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LOVE

#159

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THE LAMB TEACHES YOU TO LOVE

G. Steinberger

"Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). How did He love? He loved His own more than Himself, and this is really the "love of Christ." Natural love loves according to its own inclination; the love which the Law commands loves because God wills it. It loves from duty and loves its neighbor as itself (Luke 10:27). But the love of Christ loves others more than itself. How far we still come short of that! So many times we have begun to love, but have soon grown weary and proved unfaithful to the sacred task. Only in the school of Christ do we learn the true meaning of love. There we learn to love in *God's* way, to love with that love which is in God's own heart. There is no place where sin creeps in more frequently than in the realm of affection. One does less harm by hatred than by false love. Often our enemies have not hurt us so much as our "good friends." If we desire that our inward man shall grow and prosper, then let us undertake a thoroughgoing investigation of ourselves and allow our hearts to be cleansed of all impurity. In the great chapter on love we are told that "love rejoices in the truth."

Love is truth! Love constantly seeks the eternal in its neighbor, and it points toward this with gentleness and seriousness, and even, if necessary, with unswerving insistence. Carnal love is blind, but divine love has an open eye for truth. Carnal love loves in order to be loved. True love loves without expecting any gratitude. It does not consider what it can achieve for itself, but, rather, what can be produced for the Lord. True love seeks from Jesus only Himself; and from men, not their recognition, still less their money, but only their immortal soul.

Love is self-giving! It loves all the way to death, even if it is brought to the cross with the Master. Carnal love also loves unto death, yet not unto Christ's death but unto spiritual death. Alas, many friendships lead to this! Wounds are received

which cannot be healed through a whole long life. Once they spoke in love to each other about all things. They could not live, if they did not see each other every day. But then after some years, the burning love turned into bitter hatred. Carnal love always ends in hatred. By carnal love is not meant sensual love, but false love among the pious.

God, in His grace, permits even a downpour of bitter, unrighteous rebukes and an icy, loveless north wind to beat upon love's edifice. The poorly-built house falls together with a crash that is heard far away. Where one ceases to love with the love of Christ, there unrighteousness, confusion, and death, are the inevitable result. And to love in God's way can be learned only in the school of the Lamb.

Love is obedience. When and how do we love in God's manner? For many, this is a burning question. In I John 5:2 we are given a striking answer: "Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments." He who loves God will by his love bind men to God, not to himself. John rejoiced when his disciples left him and followed after Jesus, because he loved Jesus. He who keeps God's commandments, loves; for by his obedience he leads his brethren upon God's Way, and this is true love. Such a love conquers at last and is understood, even if throughout all its life it may have been regarded as harshness. Every friendship which does not rest upon this foundation is enmity. On the whole, this matter of cultivating friendship is a difficult point. It requires much grace and truth from above. Very few can say as the ancient Church Father said about himself and his friend: "We were acquainted with only two ways, the one to the Church and the one to the teachers of the Church; we spoke of only two things, God and His Word."

Love is life! Without love we cannot live. Even as our spirit is created to know, so is our heart created to love. Our heart is created for love even as the bird is created for flight. Love is our life's beginning and end. It is the soul's light and source of warmth. He who sins against love lays hands upon his own life. Love is the greatest power. Only as long as we love do we live. Where love awakens, the dark tyrant of ego dies. Love is the bond of perfectness; it comprehends all, even God. Love is the one commandment which the Lord has given His own. Love is the mark of the new birth and the proof that our faith is genuine. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and compensates for the presence of Jesus Himself. What is the reason that God's children have so little love? Because they have too little of the Holy Spirit. How then shall we obtain more of the Spirit? By beginning to love more. Then the Triune God places Himself on our side, for He is, above all, the God of love. "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion" (Col 3:12). Put on compassion and you will be as though "clad in festive garments, as though you had drunk of the wine of gladness and were refreshed by the peace of heaven, as though you had hind's feet, and arms as strong as Samson." Do you think that the Good Samaritan was a happy or an unhappy man? Who was more tired that evening, the priest or the Samaritan? Who do you suppose was the happier, he who gave away his dime or he who kept it in his pocket? Oh, you poor children of God, who stand and wait for power from above, who seek after deeper peace and richer joy! Begin to love, and you shall begin to live! The Corinthians desired to do something extraordinary. But Paul showed them a more excellent way, the way where:

*Love beareth all things,
Believeth all things,
Hopeth all things,
Endureth all things.*

Not only *some* things, but *all* things. No one can deny that this type of love is something extraordinary. Yet the opportunity to experience it is open to all. Faith is the beginning and love the goal of our life. Both come from God and lead to God. God has given us so rich an opportunity to achieve joy in life, just because He has given us so rich an opportunity to love. For all that calls love into service will but increase our happiness. Come, let us learn of the Lamb, that we may see what love is! Let Him be our light, Who has loved unto death! Love leads to suffering. Christ's love brought Him to the cross. Only he is able to love, therefore, who is able to suffer. As long as we expect thanks for our love, we do not love from a pure heart.

Taken From: *In The Footprints of the Lamb*, available from Chapel Library.

TWENTY MOTIVES, OR PLEAS, THAT CHRIST MIGHT HAVE THE LOVE OF YOUR HEARTS

Thomas Doolittle

1630-1707

I. Can you find a more excellent object for your love than Christ? If you search through the whole creation of God is there any like to Christ? Whatsoever you think, who dare say there is? Are riches, honours, pleasures, relations, which you have loved, comparable to Christ, whom you ought to love? If good be only the object of love, is not the best good the best object? can you love the lesser good, and not the greater? yea, the greatest of all? Is not all the goodness in the creature but as a drop to the sea, as a candle to the sun, as a sand to a mountain, if compared to the goodness there is in Christ? If David were worth ten thousand of others (2 Sam 18:3) is not Christ, David's Lord, better than all the world? (Read Song 2:3; 5:16; Prov 3:14, 15; Phil 3:8)? Dost thou waver in thy thoughts, or hesitate about this? Tell me,

1. Is not Christ a good most suitable for thee? Is liberty so suitable to a captive man, or bread to a hungry man, or health to a sick man, or ease to a pained man, as Christ is to a sinful man? for,

(1.) Art thou not lost, undone, in danger to be damned? Christ will be thy Saviour, thy keeper, and recoverer. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost," (Luke 19:10). "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). "Mighty to save" (Isa 63:1).

(2.) Art not thou ignorant, dark, and blind, knowest not the way to heaven and eternal happiness, and mightest weary thyself to find the gate of life, and yet miss it when thou hast done all? He will be thy Teacher and thy Guide, and direct thee infallibly to it. He will anoint thine eyes, and cause thee to see such things as never yet thou sawest (Rev 3:18). If he anoint thine eyes with his eye-salve, though thou wast born blind, thou shalt have thy sight.

(3.) Art thou not sick, and full of spiritual diseases? abounding with soul- distempers? even sick to death? nigh to eternal death? He will be thy Physician, who is so able and so skillful, that never any yet, whom he undertook to cure, died under his hands: for rather than thou shouldst die of thy disease, he will make thee a potion of his own blood, which, if thou drinkest, thou shalt certainly recover. Therefore he came to be a soul-physician, and gave this as a reason why he did converse with publicans and sinners, that he might cure them (Matt 9:12).

(4.) Art thou not indebted? owest thou not millions to God? Hast thou a mite to pay? if God demand satisfaction from thee, will it not prove thy damnation? if justice pursue thee, death arrest thee, will not devils seize thy soul, and hale it to the prison of hell, from whence thou shalt not be delivered, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing, which will never be? This Christ, if thou wilt but love him, will be thy bail, become thy Surety, and make payment of thy debt, and give thee a discharge.

(5.) Art thou not polluted and unclean? hath not the leprosy of sin overspread thine understanding, will, conscience, memory, and all thine affections? so that thou art defiled all over, liest wallowing in thy blood, art cast out to the loathing of thy person; and canst thou, in this filthy case, enter into the holy kingdom of God? If thou wilt give him thy love, he will take away thy filthy rags, and give thee change of raiment (Zech 3:1-5). If thou wilt come to him with faith and love, and say, "lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," he in love to thee will say, "I will, be thou clean" (Matt 8:2, 3). He will make for thee a bath of his own blood, and his blood shall cleanse thee from all thy sins (1 John 1:7). Yea, "though they be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18).

(6.) Art thou not a captive to Satan and to sin? drudging elbow deep in the loathsome service of sin? Is not thy bondage more hard than that of the Israelites in Egypt? and are not Satan and sin as cruel and tyrannical as Pharaoh and his task-masters? Dost thou love thy chains? art thou at ease in thy fetters? wouldst thou be released? Christ will be thy Redeemer, by price and by power, and make thee free; and then thou shalt be free indeed.

(7.) Art thou not an enemy to God? born so, and lived so? Take heed thou dost not die so, for then there shall be no peace,

no making up the breach between God and thy soul. But now Christ is the blessed peacemaker, and by the blood of his cross he will reconcile thee to God (Col 1:20, 2). God will never be reconciled to thee, but in and through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18, 19).

(8.) Art thou not spiritually dead? hast thou not lost the holy image of God, which was thy beauty? Though thou art dead, he can quicken thee, and give thee the life of grace and glory (1 John 5:12).

Now, if this be thy condition, and Christ can and is ready, able, and willing, to help thee in every respect, how suitable is Christ to thee? and suitableness being a ground of love, and a motive thereunto, what an argument is here to win thy love? O say then, I am lost, but Christ will save me; I am ignorant, but Christ will teach me; I am sick, and he will recover me; I am indebted, and he will be a surety for me; I am polluted, and he will cleanse me; I am a captive, and he will redeem me; I am an enemy to God, and he will reconcile me; I am dead, and he will quicken me. Oh, I never found one so suitable for me; now, even now, he shall be loved by me. Oh this is the most excellent object for my love, and I will no longer hold it from him.

2. Is not Christ the most satisfying good? Thou art indigent, he will supply thee; thou art empty, he will fill thee; thou art poor, he will enrich thee. O for love to such a Saviour!

3. Is not Christ the most durable good? When thy riches shall fail thee; thy pleasures, and honours, and friends, shall fail, Christ will never fail (Psa 73: 26).

4. Is not Christ a peculiar good? given by peculiar love, only to a peculiar people, bringing with him peculiar privileges; when all other things thou lovest, are common to the bad, as well as to the good? Though a worldly man, whose heart and hands, and house, are full of the world, might say, Riches are mine, yet he cannot truly say, Christ is mine. Let him have from thee peculiar love, and he will be to thee a peculiar good.

5. Is not Christ the most necessary good? Dost thou need food so much when thou art hungry, or liberty so much when thou art in prison, or salve when thou art wounded, as Christ when thou hast sinned? Without other things thou mayest be happy, pardoned, reconciled, and for ever saved; but can any of these be thine without Christ? Christ is needful, while thou livest, for if thou art in health, without him thy soul is sick. If thou shouldst be sick, he will give the choicest and the richest cordial; when thou diest, he will secure thy departing soul; and after death, he will be thy Friend; when all shall leave thee at thy grave, he will be thine for ever.

6. Is not Christ the most profitable good? For when thou hast him, thou hast all. Then God is thine, and the Spirit is thine, and the promises are thine, and the privileges of the covenant are thine; and heaven itself shall be for ever thine.

7. Is not Christ the most delightful good? Some delight in what they see, some in what they hear, some in what they taste, some in recreation, and some in notions, but the delight of Christ doth surpass them all.

8. Is not Christ a sure good? Other things God may give, and call for them back again: "I will return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax," (Hos 2:9). But God never saith, I gave such a man my Christ, but I will take away my Christ again. He may take riches out of thy hand, but, if thou gettest him, he will never take Christ out of thy heart.

9. What shall I say to advance Christ in thy esteem, that thou mayest love him? Is he not a comprehensive good? eminently all? There is no goodness in the creature, but it is formally, or virtually, in Christ. Is there wisdom in the creature? there is more in Christ. Is there beauty, power, in the creature? there is much more in Christ: "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col 5:19), "full of grace and truth," (John 1:14).

This is the person for whom I beg your love. This is He who is altogether lovely and desirable. Consider now, I beseech you; can you be better offered? can you find a better match for your soul? can you say all this, the one half of this, any one of all these things, concerning the objects you have hitherto loved? Oh then say, I never understood the loveliness of Christ before: how hath sin befooled me! how hath the world bewitched me! and how hath my foolish wicked heart deceived me, that I have lavished my love upon the creature, and sin, when there was a Christ to love! Such a Christ to love! such a good as is not to be found in all the world! Now shall he have my love, my heart, my all.

II. Tell me, hath not Christ deserved your love, by what he hath suffered, done, given, purchased, promised, and prepared for those who love him? Behold his wounds which he hath endured for thee! behold a crown of thorns on his head, that there may be a crown of glory upon thine! Behold him dying, that thou mayest live! him suffering, that thou mayest be saved! him poor, that thou mayest be made rich with the best, surest, and most durable riches. Behold him condemned, that thou mayest be absolved! him in an agony, that thou upon the conditions of the gospel mightest have rest and ease in glory. Behold him bearing the cross, and the cross bearing him, that thou mightest not bear the curse! him bearing the Father's wrath, that thou mightest be made the subject of his grace, and the object of his love. And now tell me, doth not this Christ deserve thy love? Shouldest thou love any like him, when none hath done for thee like him? Doth the small kindness of a creature draw thy love, and shall not all this in thy Saviour, towards thee, kindle a fire of love in thee towards him? How canst thou forbear to love him?

III. Will not love to Christ be the best love thou canst attain unto? As he is the best object of love, so love going out to Christ is the best acting of love; and pity it is, that any other object should go away with thy prevailing love. For,

1. Love to Christ will be the sweetest love. He that loveth other things, and not Christ, loves nothing but vanity, and to love vanity will prove vexation. He that loveth riches hath vexing sorrow with his love, fretting fears, and perplexing, cutting cares. When thou lovest thy relations, if they be bad, the more thou lovest, the more thou art wounded; if they be good, the more evil befalls them, the more thou art grieved. There cannot be love to other things, without love to Christ, but it will be bitter love; for thou wilt repent of that love, or thou wilt not. If thou dost, then thou wilt find more sorrow for it, more bitterness in it, than ever thou didst find delight, and say, Oh now it doth repent me that ever I loved the world as I have done; my pleasures, my sin, as I have done. But thou wilt never have cause to say, I repent that ever I loved Christ. Never was such a word heard from the mouth of a sincere lover of Christ; if thou dost never repent of thy love to the world and sin, that love will certainly end in sorrow, and with bitterness of soul be fruitlessly lamented in hell. But what content, satisfaction, delight, comfort, joy, there is in loving of Christ, none can tell so well as he who loves him.

2. Love to Christ is the safest love. No fear of sinning in this love, except it be in the smallness of the measure of it; but that is not to sin in loving, but not loving more. You might fear and tremble in loving other things, and say, Do not I sin in this? Is there not sinning in my loving?

3. Love to Christ is the surest. Love to other things is often turned into hatred: love today, and hate tomorrow; but this remaineth firm. The object is the surest object, neither men, nor death, nor devils, can take away the object of this love. It is surest in the habit and principle, the power of God, the prayer of Christ; the promise of both secure the preservation of it. It is surest in the act, for if we be careful, neither ourselves, nor men, nor devils, can hinder our acting of this love; they might keep us from hearing his word, but not from loving his person.

4. Love to Christ is the noblest love. Love to pleasures, to the world, to sin, is base, polluted love, this most sublime and raised; it hath the noblest and the highest object, it carrieth the soul in his thoughts and meditations after Him into the highest heavens, and hath complacency in the highest degree, and shall have for ever the highest reward.

5. Love to Christ is the longest: love that shall never end. Sirs, ere long, you will have done loving this world, even you who love it most, and have your hearts most set upon it. Ye who now have your hearts full of earth, when ye shall have your mouths full too, and your bodies lie rotting in the earth, you shall have done loving of it: death, which ends your life in the world, shall end your love to the world, which grace never did. Ye shall also have done, ere long, loving your relations; ye shall have done loving father and mother, brother and sister, and husband and wife, and children, as now in that relation; but the gracious soul, the lover of Christ, shall never have done loving Christ: it is sweet to have it, but this doth make it more sweet, to think he shall always have it—have it in life, have it at death, and have it after death. Oh blessed love, that shall never be lost, but ever last!

While I was musing upon this, it came into my mind to consider, what those who never love Christ in this world, can love in the next; and I could not imagine any thing which damned souls in hell, can love. (If it be that I understand not, nor am acquainted with the acting of their souls nor state, God grant I never may, as they do.) I thought, can they love God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels, saints? their hatred to all these is, and shall be, more deeply radicated, that is, rooted in them, than ever upon earth. Can they love the place of hell? they wish they never had come thither. Can they love the pains of hell? they grieve and groan under them, and are weary to bear them. Can they love the devils in hell? they curse them for tempting them to sin, which brought them to that place. Can they love their companions in hell? they are an

aggravation of one another's misery. Can they love their sin in hell? alas! all that was pleasurable in it is gone, and the pain and sting only do remain. Can they love their being in hell? they had rather die than live, and cease to be at all, than to continue to be there. I know not what it is that they can love. Oh loathsome place, where there is, and can be, no love! Oh lovely heaven! where love doth reign, where love doth live! and the life of them therein shall be for ever a life of love! And in this world, where love is wanting, so far it looks like hell. Where love, and that which is the best, love to Christ, doth prevail, so far it looks like heaven. Dear Lord! save me from hell, because there, there is no love to thee, nor to any thing that is good. Sweet Saviour! lead me in thy way to heaven, and bring me thither, where love to thee shall live and last for ever.

IV. Is it not great folly to love other things, and not Christ? For love ye will. There is such an affection as love in all your hearts, and something it will be set upon in this world, whatever it be with damned souls in the next. Now if Christ have it not, the world will; if Christ have it not, sin will. And do ye act as rational creatures, as men endued with reason, to deny your love to Christ, and give it to the world and sin? Set one over against the other, and then tell me,

1. Is it not great folly to love that which is worse than yourselves, and not that which is infinitely better? Do ye think your silver and your gold is better than yourselves, as much as ye love it? that your houses and your lands, as bad as ye are, are better than yourselves? But ye' are not yet so good nor yet so bad, but I hope ye will say and acknowledge that Christ is better.

2. Is it not great folly to love that which cannot love you again, and not him who would? Ye love your gold, but that cannot love you again. The clothes upon your back, the furniture in your houses, ye love; but these can make no returns of love. Ye give your love to them, but ye receive no love from them. Are ye not vexed, when ye love a man who doth not love you again, nor return love for love? And why are ye so well pleased, and are so well contented, in placing the very strength of your love on worldly things, where the return of love is not only not actual, but impossible? But would ye love Christ, ye should have more love from him than ye give unto him, if ye strive with all your might to love him with the utmost love you can (John 14:21, 23; Prov 8:17).

3. Is it not great folly to love that which can never satisfy you, and not him who would satisfy your souls for ever? Did these things ye love ever fill your desires? Did they ever give you full content? How should they? When God hath made your souls capable of the enjoyment of an infinite good, how can that which is finite fill them? It is only an infinite good, and not finite, that can satisfy your souls, though they be finite; all the creatures cannot fill one. For the will of man, though it be subjectively finite, yet it is objectively infinite; that is, (for to be easy and plain in such a place as this, and in such matters as these, before you, is best, because for you most profitable and edifying,) though the will in itself, and in its own nature, because a creature, is finite and limited, yet it is capable of making choice of God for its chief good, who is infinite and unlimited. And God has put into the hearts of men desires after good that is eternal, for they desire to be eternally happy; but God hath not put this eternal goodness in any, in all the things of this world, for they are all transitory. Therefore when ye look for satisfaction in the creatures that ye love, or in the loving of them, ye look for that which God never put into them, and nothing can give more than it hath, and nothing hath more than God hath given it; therefore to look for more from it than God by making it hath put into it, may yield you vexation enough, but no satisfaction at all: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity," (Eccl 5:10).

4. Is it not great folly to love that which ye must shortly part with, and not him whom ye might enjoy for ever? Though ye have your heart full of love to other earthly things, you shall not carry a handful of them to the other world: "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand," (Eccl 5:15). "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out;" (1 Tim 6:7). But death, that carrieth the lovers of the world quite away from the things they love, shall set the soul of a lover of Christ nearer to him: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," (Phil 1:23). The soul that loveth Christ, when, by death, it is absent from the body, it shall be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).

5. Is it not great folly to love that which might leave you while ye live, and not that Christ who would never leave you, nor forsake you? As ye are sure these things which ye love will be none of yours after death, so ye are not sure they shall be yours while ye live. May ye not be rich today, and poor tomorrow? well today, and sick tomorrow? in honour today, and in disgrace tomorrow? Was it not so with Haman (Esth 6:10, 11, and 7, 9, 10)? When ye have riches and love them, ye are

not sure to hold them: "Wilt thou set thine eyes," thy heart and love, "upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven," (Prov 23:5). The Hebrew text is, Wilt thou cause thine eyes to fly upon that which is not? Riches fly away, and the worldly man's heart and love fly after them; and though his heart and love be swift in their motion after riches, yet sometimes riches fly so swiftly, that their lover cannot overtake them. The pleasures of sin, and so the profits of the world, are but for a season, (Heb 11:25); and when the season is over, they are gone; but Christ would never leave you, nor forsake you, (Heb 13:5).

6. Is it not great folly to love that which may prove a hindrance to your everlasting happiness, and not Him who is the purchaser and the promoter of it? To love that which is often hurtful to the owners, and always hurtful to the over-lovers of it, and not him who never did his lover harm, but good? "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt," (Eccl 5:13). This Solomon had seen, and many have seen; but that Christ should hurt any man who hath him for his own, was never seen. Riches are thick clay and clogs to the minds of men, and keep them down to earth, that they cannot rise to heaven, nor get so high while they live, nor their souls when their bodies die, that they make salvation exceedingly difficult: "Then said Jesus to his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the *eye* of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," (Matt 19:23, 24). But to love riches, and not Christ, while a man doth so, doth not make salvation only hard, but impossible; but the love of Christ makes salvation not only possible, but certain and easy.

7. Is it not great folly to love that which cannot comfort you at death, and not love Christ, who both can and would? Love what ye will besides Christ, and not Christ, it cannot be a stay to your departing souls; what will ye look to at death for comfort—your riches? why, ye are going from them, with a heart full of love to them; to love them and yet must leave them, to leave them in loving of them, will torment and vex you, not support and comfort you. To pleasures that ye loved? when ye lie dying, they are fled, and past, and gone. To your friends? when ye are dying, ye are taking your last leave of them. To Christ? alas! him ye never loved, and the thoughts of that will be a sting more painful than the sting of death.

V. Can ye do any thing less than love Christ, or can ye do any thing more? Is it not a small thing that Christ should have your love, for all those great things ye have, and hope to have by Christ? And yet Christ stands upon your love as greatest of all, and all without love is nothing. If Christ had asked you to lay down your life for him, had he required more from you than he himself hath done for you: had he called you to give your bodies to be burned for him, should ye not have done it? How much more when he saith, Let your hearts but burn in love unto me, when that burning will not be painful, but delightful! When Naaman came to the prophet to be cleansed of his leprosy, being directed to go and wash in Jordan, and he should be clean, in wrath he went away; but his servant came to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith unto thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings 5:13). If Christ had required some great thing, that thou mightest escape great torments, and be partaker of great salvation, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith, Love me, and be saved? When you have received great kindness from a friend whom you cannot requite, yet you say, I cannot do less than love him: yet this small thing is more in Christ's account than all without this. You pray to him, but to love him is more; a heart full of love is more to Christ than a thousand prayers, full of the most eloquent expressions, without love. You hear his word, but to love him is more. You might suffer for him, but to have love to him is more. Should you give all your goods to the poor, and your body to the fire for him, to give your heart and love to him is still more. And, indeed, except all the former proceed from love, and are accompanied with it, they are not pleasing to Christ, nor profitable to your salvation (1 Cor 13:1-3).

VI. Will you love that which you might easily love too much, and not Christ, whom you can never over-love? You might love your riches, your relations, your pleasures, yourself; your liberty, your life, too much. In these your love might soon exceed, and transgress the bounds; and it is hard not to exceed, but to keep within bounds. And indeed, so much love as you give to these more than to Christ, is too much; but could you love Christ with as much love as all the saints in heaven love him, it would not be too much for him, if you were able to bear it. Many have complained they loved Christ too little, but never any that he had too much of their love. God doth blame you, and conscience doth accuse you, for your great love to things below; but neither God nor conscience, for the highest degrees of love to Christ, and things that are above.

VII. Can you love yourselves truly, and not love the Lord Jesus sincerely? There is a self-love which is inconsistent with the love of Christ; and there is a self-love which is the best, that no man hath but he that loveth Christ. Doth that man love himself indeed, who regards not the salvation of his soul? who ruins himself, and damns himself, and shuts himself out of

heaven? Doth that man love himself indeed, who exposes himself to the wrath of God, to the damnation of hell, and to banishment from the glorious presence of the blessed God? all which a man brings upon himself for want of love to Jesus Christ. If then you will love yourself truly, you must love Christ sincerely.

VIII. Are not all the duties of religion tedious to you, for want of love to Christ? Do you find it a burden to pray? a burden to hear or read the word of God? Is it a burden to you to meditate upon God and Christ, and things above? It is all for want of love to Christ; for love makes hard things easy, and heavy labour to be light.

IX. Doth any thing make you more like to God than to love Christ? Do you not in this most resemble God? Do you believe in Christ? So doth not God. Do you trust in Christ for life and salvation? So doth not God. Do you obey the commandments of Christ? God hath no superior to command him. But do you love Christ? So doth God: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands" (John 3:35; 5:20).

X. Might you return to God and Christ like for like, in any thing but in love? or in any thing carry it towards God, as God doth towards you? If God be angry with you, might you be angry with God? If God withdraw comfort from you, might you withhold duty from God? If he rebuke you, might you rebuke him? If he be displeased with you, might you be displeased with him? Would not all this be your sin, and perverseness of heart towards him? But if he love you, you may and ought to love him. If he hath set his heart upon you, your duty is to set your heart on him.

XI. Can you hope for salvation by him, without sincere affection to him? Or who bids you hope for any such thing? Can you have the face to expect such great things by, through, and from Christ, as pardon of all your sins, deliverance from hell, the happiness of heaven, and yet not love him? Do you hope for eternal life by Christ? I know you do; might not Christ then expect love from you, when you expect life by Christ? As you would have life by Christ, let Christ have love from you, or else your expectation of life will be disappointed, and end in death without end.

XII. Dare you die without love to Christ? Dare you, can you leave this world with a quiet mind, if you love not Christ? No, surely, except you die as blind as you were born. What think you when you come to be sick, and when you come to die, will it not be a cut to your heart, to think—I have lived twenty, forty years, but I never loved Christ? Now must I go to appear before him whom I never loved. Why not love him while you live in health, as well as wish you had loved him when health is gone, and sickness come? when life is going as fast as death is coming?

XIII. Is not your love Christ's due? Do you not owe it to him? Is it not due to him by virtue of creation? Did not he give your being to you? By virtue of redemption, when you were worse than nothing, did not he lay down his soul, his life, his blood, as a price for your ransom? By virtue of preservation, hath not Christ kept you out of the grave and hell unto this day? Justice would have hewn thee down, and wrath would have condemned thee long ago; and who hath procured a reprieve for thee but Christ? That thou art on this side the torments of the damned, not past praying, and hearing, and hoping, is all through Christ's procuring for thee longer time. By virtue of provision, which Christ maketh for thee, thou wouldst not have had a rag to thy back, nor a morsel for thy mouth, nor sleep in thine eyes, if Christ had not bought, and by purchase procured for thee what thou hast. Thy love is due to Christ by virtue of command, whereby thou art obliged and bound to give it to him, and shalt be accounted a transgressor, and a great one too, if thou dost withhold it from him.

If it be due so many ways, what injustice will it be in thee to deny to Christ that which is his due? Art thou not careful to give to every one their own? And is it not an ease to thy mind, that though thou art not rich, yet thou hast to give every one his due? Dost thou not trade, work, cark, and care, to give all their own, and shall Christ be the only person to whom thou wilt be unjust? If thou hast not enough to satisfy all thy creditors, yet of one, whom thou lovest and bearest more respect unto, thou sayest, If it please God, such a one shall lose nothing by me. Poor sinner! wilt thou say, Though I cannot do what I should, yet Christ shall not be so far a loser by me, as not to have my heart and love. Look to it that he do not; for if he do, thou wilt lose thy soul; and then who will be the greatest loser?

XIV. Is it not great condescension in Christ, that he will so kindly accept of thy love? One so great, accept of the love of one so mean? One so holy, accept the love of one that is so sinful? One so glorious, of one so vile? Do great men value the love of beggars? or princes the love of peasants? Would a man of great birth and estate give leave to one clothed in rags to love him in order to marriage? Or would he not scorn and reject both the person and her love? Methinks, considering what Christ is, and what thou art, thou shouldst say, If Christ will give me leave, I will love him. Give thee

leave! Not only so, but gives thee command, and that upon pain and peril of everlasting damnation; if thou dost not, he doth give thee leave and charge to love him, but no leave to live without love to him, though for thy long refusal he might justly leave thee to live without love to him.

XV. Should you ever have any cause or reason to be ashamed of your love to Christ? Is not the time coming, and the day hastening, when covetous men shall be ashamed of their loving the world, and voluptuous men ashamed of loving their pleasures, and the ambitious of their honours; but the time will never come, the day will never be, that a gracious soul shall be ashamed of his sincere love to Jesus Christ. For what is said of hope, is true of love, it "maketh not ashamed," (Rom 5:5): but as all sin is matter of shame, "What fruit have ye of those things of which ye are now ashamed?" (Rom 6:21), so especially the lovers of sin shall be ashamed that they loved not Christ. For is it not a horrid shame, that a rational creature should be such a sot as to love sin which is most loathsome, and not love Christ who is most lovely? to love deformity, and not beauty? a real evil under the notion, and appearance, and paint, of a seeming good, and not a Christ who is a real good, without the appearance of the least evil? Oh shame, shame! I am ashamed that sin should have such esteem, and Christ such great contempt put upon him; but shame shall ere long confound these now shameless wretches, when they shall cry out, We are ashamed that we loved profits, and not Christ; house, lands, lusts, and not Christ. This is the confusion of our faces, and shame doth cover us, that we should be so foolish, and so blind, that we had not sense, nor reason, to distinguish betwixt the greatest and most lovely good, and the greatest and most odious evil.

XVI. Is there any love so profitable as the love of Christ? Gain draweth love; by the love of other things more than Christ, you will lose more than you gain. By such love, God, Christ, heaven, and your own soul, will be for ever lost; and should your gains of the world be proportionable to your love of the world, yea, and exceed it, to the gaining of the whole world to yourself, which never man yet did, your gain would prove your loss; and when you come to cast up your account at death or judgment, you will find yourself cast much behind-hand, because from God's face and favour: "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt 16:26). But by the loving of Christ you shall have gain, that no man can value, no mind can estimate, no arithmetician, by all his numbers and figures, can compute; even pardon of innumerable sins, the favour of an infinite God, deliverance from inconceivable torments, possession of endless life, and more than I, or any man, can describe or comprehend.

XVII. Is there any love so universally necessary, as the love of Christ? One man loves one thing, and a second another, and a third another, but there is no necessity that all men should love any one thing but Christ, and things appertaining to our having and enjoying him; and love to Christ is necessary for poor and rich, for great and small, for noble and ignoble, for learned and unlearned, for bond and free. O then, what doings are these that that love which is necessary, not only for the most, but for all, should be neglected not only by the most, but almost comparatively by all?

XVIII. Do not you want one great help against the temptations of Satan, while you are void of love to Christ? Is not Satan your enemy? Is not your heart forward to yield to him? Doth it not concern you to resist him, when, if you yield, you deserve to die? But this love would garrison your hearts, fortify your souls, make you courageous and resolute against all the batteries of Satan, assaults of sin, and watchful against the allurements and ambushments of the world, and that you would say, Shall I offend my dearest Lord? Shall I displease him who hath had such good pleasure to do me such good, such everlasting good? Oh! how can I do this or that great evil, and sin against him whom I do love! For do you not find that love forbids, and exceedingly restrains, from grieving, offending, or wronging him whom you do entirely love?

XIX. Will you ever be able to hold your profession of Christ without sincere love unto him? When trials come, will not such as have no saving love to Christ, turn their backs upon him? Will they that love riches, ease, liberty, honours, life, or any thing, more than Christ, leave, lose, lay down, these for Christ? What you love most, will you not endeavour to keep longest? These must be harboured, but Christ then shall be abandoned (Matt 19:21, 22), but if you have not that love which will keep you stedfast and constant in suffering for Christ on earth, for want of that love you shall suffer eternally in hell.

XX. Is it not possible for you to set your love upon Christ? Is it not attainable? Devils cannot love him, but you can. Damned souls cannot love him, but you can if you would; for have you not the means to help you to love him? Is not he preached to you? Is not the Spirit striving with you? Will you say you cannot love him, though you would! That I utterly deny, for if you were really willing to love him, you could love him; nay, if you do unfeignedly will to love him, you do love him, for what is willing but loving? And what hinders you from loving, but your not willing to love him? Will you

say, you want power? What power do you mean? The natural faculty or power of the will? That you have; how else do you will any thing you do? Will you say you want a power of willing to love Christ? What is that, but that you are unwilling to love him? And if you cannot, because you will not, the more you plead your cannot, the more you aggravate your will not. A natural power God hath given you, that is a will; if you lie under a moral impotency, that is your sin; and what is this moral *cannot* or impotency, but the averseness of the will from Christ? Therefore, though without the powerful workings of the grace and Spirit of God, you cannot love Christ sincerely, yet this *cannot* is your *will not*, for if by the grace of God you were enabled to will, you could, and if you were as willing to love Christ, as some now are, who once were as unwilling as now you are, you could love him as well as they. Why should you stand off, and say, If it were possible for me to love Christ, I would? How! possible! What! is there no difference betwixt you and a devil? betwixt you and the damned in hell? You can love the world; can you do that? You can love yourself; can you do that? Yes. And I suppose you can love sin too, can you not? To your grief and your shame, we find it: but why can you love the world, and self, and sin? Is it not because you will? Do you do it against your will? I wish you did, then there might be more hopes you would be persuaded to love Christ. You can and do love sin, because you are willing; have but as great willingness to love Christ, as the world and sin, and then it may be said, not only that you can, but do love Christ. However, though I am no assertor of the liberty and power of the will in things supernatural, nor an opposer of the necessity of the workings of the Spirit, to enable a sinner to love Christ, yet it is most manifest that your unwillingness is the hindrance of such love, and this unwillingness is your weakness; since then your unwillingness (certainly by grace) might be removed, your love is possible, therefore cease not till it be actual.

Are ye at length convinced of the necessity of love to Christ? and are ye at length persuaded to seek it, and willing to get love to him?

Taken From: *Motives to Love Christ.*

BROTHERLY LOVE

Gardiner Spring

The Gospel breathes the spirit of love. Love is the fulfilling of its precepts, the evidence of its power, the pledge of its joys, and the ripe fruit of the Spirit. "A new commandment," saith our Lord to His disciples, "give I unto you, that ye love one another" (John 13:34). "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another" (I John 3:23). This is emphatically a new commandment. It has a new object, not specified in the original law of love and obviously a different affection than that which is required in the moral law. Brotherly love is an affection which is limited to particular characters. There can be no doubt but the children of God are kindly affectioned toward all men because Christian benevolence runs parallel with rational being. Genuine love to our neighbor is extended to all, according to their character and circumstances. It blesses those who curse us, and does good to those who hate us. This, however, is not the distinguishing nature of brotherly love. Brotherly love differs materially from the love of a general feeling of good will. It is the love of good men, and for their goodness only, and extends only to the followers of Christ. It is an affection which is directed toward the excellence of religion, and consists in a delight in holiness. Everyone that is of the truth, everyone that is born of God, of whatever condition, or nation under heaven, is to be loved with this affection.

There is something in the character of every child of God that reflects the image of his heavenly Father, and it is this that attracts the eye and wins the heart. There is something which is amiable and lovely, and it is this loveliness that gives a spring to the affections and draws forth the hearts of God's people toward God Himself. The children of God are partakers of the Divine nature. From bearing the image of the earthly, they now bear the image of the heavenly. God has imparted to them a portion of His own loveliness; He has formed them new creatures; of His free and distinguishing grace, He has made them more excellent than their neighbors and hence they are lovely. They are the excellent of the earth. God loves them, Christ loves them, the Holy Spirit loves them, angels love them, and they love each other. It is around them that the virtues cluster; from them that the graces of heaven are reflected, though shaded, and very often darkened by debasing and reproachful sins.

Love to the brethren is also an affection which rests upon the union which believers sustain with Christ. The Lord Jesus, together with all true believers, forms one mystical body. Christ is the Head and they are the members. The same bond which unites believers to Christ binds them to each other. The love which is exercised toward the Head extends to the members. The union necessarily involves a union of affection. Those who love Christ love those who are like Him and those who are beloved by Him. Here all distinctions vanish. Name and nation, rank and party, are lost in the common character of believers, the common name of Christian. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, rich and poor, are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28). They have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all (Eph 4:5-6). Actuated by the same principles, cherishing the same hopes, animated by the same prospects, laboring under the same discouragements, having the same enemies to encounter, and the same temptations to resist, the same hell to shun, and the same heaven to enjoy, it is not strange that they should love one another sincerely and often with a pure heart fervently. There is a unity of design, a common interest in the objects of their pursuit which lays the foundation for mutual friendship and which cannot fail to excite the "harmony of souls." The glory of God is the grand object which commands their highest affections and which necessarily makes the interest of the whole the interest of each part, and the interest of each part the interest of the whole. There are no conflicting interests and there need be no jarring passions. In a common cause which in point of importance takes the place of every other and all others, the affections of the sanctified heart are one.

The Lord Jesus has given peculiar emphasis to the duty of brotherly love, by constituting it the easy and decisive standards of true godliness. It is by this standard that His disciples are to judge of themselves. "We know," saith an apostle, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). This is the criterion also by which He would have the world judge of the sincerity of their religion and the truth and divinity of His Gospel. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). In that memorable prayer just before His death, He also prays for His disciples "that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). With this standard before him, may not every man ascertain whether he is a child of God?

The love of good men is not one of the native affections of the carnal mind. This cold, degenerate soil bears no such heavenly fruit. The affection which Christians exercise toward each other as Christians is the offspring of brighter worlds. It is a principle of celestial birth. Love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God (1 John 4:7).

It cannot be difficult to distinguish this Christian grace from a mere natural affection of mercenary or sectarian attachment. A parent may love his child, and a child his parent; a husband may love his wife and a wife her husband; and there may exist much and reciprocal affection between one man and another; while the personal religion of the party beloved constitutes none of the reasons of this affection. Persons may have been educated to esteem and respect pious men while this respectful sentiment falls far below the love of men as Christians and for their Christianity. Men may love Christians merely because they imagine that Christians love them. This, like every other affection that is purely selfish is unworthy of the Christian name. They may love particular Christians because they are of their denomination and imbibe their sentiments. This too is nothing better than that friendship of the world which is enmity with God. The obvious inquiry is: Do you love the people of God *because they are the people of God*? Because you discover in them the amiableness of that religion which is altogether lovely? Do you love them, not merely because they love you or have bestowed favors upon you; not because they are of your party, but because they bear the image of your heavenly Father? Do you love them for their love of God, their self-denial, their heavenliness, their usefulness in the world, their reproachless example, their faithfulness and love of duty? Do you love them when they reprove you, and when their example condemns you? And do you love them in proportion to the measure of these excellencies which they possess? Do you feel an interest in them and for them? Can you bear and forbear with them? Can you forget their infirmities, or do you rejoice to magnify them? Can you cast the mantle of charity over their sins and pray for them, and watch over them, and pity, and love them still? And can you feel thus and act thus toward the poorest and most despised of the flock and that because he is a Christian? If so, here is your encouragement "He that loveth is born of God" (1 John 4:7).

Taken From: *The Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character.*

TRIUMPH OF FORBEARING LOVE

Otto Stockmayer

"God... gave him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God, seeing ye have purified your souls in obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently"—1 Peter 1:21-22

The whole Christian life is *an* exercise of faith, that we may learn to walk, *in* every circumstance, *as* seeing *Him* who is invisible.

The great failure in the history of Israel began when the people came to Samuel and said, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations"—let us have a visible king. They got weary of waiting by faith in the Lord of hosts, who was ever ready to help His people when they humbled themselves, after He had humbled them. They grew weary, and desired a king whom they could see and who would lead their battles, without being obliged on their part to humble themselves before their God. "Let us have a king," they cried, "that we may be like all the nations, and that he may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

And now also it is just these shameful desires of our wicked hearts which keep us from depending upon God for everything—these desires to have something, or someone, before our eyes upon which, or upon whom, we may lean for help in critical hours; whereas God sends critical hours on purpose that we may be thrown upon Him and give Him His right place in our daily life and work and conflict. If we have learned more deeply to trust our God and not to lean upon man or circumstances—if we have learned better than ever before to walk and serve as seeing Him who is invisible—I should like to bring before you another subject which is as deeply on my heart. It is that we may see the unseen, invisible Christ in our brother, in our sister.

In some recent meetings in Germany in which I was privileged to take part, the subject was, "Christ in you, the Hope of glory" (Col 1:27), Today it came to me that the Apostle does not say, Christ in us—in a way that is simply general—but, "Christ in you." He turns to his brethren who had been brought out from among the Gentiles through the living God, and to these he says, "Christ in *you*, the Hope of glory."

Let us stop and consider the form of the expression. Of course, so far as we are children of God, Christ is in us. We cannot be born of God without having Christ in us. Christ must indeed be *formed* in us (Gal 4:19), but at the very moment we are born again from above He is in us.

Might it not be a very practical test, and a Biblical and Scriptural way of proving that Christ is in us, to get into the holy habit of always seeing Christ in our brother? Even if he were born again but yesterday, or only an hour ago, it is well for us at the very beginning of his Christian life to see in him, through faith, Christ abiding in his heart by the Spirit of God; a being of whom God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—has taken possession.

Let us learn to look at our brother as seeing in him the unseen Christ, and we shall help him in a mighty way to take heed that Christ may shine in his life. By this means he will become conscious of the holy ground on which he stands and moves and walks, by having become a Christian. We who have for years walked with Christ must help the babe, the child, to awake to his high calling as quickly as possible. By recognizing Christ in him, we shall help him to become conscious of the wonderful secret of his new life; and we must prove ourselves to be men in Christ by not stopping short at what we see with our eyes and hear with our ears of the manifestations of the flesh which we may find in the young Christian. We must be able, through Divine love shed abroad in our hearts and free grace in our lives, to look beyond what is seen; we must love our brother through faith in God, that He may bring out the new creation in him in a beautiful way... more beautiful, it may be, than in our own lives.

And, further, instead of looking at our own progress in sanctification—measuring how far we have grown up in Christ—let us rather turn our attention to our young brother in whose life, perhaps, Christ is not clearly seen by the Church and the world: and by thus considering him and exercising Divine love, we shall help him to take his stand as one in whom Christ lives.

And let us never forget to put the shoes from off our feet when dealing thus with a brother or a sister. It is holy ground—holy because we approach a being in whom Christ dwells unseen—and much may depend on the attitude we take towards him in helping to bring forth in our brother the features of Jesus Christ.

In those last days before His decease, the Greeks came to see Jesus (John 12:20-24), and He answered, You have indeed come at the right time. "The hour is come when the Son of Man shall be glorified." And how? By His sinking down, even into the earth. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

The life of love which the Lord lived was the only true life of love ever lived on earth. But for Him, there would be no life of love seen in the world—no fruit springing out of the corn of wheat which fell into the earth. The moment came in which the Son of Man should be glorified, and that glory—His fruit in them whose faith and hope would be in God—is unfeigned love of the brethren (I Peter 1:22),

Too long we have expected things of our brethren, and so there have been disappointment, grief, and pain.. because our hopes and expectations have been in our brethren instead of in God. We have failed to look for the unseen Christ in them. And because we have seen the old nature still existing in the brethren, we have forgotten that they are also fruit of the corn of wheat which has fallen to the ground. On that account we must help them; and we *can* help them by putting our hope and faith for them in God in such a way that unfeigned love—or, as it might be translated—intense, fervent love may spring forth; because our life for the brethren no more depends upon *their* character, but upon Divine, heavenly glory.

God gave Christ glory; and if Christ is in me, there must be glory to triumph over shame, over the spirit of judgment, over the flesh in my brother. I may see only the flesh, but when my hope—the crown of glory—and my faith rest in God, I can overlook what is not like Christ, and by seeing Him who is invisible, despite discouraging experiences with the brethren, I can endure and I can love.

The Incorruptible has power over the corruptible. By faith we overcome the old nature by the new nature given us by Jesus Christ. If the brother cannot let Christ's nature triumph over his own nature, let us older ones, who have known Christ so long, set him the example; and when he finds in us unquenchable love, even when we see little of Christ in him, it will help him to let Christ triumph over him.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obedience to the truth," you can now have faith and hope for your brother, so that Christ the Truth may have liberty in your hearts and lives to show forth His glory. Unquenchable, unfeigned love; love from a heart rooted in the love of God, grounded in Christ—the reigning, ruling Christ! Thus we are called to love one another: "having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed."

Do you feel paralyzed in your love by what you meet of the corruptible in your brother? Do you not perceive that what you see to be corruptible in your brother is allowed to come before you that you may triumph over it by the power of the incorruptible in you, and so that you may manifest love and faith and hope in God?

Do you not understand these things? We have power to love—power to abstain from our own flesh, from being provoked—because we have been begotten again by incorruptible seed, and we know it. But our young brother does not yet know this—he does not yet see the power he has in Christ; but we—who for ten, twenty, thirty years have known our Bible and the heart of God—we see and are being exercised not to stop short at the seen world, but through the continual exercise of faith to look deeper, even into the unseen.

"Having been begotten again" and redeemed, not with corruptible things but with the precious blood of Christ; begotten, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible; God's wonderful power has created a new world within—a new way in which we cease to look to earthly things for happiness. It is the world of light, seen through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth.

Today you discover in your brother things from which you shrink, and which might have the effect of freezing your love to him; but you do not need to have these feelings. When the current approaches you, go back to the ground of your standing in Christ; the Word of God, which has power to keep you; Jesus the living Word; also, the written Word; and let what you have learned in this Holy Book go forth and prove its power in its moment of conflict, When some corruptible thing appears in your brother, which has the tendency to call forth that which is corruptible in you, go back to your

regeneration in God; you, being born of the incorruptible, are to overcome evil by the glory of God. *That* is glory.

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the grass." Our love (to the brother) must not depend on the aspect and the sweetness of the flower—the lovely character which attracts our admiration—all this is corruption. "The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the Word of the Lord abideth." And whoever is begotten by this Word of God and has a new nature formed in him can stand the falling of the flower, the withering of the grass.

And if tomorrow you see in your brother things quite different from those to which you were accustomed, your love takes fresh power and springs forth to show your heavenly standing, proving that your faith and hope are in God. When your love grows cold, then you feed the flesh in your brother; but when the love of God in you can stand the test, you help forward the Divine Life in your brother.

"This is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you. Putting away, therefore, all guile, all wickedness, hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings... as new-born babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (I Peter 2:1). This salvation is a life of love, and he who loves his brother thus will cease from putting stumbling blocks in his way or being an occasion of his falling. "Love one another from a pure heart fervently."

Taken From: *Divine Love*

INCREASING AND ABOUNDING IN LOVE

George Muller

1805-1898

The Only Bond of Union

We should not be satisfied unless we come to this state of heart, that we know nothing less among the disciples than that the precious blood of Christ has made us clean. That is the bond of union—that belonging to Christ. One with Christ—that is the great bond to keep before us. The more we realise that the grace of God has apprehended us in Christ, and revealed to our hearts the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are all bought with the same precious blood, that we are all in the same Spirit, that the same life of the risen Jesus is in us, that we are all heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and shall before long enter into the glory of God—if these things were more present to our hearts, how loving, kind, and forbearing would the children of God be!

And yet once more in this nineteenth century it would be said, 'See how these Christians love one another.'

Only let us seek to aim after this, that we see Christ in each other, and not the old nature; the life of the risen Jesus in each other. If we seek to discern Christ in each other, how we shall be drawn to each other! (E. 1866).

On the Way to the Father's House

We are to love those who do not care in the least for us. We are to love those who do not walk with us on the road to Heaven, and whom we have never seen or heard of; that is the will of our heavenly Father regarding us.

We ought to look lovingly on weak disciples, and you and I, instead of looking at their weakness and shortcomings, ought to seek to find out Christ in them. If we do so, we shall find how dear they will become to our hearts, and we shall love them.

How deeply important to keep this before us in the divine life, that we manifest the mind of Christ. Just as that Blessed

One sought not to please Himself, but to be the servant of others, so have we to imitate that Blessed One.

Though not yet perfect in love, we are to aim after that for which we have been apprehended of God in Christ Jesus. We ought to love one another in spite of the weaknesses and infirmities we see in one another.

We are left here to be representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world. This great honour He has bestowed upon us here.

God is love, and he who loves most is most like God. All the members of the heavenly family should remember the precious blood that bought them, and love one another whilst on the way to their Father's house (W, undated).

Taken From: *The George Muller Treasury*.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE TWO GREATEST COMMANDMENTS

John Arndt

1555-1621

...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets

—Matthew 22:37-40

Of The Love Of God And Our Neighbor

Now the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned—1 Timothy 1: 5

IN this verse, the apostle sets before us love, the highest and noblest virtue; and acquaints us at the same time, with four particulars concerning it. *First*, that Love is the summary of all the commandments: for "love," says the apostle, "is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom 13: 10); in which all the precepts are comprehended, and without which, all gifts and virtues are unprofitable and fruitless.

2. What he says in the *second* place, namely, that love must arise from a pure heart, relates to the love of *God*, which requires a heart void of worldly love and affection, according to that saying of St. John: "Love not the world. neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth foreve." (1 John 2: 15-17). Whosoever, therefore, has a heart purified from all love to the creature, so as to depend or acquiesce in no transient good whatsoever, can cleave most intimately to God, saying with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psa 73: 25, 26). The love of such a one, proceeds out of a "*pure heart*." Of the same character also, is that love which is attended with great delight, pleasure and joy in God; of which we have an illustration in David: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Psa 18:1, 2).

3. The apostle, in the *third* place, teaches us, that love must be "out of a good conscience." This properly concerns the love of *our neighbor*, who is to be loved, not for the sake of interest or worldly advantage (which would be a false love out of a bad conscience); but for the sake of God only, and of his commandments. Nor ought we to afflict our neighbor either by word or deed, either secretly or openly; nor on any account, bear envy, wrath, hatred, malice or rancor against him; that so

our conscience may not accuse us when we address ourselves in prayer to God Almighty.

4. The *fourth* requisite of Love is, a "faith unfeigned;" so that nothing be done that is contrary to the rule of faith, and to our Christian profession, and that God be not denied publicly or privately, in prosperity or adversity. This is the substance of what is contained in that sentence of the apostle. We shall now speak more particularly, with respect to each of the several parts.

5. In the *fifth* place, then, *Love*, according to the apostle, "is the end of the commandment;" for that love which arises from a pure faith, is the noblest among the fruits and effects of faith; than which a man can do nothing better or more acceptable to God. For God does not require at our hands great and difficult enterprises, no high performances that exceed our capacities; but he has changed the yoke of the Old Testament service, and its many commandments and ordinances into faith and love, and has given us for this end the Holy Ghost, who, "shedding abroad in our hearts the love of God" (Rom 5:5), renders everything sweet and easy, and proves the original spring of this heavenly virtue.

6. Love, therefore, is not a hard work, a labor attended with toil and difficulty; on the contrary, it makes everything easy to a good man. "His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3), that is to say, they are not so to an enlightened Christian; for wherever the Spirit of God comes, he creates a free, willing and ready heart in the discharge of Christian virtues. Nor does God require of his children great skill or learning: it is only love which he regards. If this be sincere and fervent, free from disguise and dissimulation, God takes more pleasure and delight in it, than in all the knowledge and wisdom, in all the art and talent that any man upon earth, in his best works, can possibly exhibit. Wherever this divine love is wanting, there all wisdom and knowledge, all works and gifts, are altogether unprofitable. They are accounted vain and dead, as a mere body without life (1 Cor 13: 1, 2).

7. As for human learning and great abilities, they are common to heathens as well as to Christians; and great actions are performed as well by infidels as by believers. It is *love* only which proves the sure test of a sound Christian, distinguishing between the false and the true. For wherever love is wanting, there can be no good thing, however it may claim the admiration of men by its specious appearances. The reason is, because God is not there; for "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4: 16).

8. Love is also pleasant, not only to God who gives it, but also to man, who exercises it: whereas, all arts and sciences, all the knowledge and wisdom which man grasps, are not attained but with great labor and study, with much care and application, and even at the expense of bodily health. But this heaven-born love cheers both the body and the mind. It invigorates the spirits, confers new strength, and wonderfully improves and exalts the mind. Nor is it attended with any loss whatever, but on the contrary, produces many good and noble effects in the soul. Love is itself the reward of the lover, and virtue always carries its own recompense with it: as, on the contrary, the vicious man is punished by his own excesses, and vice is the constant tormentor of him that commits it.

9. Again, when the other faculties of the body and mind are faint and wearied, love faints not. Love is never weary, never ceases. Prophecy may pass away, tongues may cease, and sciences may be destroyed; arts may be lost, the knowledge of mysteries may vanish; yea, faith itself at last may fail also: but yet "love never faileth," nor can fail: for when all that is imperfect is happily removed, then love alone abides forever, and attains its full perfection (1 Cor 13: 8).

10. To render anything pleasing to Almighty God, it is necessary that it proceed from him; since he approves of nothing but what he himself works in us. Now, God is love; it therefore follows, that all that we do ought to proceed from a divine faith, in order that it may be pleasing to God; and from pure love, that it may prove profitable to men. This love must be *pure*, without any regard to self-honor, self-interest, and those mean designs which sometimes intrude into a Christian's actions. In like manner our *prayers* should spring from a principle of love, that they may have the more ready admittance to the God of love. Consider, therefore, how can man's prayer be acceptable to God, who is full of wrath and rancor, hatred and malice? Were such a one to repeat the whole Psalter every day, it would be but an abomination before the Lord. True worship consists in spirit (John 4: 23, 24), in faith, in love, not in a long recital of words. Remember the example of Christ, who, from a merciful heart, cried, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23: 34). A man that does not love God, is also unwilling to pour out his heart in prayer and supplication: but to him who is affected with a sense of divine love, the duty of prayer is easy and delightful. A man that has a cordial love to God, readily serves him; but he that is void of this love, does not serve him at all, though he may submit to much toil and drudgery, and even heap one mountain upon another.

11. Upon the whole, then, nothing is more agreeable to human nature, nothing better and more profitable, than this divine love, which, therefore, should be stirred up in the heart of man, and when once raised into a flame, should be carefully preserved from being ever quenched.

12. Faith should work all things in a Christian through love; and love should be the agent of faith, as the body is the agent of the soul. The soul sees and hears, speaks and acts, through the body, to which she is united; so, O man! should the love of God, springing from faith, do all things in and through thee. Whether thou eat or drink, hear or speak, commend or reprove, let all be done *in love*, after the example of Christ, in whom resided nothing but pure love. If thou beholdest thy neighbor, behold him with the eyes of a compassionate friend; if thou hearest him, hear him with love and tenderness; and if thou speakest with him, let thy speech be seasoned with love and Christian affection.

13. Carefully preserve the root of Christian love by faith, in order that nothing but that which is good may grow up in thy heart, and issue thence, as from its genuine centre (1 Cor 16:14). Thou shalt then be enabled to fulfill the commandments of God; since they are all comprehended in love. Hence, a holy man has expressed himself after this manner: "O love of God in the Holy Ghost! thou art the highest joy of souls, and the only divine life of men. Whosoever enjoys not thee, is dead even while he lives; and whosoever possesses thee, never dies in the sight of God. Where thou art not, there the life of men is a continual death; but where thou art, there life is made a foretaste of eternal happiness." Whence it appears that this divine love is the sum and fulfilling of all the commandments of God.

14. We consider now, that our love to God ought to proceed "out of a pure heart." The heart of a man who is desirous to love God, ought first to be cleansed from all worldly love and attachment to the creature. It is then that God becomes the chief and sovereign Good to the soul. She can then say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot" (Psa 16: 5). "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright," that is, those that love him out of a disinterested heart; "and their inheritance shall be forever" (Psa 37: 18). "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psa 37:4). In a word, God is the only fountain whence all our joy ought constantly to spring.

15. God, therefore, should be the most beloved object of our souls, and our hearts should rest in him alone, because he is the highest good. He is nothing else than mercy and goodness, love and kindness, clemency and patience, truth, comfort, peace, joy, life, and happiness. All this he has laid up in Jesus Christ. Whoever, therefore, has Christ, is thereby put into the possession of all these heavenly virtues. And whoever loves God, must also of necessity love God's truth and mercy, his goodness and kindness, and the whole train of divine virtues.

16. For, a true lover of God has a love to all that God loves, and an aversion to all that God hates. If any man loves God, he must love truth, mercy, and righteousness, because God is all this himself. He must also delight in humility and meekness, since thereby he is rendered conformable to that meekness and lowly-mindedness which resided in Jesus. On the other hand, a true lover of God cannot but abhor all ungodliness, with all the works of iniquity; because all manner of impiety is enmity against God, and is the work of the devil himself. A lover of God hates a lie, because the devil is the father of lies, and was a liar from the beginning. And this is the reason that every one who loves lies, injustice, and other vicious workings of nature, must needs, in that sense, be the offspring of the devil (John 8:44); and again, whoever loves Christ, his Lord and Saviour, loves also the example of his pure and holy life, his humility and meekness, his patience, and the other heavenly virtues that appeared in his conduct. And such a one must of necessity be adopted into the number of the children of God.

17. This love, proceeding out of a "pure heart," must be obtained from God by prayer and supplication. And truly, God is willing to enkindle in us this heavenly flame through the love of Christ, if He be but earnestly solicited, and if the heart be every day and every moment laid open to his divine influence. If thy love should grow cold and weak at any time, arouse thy heart, faint not, but stir up the grace of God within thee, and be not too much discouraged at it. In the name of God arise again, set to work, and renew the acts of thy first love. As thou art sensible of thy coldness in love, thou mayest be assured from that circumstance, that the eternal light of divine love is not *wholly* extinguished, although it be eclipsed, and at present give but little heat. Doubt not that thy Saviour will enlighten thee again, and fire thy heart with his love; so that thou mayest sit once more under his shadow, and rejoice in the light of his countenance. At the same time be earnest in prayer and supplications, lest hereafter the flame of this heavenly love should be again deadened in thy heart. Such is love "out of a pure heart," unmixed with love of the world.

18. Let us now consider, Love, as arising from a "good conscience: and as it respects our neighbor. The love of God and the love of our neighbor are so closely united, that they can never be separated. The true touchstone of our love to God, is the love which we bear to our neighbor. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also" (1 John 4: 20, 21). For the love of God cannot dwell in a man who is filled with hatred or malice, or divested of all bowels of love and compassion. If thou hast no pity on thy brother, who stands in need of thy help, how canst thou love God, who needs not anything that is thine, and has commanded thee to express thy love towards him, by bestowing marks of it upon thy brother?

19. As faith unites to God, so love unites to our neighbor; and as a man is made up of body and soul, so faith and love (that is, the love both of God and of our neighbor) make up a true Christian. Thus he that "dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God" (1 John 4:16). And since God effectually desires the good of all men, it follows, that he who loves in like manner is of one heart with God; and that he who is otherwise affected is against God, and has not the mind of the Lord, but is the enemy of God as well as of his neighbor. He is, unquestionably, an adversary to God who is an enemy to men.

20. It is the property of this love to bewail and compassionate the infirmities of others (Gal 6:1). Indeed, the failings and weaknesses of our fellow-creatures represent to us, as in a mirror, our own imperfections, and remind us of the various defects that encumber our nature. Therefore, when thou seest another overtaken in a fault, consider that thou also thyself art but a man; and learn from thy own infirmities, to bear those of others with patience, meekness, and humility (Rom 15: 7).

21. Such especially as sin, not from malice or determined wickedness, but who are surprised into a fault by weakness and inadvertency; and who, coming soon to themselves again, repent of that which they have done, and firmly resolve to watch the more against the snares of Satan for the future; such souls as these are surely to be pitied and assisted. He that does otherwise, shows that he has nothing in him of the merciful and forbearing spirit of Christ. When a man hastily condemns the faults of his neighbor, without feeling any love or compassion, it is an evident sign that he is altogether void of God, and of his merciful spirit. On the contrary, a true Christian, being anointed with the spirit of Christ, treats all men as one that has a fellow-feeling with them, and bears with them in a sympathizing Christian love and tenderness, according to the example of Christ, which he has left us to follow. Therefore, if any man, upon serious search into his inward condition, finds that he has not the love of his neighbor abiding in him, let him know, assuredly, that the love of God remains not in his soul, and that he himself is without God. This should strike him with horror and indignation against himself; it should influence him the more speedily (after repenting of his sin from the bottom of his heart) to reconcile himself to his neighbor, that, in this order, the love of God may also return to him again. Then all his actions, while he continues in this love and faith, are good, holy, and divine; and this love, dwelling in his heart, will actuate him freely and willingly to embrace all men, and with great affection and joy to do them all manner of kindnesses; so that he will "rejoice over them to do them good," even as God himself (Jer 32:41).

22. Without this love, whatever is in man, is diabolical and altogether evil. Nor is there, indeed, any other cause why the devil can do no good, but because he is utterly destitute of love both towards God and man. Hence, all which he does is radically evil, and deprived of all intrinsic goodness. In all that he sets about, he designs nothing but God's dishonor, and man's destruction. He cunningly contrives ways to vent his enmity both upon God and man; and, therefore, he seeks for such hearts as he can fill with spite and envy, and then discharges through them his malice and wrath. "And hereby it is manifest who are the children of God, and the children of the devil" (1 John 3:10).

23. Therefore, love must be "out of faith unfeigned," that is, we must love God equally in prosperity and adversity. Whoever loves God sincerely, accepts with joy all the dispensations of his Providence, after the example of Christ; who, with a cheerful and ready mind, took up the cross, which he knew that the will of his Father imposed on him. "I have," says he, "a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened (and in pain) till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). In the same manner have all the holy martyrs carried with joy their cross after him.

24. To those that unfeignedly love God, the cross, which Christ enjoins us to bear, does not prove grievous or burdensome; and this for no other reason, than because it is the *yoke of Christ* (Matt 11: 29). If the magnet attracts the heavy iron, why should not that heavenly loadstone, the love of God, attract the burden of our cross, and render it light and agreeable; especially after the heart is affected with a touch of the divine love? If the sugar sweeten such herbs as are bitter by nature, why should not the sweetness of the love of God make that pleasant and easy, which to the flesh is

nothing but a cross and affliction? And truly it was from the fulness of this love, that the blessed martyrs bore the most exquisite pain with patience and joy; being transported with it to such a degree, as to be almost insensible of their very torments.

The Love Of Our Neighbor, More Particularly Considered

Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.—2 Peter 2:19

THERE is no bondage more hard and grievous, than to be under the yoke of the passions: but of all these, none is so cruel as *hatred*, which so weakens and depresses all the powers both of body and mind, as not to leave to the man one free thought. On the contrary, he who lives in *love is free*. He is no slave to anger, envy, covetousness, pride, lying, or calumny; and being delivered from these by love, he suffers not himself to be subdued by evil desires, but continues Christ's freeman (1 Cor 7: 22) in the liberty of the Spirit: for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor 3: 17). Whosoever, therefore, walks in the love of Christ, is no longer a slave to sin, or a servant to carnal affections; for the Spirit of God's love has freed and purified him from carnal concupiscence. And we see that the love of God extends over all men; of which we not only find sufficient proofs in Scripture, but the footsteps of his universal benignity are also everywhere displayed in nature. We are all equally covered with the heavens, and have all the use of the sun, the air, the earth, and the water; as well they who are of high degree, as they who are of the meanest condition. And the very same mind that is in God towards us, ought also to be in us towards men; God himself having set us a pattern of universal kindness for our imitation. He regards not one more than another, but loves all with an equal affection. With him there is no respect of persons, of dignity, or merit; but he beholds all alike in Christ. This is for our instruction. Now, as God acts towards us, so ought we to act towards our neighbor. And truly, after the same manner as we deal with man, so God will deal with us again. We need not go far to inquire what favor we have with God Almighty. If we but enter into our own conscience, it will impartially tell us, what mind and affection we bear to our neighbor; and as we have done to him, so will God certainly do to us again, and return our works into our own bosom. And in this sense it is said of God, that "with the pure he shows himself pure; and with the froward, shews himself froward" (Psa 18:26); that is, if thou bearest an evil mind to thy neighbor, God will be thine adversary also.

2. Since, therefore, God has no need of our service, he has substituted our neighbor in his place, to receive our love, and has commanded us to pay it as to himself. He has made this love of our neighbor the very *touchstone* by which we are to examine the sincerity of our love to God.

3. And it is for this reason that he has enjoined the love of our neighbor with so great earnestness, requiring us to show constantly the same love to him which God shows to us. For unless a man be fully reconciled to, and be in perfect love with his neighbor, he cannot have the favor or grace of God. And although all the sins of the world are atoned for by the death of Christ, and a full pardon obtained, yet all mankind may in some sense be said to be in the same circumstances with the servant in the parable, who had not wherewithal to pay; the king freely remitted him all his debts: but when he afterwards behaved himself cruelly towards his fellow-servant, the king revoked his pardon, and condemned the servant, on account of the hard usage with which he treated his neighbor (Matt 18: 23, etc.). This parable Christ concludes with the remarkable expression: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother, their trespasses." Verse 35. And, "With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6: 38).

4. Hence, it plainly appears, that man was not created for himself alone, but for his neighbor's sake also. So strict is the commandment of loving our neighbor, that when it is broken, the very end of our creation is destroyed, and the love of God is immediately withdrawn from the soul. Nothing is left but the severest justice, judging and condemning all that are void of this love.

5. If we duly considered these things, we should never be angry with one another; neither would "the sun ever go down upon our wrath" (Eph 4: 26). It is true, on the one hand, that Christ by his death on the cross has offered a full and complete atonement for all our trespasses, and in this respect, has remitted all our sins at once; yet is it, on the other hand, an awful consideration, that the whole extent of the merits of Christ will be of no avail at all to us, if we continue to hate our brother, and will neither pardon nor love him. We shall be entirely cut off from all the benefits that flow from the atonement. [The Scriptures are filled with this truth. Here are a few to show that Matthew 18:35 does not stand alone. Matthew 6:14, 15: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not

men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (See also 1 John 3:14, 15; Heb 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-22)].

6. Hence it appears how important the love of our neighbor must be in the sight of God, binding us even to such a degree, that God refuses to be loved by us, unless we love our neighbor also; so that if we fail in our benevolence toward the latter, we fall at the same time away from that grace that bringeth salvation and divine love that draws us to Christ. And for this reason, we were created all equal and of the same nature, that we might not despise one other; but, like children of one common parent, live in peace and love, and endeavor to maintain a good and serene conscience.

7. Now, whoever hates and despises his brother, hates and despises God also, who has forbidden all such animosities in the severest terms. If thou contemnest thy brother, God also contemns thee; which hastens thy judgment and condemnation, and deprives thee of all interest in the merit and redemption of Christ, by which sin is forgiven.

8. For it cannot be possible that a heart filled with wrath and bitterness, should in any degree reap a saving fruit from the blood of Christ, which was shed from a motive of pure love. Yea, the above parable (Matt 18: 35) plainly convinces us, that God "was less offended at the debt of ten thousand talents, than at the barbarous cruelty of which the servant was guilty; he can overlook the debt, but he cannot overlook the want of love. Let us, therefore, ponder the words with which the Lord concludes the parable: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you."

9. But we must keep before us that an unfeigned love of the brethren is not grounded on any work of ours, but only on the merits of Christ applied to us by faith. From this righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, springs love to our neighbor, together with the whole train of Christian virtues, called by the apostle "fruits of righteousness, which are to the glory and praise of God" (Phil 1:11).

Taken From: *True Chrtistianity*, pp. 77-85

