

Free Grace Broadcaster

Published by Chapel Library • 2603 West Wright St. • Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA
Sending Christ-centered materials from prior centuries worldwide

Worldwide: please use the online downloads worldwide without charge.

In North America: please write for your free subscription. The FGB is sent quarterly without charge.

Chapel Library does not necessarily agree with all the doctrinal views of the authors it publishes.

We do not ask for donations, send promotional mailings, or share the mailing list.

LOVING ONE ANOTHER

#206

Contents

CHRIST'S NEW COMMANDMENT

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”—John 13:34-35

MANY of you, I do not doubt, have heard the story of Arch-bishop Usher¹ and Mr. Rutherford;² but it is so appropriate to this subject that I cannot help telling it again. The archbishop had heard of the wondrous power of Rutherford's devotion and of the singular beauty of the arrangement of his household, and he wished to witness it himself; but he could not tell how to do so until it occurred to him that he might disguise himself as a poor traveler. Accordingly, at nightfall, he knocked at the door of Mr. Rutherford's house and was received by Mrs. Rutherford. He asked if he could find lodgings there for the night. She answered, “Yes,” for they entertained strangers. She placed him in the kitchen and gave him something to eat. It was a part of her regular family discipline on Saturday evening to catechize the children and the servants. Of course, the poor man in the kitchen came in among them.

Mrs. Rutherford put to all of them some questions concerning the commandments; and to this poor man, she put the question, “How many commandments are there?” He answered, “Eleven.” “Ah!” she said, “what a sad thing that a man of your age, whose hair is sprinkled with grey, should not even know how many commandments there are. There is not a child above six years old in our parish, who does not know that.” The poor man said nothing in reply, but he had his oatmeal porridge and went to bed. Later, he rose and listened to Rutherford's midnight

¹ James Usher or Ussher (1581-1656) – Anglican Archbishop of Armagh, Ireland, and professor of divinity at Dublin.

² Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) – Scottish Presbyterian theologian, author, and Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly.

prayer. He was charmed with it, made himself known to him, borrowed a better coat from him, preached for him on the Sunday morning, and surprised Mrs. Rutherford by taking as his text, “A new commandment I give unto you.” [He commenced] with the observation that this might very properly be called the *Eleventh Commandment*. By-and-by, the archbishop went on his way; he and Rutherford had been refreshed together. It is the Eleventh Commandment. If the next time we are asked how many commandments there are, we answer, “Eleven,” we shall reply rightly enough.

But why is it a *new* commandment? Is it not included in the ten? You know how our Lord approved the lawyer’s summary of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luk 10:27). How is this a *new* commandment then—“That ye love one another”?

It is new, first, as to the extent of the love. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves, but we are to love our fellow-Christians as Christ loved us. That is *far more* than we love ourselves. Christ loved us better than He loved Himself. He loved us so much that He gave Himself for us, so that now no one of us is to say, “I am to love my friend, my brother, my fellow-creatures, as I love *myself*,” but to interpret Christ’s command thus, “I am to love my fellow-Christians even as Jesus Christ Who died for me has loved me.” This is a nobler kind of love altogether to the love that we are to manifest to our neighbors. That is the love of benevolence,³ but this is a love of affinity⁴ and close relationship. [It] involves a higher degree of self-sacrifice than was enjoined by the Law of Moses...

Next, it is a new commandment because it is backed by a new reason. The old commandment was backed by this declaration: “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exo 20:2). The Israelite was to obey that law because of the redemption that God had wrought for His nation in Egypt. But we are commanded to love one another because Christ has redeemed us from a far worse bondage than that of Egypt, and with a far costlier sacrifice than the offering up of myriads⁵ of paschal⁶ lambs. “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1Co 5:7). He has brought us out from under the iron yoke of sin and Satan and has broken our bonds asunder. Our enemies have pursued us, but He has destroyed them at the sea, even at the Red Sea. He has redeemed us with His own heart’s blood, and therefore His new commandment comes to us with the greatest possible force, “That ye love one another as I have loved you.” It is a new commandment because of the extent of it and because of the reason by which it is supported.

It is a new commandment also because it is a new love, springing from a new nature and embracing a new nation. I am bound as a man to love my fellow man because he is a man. But I am bound as a regenerate man to love my fellow Christian still more because he also is regenerate. The ties of blood ought to be recognized by us far more than they are. We are too apt to forget that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Act 17:26). By the common tie of blood, we are all brethren. But, beloved, the ties of grace are *far* stronger than the ties of blood. If ye are really born of God, ye are brothers by a brotherhood that is stronger even than the natural brotherhood that enabled you to lie in the same cradle and to hang at the same breast; for brothers according to the flesh may be separated eternally. The right hand of the King may be the position accorded to the one, and His left hand may be the position assigned to the other; but brothers who are truly born of God share a brotherhood that must last forever. They who are now brothers in Christ shall always be brothers.

It is a very blessed thing when we are able to love one another because the grace that is in any one of us sees the grace that is in another and discerns in that other, not the flesh and blood of the Savior, but such a resemblance to Christ that it must love that other one for His sake. As it is true that if we are of the world, the world will love its own, so is it true that if we are of the Spirit, the Spirit will love His own. The whole redeemed family of Christ is firmly bound together. Born of God ourselves, we keep looking out to see others who have been “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible” (1Pe 1:23). When we do see them, we cannot help loving them. There is a bond of union between us at once...You are allied to God. Therefore, you must have fellowship with all others who are allied to God, whether you like it or not...

³ **love of benevolence** – love shown regardless of the character of the one who receives it.

⁴ **affinity** – kinship; family likeness.

⁵ **myriads** – vast numbers.

⁶ **paschal** – Passover.

Beloved friends, this is a new commandment because it is enforced by new necessities. Christians ought to love one another because they are the subjects of one King, Who is also their Savior. We are a little band of brothers in the midst of a vast multitude of enemies. “Behold,” said Christ to His disciples, “I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Mat 10:16). If you are true Christians, you will not have the love of worldlings:⁷ you *cannot* have it. They will be sure to ridicule you and call you fools, hypocrites, or something equally uncomplimentary. Well then, *cling the more closely to one another*. Whatever opposition you meet with outside, let it only weld you into a firmer unit [with one another]. We are like a small company of soldiers, in an enemy’s country, strongly garrisoned by the vast battalions of the foe, so we must hold together. We must be as one man, banded together in closest fellowship, as our great Captain bids us. God grant that the very fact that we are found in an enemy’s country may result in making us more completely one than we have ever been before!

When I hear a Christian man finding fault with his minister, I always wish that the devil had found somebody else to do his dirty work. I hope that none of you will ever be found complaining of God’s servants who are doing their best to help on their Lord’s cause. There are plenty who are ready to find fault with them...

Further, dear brethren, this is a new commandment because it is suggested by new characteristics. In our fellow men, there *may* be something lovable; but in our fellow Christians, there *must* be something lovable. Suppose they are only newly born to God—for my part, I hardly know of a more beautiful sight than a newborn Christian. I like to hear the prayer of the one who is just converted. There may be...mistakes and imperfections in it, but that does not spoil it. A lamb does not bleat in quite the same tones that a sheep uses. Yet a lamb is a very beautiful object, and one likes to hear its feeble notes. There is a beauty about the lambs in Christ’s flock as well as about the full-grown sheep. There is nothing more lovely to be seen in the whole world than an aged believer, who has lived very near to God. How calm the old gentleman’s spirit: when he begins to talk about the things of God and to testify concerning the love of his Lord, how charmingly he talks! There is *much* that is beautiful about all true Christians, so try to search out their excellences rather than their defects. If we are ourselves in a right state of heart, we are all the more likely to admire that which is good in others...There is a beauty about your friend that there is not about yourself. Do not be always gazing in the looking glass: there are fairer sights to be seen than any you will find there. Look into your fellow Christian’s face; and as you see anything there that is the work of the Spirit, love him because of that.

Once more, this is a new commandment because it is a preparation for better prospects than we have ever enjoyed before. We who believe in Jesus are going to live together in heaven forever and ever, so we may as well be good friends while we are here. We shall see each other there in one common glory and be occupied forever in one common employment: the adoration of our Lord and Master. The remembrance of this truth ought to break down many of the barriers that at present exist in society...I can also bear witness that I have often learnt more in an hour’s conversation with a godly poor man, than I have learned from an educated man who has known but little of the things of God. Never judge men by the clothes they wear, but by what they are in themselves. It is a man’s heart; and above all, it is the grace of God that dwells within the man’s heart that you and I are to prize and love. May God help us so to do!

From a sermon delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on
Lord’s Day evening, April 4, 1875, reprinted by Pilgrim Publications.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist; his collected sermons fill 63 volumes and stand as the largest set of books by a single author in the history of Christianity; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.



Who, indeed, can describe the pleasure with which the members of Christ’s flock do meet each other face to face? They may have been strangers before. They may have lived apart and never been in company; but it is wonderful to observe how soon they seem to understand each other. There seems a thorough oneness of opinion, taste, and judgment; so that a man would think they had known each other for

⁷ **worldlings** – those absorbed by worldly pursuits and pleasures, not by spiritual matters.

years. They seem, indeed, to feel they are servants of one and the same Master, members of the same family, and have been converted by one and the same Spirit. They have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. They have the same trials, the same fears, the same doubts, the same temptations, the same faintings of heart, the same dread of sin, the same sense of unworthiness, the same love of their Savior. Oh, but there is a mystical union between true believers, which they only know who have experienced it. The world cannot understand it—it is all foolishness to them. But that union does really exist, and a most blessed thing it is; for it is like a little foretaste of heaven.

Beloved, this loving to be together is a special mark of Christ's flock—nor is it strange, if we consider they are walking in the same narrow way and fighting against the same deadly enemies—and never are they so happy as when they are in company. The unconverted know nothing of such happiness.—*J. C. Ryle* (1816-1900)

DEFINING BROTHERLY LOVE

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

“Let brotherly love continue.”—Hebrews 13:1

BRROTHERLY love we would define as that gracious bond that knits together the hearts of God's children. More definitely, it is that spiritual and affectionate solicitude⁸ that Christians have toward each other, manifested by a desiring and endeavoring after their highest mutual interests...⁹

The maintenance of brotherly love tends in various ways to the spiritual blessing of the Church, the honor of the Gospel, and the comfort of believers. The exercise thereof is the best testimony to the world of the genuineness of our profession. The cultivation and manifestation of Christian affection between the people of God are far more weighty arguments with unbelievers than any apologetics.¹⁰ Believers should conduct themselves toward each other in such a way that no button or pin is needed to label them as brethren in Christ. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Joh 13:35). It should be made quite evident that their hearts are knit together by a bond more intimate, spiritual, and enduring than any which mere nature can produce. Their deportment¹¹ unto each other should be such as not only to mark them as fellow disciples, but as Christ says, “My disciples”—reflecting His love!

The exercise of brotherly love is not only a testimony unto the world, but it is also evidence to Christians themselves of their regeneration: “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). There should be a word of comfort here for those poor saints whose souls are cast down. At present, they cannot “read their title clear to mansions in the sky,”¹² and are afraid to cry “Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6), lest they be guilty of presumption. But here is a door of hope opened to Christ's little ones: you may, dear reader, be afraid to affirm that you love God, but do you not love His people? If you do, you must have been born again and have in you the same spiritual nature that is in them. *But do I love them?* Well, do you relish their company, admire what you see of Christ in them, wish them well, pray for them, and seek their good? If so, you certainly love them.

But not only is the exercise of Christian love a testimony unto the world of our Christian discipleship and a sure evidence of our own regeneration, but it is also that which delights God Himself. Of course it does! It is the product of His own grace: the immediate fruit of His Spirit. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psa 133:1) is what the Lord Himself declares. This also comes out very sweetly in Revelation 3. There we find one of the epistles addressed to the seven churches that are in Asia, namely, the Philadel-

⁸ **solicitude** – care and concern.

⁹ “What is this love? I answer briefly, It is a fruit of the Spirit of God, an effect of faith, whereby believers, being knit together by the strongest bonds of affection, upon the account of their interest in one head, Jesus Christ, and participating of one Spirit, do delight in, value, and esteem each other, and are in a constant readiness for all those regular duties whereby the temporal, spiritual, and eternal good of one another may be promoted.”—*John Owen*

¹⁰ **apologetics** – the branch of theology concerned with the defense of the Christian faith.

¹¹ **deportment** – conduct.

¹² From Isaac Watts' hymn “When I Can Read My Title Clear,” republished in *Christ-centered Hymns*, available from Chapel Library.

phian, the church of “brotherly love,” for that is the meaning of the word *Philadelphia*. In that epistle, there are no censures¹³ or rebukes: that which refreshed the heart of the Lord was there!

But our text refers not so much to the existence and exercise of brotherly love, as it does to its *maintenance*: “Let brotherly love continue” or “abide constant” as some render it, for the word includes the idea of enduring in the face of difficulties and temptations. That which is enjoined is perseverance in a pure and unselfish affection toward fellow Christians. Brotherly love is a tender plant that requires much attention: if it be not watched and watered, it quickly wilts. It is an exotic,¹⁴ for it is not a native of the soil of fallen human nature—“hateful and hating one another” (Ti 3:3) is a solemn description of what we were in our unregenerate state. Yes, brotherly love is a very tender plant and quickly affected by the cold air of unkindness, easily nipped by the frost of harsh words. If it is to thrive, it must needs be carefully protected and diligently cultivated.

“Let brotherly love continue.” What a *needful* word is this! It was so at the beginning. Therefore did the Lord God make it a fundamental in man’s duty: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev 19:18). O what strife and bloodshed, suffering and sorrow had been avoided, had this commandment been universally heeded. Alas, sin has domineered and dominated; and where sin is regnant,¹⁵ love is dormant. If we wish to obtain a better idea of what sin is, then contrast it with its opposite—God. Now God is *spirit* (Joh 4:24), God is *light* (1Jo 1:5), God is *love* (1Jo 4:8); whereas sin is *fleshly*, sin is *darkness*, sin is *hatred*. But if we have enlisted under the banner of Christ, we are called unto warfare against sin, against fleshliness, against hatred. Then “let brotherly love continue.”

Yes, a most needful exhortation is this: not only because hatred so largely sways the world, but also because of the state of Christendom. Two hundred and fifty years ago, John Owen¹⁶ wrote, “It [brotherly love] is, as unto its luster and splendor, retired to Heaven, abiding in its power and efficacious exercise only in some corners of the earth. Envy, wrath, selfishness, love of the world, with coldness in all the concerns of religion, have possessed the place of it. And in vain shall men wrangle and contend about their differences in faith and worship, pretending to design the advancement of religion by an imposition of their persuasions on others: unless this holy love be again re-introduced among all those who profess the name of Christ, all the concerns of religion will more and more run into ruin. The very name of a brotherhood amongst Christians is a matter of scorn and reproach, and all the consequents of such a relation are despised.”

Nor are things any better today. O how little is brotherly love in evidence, generally speaking, among professing Christians. Is not that tragic word of Christ receiving its prophetic fulfillment: “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Mat 24:12). But, my reader, Christ’s love has not changed, nor should ours: “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1). Alas, have not all of us reason to hang our heads in shame! Such an exhortation as this is most needful today when there is such a wide tendency to value light more highly than love, to esteem an understanding of the mysteries of Faith above the drawing out our affections unto each other. Here is a searching question that each of us should honestly face: Is my love for the brethren keeping pace with my growing (intellectual) knowledge of the Truth?

“Let brotherly love continue.” What a *humbling* word is this! One had thought that those bound together by such intimate ties, fellow members of the Body of Christ would spontaneously love each other and make it their constant aim to promote their interests. Ah, my reader, the Holy Spirit deemed it requisite to call upon us to perform this duty. What sort of creatures are we that still require to be thus exhorted! How this ought to hide pride from us. Surely, we have little cause for self-complacency¹⁷ when we need bidding to love one another! “Hateful and hating one another” (Ti 3:3). *True*, that was in our unregenerate days. Nevertheless, the root of that “hatred” still remains in the believer and, unless it be judged and mortified,¹⁸ will greatly hinder the maintenance and exercise of Christian affection.

“Let brotherly love continue.” What a *solemn* word is this! Is the reader startled by that adjective?—a needful and humbling one, but scarcely a “solemn.” Ah, have we forgotten the context? Look at the verse that immediately pre-

¹³ **censures** – harsh criticisms.

¹⁴ **exotic** – a plant from a foreign place.

¹⁵ **regnant** – ruling.

¹⁶ **John Owen** (1616-1683) – Congregational theologian; called the “Prince of the Puritans.”

¹⁷ **self-complacency** – being satisfied with one’s self.

¹⁸ **mortified** – a state of a Christian in which “the strength of sin is weakened and the dominion of it destroyed, being utterly disabled from having a commanding power or rule over the man anymore by the efficacy and virtue of Christ’s death.”—*Christopher Love*

cedes. Remember that when this epistle was first written, there were no chapter breaks: 12:29 and 13:1 read consecutively, without any hiatus¹⁹—“Our God is a consuming fire: let brotherly love continue!” The fact these two verses are placed in immediate juxtaposition²⁰ strikes a most solemn note. Go back in your mind to the first pair of brothers who ever walked this earth. Did “brotherly love continue” with them? Far otherwise. Cain hated and murdered his brother. And did not he find our God to be “a consuming fire”? Most assuredly, he *did*, as his own words testify, “My punishment is greater than I can bear” (Gen 4:13). The wrath of God burned in his conscience, and he had a fearful foretaste of Hell before he went there.

But it may be objected to what has just been said, “The case of Cain and Abel is scarcely a pertinent²¹ and appropriate one! They were merely *natural* brothers, whereas the text relates primarily to those who are brethren *spiritually*.” True, but the natural frequently adumbrates²² the spiritual, and there is much in Genesis 4 that each Christian needs to take to heart. However, let us pass on down the course of human history a few centuries. Were not Abraham and Lot brethren spiritually? They were. Then did brotherly love continue between them? It did not. Strife arose between their herdsmen, and they separated (Gen 13). Lot preferred the well-watered plains and a home in Sodom to fellowship with the father of the faithful. And what was the sequel? Did he find that “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29)? Witness the destruction of all his property in that city when God rained down fire and brimstone from heaven! Another solemn warning is that for us.

“Let brotherly love continue.” But what a *gracious* word is this! Consider its implications: are they not similar to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:1-2)? That means we are to conduct ourselves not according to the dictates of the flesh, but according to the requirements of grace. If grace has been shown toward me, then surely I ought to be gracious to others. But that is not always easy: not only has the root of “hatred” been left in me, the “flesh” still remains in my brethren! There will be much in them to test and try my love; otherwise, there would be no need for this exhortation “forbearing one another in love.” God has wisely so ordered this that our love might rise above the mere amiability of nature.²³ We are not merely to govern our tempers, act courteously, be pleasant to one another, but bear with infirmities and be ready to forgive a slight: “Charity²⁴ suffereth long, and is kind” (1Co 13:4).

“Let brotherly love continue.” What a *comprehensive* word is this! Had we the ability to fully open it and space to bring out all that is included, it would be necessary to quote a large percentage of the precepts of Scripture. If brotherly love is to continue, then we must exhort one another daily, provoke unto good works, minister to each other in many different ways. It includes far more than dwelling together in peace and harmony, though unless that be present, other things cannot follow. It also involves a godly concern for each other (*see* Lev 19:17; 1Jo 5:2). It also embraces our praying definitely for each other. Another practical form of it is to write helpful spiritual letters to those now at a distance from us: you once enjoyed sweet converse together, but Providence has divided your paths. Well, keep in touch via the post! “Let brotherly love continue.”

“Let brotherly love continue.” What a *forcible* word is this! By [this] we mean [that] it should drive all of us to our knees! We are just as dependent upon the Holy Spirit to call forth love into action, as we are our faith: not only toward God, but also toward each other. “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” (2Th 3:5). Observe the forcible emphasis Christ placed upon this precept in His paschal discourse: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another” (Joh 13:34). Ah, but the Savior did not deem that enough.²⁵ “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (Joh 15:12). Why that repetition? Nor did that suffice: “These things I command you, that ye love one another” (Joh 15:17)...The Philadelphian church is the church of “Brotherly love.” Have you observed the central exhortation in the epistle addressed to that church: “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev 3:11)?

¹⁹ **hiatus** – interruption in continuity; gap.

²⁰ **juxtaposition** – side by side.

²¹ **pertinent** – relevant to the matter being considered.

²² **adumbrates** – exhibits a faint resemblance.

²³ **amiability of nature** – a cheerful and agreeable disposition that comes naturally.

²⁴ **charity** – love; “*Charity* is the...word used in the New Testament to signify *love*. And I wish we had always rendered it [*love*] because in our common use of speech, *charity* is restrained to one effect of love: relieving the poor and afflicted, which is nowhere the sense of the word in Scripture. It is *love*, then, that is intended.”—*John Owen*

²⁵ **deem...enough** – consider that to be enough.

“Let brotherly love continue.” What a *Divine* word is this. The love that is here enjoined is a holy and spiritual one, made possible “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Rom 5:5). For until then, there is naught but hatred. Love for the brethren is a love for the image of God stamped upon their souls: “And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him” (1Jo 5:1). No man can love another for the grace that is in his heart, unless grace be in his *own* heart. It is natural to love those who are kind and generous to us: it is supernatural to love those who are faithful and holy in their dealings with us.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness” (Col 3:12-14).

From *Studies in the Scriptures*, reprinted by Chapel Library.

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, Bible teacher, and author of *Studies in the Scriptures* and numerous books; emigrated to the U.S. from Great Britain and later returned to his homeland in 1934; born in Nottingham, England.



Until our souls be purified and sanctified, we shall never love purity and holiness in others, but the upright will be an abomination to us.

—Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

CHRIST’S LOVE IS THE SOURCE

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“For the love of Christ constraineth²⁶ us.”—2 Corinthians 5:14

THE love of Christ operates upon us by begetting in us love to Him...Oh, we love Jesus! Brothers and sisters, we truly love *Him*. His name is sweet as the honeycomb, and His *word* is precious as the gold of Ophir.²⁷ His person is very dear to us. From His head to His foot, He is altogether lovely. When we get near Him and see Him at the last, methinks we shall swoon away with excess of joy at the sight of Him! I for one ask no heaven beyond a sight of Him and a sense of His love. I do not doubt that we shall enjoy all the harmonies, all the honors, and all the fellowships of heaven. But if they were all blotted out, I do not know that they would make any considerable difference to us, [as long as we could] see our Lord upon His throne and have His own prayer fulfilled, “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory” (Joh 17:24). He is happiness to us; yea, He is all in all.

Do you not feel that the sweetest sermons you ever hear are those that are fullest of *Him*? When I can sometimes hear a sermon, it sickens me to listen to fine attempts to philosophize away the Gospel or pretty essays that are best described as a jingle of elegant words. But I can hear with rapture the most illiterate and blundering brother, if his heart *burns* within him, and he heartily speaks of my Lord, the Well-beloved of my soul! We are glad to be in the place of assembly when Jesus is within. Whether on Tabor with two or three (1Sa 10:3-7) or in the congregation of the faithful when Jesus is present, it is good to be there. This joyful feeling when you hear about Jesus shows that you love His *person*. Your endeavors to spread the Gospel show that you love His *cause*. The love of Christ to you has moved you to desire the coming of His kingdom. You feel that you could give your life to extend the borders of His dominions: He is a glorious King, and all the world should know it! Oh, that we could see all the na-

²⁶ **constraineth** – provides impulse for some activity; urges on; impels.

²⁷ **Ophir** – a country from which fine gold was imported to Judah (2Ch 8:18; Job 22:24; 28:16; Psa 45:9; Isa 13:12), sometimes in large quantities (1Ch 29:4).

tions bowing before His scepter of peace! We love Him so much that until the whole earth smiles in the light of His throne, we can never rest...

The love of Jesus Christ creates in men a deep attachment to the Gospel, especially the doctrines that cluster around the person of our Lord...more especially to that doctrine that is the cornerstone of all, namely, *that Christ died in the stead of men*. He who toucheth the doctrine of substitution²⁸ toucheth the apple of our eye: he who denies it robs our soul of her only hope. Thence we gather all our consolation for the present and our expectation for days to come. A great force then held the Apostle: that force was the love of Christ, and it wrought in him love to Christ in return.

Now, this force acts proportionately in believers. It acts in every Christian more or less, but it differs in degree. We are all of us alive, but the vigor of life differs greatly in the consumptive and the athletic;²⁹ and so the love of Jesus acts upon all regenerate men, but not to the same extent...When a man is growingly under its influence, he is a *growing* Christian. When a man is sincerely affected by the love of Christ, he is a *sincere* Christian. But he in whom the love of Christ has no power whatever is *not a Christian at all*.

"I thought," says one, "that *believing* was the main point!" True, but faith worketh by love (Gal 5:6). If your faith does not work by love, it is not the faith that will save the soul. Love never fails to bloom where faith has taken root.

Beloved, you will feel the power of the love of Christ in your soul in proportion to the following points: *In proportion as you know it*. Study, then, the love of Christ: search deep and learn its secrets. Angels desire to look into it. Observe its *eternity*—without beginning, its *immutability*—without change, its *infinity*—without measure, its *eternity*—without end. Think much of the love of Christ, until you comprehend with all saints what are its breadths and lengths. As you know it, you will begin to feel its power. Its power will also be in proportion to your sense of it.

Do you feel the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost? Knowing is [good], but enjoyment as the result of believing is better. Does it not sometimes force the tears from your eyes to think that Jesus loved you and gave Himself for you? On the other hand, does it not at times make you feel as if, like David, you could dance before the ark of the Lord? To think that the love of God should ever have been set on you? That Christ should die for you? Ah, think and think again: For you the bloody sweat, for you the crown of thorns, for you the nails, the spear, the wounds, the broken heart—all, *all* for love of *you* who were His enemy! In proportion as your heart is tender and is sensitive to this love, it will become a constraining influence to your whole life. The force of this influence will also depend very much upon the grace that dwells within you. You may measure your grace by the power that the love of Christ has over you. Those who dwell near their Lord are so conscious of His power over them that the very glances of His eyes fill them with holy ardor.³⁰ If you have much grace, you will be greatly moved by the love that gave you that grace and [will be] wondrously sensitive to it. But he who hath little grace, as is the case with not a few, can read the story of the cross without emotion and can contemplate Jesus' death without feeling. God deliver us from a marble heart, cold and hard!

Character also has much to do with the measure in which we feel the constraint of Jesus' love: the more Christlike, the more Christ-constrained. You must get, dear brother and sister—by prayer, through the Holy Spirit—to be like Jesus Christ. When you do, His love will take fuller possession of you than it does at this moment. You will be more manifestly under its constraining power.

Our last point upon this head is that wherever its energy is felt it will operate after its kind. Forces work according to their nature: the force of love creates love. The love of Christ begets a kindred love. He who feels Christ's love acts as Christ acted. If thou dost really feel the love of Christ in making a sacrifice of Himself, thou wilt make a sacrifice of *thyself*. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1Jo 3:16). We shall for our Lord's sake count all things but dross³¹ for the excellency of His knowledge. O soul, thou wilt have no choice left after thou hast once known and chosen thy Lord. That road leads to *wealth*; but if it does not glorify Christ, thou wilt at once say, "Farewell wealth." That road leads to *honor*; thou wilt be famous if thou wilt take that path; but if it will bring no glory to Christ, if thou feelest the power of His love

²⁸ **doctrine...substitution** – the Biblical teaching that Jesus Christ suffered in the place of His people bearing the punishment due their sins.

²⁹ **consumptive...athletic** – the wasting and sickly and the strong and healthy.

³⁰ **ardor** – heat of passion or desire.

³¹ **dross** – worthless.

in thy soul, thou wilt say, “Farewell honor. I will embrace shame for Christ, for my one thought is to sacrifice myself for Him Who sacrificed Himself for me.”

If the love of Christ constrains you, it will make you love others. For His was love to others, love to those who could do Him no service, who deserved nothing at His hands. If the love of Christ constrains you, you will *especially* love those who have no apparent claim upon you and cannot justly expect anything from you, but on the contrary deserve your censure.³² You will say, “I love them because the love of Christ constraineth me.” Dirty little creatures in the gutter, filthy women polluting the streets, base men who come out of jail merely to repeat their crimes—these are the fallen humanities whom we learn to love when the love of Christ constraineth us. I do not know how else we could care for some poor creatures, if it were not that Jesus teaches us to despise none and despair of none. Those ungrateful creatures, those malicious creatures, those abominably blasphemous and profane creatures that you sometimes meet with and shrink from—you are to love them because Christ loved the very chief of sinners. His love to you *must* be reflected in your love to the lowest and vilest. He is your sun, be you as the moon to the world’s night.

The love of Jesus Christ was a practical love. He did not love in thought only and in word, but in deed and in truth. If the love of Christ constraineth us, we shall throw our souls into the work and service of love. We shall be really at work for men, giving alms of our substance, enduring our measure of suffering, and making it clear that our Christianity is not mere talk, but downright *work*. We shall be like the bullock of the burnt offering, laid upon the altar wholly to be consumed. We shall consider nothing but how we can most completely be eaten up with the zeal of God’s house, how without the reserve of one single faculty, we may be entirely consumed in the service of our Lord and Master. May the Lord bring us to this!

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, April 28, 1878, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, reprinted by Pilgrim Publications.



We must love because of the *excellency* of this grace! It is a lovely grace. All the other graces seem to be eclipsed unless love shines and sparkles forth in them. Faith itself has no beauty unless it works by love. The tears of repentance are not pure unless they flow from the spring of love. Love is the jewel Christ’s bride wears. It is the diamond in the ring of graces. This is the grace that seasons all our actions and makes them savory. Love is like musk among linen that perfumes it. So love makes all our religious services a sweet odor to God (Eph 5:2).

—Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

LOVE EDIFIES CHRIST’S CHURCH

Nathaniel Vincent (1638-1697)

“*Maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*”—Ephesians 4:16

HOW can one who loves the Lord Jesus in sincerity choose but to love all saints, though of different persuasions, since, notwithstanding that difference, they are all so dear to Him that He gave His life as a ransom for them all? The blood of God was shed for every one of them that there might be a price paid sufficient for their redemption...The Apostle Peter gives this charge in 1 Peter 4:8: “Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.” *Gifts*, though excellent, may be abused and perversely employed to instill error and rend the Church of God. *Knowledge*, if it is alone, will not profit, but will puff up him who has it. But “charity edifieth” (1Co 8:1). Love is greatly beneficial. Its acts are pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits. [It is] against the very nature of it to work ill to any...The grounds and attractions of *this* love are spiritual; and this is the kind of love of which our primary text speaks. Christian hearts should be filled with it. The more this is expressed, the more the Church must be edified. The nature of this love I shall explain in these particulars.

³² **censure** – harsh criticism.

(1) **Love is a grace wrought by the God of all grace.** “Let us love one another; for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1Jo 4:7). [The] Spirit that brings a man to the knowledge of God regenerates him, makes him a new creature, [and] works in him this grace of love. Therefore, we read that the fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal 5:22). Though good nature is an excellent thing, and the dispositions of many incline them to be full of lovingkindness, yet this natural sweetness of temper greatly differs from Christian charity... True love to others is of a *heavenly* origin.

(2) **Love is in obedience to the divine command.** Christians love one another because their Lord and Savior has commanded them to do so. “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (Joh 15:12). Both Law and Gospel insist upon this. The sum of the Second Table of the Law is this: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” And by the Gospel, this law is established. Faith in Christ therefore and love are joined. “And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment” (1Jo 3:23). Obedience to the command sanctifies our love for our neighbor and renders it not only more profitable to him, but also acceptable to God Himself. When we love others that God’s will may be fulfilled and He may be pleased and because of the image of God and Christ that we see in them, then we love truly. And this is the meaning of 1 John 5:2: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments,” that is, when love for God and a care to keep His laws induce us to love His children...

(3) **Love implies a mortification of contrary passions.** The poet says, “Virtue is to fly from vice.” So may I say [that] love is to fly from anger, wrath, malice, bitterness, envy, and revenge, which are sins of such a nature that they carry their punishment in their bowels and *make* a hell as well as deserve one. The darkness of the night is chased away when the day returns and the sun rises. Sickness is removed when health is restored. In like manner, those sinful and corrupt passions, which benight³³ the soul and are the diseases of it, are purged out where this grace of love is indeed infused. The Apostle plainly shows this in Ephesians 4:31 and 5:2. In the former verse, he says, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour,³⁴ and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.” In the latter, he says, “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us.” Compare also Colossians 3:8 with verse 14; and you may perceive that we must put off anger, wrath, and malice when we “put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

(4) **Love implies an inclination to union.** The nature of it is to unite and knit things together. Thus, by the love of friendship, the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David (1Sa 18:1); and the hearts of Christians are knit together by this excellent grace of love (Col 2:2). Union is of God and is indeed the Church’s strength... So far as the Church is divided, so far [it is] certainly and dangerously weakened.

There is an admirable union in the Godhead. Three distinct persons are in one incomprehensibly glorious nature. There is a wonderful union also in Christ Himself: two distinct natures in one Person and Mediator.³⁵ And these two natures differ infinitely more than earth and heaven, than the sun and a molehill, and yet behold them inseparably united! The Church’s union is mystical. There are many members, but love makes them one body; it makes them of one heart and of one soul. Love alters the contentious and cruel nature and inclines to union and peace... So far as love prevails, there is no hurting or destroying one another in all God’s holy mountain (Isa 11:6-9). Christ prayed for this union, as that which would be for the Church’s benefit and the world’s conviction that He came forth from God. “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” (Joh 17:21). How needful is love to unite Christians and make them one, since divisions strike at Christ Himself and harden the world in its infidelity!

(5) **Love enlarges the heart, frees it from the bonds of selfishness, and makes us desire others’ welfare as well as our own.** Love for our neighbor breathes forth in fervent wishes that it may be well with him, both in time and to eternity. We are in every respect to consider our brethren. True love will make us long that in every way they may be benefited; that they may not want any needful secular comfort³⁶ and encouragement; especially that they may be

³³ **benight** – involve in moral darkness.

³⁴ **clamour** – quarreling.

³⁵ **Mediator** – go-between; “It pleased God in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest, and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.”—*Second London Baptist Confession*, 8.1, 1689.

³⁶ **secular comfort** – provisions for needs of life in this world.

blessed with all spiritual blessings; and, above all, that they may attain eternal happiness and salvation. The Apostle's love vents itself in a prayer for the Corinthians' temporal prosperity and increase. "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness" (2Co 9:10). So John, writing to his beloved Gaius, wishes him health and prosperity in 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." But the Apostle's wishes that souls might be sanctified and saved were most vehemently and pathetically³⁷ expressed in Romans 10:1: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all..." (Phi 1:8). "My little children, of whom I travail in birth³⁸ again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal 4:19). *Behold how the Apostle loved souls!* I do not wonder that he offers his love as a blessing to the church in 1 Corinthians 16:24: "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."

(6) Love is the fulfilling of the Law, the doing of which is so much for our neighbor's benefit. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Rom 13:8). As love for God includes the whole First Table of the Law, so love for our neighbor includes the Second: with reason [it is] called "the fulfilling of the law," for it causes an affectionate and obedient respect unto every commandment of the Second Table. And there is not one of these precepts [that is not] hugely for the good of mankind.

Love has a regard to the honor and authority of others. That honor which is due to natural parents, love is ready to yield. They who were instrumental in giving us our very being, and who nourished us with such tenderness and care when we were not able to shift for ourselves,³⁹ may rightly challenge obedience from us...

Love has a regard to the lives of others. The guilt of blood is great; the cry of blood is loud. Murder! How does it wound the murderer's conscience and defile the very land that receives the blood of him who is murdered! Love utterly abhors cruelty and slaughter. It considers the meekness and gentleness of Christ...Love is so far from thirsting after blood that it will not allow malice in the heart; nay, rash and causeless anger it dislikes, for that will make a man in danger of the judgment (Mat 5:22)...

Love will not violate others' chastity. Lust is strongly inclined to such a violation, but the grace of love is of a holy and clean nature and abhors all obscenity. It is so far from consenting to defile another's body that it will not allow the heart, even by a filthy thought or desire, to be defiled. For our Lord says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mat 5:28). Love looks upon the bodies of Christians as members of Christ, as temples of the Spirit. Now the members of Christ are not to be polluted. The temples of the Spirit are not to be profaned. How little of true love is there in this lustful age, in this *adulterous* generation! An affection that is indeed Christian is rarely to be found, but a reprobate⁴⁰ and brutish concupiscence⁴¹ is very rife⁴² in both city and country, though hereby both are ripening apace⁴³ for vengeance. "When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jer 5:7-9).

Love will not steal away the substance of another. It abhors being injurious to any. It is for following that which is altogether just. It is ready to distribute, willing to share with the poor, according to that charge in 1 Timothy 6:18. The poorer any are, love is so much the more generous. Love is liberal: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2Co 9:6). Though it will *give* away pounds⁴⁴ to those who are needy, it dares not unjustly *take* away a penny or a farthing⁴⁵ from another, though never so wealthy. Solomon tells us "divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good" (Pro 20:23). They are also an abomination to *love*.

No duty is more clearly discovered by the light of nature than to do justly. What does God in His written Word more expressly require? The unrighteous are plainly threatened with the loss of the kingdom of heaven. What poor

³⁷ **pathetically** – earnestly; passionately.

³⁸ **travail...birth** – to suffer pains associated with giving birth; *figuratively*, to suffer greatly.

³⁹ **shift for ourselves** – provide for our own interests, safety, or livelihood.

⁴⁰ **reprobate** – morally corrupt.

⁴¹ **brutish concupiscence** – uncontrolled lust.

⁴² **rife** – widespread.

⁴³ **apace** – swiftly.

⁴⁴ **pounds** – basic unit of money in Great Britain and Northern Ireland; equal to 100 pence.

⁴⁵ **farthing** – former British bronze coin, worth a quarter of a penny.

and petty things are their unjust gains compared with such a kingdom! Wronging another, though it is in so sly a manner that human eyes observe it not, cannot be punished by human laws. Yet it *will* be overtaken with divine vengeance. “That no man go beyond and defraud⁴⁶ his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified” (1Th 4:6). Love for our neighbor implies a love of justice, which is to give our neighbor his due.

Love can as soon cease to be love as it can begin to be injurious. Nay, if a man has heretofore been guilty of injustice, it will incline and constrain him to make restitution,⁴⁷ for “If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die” (Eze 33:15).

Love is very tender of others’ names and reputations. It detests *all* manner of lying as that which is an abomination to God (Pro 6:17) and exposes the liar himself to the burning lake (Rev 21:8). But a slanderous or malicious lie, which wounds the name and murders the reputation of another, *hates exceedingly*. This is an abomination most abominable and more against the very letter of the Law: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exo 20:16). The name of a man ought to be very dear to him, especially if he is a Christian, because God, Christ, and the Gospel are concerned in it. A Christian cannot have aspersion⁴⁸ cast on him without some aspersion on Christianity itself...Love hinders the tongue from evil speaking and makes it subject to the law of kindness. Love is so far from raising a false report of another that it dares not take it up, much less spread it all abroad. This is part of the character of the citizen of Zion who shall dwell with God both here and forever: “[He] speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour” (Psa 15:2-3)...If we observe how much injury may be done by a slanderous tongue, we shall not wonder that the throats of such slanderers are compared to open sepulchers, their tongues to whetted swords and sharpened arrows, and the poison of asps is said to be under [their lips].

Love is contented with its own and hinders us from coveting what belongs to another. Sinful lust and desire after that which is our neighbor’s precipitate⁴⁹ those acts whereby he is injured. Thus, Ahab’s inordinate desire after Naboth’s vineyard made him a murderer of Naboth (and that with many aggravations) that he might enjoy it. Love breeds contentment. Instead of coveting what is another’s, it wishes him both a quiet possession and a holy improvement.⁵⁰ Love, expelling these inordinate lusts, plucks up the very root of bitterness from whence commonly grow all those injuries that the sons of men do one to another. Thus, love is eagle-eyed to observe whatever God in His Law has commanded for our neighbor’s good. Since the wise and gracious Lawgiver has manifested His care of our neighbor in fencing his life and all that is dear to him with so many commandments, love rationally infers that it ought to be our care not to break this fence, but to keep all these commandments without exception.

Love breeds sympathy when our fellow Christians are in misery. It makes us fear lest harm befall the Church of God. When the Church is actually under affliction, it causes us in that affliction to be afflicted. Love is the great law of Christ, and Christian sympathy is a fulfilling of it. “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2)...Love easily melts the heart of a saint into sorrow when other saints are in sadness and calamity. Nay, [it is] ready to put on compassion when it sees any in misery. This sympathy of love is a real thing and shows itself in a forwardness⁵¹ to relieve and help. Love enlarges the heart in prayer for the distressed Church of Christ and all His members. It makes us, as we observe the Church’s languors,⁵² ready to faint and die away ourselves...

Love makes us delight in the communion of the saints. Sin has brought a great deformity and unloveliness upon mankind. The Scripture speaks thus of men considered in their natural state: “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Psa 14:3). But the grace of God has made a difference between the saints and other men, in that they have put off the old man which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph 4:22, 24). Now this holiness makes them truly amiable.⁵³ Love makes us pity the world that lies in wickedness, but de-

⁴⁶ **defraud** – deprive by deceit; take advantage of.

⁴⁷ **make restitution** – restore or give back something to its proper owner.

⁴⁸ **aspersion** – statements that attack someone’s reputation or character.

⁴⁹ **precipitate** – hasten; urge on.

⁵⁰ **improvement** – profitable use.

⁵¹ **forwardness** – eagerness.

⁵² **languors** – afflictions.

⁵³ **amiable** – worthy to be loved.

light in those who by regeneration are called out of the world and made new creatures...Love is exceedingly pleased with the holy, unblameable, and exemplary lives of others. It finds a melody and sweetness in their gracious and edifying discourses, when their hearts are warm and their graces are in vigorous exercise...Love is for communion with all saints, though of different persuasions. It is a sign that a man is fond of his own opinion if he likes saints of his own judgment only, and that his complacency⁵⁴ is not so truly in the image of God wherever it shines. [It is] want⁵⁵ of *light* that makes saints of different sentiments in religion; and [it is] want of *love* that makes them so shy, to look so strangely, to speak so strangely, and to act so strangely one towards another.

Love causes a joy in the good of others. In the natural body, if “one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1Co 12:26). Christians in like manner are “to rejoice with them that do rejoice” (Rom 12:15). It was an excellent spirit in John the Baptist, and it argued the truth of his love for the Messiah, of Whom he was the forerunner, that he rejoiced to see Christ increase, though he himself decreased (Joh 3:29-30). The Apostle was persuaded of the Corinthians’ affection for him when he said, “Having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all” (2Co 2:3). The more love abounds, the more the joy of one Christian will be the joy of every one! Love rejoices to see the Spirit of God poured out in the most plentiful manner, to see useful and excellent gifts distributed to others. It is glad of their highest attainments, their enlargements,⁵⁶ their comforts, their honor and esteem following upon all this. We are all members one of another. Why should we not rejoice in one another’s honor since we are really honored one in another, and the honor of all redounds⁵⁷ at length to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Head of all?

Love covers a multitude of sins and infirmities (1Pe 4:8). Not that there is any merit in this grace of charity to deserve the pardon of sin in ourselves; but instead of spreading the faults of others, it spreads a veil over them. Love makes us tenderhearted and kind, ready to forgive others, as we ourselves for Christ’s sake have been forgiven. Indeed, the offenses and injuries done to us by others are but like the debt of a few pence compared with our offenses against God, which amount to many millions of talents.⁵⁸ The Apostle Peter asked Christ, “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Mat 18:21-22)...We must pardon our trespassing brother without any stint⁵⁹ or limitation...

Where is the love of those who not only harbor in their hearts a grudge against their brethren, but whose mouths are like trumpets to sound forth their failings? Nay, they tarry not to examine whether they are truly failings or not, but boldly and blindly conclude them to be such and proclaim and exclaim against them. Nay, their eager tongues tarry not for verified information. Whether reports to the disparagement⁶⁰ of others be true or false, they spread them like wildfire.⁶¹ What has become of love all the while? Love *hides* a multitude of sins, but these persons will not conceal one. Love covers real crimes, but these forbear not spreading false reports...If, as the Apostle says, an unruly tongue defiles the whole body; and he who seems religious and bridles not his tongue does but deceive his own heart and his religion is in vain (Jam 1:26); then let a multitude of professors at this day tremble and be astonished and cry out, “Who among us shall be saved?”

Love is projecting and designing the good of others. Thus, the Apostle abased⁶² himself that others might be exalted, and sought not his own profit, but the profit of many that they might be saved (1Co 10:33). Love works no ill to one’s neighbor, but is very fruitful in contriving and operative in promoting his neighbor’s welfare. Love is not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth (1Jo 3:18). It will not only say, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled” (Jam 2:16), but [it is] ready to clothe the naked and to feed the hungry. Nay, it devises liberal and charitable things and considers the wants of *souls* as well as *bodies* cordially,⁶³ according to its capacity, endeavoring that both may be supplied. The Apostle’s love for the Corinthians was very active, notwithstanding a woeful failing on

⁵⁴ **complacency** – pleasure; satisfaction.

⁵⁵ **want** – lack.

⁵⁶ **enlargements** – increases in intellectual powers or knowledge.

⁵⁷ **redounds** – returns.

⁵⁸ **talents** – originally, a *talent* was a measure of weight, varying in size from country to country; it came to mean a large unit of money, varying in value with the metal involved, whether gold, silver, or copper.

⁵⁹ **stint** – restriction.

⁶⁰ **disparagement** – belittling; disgracing.

⁶¹ This is tragically true of many professing Christians and their use of the Internet.

⁶² **abased** – lowered; humbled.

⁶³ **cordially** – heartily; with all one’s heart.

their side. “I seek not yours, but you...and I will very gladly spend and be spent for you,⁶⁴ though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (2Co 12:14-15). Thus, have I explained the *nature* of love.

From *A Discourse Concerning Love*, reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria, a ministry of Reformation Heritage Books, www.heritagebooks.org.

Nathaniel Vincent (1638-1697): Nonconformist Puritan preacher; graduated from Christ Church, Oxford; became well known for his sermons preached in London following the Great Fire of 1666; born in Cornwall, England.



It is foretold by our Lord Jesus Christ that in the last days the “love of many shall wax cold” (Mat 24:12). Truly, this is the symptom of a decaying, fading Christian and church. Love is the vital spirits of a Christian, which are the principles of all motion and lively operation. When there is a [failure] in these, the soul is in decay. It is so comprehensive an evil, as alone is sufficient to make an evil time. Besides, it is the argument and evidence, as well as the root and fountain, of abounding iniquity because this is the epidemical disease of the present time: love *cooled* and passion *heated*. [From these] proceed all the feverish distempers, contentions, wars, and divisions that have brought the church of God near to expiring. Therefore, being mindful of that of the Apostle (Heb 10:24), I would think it pertinent to consider one another and provoke again unto love and to good works.—*Hugh Binning*

LOVE AND THE NEW BIRTH

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.”—1 John 4:7-8

IT is very clear that this question of love is of vital importance, and John constantly emphasizes it. It is in connection with this that he says some of the most glorious and elevating things that can be found in the whole of Scripture. We have, for example, the great statement, “God is love”; but it is the whole question of *brotherly* love that led him to say it. It was as he thought about this that he arrived at that great statement.

This, then, I would suggest, is indeed one of the things that is emphasized more than anything else in the whole of the New Testament. Our blessed Lord Himself at the very end of His ministry kept on repeating this same thing—“Love one another.” He constantly told them that the world would be against them and that they would have tribulation. “But,” He kept on saying, “*you* love one another, and that is how the world will know that you are My disciples. This is the way in which you can demonstrate more clearly than anything else that you are My true followers and that you are children of God.” You will find this standing out in a most exceptional way if you read John 13–17:1. But it is indeed a great theme running right through the entire New Testament—the Gospels and the Epistles.

I do not hesitate, therefore, to say that the ultimate test of our profession of the Christian faith is, I believe, this whole question of our loving one another. Indeed, I do not hesitate to *aver*⁶⁵ that it is a more vital test than our orthodoxy.⁶⁶ I am the last man in the world to say anything against orthodoxy, but I am here to say that it is *not* the final test. Orthodoxy is *essential*. This epistle [shows] that repeatedly...*We must* believe the right things. Apart from that, we have nothing at all; and we have no standing whatsoever. So the correctness of belief is essential. And yet I

⁶⁴ In the Greek, “for you” is literally “for your souls.”

⁶⁵ **aver** – assert as a fact.

⁶⁶ **orthodoxy** – literally, “right belief”; orthodoxy generally means the body of doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith; this implies consistency in belief and worship with the revelation of Holy Scripture.

say that when we come to the realm of experience and self-examination, the test of orthodoxy is not the ultimate test.

Alas, let us admit it: It is possible for a person to be correct and yet not to be a Christian. It is possible for men and women...to be interested in theology and to say that one theology is superior to another and to accept and defend and argue about it, and yet to be utterly devoid of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the love of God in their hearts. It is a terrible thought, it is a terrible possibility, but it is a fact. There have been men, also, who have clearly been perfectly orthodox—champions of the faith, and yet they have denied that very faith in the bitterness with which they have sometimes defended it. I repeat, *the test of orthodoxy, while it is so vital and essential, is not enough.*

There is something, as John shows us in these two verses without going any further, that goes very much more deeply and is a more certain guarantee of where we really are. I suggest that it is even a more thorough test than the exercise of faith as a principle. I need not emphasize that. Paul has done this once and forever in 1 Corinthians 13 (here paraphrased): “Though I have faith that I can remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I have knowledge and understanding and wisdom, if it is without love, it is no good; it is like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal—no use at all.” Faith is a most glorious and valuable thing, and yet there is something deeper than that. Indeed, there is a more thoroughgoing test, and it is this test of *brotherly love*—love for one another.

Likewise, this is a more thorough test than conduct and behavior. John has a great deal to say about that. Conduct, behavior, and deportment⁶⁷ are of the most vital importance. “Be not deceived,” says Paul, “God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7). And remember what he tells the Corinthians: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1Co 6:9-10). Conduct is essential and important. Yet the fact that men and women live good, moral, and highly ethical lives does not prove that they are Christians. *The ultimate test of our whole position is this question of love.* Do we possess the love of which the Apostle is here speaking?

So let us approach it more directly: What is this love? Well, it is generally agreed that it has reference to Christian people. John is not talking about people who are not Christians. He is here emphasizing this one thing to those who claim to be Christians, to those within the faith. And this evidently is an exhortation that is necessary. What does he mean when he exhorts and pleads with us to “love one another”? I cannot think of a better way of putting it than simply to say that we are to be manifesting in our lives with one another, and in our attitude towards one another, everything that we read about love in 1 Corinthians 13. We are not to be puffed up; we are not to be easily provoked; we are not to think evil; we are not to rejoice in evil about others; we are to hope for all things and to hope for the best in other people.

I am afraid that as we read those words together, we all feel condemned. Loving one another is to love like that, and not only those whom we happen to like, but even those whom we dislike. *That* is the test of the Christian. You remember how our Lord put it in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?” (Mat 5:46). That is not difficult—anybody can do that—natural love does that. But the whole test of the Christian is to love the difficult person and to manifest 1 Corinthians 13 with the trying person.

“But I thought you said,” says someone, “that this is only applicable to Christian brethren?” Yes, it is. But, alas, we all know that though we are Christians we are not perfect. There are things about all of us that irritate others. God, forgive us for it. There are things that should not belong to us, but they are there, and this calls for patience in others. It calls for sympathy. It calls for understanding. That is what John is pleading for at this point. He is asking these people to do all they can to help one another, to bear with one another, not to be antagonistic,⁶⁸ not to become irritated. If you see your brother at fault, be patient with him, pray for him, try to help him, be sorry for him, instead of feeling it is something that is hurting you. See it as something that is hurting *him* terribly and doing *him* great harm and robbing *him* of so much joy in his Christian life.

⁶⁷ **deportment** – the way a person behaves towards other people.

⁶⁸ **antagonistic** – expressing hostility or opposition.

That is what love means—that you somehow detach yourself from the problem and do not think of it in terms of that which is hurting *you*, but look upon it as Christ did; and have compassion for that person, take hold of him, love him out of it...Now John not only puts this as an appeal, he lifts it to a higher level. He goes further than that, and he puts it in such a way that it becomes something very solemn: it becomes a warning. That, again, is something that is so typical and characteristic of the New Testament method of teaching holiness. It does not consist of a mere denunciation of sins or the doing of certain little things. It is so easy to stand and condemn people who do certain things; but that is not the teaching of holiness. *This* is holiness—loving one another—and this is to be seen in terms of our whole relationship to God. It is a great doctrinal matter, and the New Testament always puts the teaching about holiness in terms of ultimate doctrine. Let us see how John does this here.

He does it in a very characteristic way. John, as we have had occasion to see in our study of this epistle, had an interesting type of mind. There was a great deal of the poet and the mystic in him. His method is not logical like that of Paul. As someone has said, John thinks in circles: he generally starts on a practical point, then he philosophizes about it in a Christian way, and then he arrives at some glorious statement of doctrine. This is a perfect illustration of his method.

In my opinion, John ends with what Paul would have said at the start. John says, “Beloved, let us love one another...every one that loveth is born of God.” Then comes the negative that he is so fond of: “He that loveth not, knoweth not God,” and then he says, “for God is love.” Now that is the poet’s way of arriving at truth, but I think it will perhaps be more helpful to us, especially those of us who are not poetic and those of us who are more logically minded, if we put it the other way round. The fundamental statement is, “God is love.” Because God is love, certain things must be true of us. That is the logical approach.

So, let us start like this; and more than ever do I feel my utter and complete inadequacy as I try to handle words like these. Indeed, who is sufficient for these things? What right has a pigmy man to make such statements as these? And yet it is true—“God is love.” No one can answer that. One trembles even to handle it. It cannot be analyzed. I simply want to point out that John does not say merely that God loves us or that God is loving. He goes beyond that. He says, “‘God is love.’ God essentially is love; God’s nature is love. You cannot think of God without love”...“Therefore, because that is the fundamental postulate,⁶⁹ because that is so true of God,” John is saying, “that works itself out for us like this: Because God is love, we ought to love one another, for [these] reasons.”

The first is that “love is of God.” In other words, love is *from* God, love flows from God. It is as if John were turning to these people and saying, “You know, we ought to love one another. We ought more and more to clutch at the great privilege we have of being like God. God loves, and this love I am talking about,” says John, “is something that only comes from God—it is derived from Him.”

John is not talking about natural love at all—let us get rid of that idea. The Greek scholars know that this is a word that really belongs to the New Testament. The pagans did not understand it. It was a new conception altogether. Indeed, there was a sense in which the Jews themselves did not understand it. It was something new that God gave to the world through Jesus Christ. Our whole idea of love is so debased; it is so carnal. It is the thing you read about in the newspapers or see in the cinema. But that is not the thing that John is speaking about. He is speaking about this love that comes from God, something that God Himself is doing. “Beloved,” says John, “love one another. Cannot you see that as you are doing this you are proving that you are of God? You are doing something that God Himself is doing!” How foolish we are not to rise to the great height of our calling! Let us manifest the fact that we have received this from God. That is the first reason for brotherly love.

The second reason for loving one another is that it is the evidence of our new birth. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God.” Now that is why I said at the beginning that this is the most thorough test of whether we are true Christians or not. You see, what finally makes us Christians is that we are born again. We are born of God! It is not a certain intellectual proposition. It is not that we are defenders of the faith and so are concerned about being strictly orthodox. It is not that we are highly moral and ethical. It is not that we do a lot of good and are benevolent. The one thing that *makes* us Christians is that we are born of God. We are “partakers of the divine nature” (2Pe 1:4)—nothing less than that, nothing short of that.

⁶⁹ **postulate** – a proposition that is accepted as true in order to provide a basis for logical reasoning.

“Here is the thing that proves you are born of God,” says John in effect; and this works out in two ways. Only those who are born of God can love like this: nobody else can. The natural man cannot exercise this love; it is obvious that he cannot. Look at the life of the world, and you see the breakdown. The natural man cannot love in this sense. The only people who can love as God loves are those who have received the nature of God. It is no use asking the world to “love one another.” It is impossible. They are incapable of doing it. We need the divine nature within us before we can truly love one another. If within the church you have failure on the part of men and women to love one another, what hope is there for the world to do this? It is utterly impossible.

Let me put it like this: According to this argument, and this is the argument of the New Testament everywhere, those who are born of God must love one another—they *cannot help it*. If something of the divine nature is in me, and the divine nature is love—“God is love”—then there must be this principle of love within me. It must be here, it must be manifesting itself. If I am not conscious of this life within me, and if I am not manifesting this life somehow or other, however feebly, *then I am not a Christian*.

As we have said, John does not put this merely as an exhortation. He puts it in such a way that it becomes a desperately serious matter, and I almost tremble as I proclaim this doctrine. There are people who are unloving, unkind, always criticizing, whispering, backbiting, pleased when they hear something against another Christian. Oh, my heart grieves and bleeds for them as I think of them! They are pronouncing and proclaiming that they are not born of God. They are outside the life of God. I repeat, there is no hope for such people unless they repent and turn to Him. They belong to the world; the murderous spirit of Cain is in them. God is love, and if I say I am born of God and the nature of God is in me, then there must be some of this love in me. “Every one that loveth is born of God,” and everyone who is born of God loves—the two statements mean the same thing, so that this is proof positive, final evidence, of my new birth and that I am born of God.

From *Life in Christ: Studies in 1 John* by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, © 2002. Used by permission of Crossway Books, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): influential minister of Westminster Chapel, London; known for his expository preaching; born in Cardiff, Wales.



If we find a person that is orderly admitted into church society, he is as certain and evident an object of our love, as if we saw him lying in the arms of Christ.—*John Owen* (1616-1683)

PRINCIPLES FOR PRESERVING LOVE

Ralph Venning (c. 1622-1674)

PRINCIPLE 1: Let us bear with one another and forbear⁷⁰ one another in love. We are commanded to bear one another's burdens so that we may fulfill the law of Christ (Gal 6:2). We shall undoubtedly be commended, for it is according to the good will of Christ [to] bear one another's burdens. I am confident it is a burden to many a soul that they are not in all things like-minded with their brethren. Yea, it is not without some fear and trembling that in anything they disagree with so many worthy and gracious men who are otherwise minded. Oh, help to bear, or at least bear with, the burden. You cannot keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace *unless* you forbear one another in love, as appears most plainly by their connection—“forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:2-3). This endeavor for unity and peace will be lost unless God, Who bears with us, teaches us also to bear one with another. Take these reasons for forbearance:

⁷⁰ **forbear** – have patience with.

First, you all pretend,⁷¹ yea, I hope, intend the same end.⁷² You profess the same design—the advancement of the Gospel of peace and the peace of the Gospel. Should you not therefore in relation to this end rejoice that Christ is preached, though some should preach Him out of envy and to add to your bonds on purpose? It was Paul’s joy (Phi 1:15-18)...See that remarkable passage in which John says, “Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us” (Mar 9:38). Christians, is this not a man’s language? *Forbid* him! *Silence* him! *Out* with him! *Down* with him! Why so? Why, “because he follows not us.” But...Jesus said, “Forbid him not” (Mar 9:39). He gives two reasons for it. First, He said, “There is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.” Second, “For he that is not against us is on our part⁷³” (Mar 9:40). Christians, can he be against you who is for Christ? What if he follows you not? Notwithstanding, he carries on Christ’s end. Blessed God, forbid that we should forbid one another to do Thy work.

Second, you agree in the most and the best things. The fundamentals and essentials of religion (in which you to whom I write agree) are of far more worth, and therefore of far more concernment to engage you, than circumstantials and accidentals⁷⁴ (the things in which you disagree) are to disengage you.

Third, consider that you also are men subject to the like passions and have your failings and aberrations.⁷⁵ “In many things we offend all” (Jam 3:2). Who is there that sins not? *Good Lord!* If *Thou* should be as soon angry with us as we are with one another, who could stand? I beseech you to read this Scripture with all lowliness and meekness of mind. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness” (Gal 6:1). Why so? “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” If you are tempted, that which you find fault with may be your fault.

PRINCIPLE 2: Until you are agreed, have charitable thoughts, not hard and harsh censures, of each other’s walking.⁷⁶ Judge it rather to be *conscience* than stubbornness that engages men to walk in different courses. You would have others think so of you. Why will you not think so of others?...Love thinks no evil of others as well as towards others. Love banishes jealousies and suspicions, and so consequently censures.

PRINCIPLE 3: Draw not away your love when God draws not away His love. Dare any man deny his love to that man where God grants His love? “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha” (1Co 16:22). But is any man beloved and a lover of Christ? Oh, take heed: *deny him not your love*. Let that of the Spirit that appears in him draw your heart more *towards* him than you let that of flesh that appears take off your heart *from* him.

Many times we take notice of that which will divide and not of that which will unite...But, dear Christians, let us rather say one to another, as Queen Elizabeth I said to Lord Burleigh, “Sit down, my Lord. We make use of you, not for your bad legs, but for your good head.” Let us make much of each other and sit down together, not because there is badness in the feet, but because there is goodness in the head and heart.

PRINCIPLE 4: Censure no man’s intention until his practice by either words or works reveals his meaning. Many times by their fears, jealousies, and suspicions, men create that in their hearts that had never a place in the suspected parties’ imagination. Jacob was needlessly troubled and causelessly afraid of his brother, Esau, when nothing gave him occasion to suspect his brother but his own guilty conscience that told him he deserved it. Jacob feared that he came to execute revenge when he really came to welcome his brother home and entertain him honorably.

Jealousy is as quick as martial law:⁷⁷ it arraigns, condemns, and executes all in a moment. Nothing more hurts and wrongs friends than jealousies. Some cry out about some, “These men intend nothing but *anarchy* and *confusion*, so that shortly there will be no difference of or respect to persons!” Others cry out about others, “These men intend nothing but *lordship* and *tyranny*, to encroach⁷⁸ all power into their own hand, and so to be masters over our faith

⁷¹ **pretend** – claim.

⁷² **end** – purpose for which something is designed; goal.

⁷³ **on our part** – for us.

⁷⁴ **circumstantials and accidentals** – unimportant and non-essential things.

⁷⁵ **aberrations** – departures from what is expected.

⁷⁶ **walking** – understanding and practice of the Christian life.

⁷⁷ **martial law** – a military government that suspends ordinary law and the military authorities are empowered to arrest and to punish suspected persons without formal trial.

⁷⁸ **encroach** – seize.

and to lord it over the Lord's inheritance!" But why have you become evil judges of thoughts? Are you the searchers of hearts?...

PRINCIPLE 5: Do nothing to incense and exasperate one another. Provoke one another to love as much as you can, but to wrath as little as you may, nay, not at all. It is becoming of Christians to use soft words, and they turn away wrath (Pro 15:1). But many words stir up strife. Bitter words are like sharp swords: they pierce to the very soul (Pro 15:16). But let the passion of others provoke your compassion. It was sweetly said of Calvin⁷⁹ concerning Luther,⁸⁰ "Though he calls me devil, I will call him saint." Oh, that Christians would learn that lesson of Christ: when you are reviled, *revile not again!*

Alas! Do not men speak bitterly against bitter speaking and write bitterly against bitter writings, becoming inexcusable thereby? "For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom 2:1). Oh, that Christians would overcome evil with good, passion with meekness, and bitterness with sweetness, for a soft tongue breaks the bone (Pro 25:15)!...But you (ah, *you* Christians!) are to exceed and excel in love, to love when you are not loved (though the more you love, the less you are beloved). [You are] to speak fair when you are ill spoken of, not to render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, knowing that you are thereunto called (1Pe 3:9)...Let us do for the future as John's disciples did by their master when Herod slew him. They took up the body and buried it and went and told Jesus (Mat 14:12). Let us bury in oblivion all railings and injuries. Only go and tell Jesus, and say, "Lord, rebuke them."

PRINCIPLE 6: Go not about to make one another odious⁸¹ by representing things as being worse than they are. Many times the picture of the lion is more dreadful than the lion himself. *Good Lord!* In what black, ugly, and deformed shapes do men set forth one another, as if they were monsters and not men?...

PRINCIPLE 7: Draw not conclusions from other men's principles and then say that they are their opinions. We may make the same complaint as David: "They wrest, torture and wrack my words." Alas! Men set everything on hooks and stretch and twist every principle like a nose of wax. Alas! What a pity it is to see men invert and pervert one another's words, and at length to draw such conclusions as would make one think they meant what they *never* meant!...So some mistook and misreported Paul as if he had said that we might do evil so good might come thereof (Rom 3:8). So the Jews depose⁸² that Christ said He would destroy the temple at Jerusalem in three days and raise it up again, when He spoke of His body (Mat 26:61; Joh 2:21). What words thus wrested and perverted may not be called *heresy* and (as they said of Christ's words) *blasphemy* when, if taken as meant, and in their proper sense, they may be found very sound and consistent with truth? Take heed therefore of...commenting upon another's text.

PRINCIPLE 8: Grant to others what you would have others grant to you. We are usually better at receiving than at giving. We care not how much we receive, nor how little we give, though it is more [blessed] to give than to receive (Act 20:35)! When we are *inferior* and others superior, we beg (as did the servant in Matthew 18:26), "Have patience a little." Have a little patience! But when we are *superior* and others inferior, we have no patience at all.

Jesus Christ sums up the Law and Prophets in this principle: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Mat 7:12). This is all that the Law requires: to love your neighbor as yourself. The doing of it is the fulfilling of the Law. It is indeed a golden rule, a royal law, the standard of equity, according to which we must converse with all men.

Ah, Christians! Did we make other men's cases our own, we should say the case is altered. Job pleads thus with his friends: "I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage⁸³ your grief" (Job 16:4-5)...

PRINCIPLE 9: Do nothing in prejudice or partiality. The one will make you an enemy of good; the other will make you a friend of evil. Prejudice will take in nothing; partiality will take in anything. Alas! Such is our misery that men part religion and love by parties. Men love *not* as God loves, without respect of persons; but men love such because they take part with them and their designs and have prejudice against others because they are not *their*

⁷⁹ **John Calvin** (1509-1564) – French-born Swiss Protestant reformer.

⁸⁰ **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German leader of the Protestant Reformation.

⁸¹ **odious** – detestable.

⁸² **depose** – bear witness.

⁸³ **assuage** – provide relief for.

followers. Until we love one another according as Christ has given us command and example, as He has loved us, that is, as His, we cannot expect so sweet a concord as then we may.

PRINCIPLE 10: Ascend or descend, go higher or lower, do anything (sin excepted) that you may agree. Become all things to all men, if at last by any means you may win some. There is no greater way to win one another's love as by denying ourselves to seek one another's wealth... Oh, that there was such a heart in us to lay aside our own particular relations and interests, that there may not be so many a breach in public. Let us be weak with the weak as well as strong with the strong that we may make up breaches.

From "The New Commandment Renewed" in *The Puritans on Loving One Another*, reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria, a division of Reformation Heritage Books, www.heritagebooks.org.

Ralph Venning (c. 1622-1674): Nonconformist pastor and theologian; author of numerous tracts, sermons, and books, including *The Plague of Plagues*; born in Devonshire, England.



Indeed, the glory of all our hereafter glory will be oneness of communion with the Father, Son, Spirit, and one another in God.—*Ralph Venning*
How Christians reproach, censure, and malign one another! The text says, "Love fervently," but they *hate* fervently. Instead of the bond of love, behold the apple of strife! We live in the frigid zone, "the love of many waxeth cold."—*Thomas Watson* (1620-1686)

HINDRANCES TO BROTHERLY LOVE

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

THE root hindrance to the exercise of brotherly love is *self-love*. [This means] to be so occupied with number one that the interests of others are lost sight of. In Proverbs 30:15, we read, "The horseleach⁸⁴ hath two daughters, crying, Give, give." This repulsive creature has two forks in her tongue, which she employs for gorging herself in the blood of her unhappy victim. Spiritually, the "horseleach" represents self-love and her two daughters are *self-righteousness* and *self-pity*. As the horseleach is never satisfied, often continuing to gorge itself until it bursts, so self-love is never contented, crying "Give, give." All the blessings and mercies of God are perverted by making them to minister unto self. Now the antidote for this evil spirit is for the heart to be engaged with the example that Christ has left us. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister unto *others*. He pleased not Himself, but ever "went about doing good." He was tireless in relieving distress and seeking the welfare of all with whom He came into contact. Then "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phi 2:5). If brotherly love is to continue, *self* must be denied.

Inseparably connected with self-love is *pride*. Fostering pride is fatal to the cultivation of brotherly affection. The majority, if not all, of the petty grievances among Christians are to be traced back to this evil root. "Love suffereth long," but pride is terribly impatient. "Love envieth not," but pride is intensely jealous. "Love seeketh not her own," but pride ever desires gratification.⁸⁵ "Love seeketh not her own," but pride demands constant attention from others. "Love beareth all things," but pride is resentful of the slightest injury. "Love endureth all things," but pride is offended if a brother fails to greet him on the street. Pride must be mortified if brotherly love is to flourish.

⁸⁴ **horseleach** – a large freshwater blood-sucking worm differing from the smaller common leech.

⁸⁵ **gratification** – satisfaction.

ish. Therefore, the first injunction⁸⁶ of Christ to those who come unto Him for rest is, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek⁸⁷ and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29).

Another great enemy to brotherly love is a *sectarian*⁸⁸ *spirit*. This evil is far more widespread than many suppose. Our readers would be surprised if they knew how often a sample copy of this magazine is despised by those who have a reputation for being stalwarts⁸⁹ in the Faith and as possessing a relish for spiritual things. Yet because this paper is not issued by *their* denomination or “circle of fellowship,” it is at once relegated to the wastepaper basket. Alas, how frequently is a spirit of partisanship⁹⁰ mistaken for brotherly love: so long as a person “believes *our* doctrines” and is willing to “join *our* church,” he is received with open arms. On the other hand, no matter how sound in the faith a man may be, nor how godly his walk, if he refuses to affiliate himself with some particular group of professing Christians, he is looked upon with suspicion and given the cold shoulder. Such things ought not to be. They betray a very low state of spirituality.

We are far from advocating the entering into familiar fellowship with everyone who claims to be a Christian—Scripture warns us to “lay hands suddenly on no man” (1Ti 5:22), for all is not gold that glitters. Perhaps there never was a day in which empty profession abounded so much as it does now. Yet there is a happy medium between being taken in by every imposter who comes along and refusing to believe that there are any genuine saints left upon earth. Surely, a tree may be known by its fruits. When we meet with one in whom we can discern the image of Christ, whether that one be a member of our party or not, there should our affections be fixed. “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Rom 15:7). It is our bounden⁹¹ duty to love all whom Christ loves. It is utterly vain that we boast of our orthodoxy or of the “light” we have, if brotherly love be not shown by us to the feeblest member of Christ’s body who crosses our path.

Many other things are serious obstacles to the maintenance of brotherly love. Yet we must not do more than barely mention them: the love of the world; failure to mortify the lusts of the flesh in our souls; being unduly wrapped up in the members of our own family, so that those related to us by the blood of Christ have not that place in our affections that they ought; ignorance of the directions in which it should be exercised and of the proper duties which it calls for; forgetfulness of the foundation of it, which is a mutual interest in the grace of God, that we are fellow members of the Household of Faith; a readiness to listen to idle gossip, which in most instances, is a giving place to the Devil (Eph 4:27), who accuses the brethren day and night.

But there is one other *serious* hindrance to the continuance of brotherly love that we will notice in a little more detail, namely, *impatience*. By impatience, we mean a lack of forbearance. True brotherly love is a reflection of God’s love for us. He loves His people not for their native attractiveness, but for Christ’s sake. Therefore, [He loves] them in spite of their ugliness and vileness. God is “longsuffering to us-ward” (2Pe 3:9), bearing with our crookedness, pardoning our iniquities, healing our diseases, and His word to us is, “Be ye therefore followers⁹² of God, as dear children, and walk in love” (Eph 5:1-2). We are to love the saints for what we can see of Christ in them, yes, *love* them and for that reason—in spite of all their ignorance, perverseness, ill temper, obstinacy, fretfulness. It is the image of God in them—not their wealth, amiability, social position—that is the magnet that attracts a renewed heart toward them.

“Forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2). False love is glad of any specious⁹³ excuse for throwing off the garb that sits so loosely and uncomfortably upon it. Ahithophel was glad of a pretext to forsake David, whom he hated in his heart, although with his mouth he continued to show much love (2Sa 15-17). “Forbearing one another in love.” That love which a little silence or neglect can destroy never came from God; that love that a few blasts of malice from the lips of a new acquaintance will wither is not worth possessing! Remember, dear brother, God suffers our love for one another to be tried and tested—as He does our faith—or there would be no need for this exhortation “forbearing one another in love.” The most spiritual Christian on earth is full of infirmities, and the best way of enduring them is to remind yourself frequently and honestly that you also are full of faults and failings.

⁸⁶ **injunction** – command.

⁸⁷ **meek** – gentle.

⁸⁸ **sectarian** – rigidly adhering to the doctrines of one group and intolerant of other views.

⁸⁹ **stalwarts** – loyal supporters.

⁹⁰ **partisanship** – the inclination to favor one group or opinion over alternatives.

⁹¹ **bounden** – morally obligated.

⁹² **followers** – imitators.

⁹³ **specious** – having the ring of truth, but actually false.



Oh, Christians! Turn your hot words into salt tears! How do the enemies of religion insult us to see not only Christ's coat, but also His body rent. For these things let our eyes run down.—*Thomas Watson* (1620-1686)

THE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

John Angell James (1785-1859)

A DISTINCTION has been introduced into the subject of religion that, although not wholly free from objection, is sufficient to answer the purpose for which it is employed. I mean that which exists between *essentials* and *non-essentials*. It would be a difficult task to trace the boundary line by which these classes are divided. But the truth of the general idea cannot be questioned: there are some things in faith *and* practice, which for want of perceiving the grounds of their obligation, we may neglect and yet not be destitute of true religion. There are others, the absence of which necessarily implies an unrenewed heart. Among the essentials of true piety must be reckoned the disposition we are now considering... We must possess it, or we are not Christians now and shall not be admitted into heaven hereafter. The Apostle has expressed this necessity in the clearest and the strongest manner. He has put a hypothetical case of the most impressive kind, which I shall now illustrate...

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”—1 Corinthians 13:3

This representation of the indispensable necessity of love is most striking. It supposes it possible that a man may distribute all his substance in acts of apparent beneficence,⁹⁴ and yet, after all, be without true religion. Actions derive their moral character from the motives under the influence of which they are performed. Many that are beneficial to man may still be sinful in the sight of God because they are not done from a right inducement.⁹⁵ The most diffusive liberality,⁹⁶ if prompted by pride, vanity, or self-righteousness, is of no value in the eyes of the omniscient Jehovah. On the contrary, it is very *sinful*. And is it not too evident to be questioned that many of the alms-deeds of which we are the witnesses are done from any motives but the right ones? We can readily imagine that multitudes are lavish in their pecuniary⁹⁷ contributions, who are at the same time totally destitute of love to God and love to man. If destitute of these sacred virtues, they are as it respects real religion less than *nothing*, although they should spend every farthing of their property in relieving the wants of the poor. If our munificence,⁹⁸ however great or self-denying, be the operation of mere selfish regard to ourselves, to our own reputation, or to our own safety and not of pure love, it may do good to others, but will do none to ourselves.

“And though I give my body to be burned,” i.e., as a martyr for religion, “and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” Whether such a case as this ever existed, we know not. It is not impossible, nor improbable. But if it did, not the tortures of an agonizing death, nor the courage that endured them, nor the seeming zeal for religion that led to them would be accepted in lieu⁹⁹ of love to man...

⁹⁴ **beneficence** – goodness and kindness.

⁹⁵ **inducement** – a reason that leads one to a course of action; motivating cause.

⁹⁶ **diffusive liberality** – widely spread generosity.

⁹⁷ **pecuniary** – financial; monetary.

⁹⁸ **munificence** – generosity.

⁹⁹ **in lieu** – in the place of.

It will help to convince us, not only of the necessity, but also of the importance of this temper of mind, if we bring into a narrow compass¹⁰⁰ the many and various representations of it that are to be found in the New Testament.

1. It is the object of the Divine decree in predestination. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph 1:4).

2. It is the end and purpose of the Moral Law... “Jesus said unto him, 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 great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mat 22:37-40)...

3. It is the evidence of regeneration. “Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1Jo 4:7).

4. It is the necessary operation and effect of saving faith. “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6).

5. It is that grace by which both personal and mutual edification is promoted. “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [*love*] edifieth.” (1Co 8:1). “Maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:16).

6. It is the proof of a mutual inhabitation between God and His people. “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1Jo 4:12-16).

7. It is declared to be the greatest of all the Christian virtues. “The greatest of these is charity [*love*]” (1Co 13:13).

8. It is represented as the perfection of religion. “Above all these things, put on charity [*love*], which is the bond of perfectness” (Col 3:14).

What encomiums¹⁰¹ are these! What striking proofs of the supreme importance of the disposition now under consideration! Who has not been guilty of some neglect of it? Who has not had his attention drawn too much from it? Who can read these passages of Holy Writ, and not feel convinced that not only mankind in general, but the professors of spiritual religion also have too much mistaken the nature of *true* piety?...Delusion on this subject prevails to an extent truly appalling. *Millions* are in error as to the real condition of their souls and are travelling to perdition, while according to their own idea they are journeying to the celestial Canaan. *Oh fearful mistake! Oh fatal imposture!*¹⁰² What *terrible* disappointment waits them! What horror, anguish, and despair will take eternal possession of their souls in that moment of revelation, when instead of awaking from the sleep of death amidst the glories of the heavenly city, they shall lift up their eyes “being in torment.” No pen can describe the overwhelming anguish of such a disappointment, and the imagination shrinks with amazement and torture from the contemplation of her own faint sketch of the insupportable scene...Jesus Christ does tell us that many, in that day, shall say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?” to whom He will say, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:24-25)...It is He that has sounded the alarm to awaken slumbering professors of religion from their carnal security. It is he that hath said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mat 11:15). “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Rev 3:1). How careful then ought we to be, not to be imposed upon by false evidences of religion and not to conclude that we are Christians, while we are destitute of those things which the Word of God declares be *essential* to genuine piety. We must have *love*, therefore, or all else is insufficient.

1. Some conclude, that because they are regular in their attendance upon the services of religion, they are true Christians. They go punctually to Church or to meeting. They receive the Lord’s Supper. They frequent the meetings for social prayer. Perhaps they repeat prayers in secret and read the Scriptures. All this is well, if it is done with right views and in connection with right dispositions. But it is the whole of their religion—a mere abstrac-

¹⁰⁰ **narrow compass** – limited scope.

¹⁰¹ **encomiums** – warm, glowing praises.

¹⁰² **imposture** – pretending to be someone else.

tion¹⁰³ of devotional exercise, a thing separate and apart from the heart, temper, and conduct; a business of the closet and of the sanctuary; a sort of composition¹⁰⁴ paid to the Almighty [in order] to be released from all the other demands of Scripture and obligations of piety. [It is] an expression of their willingness to be devout in the church and on the Sabbath, provided they may be as earthly-minded, selfish, malicious, and unkind as they please, in all places and all times besides. This is *not* religion.

2. Others are depending upon the clearness of their views and their attainments in evangelical knowledge. They pretend to a singular zeal for the truth and are great sticklers for the doctrines of grace, of which they profess to have an acquaintance little short of inspiration. They look upon all, besides a few of their own class, as mere babes in knowledge...They are the eagles who soar to the sun and bask in his beams, while the rest of mankind are the moles that burrow and the bats that flutter in the dark. Doctrine is everything. Clear views of the Gospel are the great desideratum¹⁰⁵...Puffed up with pride, selfish, unkind, irritable, emotional, malicious—they manifest a total want of that humility and kindness which are the prominent features of true Christianity...As to any spirituality of mind, any heavenliness of affection, any Christian love—in short, as to any of the natural tendency, the appropriate energy, the vital elevating influence of those very doctrines to which they profess to be attached—they are as destitute as the veriest worldling...This is a religion but too common in the present day...a religion but too common in our churches, a religion cold, heartless, and uninfluential. [It is] a sort of lunar light, which reflects the beams of the sun, but not his warmth.

3. On the other hand, some are satisfied with the vividness and the violence of their feelings. Possessed of much excitability and warmth of temperament, they are, of course, susceptible of deep and powerful impression from the ordinances of religion. They are not without their *religious joy*, for even the stony ground hearers rejoiced for a while. They are not without their *religious sorrows*. Their tears are plentiful, and their smiles in proportion. See them in the house of God, and none appear to *feel* more under the Word than they...The preacher seems to have their hearts at command. They talk loudly of “happy frames,” “precious seasons,” “comfortable opportunities.” But follow them from the house of God to their own habitation, and, oh, how changed the scene! The least offence, perhaps an unintentional one, raises a storm of passion. The man that looked like a seraph in the sanctuary seems more like a fury at home. Follow them from the Sabbath into the days of the week. You will see the man who appeared all for heaven on the Sunday, all for earth on the Monday. Follow them from the assembly of the saints to the chief places of concourse, where they buy, sell, and get gain. You will see the man who looked so devout, irritated and litigious,¹⁰⁶ selfish and overreaching, rude and insulting, envious and malicious, suspicious and defamatory. Yes, perhaps in the evening of the same day, you will see him at a prayer meeting, enjoying, as he supposes, the holy season. Such is the delusion under which many are living. Their religion is, in great part, a mere susceptibility of impression from religious subjects; it is a selfish, religious voluptuousness¹⁰⁷...Any emotion, however pleasurable or intense, that does not lead to action, is mere *natural*, not holy, feeling: while that, however feeble it may seem, which leads us to do the will of God, is unfeigned piety. In order to ascertain our degree of religion, we must not merely ask how we *feel* under sermons, but how this feeling leads us to act afterwards. The operative strength of our principles, and not the contemplative strength of our feelings, is the test of godliness. All that imaginative emotion, produced by a sense of God’s love to us, which does not lead to a cultivation of the virtue considered in this treatise, is one of the delusive fires, which, instead of guiding aright, misleads the souls of men.

4. It is to be feared that many in the present day satisfy themselves that they are Christians because of their zeal in the cause of religion...The mind of man, prone to self-deception, and anxious to find some reasons to satisfy itself in reference to its eternal state, short of the true evidence of a renewed heart, is too apt to derive a false peace from the contemplation of its zeal. In proportion as the cause of the delusion approximates to the nature of true religion is its power to blind and to mislead the judgment. If the mind can perceive anything in itself or in its operations that bears the semblance¹⁰⁸ of godliness, it will convert it into a means of lulling the conscience and removing anxiety. This is to many persons the fatal opiate, the soul-destroying imposture—their activity in the cause of Christian zeal...It cannot be denied that our love of activity and of display will generally incline us to prefer the

¹⁰³ **abstraction** – a thing that exists only as an idea.

¹⁰⁴ **composition** – settling of a debt by mutual arrangement.

¹⁰⁵ **desideratum** – highly desirable necessity.

¹⁰⁶ **litigious** – inclined to disagree.

¹⁰⁷ **voluptuousness** – addiction to sensuous pleasures.

¹⁰⁸ **semblance** – outward appearance.

cultivation of public spirit, rather than the more private and self-denying tempers of meekness, humility, and forbearance. For it is inconceivably more easy and more pleasant to float upon the tide of public feeling towards the objects of religious zeal than to wade against the stream of our own corrupt tendencies and to accomplish an end that He only Who seeth in secret will duly appreciate.

Woe, *eternal* woe, will be upon that man who bears the name of our Lord Jesus without His image. Woe, *eternal* woe, will be upon those members of our churches, who are content to find their way into the fellowship of the faithful without adding to their character the luster of this sacred virtue...it will be *dreadful* beyond the power of imagination to conceive to find ourselves the next moment after death amidst the horrors of the infernal pit, instead of the felicities¹⁰⁹ of the Celestial City. Love is required by God as an *essential* part of true religion...Without this, there can be no grace here and therefore no glory hereafter.

From *Christian Charity Explained* printed by Frederick Westley
and A. H. Davis, London, 1828.

John Angell James (1785-1859): English Congregationalist preacher and author; preached and wrote to common people of every age group and station in life; author of *Female Piety, A Help to Domestic Happiness, An Earnest Ministry*, and many others; born at Blandford, Dorsetshire, England.



Labor for a right understanding of each other's mind. There is nothing that makes men stand at such a far distance as a misunderstanding.—*Ralph Venning*

Let us turn all our censuring into praying. Let us pray to God that He would quench the fire of contention and increase the fire of fraternal love among us. Let us pray that the Lord would heal our schisms and repair our breaches, that He would make us like the cherubim with our faces looking one upon another.—*Thomas Watson* (1620-1686)

LOVE AT THE END OF THE DAY

J. R. Miller (1840-1912)

THERE are some people whom it is not hard to love and to whom it is quite easy to be kindly affectioned. They are congenial and to our taste. We are drawn to them by their amiable qualities or charming manners; or their treatment of us is so kind and generous as to win our affection. It is easy to love such.

But there are others to whom we are not thus naturally attracted. They are not congenial—perhaps not amiable. They have unlovely or disagreeable traits. Certain faults mar the beauty of their characters, or they treat us rudely and unkindly. It is by no means easy for us to bear ourselves toward such with all of love's patience, gentleness, thoughtfulness, and helpfulness. Yet it is this that is required of those who would walk in the footsteps of the Lord. Sinners love those who love them. Sinners do good to those who do good to them. Sinners lend to those of whom they hope to receive again. But we are to do more. We are to *love* our enemies. We are not to select from the mass about us a few to whom the law of love is to be applied. We are to have our special friends, just as Jesus had, to whom our hearts and lives may turn for that deep companionship that all pure and true souls crave. But, like Him also, we are to love all and show to all love's holiest offices...

Most Christian people are better than they seem. There are excellent men whose goodness is rugged and cold like the bare granite rocks. It is strong, firm, true, upright, but lacks the finer graces of [Christlike] piety. It is quite possible to love and not be kindly affectioned. There are homes in which there is love that would make any sacri-

¹⁰⁹ **felicities** – blessings; happiness.

fice, but in which hearts are starving for kindly expression. There is a dearth¹¹⁰ of those tender words and thoughtful little acts that a true gentleness would suggest. There are fathers who love their children and would give their lives for them who are yet wanting in those kindly expressions that so endear the parental relation. There are friendships that are true enough, but which are not hallowed by those graceful attentions and those tokens of thoughtfulness that cost so little and are worth so much. There are men whose hearts are full of benevolent dispositions toward the needy and of sincere sympathy for those who suffer, in whose lives none of these benevolent thoughts or feeling of compassion take practical form. There are men with kindly natures whose manners are gruff¹¹¹ and rude. Others boast of honest frankness in speech whose words are so harsh or ill timed as to give immeasurable pain. Then how rare is that wise tact which seems always to know what one is in need of and comes always at the very right moment with its delicate attention, its unostentatious¹¹² ministry, its quiet help!...There is great need, therefore, of thought with regard to the fitting *expression* of love. The kindly feeling must find some way to utter itself—a way, too, in keeping with the beauty of the sentiment. Many a lovely thought loses all its loveliness when clothed in speech or act. The benevolence of the heart must show itself in amiability of deportment and in deeds of mercy. Manner is as important as matter. The gruff man can never impart much happiness to others. Kindness must be kindly expressed.

The true test of Christian love is in life's closer relations. There is a great difference between loving people we never saw—and never shall see—and those with whom we mingle continually in actual contact. There are some persons whose souls glow with love for the benighted heathen far away who fail utterly in loving their nearest neighbors or those who jostle¹¹³ against them every day in business and in society. No doubt, it *is* easier to love some people at a distance. Distance lends enchantment to many lives, just as a far away rugged landscape may seem charmingly picturesque. We cannot see their faults and blemishes. We are not required to endure their uncongenial or disagreeable qualities. We do not meet them in the rivalries of business or chafings¹¹⁴ of social life. We see nothing of the petty meanness and selfishness that closer association would reveal in them. Our lives are not impinged upon¹¹⁵ at any point by theirs, and there can therefore be no friction. If we were brought into close association with them, our interest in them might be lessened. Many men who have been excellent friends while meeting occasionally and in favorable circumstances have ceased to be friends when brought into close contact in the attritions¹¹⁶ of daily life. Few characters will bear the microscopic lens.

But the test of true Christian love is that it does not fail even in the closest relations, in the most trying frictions of actual life, in which men so often appear at their worst. Charity beareth all things and never faileth. When hitherto undisclosed and unsuspected faults or blemishes appear in one we have esteemed, we are not to love him the less. Disagreeable qualities may appear upon closer acquaintance that will break the charm that distance lent and sorely test the genuineness of our love. There may be faults or eccentricities¹¹⁷ that painfully mar the beauty of men's characters, rendering them uncongenial. Their actions toward us may give us apparent cause for withholding from them that courtesy and kindness that it is our wont¹¹⁸ to manifest to all men.

Yet none of these things modifies the law of love or abridges its application. In all our intercourse with them, our treatment of them is to be in the spirit of the sweetest charity. No rudeness of theirs must provoke us to rudeness in return. No matter how distasteful to our spirits their habits or manners may be, we are to treat them with unvarying courtesy. Even wrongs and injustice on their part toward us are to be answered only by that love that beareth all things and is not easily provoked, by the soft answer that turneth away wrath, and by the meekness that when reviled¹¹⁹ revileth not again (1Pe 2:23).

The law of love, however, is not to be tortured into applications never intended. We are not required to take all sorts of people into intimate companionship or sacred friendship. There are many from whom we are commanded to separate ourselves. Even among the good, our hearts are permitted to have choice of their affinities. Yet we are

¹¹⁰ **dearth** – scarce supply.

¹¹¹ **gruff** – blunt or stern in manner.

¹¹² **unostentatious** – unpretentious; not intended to impress others.

¹¹³ **jostle** – push and shove.

¹¹⁴ **chafings** – irritations.

¹¹⁵ **are not impinged upon** – are not touched.

¹¹⁶ **attritions** – mutual frictions.

¹¹⁷ **eccentricities** – strange and unconventional behaviors.

¹¹⁸ **wont** – customary practice.

¹¹⁹ **reviled** – attacked with insulting or abusive language.

to cherish love toward all. In the face of the most repulsive qualities, even under the deepest wrongs, we are still to maintain and exhibit love in all its tenderness, patience, thoughtfulness, compassion, and helpfulness—not the love that calls evil good, but the love that desires for others the blessings that we seek for ourselves.

To help in bearing with disagreeable people or those with unamiable qualities, there is nothing better than a sincere wish to do them good. There is a better side to every marred or distorted character. Hidden away under the blemishes are the germs and possibilities of a noble and beautiful life. Christ sees under the most faulty exterior that which by His grace He can exalt into heavenly sainthood. We should look even upon the worst men in the same way, and hold it to be our errand to them to help to bring out in them the possible beauty. There is a key somewhere to unlock any and every heart, and a hand that can bring betterment to every life. If we meet men and women, no matter how distorted their character, with a sincere desire to help and to bless them, we shall find it an easy task to bear with them and treat them lovingly...

An artist used to say to his pupils, “The end of the day is the proof of the picture.” He meant that the most favorable time to judge of the excellence of a painting is the twilight hour when there is not light enough to distinguish details. Then, defects in execution cannot be seen, and the artist’s thought glows in its richest beauty. In like manner, the close of the day of life is the truest time to look at human character. In the noon glare, all men’s faults appear. Jealousies, emulations, and rivalries show us to each other in the heat of clashing, conflicting life in most unfavorable light. We are apt to put the worst construction upon each other’s actions and motives. We see each other through the defective and distorting vision of our own selfishness. All the evil appears magnified, and many of the better things are unperceived or shown in false settings. But when the shadows of the evening of eternity begin to fall upon us, we see each other with the asperities¹²⁰ softened and with the blemishes covered by the veil of charity. When the fierce competitions are hushed, we see man in truer light. We do justice then to their virtues and better qualities. Envy and prejudice in us no longer magnify the evil that is in them, while the good shines out in transfigured splendor.

When we sit beside a man’s deathbed, we have no harsh judgments to pronounce. Beauties appear that we had never observed before; and imperfections fade out in the softening, mellowing glow that streams from the gates of the eternal world. How kindly we feel toward him in *that* hour! Can we not learn to look at men always, as we shall at the close of the day? Then it will be easy to feel and to exhibit toward all that love that never faileth, that thinketh no evil, that hopeth all things.

From *Weekday Religion*, 1887 by Oliphant, Anderson, & Ferrier.

J. R. Miller (1840-1912): Presbyterian pastor and gifted writer; Superintendent of the Presbyterian Board of Publication; born at Frankfort Springs, PA, USA.



¹²⁰ **asperities** – harsh, embittered feelings.