lazarus Christ was able to reveal His sovereign power. John 11:4 *"When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."*

In John 9:3 the Lord came to the defense of a man bore blind. *"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."* Though men might not always understand in some way God is at work to reveal Himself in and through suffering. Hebrews 12:1-3 *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."* Using the Cross-of Christ as the pattern there are several spiritual lessons to learn.

First, the Cross-of Christ and His suffering become a stimulus for patient endurance as per 1 Peter 2:18-23. *"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:"*

In context the reference is how Christians are to respond to suffering due to opposition or persecution. But perhaps there is a wider application to be noted. There are times when suffering simply must be endured for its own sake.

Jesus had to be crucified.

Following his conversion Paul was told by Ananias that he was going to endure much for the cause of Christ. Acts 9:15-16 *“But the Lord said unto him, [Ananias] Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.”*

In 1967 a beautiful athletically inclined teenager had a terrible diving accident in Chesapeake Bay. Joni Eareckson did not want to suffer as a quadriplegic. Yet, since 1967 Joni has learned to patiently endure her ordeal. She found comfort in the Cross-of Christ when she came to realize there was a time when Jesus too was paralyzed. The Cross-can serve as a pattern for patient endurance.

Second, the Cross-of Christ is the path to mature holiness. Hebrews 2:10 is a wonderful passage. The Bible says *“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”*

There are three graphic images used in the Scriptures to illustrate how God uses suffering in order to make believers holy and like Christ.

There is the image of a father disciplining his children. Proverbs 3:11-12 *“My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”*

There is the image of metal being refined. Psalms 66:10 *“For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.”* 1 Peter 1:6-7 *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”*

There is the image of the branches being pruned on the vine. John 15:1-2 *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*

When human suffering is associated with divine activity for refining and pruning there is much good that will come forth. The psalmist said, Psalms 119:67 *“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.”*

Other positive benefits of personal suffering include the ability to empathize; humility as Paul discovered with his thorn in the flesh; and leadership creativity. In 1975 there was an article written by Dr. Pierre Rentchnick of Geneva, *“Orphans Lead the World.”* Dr. Rentchnick made the interesting observation from the life stories of history’s most influential politicians that near 300 were orphans. Orphaned leaders included such famous and infamous figures as Alexander, Julius Caesar, Charles V, Louis XIV, George Washington, Napoleon, Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, and Castro. Dr. Rentchnick developed a theory that emotional deprivation or suffering must have aroused in these children an exceptional *“will to power.”* There is creativity for good or evil, argues the doctor, that comes from suffering depending on how an individual responds.

There is a third lesson the Cross-of Christ teaches in the revelation of suffering service. In a world where being served is more popular than serving, the Cross makes people feel uncomfortable. It was meant to. Listen to Paul as he write, *2 Timothy 2:8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: 2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

A fourth truth from the Cross-of Christ is that God loves men. In a world filled with so much evil it is possible to wonder if God cares. The holocaust of WW II makes men question the goodness of God. "*After Auschwitz,*" said Richard Rubinstein, "*it is impossible to believe in God.*" During the terrible ordeal, one Sunday afternoon, in a sub camp of Buchenwald, a group of learned Jews decided to put God on trial for neglecting His chosen people. Witnesses were produced for both prosecution and defense but the case for the prosecution was overwhelming. The judges were Rabbis. They found the Accused guilty and solemnly condemned Him to die. It is understandable. Picking up on this real life drama in a German death camp, a verse was composed with the title, "*The Long Silence.*" It is an eloquent response to the verdict of the Rabbis.

The Long Silence

by

Barry Setterfield

At the end of time, billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God's throne. Most shrank back from the brilliant light before them. But some groups near the throne talked heatedly. Not with crying shame, but with belligerence. *"Can God judge us? What can he know about suffering"* snapped a pert young brunette. She ripped open her sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. *"We endured terror... beatings.... torture.... death"*

In another group a Negro boy lowered his collar. *"What about this?"* he demanded, showing an ugly rope burn. *"Lynched for no crime but being black"*. In another crowd, a pregnant schoolgirl with sullen eyes. *"Why should I suffer?"* she murmured. *"It wasn't my fault."* Far across the plain were hundreds of such groups. Each had a complaint against God for the suffering and evil he had permitted in his world.

How lucky God was to live in heaven where all was sweetness and light; where there was no weeping or fear, or hunger or hatred. What did God know of all that man had been forced to endure in this world? *"For God leads a pretty sheltered life"*, they said. So each of these groups sent forth their leader, chosen because he had suffered the most. A Jew, a Negro, a person from Hiroshima, a horribly deformed arthritic, a thalidomide child.

At last they were ready to present their case. It was rather clever. Before God could be qualified to be their judge, he must endure what they had endured. The decision was that God should be sentenced to live on earth - as a man. Let him be born a Jew. Let the legitimacy of his birth be doubted. Give him a work so difficult that even his own family will think him out of his mind when he tries to do it. Let him be betrayed by his closest friends. Let him face false charges, be tried by a prejudiced jury and convicted by a cowardly judge. Let him be tortured. At the last, let him see what it means to be terribly alone. Then let him die! Let him die so that there can be no doubt that he died. Let there be a great host of witnesses to verify it. As each leader announced his portion of the sentence, loud murmurs of approval went up from the throng of people assembled. When the last had finished pronouncing sentence, there was a long silence. No one uttered another word... no one moved. For suddenly all knew that God had already served his sentence. While there is no easy solution to the problem of pain there is something that makes much of it bearable. The Bible calls it love. The Cross-of Christ demonstrates that love. The challenge for the Christian community is to bear all things in love.

Chapter 14

*Love...believeth all things,
hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

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1 Corinthians 13:7

Three Products of Love

A simple understanding of 1 Corinthians 13:7 is that love motivates a person to believe the best and hope for the best in others. The popular Bible translator Kenneth Taylor understands the verse this way. The *Living Bible* says, “*If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.*” While there is nothing wrong with this understanding of 1 Corinthians 7:13, it is possible the apostle has something else in mind. The focus of attention in this verse may not be upon the heart’s attitude towards others per se but the fruit love produces. Paul has already said in verse 5 that love “*thinketh no evil.*” He does not need to repeat that thought. Rather, the apostle would have the Church understand that Christian love produces faith and hope. Faith refers to all that is true about Christ in His person and work. Hope refers to confidence in that body of truth. If the focus of attention is upon what love produces in the heart then there is a wonderful relationship to be noticed among the graces of the Christian life: faith, hope, and love. Consider the following.

An Essential Unity

First, the main graces of the Christian life form an essential unity. Where there is love there is faith and hope. Where there is faith there is trust (hope) in God. Where there is hope there is a holy fear of the Lord and a reverence of His presence. *Psalms 147:11* “*The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.*” Of course, where there is love for God, there is love for man. Understanding this concept the apostle John wrote,

*“If any man say, I love God,
and hateth his brother, he is a liar.”*

Love to God is a sign of love to the brethren.

*“By this we know that we love the children of God,
when we love God, and keep his commandments.”*

~*~

1 John 5:2

No one can love God and be angry or hostile to a Christian. Despite gracious words on the lips, eternal judgment waits those who harbor hatred in the heart. It is that serious a matter. When Besty Ten Boon returned to her bed in a German concentration camp her sister Corrie noticed she had been beaten. Her mouth was swollen. “*Oh, Corrie,*” said Besty, “*I feel so sorry for that guard.*” The love of God filled Betsy’s heart so that she loved her enemy. When the angel of the Lord released Paul from his prison chains in Philippi, Paul took the opportunity to lead his jailers

to Christ. There was a baptism at midnight. Love found a way to conquer the rise of bitterness and hatred in the heart.

A Desperate Dependency

There is a second great thought found in 1 Corinthians 13:7. The graces of Christianity, faith-hope-love, depend upon each other. We see this illustrated very simply when a person makes a promise and keeps it. Something wonderful happens in the soul. Trust is increased, love grows, and faith in the person is enhanced. So a Christian is wise to learn to love according to biblical standards. But who are we to love? We are to love God for that is the first and greatest of all the commandments. Mark 12:29 *“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”* In the act of loving God, the Christian learns to trust in Him alone. Someone has wisely written the following.

*“Trust in yourself and you are doomed to disappointments.
Trust in your friends and they will die and leave you.
Trust in money, and you may have it taken from you.
Trust in reputation and some slanderous tongue may blast it.
But trust in God and you are never to be confounded in time or eternity.”*

When we love God it will be easy to love others for that is the second great commandment. Jesus said, *“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these”* (Mark 12:31). In this matter of loving others some modern day ministers believe the way to be able to do that is to love ourselves. This is the essence of Self-Esteem Theology. The idea is that if we love ourselves and are secure in ourselves then we will not be threatened by others and so can love them.

Signs of Salvation

There is a third major thought from 1 Corinthians 13:7 and that is faith, hope, and love are designed to be tests to determine genuine conversion. Jonathan Edwards argues that true conversion is characterized by specific marks.

- **Humility.** As Christ was clothed with humility so shall His disciples be clothed. The story is told of a little boy who came to his mother and boasted, *“Mamma, I am as tall as Goliath. I am nine feet high. ‘What makes you say that?’, asked the surprised mother. ‘Well, I made a little ruler of my own and measured myself with it, and I am just nine feet high.’”* There are countless people who follow that little boy’s method and measure themselves by a ruler of their own making. There are individuals who believe that God must save them for one reason or another, like the Pharisees of old. True salvation is more humble. True salvation cries out, *“Lord, be merciful to me the sinner.”*

- **A warm heart.** If there is one mark of modern day conversion experiences it seems that so many are dried eyed. One Puritan writer commented about the alleged conversion experience of a person by observing, *“if their faith has in it only light, but no warmth, it has not the true light.”* Is it possible for a person to see Jesus crucified, understand the concept of a substitute Savior, and not be moved to cry out in gratitude?

*“I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agony and blood.*

*He fixed His loving eyes upon me,
As near His cross I stood.*

*My conscience felt and owed its guilt,
And plunged me in despair.*

*I saw my sins His blood had spilt,
And helped to nail Him there.*

*O, can it be, upon a tree, the Savior died for me?
My soul is thrilled, my heart is filled
To think He died for me!”*

- **Conviction is another characteristic of true conversion.** Love for Christ can be examined by the degree of faith one has in Him. Unfortunately in this day the historic faith of the Church is being challenged and dismissed by leaders of major denominations. The apostle Paul becomes a source of encouragement as he writes in *2 Timothy 4:7* *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”* Paul kept the faith because he loved Christ passionately. He loved Christ passionately because Paul believed in Him fervently and hoped for His return eagerly. Henry Ward Beecher wrote, *“If Christ be not divine, every impulse of the Christian world falls to lower octave, and light and love and hope decline.”*
- **A spirit of obedience also characterizes the soul captured by true conversion.** Obedience is the heart’s longing to know the will of the Lord and do it. The soul that truly loves Christ seeks to please Him for nothing pleases the Lord more than when His commandments are honored. Dr. R. A. Torrey tells the story of a meeting he had with a minister’s son following an evangelistic service. The young man claimed to be a Christian but his lifestyle was contrary to his profession of faith. Dr. Torrey sought the young man out and as they were shaking hands Dr. Torrey asked, *“Are you a friend of Jesus?”* *“Yes,”* replied the young man. *“I consider myself a friend of Jesus.”* Dr. Torrey grew solemn and softly said to the young man, *“Jesus said ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14).* The heart of the young man was seized and in a moment of honest he quietly replied, *“If those are the conditions I guess I am not.”* The heart of the converted will be characterized by a spirit of obedience.

*“When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died.
My riches gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That was a present far too small.
Love so amazing so divine,
Demands my soul, my life my all.”*

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- **Mortification of sin.** There is one other characteristic of the converted heart that should be mentioned and that is a sincere effort to mortify the impulses and actions of the mind and body that are displeasing to the Lord.
 - ◆ *Colossians 3:5 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: “*
 - ◆ *Romans 8:13 “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*

The children of the world may indulge themselves in unwholesome appetites and passions, but the Christian cannot. The Christian is to be neither lascivious nor legalistic. Faith, hope, and charity which is love. These are the crowning words of the Christian faith. These are the words that can be used to determine saving grace in the heart. These are the words used together for they are not independent of each other.

- ◆ *1 Corinthians 13:13 “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”*

May God grant us a true state of saving grace so there can be love among the disciples of Christ.