



LIBERATING
LOVE

Geoffrey Bingham

Liberating Love

GEOFFREY BINGHAM

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Constraining Love
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Christ's Cross over Man's Abyss
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PREFACE

This volume went through a number of printings in Pakistan, where it was also translated into Urdu. In 1969 The Christian Literature Crusade published an international edition, which was a revised and enlarged. New Creation Publications republished it in 1976, and now, in 1988 a further printing has taken place.

The book was first written in 1959, when I was a missionary working in Pakistan. Two Muslim officials were captivated by the book and declared themselves—as a result of reading it—to be secret disciples. Many missionaries on the Indian sub-continent, as also Christian Indians and Pakistanis, told me the book had been most helpful. In 1973 when I was in Papua New Guinea, I discovered a group of missionaries who had virtually gathered around this volume, having been greatly helped by it. In fact over the years it seems to have served a useful purpose.

My own understanding of God's love has grown over the years, and yet when I re-read this small volume I think that the essence of what I know is contained in this book, even—in some cases—if only germinally. We had thought we would not republish it, but again—as in the past—there have been demands for it. The Principal of a theological college urged his students to read it, if only to grasp the truth of the Atonement, for he himself had discovered a new understanding of it. A clergyman said it had revolutionized his thinking in regard to God's love, and had deeply affected his life. A

woman said it is the book to which she returns, time and again. Many such stories could be told. Even years after the last printing has been sold there are still inquiries by those who wish to obtain a copy.

So then, we print again. I know I would like to rewrite it, but somehow when a book is rewritten much of its charm and affects are lost. I myself consider it has weaknesses in regard to style and the arrangement of its materials, yet probably I would think this regarding most of the other books I have written. That it has been helpful to many and life-changing to some seem sufficient justification for reprinting it, and I trust it will continue to be useful.

Geoffrey Bingham.
Coromandel East, June, 1988

CHAPTER ONE

GOD'S LOVE PERFECTED IN ME

JOHAN'S First Epistle has a number of very rich themes. These are seen in his Gospel and reflect the matured experience of the aged saint. Love, faith and obedience are three themes upon which he gives great emphasis, but they are intimately linked together. He has much to say about love. In particular, chapter four, verse twelve presents a teaching which at first sight does not seem startling, but on investigation presents a problem which must exercise all who think.

It says, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." What do we mean by "His love is perfected in us"? Vincent (Word Studies of the New Testament, ad loc.) says, "Not our love to Him, nor His love to us, but the love which is peculiarly His; which answers to His nature." Westcott speaks much in the same vein. He says, (The Epistles of St. John, ad loc.) "His love, the love which answers to His nature and with which He has endowed us. Man receives the love of God and makes it his own. Neither of the two specially defined senses—'the love of God for man,' or 'the love of man for God'—suits the context." We might also add that neither is it the love of man for man, even though that love is virtually God's love operating through us.

It is quite clear that John is here describing an experience which can be the lot of redeemed man. This very love, which is of God, is perfected in us. It is also interesting to note that John uses a tense which shows that the action is completed. It conveys the thought of enjoying, here and now, the benefits of an act already completed.

What do we mean by “perfected”? Our ideas of perfection usually contain the thought of impeccability, or faultlessness. Actually this is close to the Pharisaic idea of perfection, in which the lack of fault was the thing commendable rather than a positive accomplishment which demonstrated the inherent perfection as being active. God’s glory is not passive, but both positive and active. Man’s sin does not lie so much in his disobedience in itself as in the fact that he refuses to take an active and positive line of service. Man has sinned because he has “missed the mark,” that is, has failed to achieve that for which God created him.

When we speak of perfection we cannot in any way think that God’s love is imperfect, or in process of being perfected. God’s love must be perfect or it could not be called love. There is a sense in which God’s love reaches its fulfilment when we become the instruments through which it flows, and this sense is not excluded from the verse. However, it is not the primary meaning. To understand the primary meaning of “perfected” we have to look at it in its many contexts’ in the New Testament, and we see that it points rather

to “completion” or “fulfilment.” In Hebrews 12:2 Christ is spoken of as being the “completer” or “finisher” of our faith. The writer exhorts his readers to go on unto “perfection.” In Philippians chapter three Paul contemplates the final consummation of his resurrection and admits he has not yet attained, and is not already perfect, but he presses on to this end. Then he exhorts his readers who are “perfect,” also to press on. We cannot escape the thought of maturity in these passages. The “perfect” Christian is the mature Christian. We might be justified in translating the verse John has written as follows: “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is matured in us.”

However, this does not fully convey the meaning of the verse. God’s love is inherently perfect. Therefore, when men and women see God’s love perfected in us they will surely see perfect love in us. How can this be? We are driven to conclude that there is an experience which is not only possible, but enjoined, by which God’s love may be filled out in us and seen in its perfection. This is breath-taking. God’s perfect love indwells me, and can be either “filled out” or hindered in its operation. This is an incredible thought. Indeed, when we ponder on the thought we ask, “What more can God do in me than perfect His love? What greater thing can He do?” Surely this is the ultimate. What more could be desired than to see a human creature in whom the love of God is perfected?

If this were a high, airy ideal, not possible of consummation or, if possible, then only in unusual people and on rare occasions, we might excuse and satisfy ourselves with a somewhat wistful longing. But the tenor of John's Epistles, and indeed Scripture itself, is that such an experience is possible. God has laid down conditions by which such perfection may be achieved. As we pursue the subject we shall see not only that God enjoins such a demonstration of love, but not to have His love perfected in us is to live in a state of disobedience or sin. We are entitled to ask the question, "What sort of a salvation is it, anyway, which leaves us as loveless creatures? Is not this very love the purpose of our salvation? Does not God wish to create, or recreate, those who, being now truly in His image, are creatures of love?"

Consider further. It is not love for God, not God's love for us, nor our love for the brethren. Conceivably it includes these aspects. It is simply God's love indwelling us. Westcott and Vincent, as we have seen, both agree that it is "His nature." This is most important, for the battle still rages between Pietist and Confessional theologians. The first claim a personal and mystical union with Christ, the latter maintain that belief is sufficient and that subjective experience and living can be dangerously misleading, even coming close to a fine blasphemy to dare claim such a personal indwelling of God. This distinction has a great importance for us, for if God does not indwell us and there are no objective standards and means whereby this

may be detected, then it would seem that spiritual experience is finally a matter of convictions. It would appear, however, that the two seemingly opposing concepts, far from being mutually exclusive, are complementary truths.

John points out in the verse we are considering that "no man hath seen God at any time." He then goes on to say that God's love may be perfected in us. Thus he is saying, "No man has ever seen God. If we love one another, God's love is perfected in us." That is, we can truly see God in a man in whom God's love is perfected.

The first condition then for having God's love perfected is to love the brethren. A second condition is laid down in chapter two, verse five, "But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." There is a third condition, but it is not as explicit as the first two. It is confession of Jesus as the Son of God, and belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Such confession and belief show the indwelling of God in the believer, and that the believer is one born of God who loves his brethren.

In our next chapter we will go on to examine what is meant by these three conditions, and whether they are possible of attainment. They are three practical ways by which we may pursue having the love of God perfected in ourselves. Incredible as such a statement may be, it is of the essence of Scripture to believe it capable of fulfilment, and of the essence of unbelief, sin and disobedience not to believe and pursue it.

CHAPTER TWO

HOW LOVE IS PERFECTED IN ME

WE saw in the previous chapter that John lays down three conditions by which God's love may be perfected in us. If it is possible for us to fulfil these conditions, then truly God's love should be manifested in us.

LOVE OF THE BRETHREN

It is quite clear that loving one another is not optional for the Christian. He is commanded to love. John's writings abound in statements which speak of that which God both commands and expects—our love to the brethren. Indeed, not to love is a sign that one has not yet been born of God, for in I John 3:10 we read, "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Obedience and love are linked together as signs by which a true child of God may be discerned. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." Christ pointed out that the entire Law and the Prophets were summed up by the two-fold law of love—love to God and love to one's neighbour. To reject the obligation to love God and one's neighbour is to reject the whole structure of the Old Testament. He who claims to lay great store by the Scriptures is living a lie if he does not love. Christ said very clearly to His disciples,

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." It would seem that this was no new command. It was the demonstration of love that was here emphasised. In the way Christ had loved them, so they were to love one another. He loved them unto the end. His love was perfect. Thus He could claim that whoever had seen Him had also seen the Father. They, too, were to love in the same manner.

He went on further to say that such love would mark them out as His disciples. The disciple, of course, should be like his master. It would not be their teaching and doctrine which would primarily mark them out as His disciples but their love one for the other. Such a test applied to the Church today might bring meagre and pitiful results.

Twice in the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel our Lord commands His disciples to love one another. This command is tremendously important. Indeed it was a command from the beginning. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." "These things I command you, that ye love one another." Why should a command be so important? Because a command automatically carries with it the assurance that what has been commanded can be accomplished. The method or degree is also enjoined—"as I have loved you." So we are left without a shred of excuse. We cannot say that we will love to the degree possible, or that love will have better sway

when the other party makes a reasonable move towards a changed life or attitude. The old talk about “give and take” is simply ruled out. Love *loves* unto the end, and lays down no conditions.

Once we see that love is commanded we learn a startling truth. It is so simple that it is generally passed over. It is this. *We can love*. It is amazing that our reasoning never includes this. We say, “I know I ought to love. Not to love is very wrong. I do try to love. At times I am distressed by my lack of love and I ask God to give me in some special way a love for a person. I ask for strength. I seek to live on a higher spiritual plane in order that I may love.” Yet we fail to achieve that love.

It may seem strange to conclude that we can love, simply because God has commanded us to. Yet surely, God cannot give a command which we cannot obey. There are those who claim that God has set a series of impossible standards before us, not because He expects we will be able to obey, but rather He enjoins us on the principle that, “If you aim at the sky you will at least reach the top of the trees,” which, it seems, is better than the earth anyway.

This is a curious thought—God setting us a standard but not expecting us’ to achieve it; God pretending to expect a high level, but not really expecting it; God commanding obedience but never expecting us to obey because He knows it is impossible. Surely it is better to take His commands simply and directly, and seek to obey them. If obedience is possible, then we are

faced with the comforting thought that every command is also a promise.

Now if we truly believe this, then we are committed to a life of unswerving obedience. When we are commanded to love we simply move forward to love. This is truly amazing. It means I have been so created, or recreated of God, that I can love. It should not seem so amazing because God is indwelling me. But great truths like “God indwells me” are not easily grasped in practice. Indeed, for many they are often only theoretical concepts. However, when I accept it as truth I move forward to love and find that *I can love*.

At the same time it is evident that many do not move forward to love. They claim that they desire to love but are incapable. They are wrong. They *are* capable, but they are either unwilling or do not recognise that it is possible. This may simply spring from ignorance of what God has made them by His Holy Spirit. They do not know the new freedom into which Christ has led them. Perhaps it is this latter. But when it is revealed that it is possible to love, no door of excuse is left open. We are pressed on to love. We are shut up to love. It is our ‘inescapable duty’.

“Pressed to love,” “our inescapable duty”—these phrases contradict our commonly accepted ideas of love. “Love,” we say, “*to* be real love, ought to flow easily and spontaneously.” At the most this is a half truth. Love is really a matter of will. If love is commanded then it is possible. Only my will stands

in the way of its being carried out. It is not, “I do not love because I cannot,” but, “I do not love because I will not.”

When we realize it is a matter of will and are prepared to be obedient, then we are launched into a life of love. “If we love one another, then the love of God is perfected in us.”

The “one another” means, of course, anyone and everyone. We need not here go into why we should love one another, or what the effects are when we love another. Sufficient is the thrilling knowledge that it is possible.

OBEDIENCE

We have seen that John observes in his First Epistle, (chapter two, verse five) that “Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.” “Keeping His word” is simply obedience. Love and obedience are twin truths—Siamese-twin truths in fact. John has already said in the two preceding verses, “And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

It is clear that John is saying that obedience is the condition laid down for the perfecting of God’s love. Obedience is a subject which compasses the entire Scriptures. Man’s disobedience arose out of a desire to be independent of God. This desire was in itself

disobedience, for man was created not for his own glory but for God’s glory. Thus the history of man is one of disobedience. Some of the passages which deal with his consequent tragic state are Mark 7: 18-23, Romans 1: 18-32, 3:9-20, Ephesians 2: 1-3, 11, 12, 4: 17-19, Colossians 1:21. The fearful trail of war, tragedy, murder, rape, hatred, and daily mean selfishness is the history of disobedient man following the selfish ambition of his first father, Adam. With what horror Paul views this old Adam whom he calls a rebel! The darkness of history is relieved only when the Light of the world appears, made in the likeness of sinful flesh yet as One come to demonstrate the glory of obedience. “I come to do Thy will.” “I delight to do Thy will.”

Man seems to have it firmly fixed in his mind that there is no delight in obedience. This was Satan’s first lie and is an untruth deeply seated in man’s mind. Even regenerate man finds he must continually fight this lie. Obedience, as we shall later see, is a matter of joy.

However, it is sufficient for us to see here that obedience is possible because enjoined. Therefore we must obey. Paul says, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” We have been liberated from the just penalty of the law; that is, the penalty accruing to us for having broken the law. The law never gave us power to keep it, for that was not its function. Paul says our agony was intensified when we discovered we could not keep it. Nor, indeed, did the law ever promise us salvation

should we have kept it. Yet nowhere in the Scriptures are we told that we are free from obedience to God's law. Of course, we are not Israelites and therefore have never been subject to the *Mosaic* law. But the Ten Commandments given at Sinai were not peculiarly and only Mosaic. They constitute, generally, God's whole law. However, we are given to understand clearly that the sum total of law, as the Scriptures use that word, is love—love to God and to our fellow-creatures. This was the law that Christ came to fulfil in His complete and perfect obedience.

It is clear, too, as we have seen above, that love is commanded. Not to love is to be disobedient. Disobedience is rebellion—nothing less. Every child of God is in a position to love his brethren. Since love is commanded, we can see how intimately linked are love and obedience. He who refuses to love is living in darkness. He who is unforgiving or resentful is “giving place to the devil.” He is in no position to love, for the Spirit of God resident within him is grieved and love cannot be free. To believe we can have love without obedience, or obedience without love, is foolish.

JESUS IS MESSIAH, SON OF GOD

John says “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” He also says, “Everyone that loveth is born of God.” Again, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” Linked with this is another

observation, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.” (I John 4: 16, 4: 7, 4: 15, 5: 1).

It is clear from these verses that John links God's indwelling with our love, and our love with God's indwelling. Only he who is born of God, loves. Only he who loves is born of God. Yet this indwelling of God is not the part of the believer until he knows the truth and confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, and that Jesus is the Christ. This is very important, for John had a real heresy to contend with; this heresy taught that the man Jesus, was distinct from Christ. Christ might inhabit Jesus, but He was not Jesus. To speak then of Jesus as both Messiah and Son of God meant that one moved in an entirely different circle of thought and experience from the one who did not believe Jesus to be Christ and Son of God.

This ought to teach us afresh that true belief leads us into a new realm. Indeed, without it we are still in the realm of the natural man, and whatever heights we attain we are still bound and unable to move up into the realms of fellowship with God through Christ, and through Him to move out into real love.

Belief in Jesus as Son of God and Messiah cannot remain in the realm of theoretical concepts, for if it is truly apprehended by faith, then it is a dynamic force. What do we mean by “Jesus,” “Son of God,” “Messiah” ?

By “Jesus” we mean Saviour. One who will save His people *from* their sins, and not simply One who will save them *in* their sins. By saving we mean that God has provided a Way in Christ to release mankind from the dread penalty of sin, and from the tyranny of sin’s domination, so that all might be freed to serve Him. By “Son of God” we mean Jesus is not a mere man, not simply a good man, but God Himself, in the eternal mystery of the Trinity. Only as Son of God can He say, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” Not simply a miracle worker, not only a brilliant teacher, but God Himself, before whom Thomas must fall and cry, “My Lord and my God!” By “Messiah” we mean the One anointed with God’s Spirit to preach the good news to fettered, imprisoned, diseased mankind that it might be liberated into the freedom of the children of God.

Bound up in these three words—“Jesus, Son of God, Christ”—is the whole truth of God. John deals faithfully with this body of truth. He points out that one who has come into the experience of faith in Jesus as Christ and Son of God, and who confesses it, overcomes the world. He has One dwelling in him, greater than the prince of the world who dwells in his own evil realm. He that is so born of God is obedient. He walks in the light as the Son of God walks in the light and has fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The Spirit indwells him. He has an unction from the Holy One and knows all things, and is able to discern the evil and to know and experience the good. Truth is always a practical matter, being outlined daily. By

this experience we can know that we know. We can know that we have passed from death unto life. We can and do love the brethren.

John is saying that it is possible to live victoriously on this earth because of this faith. “Jesus, Messiah, Son of God” are not simply theological terms without relevance to daily experience. They are not only articles of belief but the very dynamic of obedient, loving living. To make such confession is to overcome the world, to love the brethren, to grasp all the victory of the Cross for man against the world, the flesh and Satan. It is to live a practical life of love, for only one freed from the power of evil can love.

To sum up then, we have been given three practical methods whereby God’s love may be perfected in us. They are—love of the brethren, keeping His commandments and confessing and believing in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. We have now to consider in what way these three conditions may be carried out in the life of the believer. Then we will expect that God’s very Nature will be demonstrated in us.

The reader is referred to the two statements (p. 8, para 2 and p. 11 line 1):—“It may seem strange to conclude that we can love simply because God has commanded us to.” and, “However, it is sufficient for us to see here that obedience is possible because enjoined.” These statements will immediately raise objections in accordance with certain theological thinking. They would seem to suggest that man can render obedience in perfection; that he is in fact not impotent.

This question of obedience is often raised in the Bible. However it is doubtful whether much emphasis is given upon the impeccability of obedience. When Christ commanded His disciples to love they did not raise the question of their innate impotency.

They just believed that they should love. We are more than a little shocked to read in John 17:6 that Christ says of these very very imperfect men “they have obeyed the command” (NEB) or “they have kept thy word” (AV). While we (and the Pharisees) raise the question of impeccability, the Bible seems more concerned with the attitude of the heart. True, we must avoid the heresy of “evangelical obedience” which says that God adapts our obedience to our ability: that is, He requires only what our fallen nature can do. This is untrue. God’s high demands are never lowered.

Paul’s discussion of the matter in Romans 7:14-25 is interesting. He sees three things: (i) That in him (of himself) dwells no good thing, that is no innate goodness. (ii) That he has a love for the law, and a desire to do good and not do evil. (iii) That he has no power to do good, or to refrain from doing evil. This is man, innately even regenerate man. On the other hand Paul can say “I can do all things through (in) Christ.” Man-in-Christ can of himself do nothing, but in Christ he can do all. Having done all he must, however, admit that he is an unprofitable servant. This is the tension and paradox in which we must live. We must continually assert that God demands perfection, even though we do not render it. God expects us to render it nevertheless.

In Chapter Eleven we will see that love constrains us to this course of action which God requires. Romans 8:11-14 shows us that we are released from the paralysing effects of fear and must now by the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body, and follow Him because He has made us sons of God. In Other words obedience is discussed simply along the lines of impeccability or even ability as being the “mind of the Spirit”. To affirm that we give perfect obedience leaves the door open to pride. To see only the impeccability of obedience is to open the door to legalistic endeavour. To despair or be cynical of the possibility of obedience is to destroy true endeavour and open the door to laxity.

Ultimately the Scripture does not concern itself with this kind of question. This is more in the line of an abstraction.

Its propositions are in the realm of grace. Christ has rendered perfect obedience and this has been accounted to man. So his mind is relieved of the pressure to achieve perfection, and his spirit—now free from tension—can be gay and free to obey with joy. Psalms 119 and 19—whatever others may say to the contrary — show an intense joy in fulfilling the revealed will of God which is contained in, and shown by law. In daily practice we may safely move forward to love, and obedience, and indeed are bound to do so. We would do well, at the same time, to leave the question of the degree of perfection achieved to God Himself.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPEDIMENTS TO LOVE, OBEDIENCE AND FAITH

We have before us these three—love, obedience and faith—by which God’s love is to be perfected in us. The mind, however, cries out that this is impossible. Desirable? Yes. But possible? No. At best only in very small measure and then only for some rather rare and wonderful persons. The mind says it is an ideal.

If by an ideal we mean incapable of being achieved, then we are wrong. If we mean incapable of being achieved without failures, then we are right. There will be failures. Love itself, as we shall see, teaches and matures us. However, while we are in a battle against three deadly enemies—the world, the flesh and Satan—we are likely to lose in some of the skirmishes. But defeat ought never to be habitual, nor should we look at any defeat as final failure. There never was a soldier who believed it was his right to escape without wound or some defeat.

There is a perfectionism which is deadly. It says, “If I cannot completely and automatically succeed, then I will not engage in the conflict.” However, John is not interested in such a conception. It is clear that he looks upon habitual failure as foreign to the Christian life, yet recognises that failure is neither final nor frightening. “If we say that we have no sin we deceive

ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

There is forgiveness and cleansing. He who truly understands the nature of the particular sin he has committed cannot lightly ask forgiveness. Such asking means he cannot go and do it again. Any other plea for forgiveness is too lightly asked. God cannot grant it. As someone has remarked, Calvary is not simply “a handy rinse.” The one who is forgiven does not stop to contemplate his sin. Faith assures him God has forgiven. He does not lightly or deliberately sin again. The one who presses on in order that the love of God may be perfected in him does not question whether it is possible or not. He is simply obedient, living consistently with his having been begotten of God. He sees he is not being given a choice. God lays no impossible burden upon him, but demands that his life, because it is now eternal, must spring forth as naturally as a fountain and demonstrate the character of God.

There are those of us who admit that such a life in which God’s love is manifested is indeed possible of attainment. It must be, because it is both enjoined and promised. Such do not concern themselves with the desperation of unachievable perfection, but recognise that to *commence* loving is the step they should take. The rest is the work of God. Yet at the same time they are aware of the very practical difficulties and obstacles which confront them. They see, for

example, that some people are the kind we can love easily, others are not. Some we instinctively dislike. Then there are problems in class, differences in temperament, in race and in culture. Are we to be lost in *others’* interests? Where do *we* fit into the picture? What are *our* rights, if any? Are we not being rather unnatural trying to force ourselves into loving others? And in the ultimate, is this really love?

He would be foolish indeed, who ignored these difficulties. He would be equally foolish who attempted to work from the difficulties to their solution. One must first grasp the “technique of love,” if we may be permitted that rather clumsy phrase. It might be well to examine the obstacles themselves. For example, to talk about a person being “easy to love” is not really using the word love in its true sense. It would be better to say that we find some people more compatible, less objectionable, less likely to rouse opposition. Some are physically attractive, some stimulate and please us socially and intellectually. Yet we can scarcely say we love them. True love knows no boundaries, nor lays down conditions.. It is just love, that is all. It does not talk about “easier,” or “harder to love.”

Some have escaped the full implications of love by making a distinction between “love” and “like.” They say, “Some people I can like and love. Other people I can love, but not like. That is, I cannot like them, but I can act towards them in a manner of love.” Subject this attitude to a clear test and we can see its weakness. There is only one true love; God’s love. This

love is spoken of in Scripture in great distinction to other “likes,” “affections” and “physical attractions.” There is a word for human friendship, another for physical “love.” The word which the early Christians used for true love was agape. It’s origins are not very distinct but it is certain the Christians lifted it up and filled it out with a new and rich meaning. It denoted the love which is God’s alone and described the various means by which that love operates in and through the lives of redeemed humanity. Thus agape was used to speak both of God’s love in itself operating towards man and that same love in man, for God and for his brother, flowing through him from God.

Now to speak of God as “acting in love towards us” but not “liking” us, drains love of any real content. It is cold. It is deceptive. If I approach God, longing for His love, and find Him helpful but impersonal, then I remain in the darkness of isolation. Love finally means fusion; fusion of two into one. Surely if love means anything, it means God was incarnate in Christ on Calvary demonstrating to me His love. It is through the Cross that I become one with Christ. His love fuses me, unites me with the very being of God. When I see, in that greatest act of provocation in all history, my Lord unprovoked, pouring out His love in demonstrable action and in real sacrifice, then I truly understand love. To talk about “liking” me, drains love of its real meaning. In love I want all of God, as He wants all of me, and when I love a fellow creature it should mean no less.

Then what of the impediments we have mentioned above? How are we to overcome them? The answer is simple. Go and love and they will dissolve in that love. If I ask that they be removed before I begin to love, then I am saying that love does not overcome all. In other words, I am insisting that the conditions must be made right for loving. It is then we get to talking about “Give and take.” “Surely I’m not expected to pretend to love when those things simply infuriate me.” “There is a limit, surely, to what and when one can love.” These are the arguments of darkness.

It is better for us first to face why things infuriate us. Our Lord observed that as we judge so would we be judged. It is a psychological tenet that that which we judge in another often exists unjudged in us. Our judging it in another gives us some *sort* of temporary relief. However, this sets up a vicious chain of reactions within us, for the original cause of criticism has not been removed. The more we judge, the more sensitive we become to our own failure and the more we try to cover it.

For this reason the Pharisees lived in continual spiritual insecurity. They feared Christ because with a few well-chosen phrases He could expose their rotten core. They dreaded this perception and exposure. Their whole system was built upon self-righteousness and such a system has no place in it for love. It has no sense of need and does not sense another’s need of love. It was to Simon the Pharisee, who stood by in cold, hard criticism of the woman who was a sinner.

that Christ spoke words which revealed the truth of love. "She has loved much, because she has been forgiven much." Only those who know the desperate need of the heart for forgiveness can understand God's great love and, understanding it, can love a fellow creature in the same need. He who has never tasted the sweetness of repentance will taste one day the bitter fruits of remorse. Remorse is horror at being found out. Repentance discovers that God is love. This brings release from the dread power and penalty of sin. When we become critical of sin in another, it often has its origin in self-righteousness—thinking ourselves superior.

Judgment is a fearful thing. James is most stern in his condemnation of it. He says, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." Some speak evilly. Some simply think evilly. Often their thinking is conveyed by attitude or innuendo. But the innate attitude of criticism comes from some deep-seated self-motive. It may have to do with spiritual emulation, with discomfort at another's failure, with irritation because the member has betrayed the high standard of his group, or simply because that person's failure reminds us of our own failure. Whatever it is, it is certain to be traced to self.

Now the interesting thing is that often we can readily accommodate ourselves to failure in one who does not claim to be a child of God. In other words, we find a sort of love for a sinner which we cannot find for a saint. Perhaps we recognise that a sinner is simply being consistent with his nature, which is that of a rebel to God. But the brother in Christ really is the problem, especially if he is not as perfect as we are, or is more so—and knows it! It is a curious thing that the more informed the Christian and the finer in character, the less we are able to tolerate fault in him. To a great degree we can tolerate the same failings in ourselves. Why then is it that we do not love the other brother in spite of his failure?

There are those who say it is wrong to love a person in the midst of his failure. "This encourages him in it," they say. "It is like closing an eye to what is there. Better to rebuke him." This is a half truth. True, we must not compromise, and we are told to rebuke in love. But it is dangerous to rebuke when we do not love the person. It becomes the rebuke of self-righteousness. When a man is loved he is not encouraged to go on with his failure, but to fight it. Indeed he now has real fellowship with one who can help him. Two now combine to defeat the difficulty. Love closes its eyes to nothing, but knows its power to bring victory. When I love, the failure of another no longer irritates me and if a rebuke is needed, then it is recognised as springing out of love and becomes really valuable.

Let us be honest. We generally do not love, not because we cannot love, but just because it is inconvenient. If that failure I perceive in another is also in me, then it means I must first get right with God in the matter before I attempt to pull the mote out of my brother's eye. It may mean admitting my failure, not only to God, but to that very one I am criticising. That too, is most inconvenient. Indeed it is just here that we discover an interesting and revealing truth. Whenever my brother's sin stirs me it may be that I have taken up the position of judge. God is the only true judge. It is wrong to constitute ourselves as judges. God the Creator is alone the Judge, and a created thing—a creature—may not usurp the power or prerogative of the Creator. That is blasphemy.

A second thing is that God is not involved in sin, subjectively. When we are caught up in subjective involvement in another's sin, we are unhappy, stirred up, affected. If God were so affected then Satan would surely have triumphed and, in a sense, would have God fearfully involved in an eternal restlessness. God would be the victim of our rebellion. Yet God uses even our rebellion for His plans. He turns the wrath of man to His praise. Because He views us objectively—although never impersonally—he can help and love the sinner. The simple statement that God loves the sinner, but not his sin, is very true. However, often we cannot love a person because his sin keeps stirring us and probably for the reasons which we have ex-

amined above. Therefore, until we attain to God's love, we can never help the sinner or the sinning saint.

We might go even further. Paul says, "God commendeth His love towards us in that *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us." Williams translates it, "God proves His love for us by the fact that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners." That is, God does not say, "I will give you a new life and love you when you resolve to be better or when you fulfil certain conditions which I lay down." For then it would cease to be love. Similarly we are to have the same love. Because God did not lay down conditions we know He is love. Christ repeatedly said that in the manner in which He loves us, so we ought also to love one another. This commits me to love my brother in the midst of his failure no matter how great it may be.

As for the matter of cultural, social, economic and intellectual differences, we will find that they are not impediments but often even occasions for love. Love does not make us equal with God. It simply entitles us to love and enjoy Him. So with each other. It is because we do not love that we are afraid of being invaded or taken advantage of. Love never insists on its rights because it finally discovers, with a touch of surprised humour, that it has no rights. Therefore it never has to worry or be on guard.

A third thing is that when I move out to love another there will often be a response. This response is evoked by my love. It is foolish to say, "When she

asks forgiveness, of course I will forgive.” Or, “When he makes a move, then I will respond.” This is not love speaking but self. Love always takes the first step. We are fools to lose that wonderful opportunity. The life of love is deeply satisfying. The other person may be in deep bondage from which our action will release him. Perhaps that bondage may even be judgment of us. But once we make the move he is freed-freed to love. Should he make that first move, then it is his love which liberates us.

We might conclude by saying that love really knows of no impediments, and as we shall see later, the greater the seeming impediment the greater the opportunity to demonstrate love. This is the truth of the Cross.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHARACTER OF LOVE AND HATRED

WE would find it difficult to prove from Scripture that there are three categories of living: love, hate and neither-love-nor-hate. John clearly states, “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” The not-loving (often understood as the not-hating) state is a state of death. He says, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” This one who hates is also in a state of death. John says further, “In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother.”

We must conclude then that we live in one of two categories, that of loving or hating, of life or death. Because we do not positively pursue our hate is not to say that we do not hate. It might be too inconvenient to pursue it, too dangerous to expose it. Indeed, self might find it altogether too inconvenient. But it is not to say that it is not there. It seems that John views with horror any failure to love and regards this as fearful darkness. Hate, as John sees it, is the quality of the murderer whether it manifests itself in overt action or not. Our Lord observed that the inner contemplation of lust was the equivalent of the deed. There is a vast impatience outside the Christian Church

with our profession of love and yet our failure to love. An even deeper impatience is manifesting itself within the Church. We are beginning to see how dangerous it is to mouth the great truths of love and yet find love to be lacking. It is sin of Balaam—knowing the truth but having no internal spiritual apprehension and no external obedience to it.

The origins of hatred are always connected with self-ambition. Man had fellowship with God. He had fellowship with his fellow-creature, woman. To all appearances this fellowship was complete. Yet ambition to exist as an independent creature, to be as God, separated man from God. Faced with his sin, Adam excused himself by laying the blame on Eve. Thus began the division between man and his fellow creature. The entire trinity of fellowship was broken. A child of these two divided ones murders his brother—the closest human creature to himself. This was the product of spiritual pride. Cain was to become the father of all who set themselves against God. Abel and Seth were to become the head of a group to be called God's people. Cain was not without spiritual pride, being deeply resentful of the rejection of his religious offering, and in his trail were to come the Pharisees of later days. Deep down in this opposition was a failure to understand the love of God. John very clearly sees it was resentment against the obedience required by God and rendered by his brother. "For this is the message that ye heard from the begin-

ning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." In this passage John links love and obedience in contrast to Cain's hatred and disobedience.

This system, this collaboration between man and Satan which the Bible variously calls "the world," "this present age" and "this present evil age," is the temper of proud man. Linked into it are the vast heavenly powers of evil who, in the beginning, conspired with Satan to snatch God's glory for themselves. Behind it all is the hollow illusion that a created thing may share the glory, power and holiness of the Creator. Satan's foolish boast, "I will be like the most high God," shows how blinded he is by passion and pride. That is why Christ singled out the Pharisees for His most scathing of all judgments, "Ye generation of serpents and vipers. How shall ye escape the damnation of hell?" Their father, Satan, was serpent and viper above them all. Proud, arrogant creature that he was, the same pride and arrogance were manifested in his offspring. In bondage to their own' pride and passions, his offspring could not see that they were in bondage. In the manner of murderers they slew Christ, "because His works were righteous" and because He tore away the robes of self-made righteousness and exposed their spiritual nakedness. They felt no need of the pure robe of Christ's righteousness. Thus, when Christ was urged to go to Jerusalem in order to expose Himself,

He rightly commented, “The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works are evil.”

The most intense form of hatred springs from spiritual pride, a fact with which we are all too well acquainted. We should view spiritual pride with abhorrence and dread. The moment we forget that it needed Calvary’s sacrifice to cover our sin, the moment we believe we have some holiness of our own, we are set upon the path which leads to the heights of spiritual pride. “All is of grace.” “There is nothing that is not of grace.” These truths we dare not forget. At the place of spiritual pride we forget the joys of forgiveness and we cannot forgive. We cannot tolerate things in others once we have judged them. We become impatient when they are not put away. We are capable of a hatred the ordinary sinner can never conceive. It will crucify Christ—in some form or other—if it be given provocation or opportunity.

When we understand the darkness of hatred we realize the necessity for God’s wrath against sin. He must destroy darkness and hatred. He cannot tolerate this evil in His universe. Only the blood of the Cross can effect a reconciliation of all things. How this is done is hidden in the Being of God. The Cross accomplishes it; we dare not doubt this, else were all lost.

Paul, to whom the subject of love was precious and of primary importance, is also aware of love’s opposite, hatred. It is interesting to see how many

times he refers to both. He who had been so blinded by spiritual arrogance as to persecute the very Body of Christ, knew what the flesh was. In Galatians he warns his brethren of the character of hatred. In effect he says, “Self is mutually self-consuming.” First commanding them, “By love serve one another,” he then warns of the consequence of doing the opposite. “If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed, one of another.” This is the snake life with a vengeance. This is snake devouring snake.

Then he names the works of the flesh. Some are so obviously evil that we do not hesitate to condemn them. However, others are so subtle that we do not suspect that they are in our lives. Satan—that past master of transforming himself into light—has transformed these fleshly qualities so well that we think they are permissible and not essentially evil. Some are close enough to the real thing that their perversion makes them all the more horrible.

Adultery, uncleanness, lasciviousness, fornication – these are perversions of a richer experience. They are wrong relationships which cheat, destroying the beauty of purity and the purity of beauty, and set up even deeper passions in the hearts of the unsatisfied and disappointed. Idolatry is simply love of anything but God. On the other side it is seen as sheer hatred of God. Then hatred is named boldly in its various forms. Variance or quarrelling, emulation or rivalry, wrath or anger, strife or dissensions, heresies or party

spirit—these are forms of self often projected into group manifestations and all the more evil because they are excused on spiritual grounds and dressed up to appear as legitimate in the service of God.

The more obvious evils such as envy, murders, drunkenness, revellings, clearly picture the extent to which self will go in its mad endeavour to please itself. Not one of these works of the flesh can be separated from self-love and hatred of that which is fine and good. They arise out of self-love. But that very kind of love destroys the ego and creates the depths of a hell it will know for all eternity. Nothing sadder can be written of man than that his life finally narrowed down to only himself. How dreary—left to oneself for all eternity, with nothing to satisfy the unhappy, restless, self-centred ego.

Following this list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5: 19-21, Paul cites the fruit or harvest of the Spirit. Before we examine them we ought to see that in I Corinthians 13:1-3 he speaks about some works which would seem to spring out of love, but in reality are imitation love products. Here we may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, may have all knowledge and mountain-moving faith, may understand deep mysteries, may go to the extent of giving all our possessions to feed the poor and even offer our bodies to be burned, yet not have love. This seems incredible until we realize that this is happening throughout the world—in the homelands and on the mission fields.

The national people are amazed at what missionaries will do, but even more amazed that often there is no evidence of love in all this fine effort. Self, not love, is at the heart of this demonstration.

When, however, we examine the fruit or harvest of the Spirit we see the true character of love. It is the character of Christ. It *is* Christ. The fruit is not a collection of separate single fruits, but rather a harvest. We have all, or none. A woman once said, “I have all the fruits of the Spirit, except one—patience.” This is a contradiction. If one does not possess patience, then one does not love. We also have to recognise that certain people are temperamentally calm and able to endure difficulties. Indeed one has said, “Until I became a Christian I didn’t know I had a temper.”

We will see later what these characteristics of love are, but the list given by St. Paul is a complete and perfect picture of our Lord as He suffered in those hours of His death and passion. He was the living example of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance. Thus we gather that this fruit is Christ Himself, indwelling. The contrast between the self-extending yet ego-destroying works of the flesh is so strong that one wonders that man would be so foolish as to persist in the life of the flesh. Yet the natural man cannot see the beauty of love. He is the victim of his own lusts and

passions. Paul points out that the Cross alone can crucify these and liberate a man into the broader realm of love.

However, what is distressing is the sight of one who is dwelling daily with Christ, yet in whose life the old flesh or self forms, newly disguised, have their way. It is shown in criticism of other groups neither as orthodox nor as holy as his, or of other folk who have not attained to his usefulness, or knowledge—indeed in a thousand ways. There are successful preachers who do not know how to fulfil their duties as fathers or husbands. The character of love is positive, but self, in any form, is self-seeking, self-protecting, self-extending. It looks for worship and praise of its activities. Whatever it may pretend to be, it resents criticism deeply and in reality hates all but itself. It becomes violent in thought or in overt action against all that oppose it. Someone has said that sin is “meism,?” and the great world or age of self could then be called “us-ism.” Self is not simply a minor unfortunate accident in man’s history and his being. It is the major’ tragedy of all time.

Therefore, we see the necessity to know the truth and the experience of love. Love is self-giving. God was and is ever self-giving. This was manifested ‘at Calvary. More than this we cannot say—“God is Love.” We will never have any love but His. The love which operates through us is God’s love. Its quality is never less than His, for it is His quality. Only by union with Him may we love. For this reason love

can never be self-centred. As Westcott says, “Man receives the love of God and makes it his own.” This means that although the love is God’s or God Himself, yet when man knows union with Him that love, in some way, becomes his own. We discover that love is truly an act of the will. There is nothing love cannot do—if we are willing to be obedient. Man must decide to operate by love and so truly love. As Christ and the Father were one, by the same love the child of God and the Father become one. John says, “Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.”

Thus we see that the ego, hitherto selfish in all its activities, is replaced when cancelled at the Cross, by what would seem to be a new ego. This is in fact our essential ego with its old members redirected. So self-love is changed into love for God and fellow men. Self-worship now becomes worship of God, and self-praise the same. Our faculties once used for promoting our own enjoyment are now engaged in sharing the glories of God with others and bringing to them the joy that comes from belonging utterly and entirely to God and all His creatures.

CHAPTER FIVE

HEIGHT BEYOND ALL HEIGHTS

PAUL'S interest in the subject of love is apparent in all his Epistles. John is known as the Apostle of Love, but he never attempts an analysis of love. He clearly lays down the conditions for love, and understands loving simply as a matter of obedience, and hatred as disobedience and death. But Paul fits the concept of love into his theology. For example, we miss the main point of the Ephesian Epistle by not seeing that love is one of the great key-words. It is this that gives meaning to all that he says. Similarly, in the Epistle to the Galatians, he deprecates the barren legalism of the Judaisers, extolling the delightful obedience to the Holy Spirit which will bring forth the fruits of love. To the Philippians he writes expressing his anxiety that they should know to the full the great experience of humility in love.

In the Corinthian church Paul was faced with the numerous problems of party spirit, law suits, licentiousness, boasting by those possessed of the gifts of the Spirit. He assessed the problem as one of spiritual immaturity. In his First Epistle he deals with each problem, but in the third chapter he points out that whereas, as young Christians, they had been unable to digest more than baby's diet in spiritual things, now they will accept nothing stronger, because they are

immature, or deliberately carnal. They who should have been enjoying that which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man," were far from knowing these "deep things of God" which only the Spirit could reveal.

Paul explains what he means by carnal. It is not that he has deep things for them which they cannot grasp intellectually. He says (I Cor. 3:3), "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Envy and strife are words used by Paul in Galatians 5; 19:21. They are "works of the flesh."

His one vision has no boundaries. He does not oppose Cephas, or Apollos, or others. He includes them all. "All things are yours," he says. "Why foolishly limit yourself to one set of ideas? They are all yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all things are yours." This is the love that knows no boundaries. He allows his wings to be clipped by no one. He refuses to be caught inside any party, however perfect it may be. We may pity the Corinthians for their foolish party-divisions, but we ought to look to ourselves to find out how firmly we are imprisoned by our denominational doctrines, concepts and attitudes. We could be more stunted than our Corinthian brethren.

Paul is saddened by the contradiction of believers who, gathering together for the Lord's Supper—part of which seemed to have been the Love-Feast—failed to show love but instead manifested self. They took their food into a corner while others, poor and foodless, sat and watched hungrily. Most seemed to have missed the point that it was the Communion, the Holy Fellowship of Love. He pointed to a mysterious uneasiness which arose when some claimed to discern the Body, but because of blindness of heart, in reality could not.

The problems affecting the church at Corinth all arose out of self-seeking. How else could a man take his brother to court before Gentiles? How else become a stumbling block to his weaker brother who could not understand that eating meat sold in the shambles was not partaking in idolatrous worship? How could any man dare to boast of gifts, or indulge in emulation, when the Holy Spirit of God had endowed Him with such gifts, given to upbuild the body in love? How necessary for Paul to teach the intimate relationship of the members of the Body. Having shown them the barrenness of lack of love, and having explained the unity of the body, Paul now leads them to a vantage point. From here they gaze at a vista unsurpassed for beauty—the wonder of love. “Look!” he says, “I show you a way above all other ways, a height beyond all heights—Love!”

How strange this must have seemed to his stunted, immature Christian brethren at Corinth. And how strange it would seem to many of us today if the sheer beauty of I Corinthians 13 had not lulled us into thinking that it was only exquisite poetry. Here Paul has taken one of his unusual poetical flights but it is intensely practical.

As we have seen, he speaks in the first three verses of an “imitation” love. And there is an imitation love. It springs from a recognition that love is the highest reality. But it is a vain thought that unaided human effort can achieve love. Love is God's Being and it can only be known by His indwelling. We cannot manufacture God's nature however much we may try to emulate or copy it.

Paul then moves on to show what true love is. It is a living portrait of Christ. “Love suffereth long,” that is, love is long-suffering. It bears the sneers, the taunts, the injustices, the pressures of Scribe, Pharisee, Sadducee and Priest. It hears its acts misunderstood, its motives twisted, its deeds ascribed to the powers of darkness. Longsuffering is suffering which goes to any length.

“**Love is kind.**” Kindness is not mere pity. It springs from love. We never lose our appetite for kindness. We may find it hard to describe but we easily recognise it when we see it manifested.

“**Love envies not,**” that is, it is not jealous. It does not seek to emulate. It does not resent one who is more gifted or who has acquired more knowledge. Love knows such envy is empty and futile, selfish and without purpose. “Love vaunteth not itself,” that is, it does not boast. Love hides itself and is shy at being found out in good. “Love is never puffed up,” for it knows that pride is empty and knowledge without love is empty. To be puffed up with nothing but self, is to do despite to that which is made in the image of God and which should therefore be filled with His love.

“**Love does not behave itself unseemly.**” What does that mean? It means that in a person who loves, no unseemly act is seen. In Christ’s life there was no unseemly act. He was never rude, never assertive. He viewed sinner and saint alike and treated them with courtesy. He rebuked Peter’s untimely act of severing Malchus’s ear and showed kindness towards him. This showed Peter’s act to be unseemly, however loyal his impetuosity may have seemed. That which is most unseemly of all is to insist upon one’s own rights. This love never does. And as a matter of fact, when we insist upon our rights, we stimulate a similar insistence in the other party. We all have rights, true or imagined, and they stimulate the dark devils of pride, envy and emulation, and the white devils of indignation. These latter are stimulated when we are truly in the right. Christ was truly in the right, but He never insisted on His rights. The twelve legions

of angels, poised to do His will, remained uncalled. Instead He chose that way of glory which is called suffering. It was not a disguise, but His robe of glory that He wore, and Satan could have no part in Him. Satan, no more than self-blinded man, can understand the glory of humility, or the humility of love.

“**Love is never provoked.**” Actually we are only provoked when we claim to have rights. That is why it is foolish to think that we have fights. God has rights and He alone. Yet Christ chose not to insist upon them. Love is unprovokable. Thus man’s rebellion can never move God, as it were, out of His orbit. The Christian who dwells in that same love never gets out of focus. He goes the extra mile; out of love. He turns one cheek out of love and then the other, if love so demands. This is not an inverted legalism. The Authorised Version says, “love is not easily provoked” but the Revised Version translates correctly, “Love is not provoked.” We are given no excuse to say, “One can love to a point, but then there is a point beyond which even love cannot go.” This would be to deny the absolute reality of the Cross.

“**Love thinketh no evil,**” that is, about others. It abhors evil in itself and is not eager to find it in others. It does not impute evil to another, even when it seems to be there. In a way, it seeks to excuse, although it hates that which is evil. It seeks to understand. It never stands in judgment or criticism of another. It encourages the weaker brother and salvages the

Zacchaeus, the Matthew, and the woman who is a sinner. It never seeks to raise its own reputation by pushing others down. It sees that to seek evil and failure in another is to deny God's working and to have a perverted satisfaction at seeing some success of evil. It tries not to underrate the person recreated in the image of Christ.

Thus "love rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth." It sees failure and is sad. It sees truth prevail and is flooded with joy. It sees righteousness crowned in a life and is glad. It is thrilled when it finds new springs of pure thought and action welling. It exults in finding out all of God's Holy Being and in seeing God's graciousness and His love flood another and light up what before was darkness. This is love's ultimate. It is this which makes the leaders cast down their crowns, for they submit most joyfully to that great Authority, Enthroned Love. Love rejoices in the truth, for love is Truth,—crucified, risen and ascended. Truth is Victor and Lord over all.

"**Love beareth all things,**" that is, suffereth all things, but not just with resigned patience. The meaning really is, "Love covers everything," as a mother bird covers her young—a protection which costs something. The Spirit of God brooded over the chaos in the beginning and, it would seem, protected that chaos. Out of it was to come the pure creation which was indeed "very good." But chaos must be abhorrent to the Spirit of Light. Nevertheless, love covers, en-

dures and suffers that which is abhorrent, not simply because the chaos becomes ordered and patterned, but because chaos is something which can never become beautiful without love. Love works on a chaos and brings form and pattern. If only we would believe this when we see chaos in the lives of men and women. If only the pastor, the missionary, the child of God would see and believe this. The Spirit of God works on the chaos of corrupt selfish man, and transforms the ego until it becomes like Christ. Although it does not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know that when we shall see Him, we *shall be like Him*. Indeed that process of transformation is proceeding daily. Love, in bearing all things, transforms all things.

"**Love believeth all things.**" Love never ceases to exercise faith. Had God ceased to believe man, man himself would never have begun to believe. It is not that God knows what can be done. He knows what has been done. He knows the power of His Cross, of reconciliation. Without faith it is impossible to believe God. Because God believes, we must believe. When we cease to believe in all things, we doubt not our own love, but His. When love becomes scared and refuses to trust, we betray the loved one. Love then lays down demands, conditions for security. The bird fears the darkness and flees from the chaos. Trust calls out a response. Unbelief withers the weakly shoot which has begun to sprout. It is not simply that we have ceased to believe one who has failed, but God Who has never failed.

“Love hopeth all things.” Hope is more than wishful thinking. Hope is tasting the first-fruits of faith, and looking, undaunted, to obtain all. No matter how much circumstances militate against love, they do in fact but strengthen and mature it. Hope, however, does not exist apart from love. “And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given unto us.” Love knows that, in itself, it is the final Reality. Nothing can destroy love, for love never fails, and therefore its hope is often clean against common-sense and self-saving rational wisdom. But love’s hope has led a people out of darkness into the regenerating light of the Gospel.

Hope does not surrender its object to the forces of darkness, but against hope saves it. That is what leads a man to believe that there is nothing God is unable to do. Even though his convert plunges back into darkness, the hope of love sustains him and faith sees the final emergence of the redeemed creature. It is this hope which assures us that He Who has begun a good work will complete it. It dares not give up hope for another. In this way hoping and believing are the same.

“Love endures all things”—without exception. Love never nearly endures all things. It not only endures all things but, as the text suggests, patiently endures all things. The real meaning of the word is that it “waits behind.” It does not wish to be the first in line, or at the feast, or in the praise. It does not en-

dure wearily, but with gladness. Love has discovered the joy of being left behind. It is the same endurance demonstrated at Calvary by Him Who “for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross.”

“Love never fails,” that is, it is eternal. It has no mark of the temporal on it. Experienced in time, it is the quality of the eternal. It never has a flaw in it. That is why Satan could not scale its heights at Calvary. He could find no foothold. It has no dark patch of corruption. It never can revert to self-love and save itself. It can never fall down under pressures. It never accepts bribes. It never makes conditions for itself. It never fails itself, because it never fails others. When we save ourselves, we fail others. True self is linked with all self, because it is in Him, ultimately, that we live and move and have our being. Love listens to the accusation and taunt, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save,” and it agrees. This is the logic of love. Love cannot save itself, else it would cease to be love.

But other things fail. However highly we may prize the gifts of the Spirit, or the possession of knowledge, they must pass. They are simply the temporary servants of love. They are a scaffolding which must drop away when the structure is complete. It is eternal, they are temporal. All the joy of prophecy, the ecstasy of tongues and whatever else may be, would have no point unless they were motivated by love and were the minister of love. We look for the perfect to come.

When I was a child I was childish, says St. Paul. You poor childish ones at Corinth. Would that you were child-like, but you are childish. You quarrel like children, divide up into groups, stand on the hillocks of your pride and shout, "I'm the king of the castle, and you're the dirty rascal." Only children get into corners and greedily eat all they have been able to snatch. But this is the way of children and we do not criticise them for it.' We try to train and change them.

The matured man has learned the dignity of maturity. Matured by love he has left the restlessness of self-seeking. He enjoys the dwellings of light. He welcomes the consuming fire of God's Love and His Being. He has little fear, for all it can consume is the last traces of self. Then he sees what he really is and marvels at the power of love which has changed him into a fully matured being, created for an eternity of selfless being in the image of His Saviour.

These others, says St. Paul, will feel the fire of His love, but when the fire has destroyed the last vestiges of self, there will be little remaining. Many have done much building, but it has been of the flesh. Perhaps it was faith, knowledge, tongues and martyrdom, but all with an eye to praise and to self. They will be saved, but what they will have missed! They will be painfully aware of what they missed.

Truly love is the height beyond all heights. But it is not beyond the child of God for he was made to love. It is not an experience designed only for eternity. God's love may be perfected in us now. No man has

seen God at any time, but we can see Him, indwelling human creatures by love—if only we will leave our busy programs, our sacrifice, our great knowledge, our methods, our special doctrines, our self-seeking, and begin being obedient in love.

This is God's final and mighty triumph. The whole world waits expectantly to see it. Creation strains to catch a sight of the triumph of the Cross: human creatures snatched from their selfish darkness and made to be sons of light; creatures so transformed by love that they are lovers—lovers of God and lovers of men.

And for this a hungry world continues to wait in every land. It knows our zeal. It admits our earnestness in contending for doctrines. It acknowledges our sacrifice. But it waits to see love.

"Follow after love," says St. Paul.

CHAPTER SIX

HATING AND LOVING MYSELF

THERE is a right loving of one's self, just as there is a right hating of one's self. Out of focus, such love and hatred are dangerous. "He that loveth his life shall lose it," said our Lord. Perhaps it could be translated, "He that loveth his soul, or his self, shall lose it. But he who hates his self, for My sake, shall keep it unto life eternal." What does this mean? Is there not a legitimate love of one's self? Are we not told to love our neighbour as ourselves? If we hate ourselves, then how can we really love our neighbour? Wherein lies the explanation?

It is simple. He who first loves God may then love himself. One has said, "Love God and do what you like," or, "Love God and be what you like," "Love God, and then love yourself as you like." It all depends on the way I love God. If I love Him with every faculty—heart, mind, soul and strength—then those faculties are wholly dedicated to God. I would seem to have nothing left over with which to love myself, and this is true. Yet, paradoxically, I have every faculty to use in a true love of this self which primarily loves God. It is orientated to Him, not to me and I first find myself in the delight of worshipping and serving Him.

Mankind has to re-find its way to God. It has long forgotten the joy of being dependent upon God. It seeks after the temporal things, forgetting that God created these for man's pleasure, setting certain spiritual laws for the right enjoyment of them. "All things for Thy pleasure, were, and are created." The child at the breast knows a sweet and natural comfort of dependence. When a soul is truly dependent upon God it receives its life from Him and becomes a new creation, loving and lovable.

But it is healthy to hate one's soul, initially. Unredeemed, it is in the clutches of a grasping, self-hugging, self-seeking power. It so easily becomes resentful, irritated, angry, provoked, impatient, intolerant. It resents those above and fears those below. It seeks possessions, power and glory for itself. It wraps itself, octopus-fashion, around what it has come to possess. It fears to lose dear relationships and, in this respect, is suspicious of others. It dreads the cold heights of holiness, the bracing atmosphere of obedience, so lurks in the unhealthy darkness of self-protection.

It is only by spiritual revelation that we see self as a thing to be despised. Whatever his previous spiritual experiences may have been, Isaiah caught such an understanding of himself in the Temple, as to make him cry out in horror that he was a man of unclean lips, undone, and lost. He saw his own miserable self in the light of God's holiness and purity. He saw his own smallness and meanness in the light of God's

glory. His experience was intolerable, agonising. He must be cleansed or he could not abide God's glory. He hated his old self and longed to be utterly identified with this new fullness of God which he now saw.

Similarly Peter, lazily following Christ, let down the nets for the draught of fish which he may not even have expected. Then suddenly he understood with awful certainty the true eternal character of Christ. It was intolerable. He cried out in agony for Christ to depart from him. He saw his old life and hated it. Nothing of self is tolerable to us when we have seen the glory of Christ.

Zacchaeus, with his eyes fixed on this world's goods, must have been to some extent dissatisfied with the pleasure they could bring, but when he saw Christ in all His love, he could not tolerate his old life a moment longer.

Saul, the arrogant, self-righteous Pharisee busily persecuting the church of God, saw the glory of Christ on the Damascus road. Later he counted his own former glory of self as rubbish. He tells of the intense relief to know crucifixion with Christ—that old self on a criminal's cross, which is the rightful place for every jot and tittle of self. Paul, Isaiah, Peter, Zacchaeus—each was given a new self, of which they were never to be ashamed.

Thus we see that to lose every attachment to self and to all that self clings to—possessions, friendships, relationships, ambitions, things—is but a glorious

liberation. The Cross seems cruel. It is so, because it is against all self-saving human reasoning. But it is not cruel, any more than the surgeon's knife when it separates dead or cancerous tissue from the living flesh. Indeed to cease living to self, is to cease living in death. The flower in the darkness becomes like the darkness, and when brought to the light is a dismal sight. The flower that turns toward the sun is filled with rich colour. So are we when turned outward to God.

We may conclude then that hating oneself, far from being a morbid and introspective pursuit, is simply a determined going to death with Christ. He had to take humanity with Him to that Cross. However, we not only die with Him, we are resurrected. We are not only resurrected, but live a resurrected life. We not only live a resurrected life, but reign with Him. We not only reign in the heavenlies, but are given the ministry of a priest, to bear in love the names of the world's lost tribes upon our breast. Here is a ministry that not even angels are allowed. Who then would revert to the old ministry to self, when he may know the full richness of being a child of God, one of a kingdom of priests, ministering before God for his brethren?

Man is foolish to live in the barrenness of asceticism, or will-worship, or in the licentiousness of antinomianism. In both he must hate himself, for he is a traitor to the true liberty of the children of God. But

in living the new life in Christ, he may love himself, for he is indwelt by Christ, filled with the Spirit, flooded with love. Why should he hate such a creation, made by God, bought by the blood of the Cross, renewed daily by all the power of the indwelling Spirit, being transformed into the full image of Christ and is in him having God's love perfected?

This is the sort of message we ought to be preaching to-day. Paul told his Colossian readers to seek the things which are above, because that is where they belonged, having been raised with Christ. We set our affections where we belong. And in that sense we belong where we set our affections. When people see us setting our affections on things below they will surely judge us as belonging to this order.

We ought to recognise that God has renewed us. He has made us the kind of creatures in whom there is the natural impulse and capacity to love. We go against all that He has made us when we hate. "He that is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Moreover, we, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are being transformed, from glory unto glory. The process is a continuous one, with an ever widening outreach.

I ought to be ashamed when I allow the Devil to delude me into believing a lie. Some seem to think it is not right to claim that God has done anything in our lives. We then agree with Satan that we cannot

be victorious over sin and that being delivered from the bondage of sin is an interesting doctrine, but not a fact in experience.

Paul tells us that the love of God has already been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who has been given unto us. Therefore the love is already there. John tells us that whosoever is born of God loves his brother, and whoever loves Him, loves him also that is begotten of Him. As we have seen it is our nature to love. Paul told the Thessalonians, "as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." He then goes on to say, "And indeed ye do it towards all the brethren which are in Macedonia."

We know then, that we can love. We have been chosen to be the praise of the glory of His grace and have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. We need not think about the future. The Word of God tells us what has already been done. Satan would dearly love to have us think only in the future tense. Many Christians live in this tense. God is always going to do something. He has either done things in the past, or He is going to do things in the future. He is the God of the future tense. There is power, victory, blessing, a renewed church, a rich experience of love and fellowship—all in the future.

When we understand what God has already done in making us new creatures, and begin to comprehend the power of the indwelling Spirit, realising that a transforming process is going on within us, then we

understand what it means to love ourselves. We love this thing that God is doing and we gladly begin to work out that which He has wrought within, even to fear and trembling, fearing lest in any way we might fall short, or miss that full reward, the crown of righteousness stored up for that day.

But if I see this in myself, then I must also see it in others. I cannot egotistically believe that God is partial to me above others. God is working in all His children. It is an interesting experience to see God at work in other lives. The Body of Christ is composed of many members. As we begin to share and talk with them we discover our own selves in a new way. We learn that we must love others in order truly to love ourselves, and that Christ, so precious to us personally, is known in all His wonderful Being only when He is shared with others.

To many members of the Body of Christ this last paragraph will seem more like an ideal than a reality. And in all fairness we must admit that in practice it seems to be so. We seem to stand on the edge of what fellowship has to offer. We seal ourselves off from fellowship in an age which is spiritually hungry. It is a great missionary age. It seems we lack only one thing—love. If we are not careful we will grow bitter accusing others of lacking it, because we are disappointed at not finding it in ourselves.

It is an age of fragmenting. Group splits off from group. Holiness becomes more select, narrowing down until only one is standing in that magic circle. Theo-

logians waste their time on fine points of prophecy and similar non-essentials. Others spend time trying to draw the spreading groups into one—for it would seem more comfortable so to live. All the time the real oneness is within our grasp—rather, within us—the power of love. It is this that every joint supplies when it is working. How foolish we are to refrain from being what He has made us.

When we really see what we now are and live that way, we are certainly not ashamed of what He has made us and He is not ashamed to call us His brethren. When we do live this way it is called Revival, whereas the early Church just thought of it as its natural life! Call it what you may, we want it all.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LOVE IS NOT PROVOKED

WE are now in a position to believe that God's whole Being can be worked out in us, that His love can be perfected, that we can love others, and that we can really demonstrate love as we have seen it in Christ and refuse the evil of self, as we have known it in our own lives.

Love is not provoked and the example is Christ Himself. We have seen that the Revised Version gives us the better rendering, "Love is not provoked," as against the "love is not easily provoked" of the Authorised Version. When we realize that God is not simply loving, but is Love Itself we are faced with a number of problems. The Scriptures say very clearly that the Israelites often provoked God. "They tempted and provoked the Most High God," "They provoked Him to anger with their high places." Psalm 78: 56,58. "They provoked Him to anger with their inventions," "They angered Him also at the waters of strife." Psalm 106: 29,32. How then, in the light of these verses, can we understand God to be Love when He was provoked and yet we are expected not to be provoked?

The explanation would seem to lie first in understanding the meaning of provocation, and then in discovering what it means in the human realm and what in the Divine.

The writer of Hebrews tells us clearly that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. This is what is known today as remedial discipline. That love disciplines is an interesting fact. Love is never easy-going. Because it is so intimately concerned with our well-being and growth it seeks to implant right attitudes and build character. Any act of discipline on God's part must not be confused with the rather mixed sort of discipline administered by earthly parents which so often has in it elements of resentment, indignation and impatience. With God this cannot be so.

Secondly, God is Judge. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Yes, of course. We cannot understand this term "provocation" in respect to God, because our provocation arises from the "I am" of our lives. "I am incensed that this should be directed against me." "I am amazed." "I am grieved that this should be thought of me." However, God alone is the true "I AM." He is true, absolute Being. He does not need to justify, protect, save or extend Himself. He IS. He told Abraham that He was the "I AM." Jesus spoke in the same measure. His contemporaries recognised that He claimed to be God by saying, "Before Abraham was I AM" and this meant either that He was God or that He blasphemed. Our "I am"-ness is a sort of fine blasphemy.

We recognise that Satan's evil lay in his initial envy of God's "I AM"-ness. He wanted to be "I AM." Hence in Isaiah 14:12-14 we read of his five emphatic "I wills" which, in themselves, betrayed the fact that

he was not an “I AM” but only a pretender. He was really only an “I will be,” a future tense and not eternal. Infected with the same poison, mankind restlessly seeks, to establish its “I am”-ness. Satan will not be satisfied until he is worshipped as God in the Temple, but that will be short-lived.

However, it is this “I am” in the ego seeking domain of man’s being which is his point of provocation. Insecure, he seeks to preserve himself. Thus he is “touchy”—easily provoked. The real I AM, of course, has nothing to fear for HE IS. He is Judge. He alone is truly impartial. His conclusions must be right and His actions consequent upon judgment must be right, issuing as they do out of His Being of Love.

What then do we understand by such phrases concerning provocation as we have quoted above? Firstly we must recognise that from Israel’s point of view God acted against their evil. It would be a foolish mind indeed which ascribed to God the petty emotions and reactions which we experience in such circumstances. Then we must recognise that God has wrath. This is part of His Being. He is angered by sin. Again not in a weak subjective temper, arising out of insecurity and frustration. They can never be His in experience. He is wrathful against that which would destroy the character of His creatures. We only learn of this wrath by revelation, for if we compare it with our own wrath, we will never understand it. Love is wrathful for it is committed to hate darkness and destroy devilishness in every form.

We see, then, that the Israelites are describing God’s right anger against their wrong action. The language is slanted towards their understanding. The act of provocation was the evil thing and mainly because they believed they could provoke God. It was ascribing such character to God as man possessed that was the real evil. They attempted to deal with Him as a man. Eventually they were to understand clearly that only because God loved them did He punish them. Mawkish sentiment preserves the evil-doer from punishment. It tries to evade the criticism that comes to a love that cares enough to be misunderstood, but which knows that the eternal laws of love and justice demand punishment.

We can conclude then, when we speak of God being provoked, that we must have regard to His being Judge and Lover. His were not human reactions. God is objective in His dealing, although never impersonal. His love and His wrath cannot be separated.

We also see that anger from provocation is instinctive self-defence, or self-justification. It is evil. Love can never defend itself either passively or actively. Therefore it cannot be provoked. The perfect picture of Love unprovoked is our Lord. From the moment of His birth evil forces set out to destroy His peace. The fear of Herod tried to destroy Him. He was forced into exile when a babe. He lived in humble circumstances, and when He emerged into His public ministry, the great pressures were always about Him. His actions were misunderstood. The Scribes, Phari-

sees and other leaders were continually bringing pressures to bear. The Cross is the story of unfair dealings; and even when He was in the grave they sought to dispute His prophecies concerning Himself.

However, all they could draw from Him was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." The character of His dying was such that the Roman soldier was forced to cry, of a supposed criminal, "Surely this was the Son of God!"

His then was the eternal example of non-provocation. He neither provoked, nor was provoked. Indeed, to believe that He could be provoked would be to deny His Godhead. The prophet Isaiah, in his great 53rd chapter, had spoken of this. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." Later Peter pointed back and declared, "neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not . ." Satan could not understand this. It was not that Christ wore a disguise, but just the glory of His own humility, which the self-blinded eyes of Satan could not see, nor understand.

Not that His love was pliable. He cleansed the evil from the Temple with a whip, and His love will be the whip which will scourge the evil from many a sin-drenched spirit. It was the same tender mercy of God which drove His people to Babylon, and brought

them back refined and said to them, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem."

It is perhaps from Moses, more than any other, that we learn the principle of provocation. He was called the meekest man upon all the earth and bore so well with the grumbling of his people. Yet in Numbers chapter twenty we read of his failure. We know that the rock from which the waters were to flow had already been smitten. Christ was that Rock. The Rock needed only one smiting, after which the rivers of living water would flow. Indeed the stage was set to demonstrate the endless kindness of God in the time of His people's need. Yet they were impatient, grumbling and self-centred.

In all this it is not for us to pour criticism on Moses. So many of us face similar situations daily and fail, as did he.

Moses stood as God's representative. The people knew that God had supplied all their needs. Their attitude was ungracious, but it is the ungracious who need to see love. They knew God would not punish them for having a need. So they watched and listened to Moses. To them he was the hand and the voice of God.

But the man who spoke was Moses and not the servant of God. "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" It was a horrible moment: Moses assuming the prerogative of God and defaming

Him in the eyes of the people. The rock was ready to pour forth the fullness of its sweet waters. Then Moses struck the rock and his words and action constitute the act of provocation of all time. It was Moses' and in a sense, God's great opportunity to show love, but it failed.

The Psalmist later rightly observed, (Ps. 106: 32, 33), "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." The lips betrayed the heart.

God said to Moses, "Ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the people." God is sanctified in the eyes of the people when we love. We understand and deplore Moses' failure but we forget to deplore the fact that we fail to sanctify Him when we, too, are provoked. We are provoked by fellow-nationals, fellow-workers, fellow-missionaries, fellow-believers. Of course they are grumbling and complaining, but then we have been given leadership and understanding. Here is an occasion to demonstrate love and to refuse to be provoked. And so often we fail in the occasion.

Paul knew the error of lips that uttered speech that was not with grace. He wished that his readers could speak so that they would "minister grace unto the hearers." Perhaps he never forgot that occasion when he and beloved Barnabas had words. It is; one of the rare occasions in the New Testament when a

derivative of the word "provoke" is used. We could translate Acts 15:39 "the provocation was so strong between them, that they departed asunder one from the other." Rare is the saint who does not know provocation. Yet Paul was adamant when he said, "Love is not provoked."

Paul knew too, that provocation is more likely when we are in the right. "Be ye angry, and sin not," he said, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: *neither give place to the devil.*" Here is an indignation which might have a right basis, but is dangerous if we go to bed nursing it, for Satan will be given an entrance. To be right, and yet to be gracious is really loving; indeed it provides the finest opportunity for loving. Right indignation can pass over into wrong anger, but refusal to be provoked leaves the believer unassailable by evil.

The Apostles pointed to the example of Christ because He had been humiliated. He had walked down step by step to the most humiliating darkness and had demonstrated God's love in it all. On the basis of such an example they exhorted themselves and their brethren. They never thought it to be beyond them.

Finally we see that provocation is not just a slip of the moment. We sometimes say, "Why on earth did I say that? I could have bitten off my tongue but it just slipped out before I realised it." The fact is that provocation in any situation has a history behind it. Our minds rationalise the failure. We say, "I have been doing too much lately." "I have been so pressed

that I have missed my Quiet Times.” “I can’t remember when I was so busy.” “It is all right for some folk, but I have been placed where I have so many pressures that one breaks down under them.” All these statements are undoubtedly true, but if we are honest we will see that our failure does not arise from pressures, but how we have accepted and used the pressures.

There are some who suggest that any sort of busyness in a Christian is wrong, but that cannot be fairly maintained. Although many Christians do plunge themselves into an unnecessary and unproductive, restless activity, others simply have to meet real and useful commitments. However, it is the way in which they meet them that counts. If they resent the pressures and dream about quiet hours for meditation, then their attitude must result in frustration. If the Spirit of God is not allowed to lead in the pressures and busyness—or worse, if we seek to get to ourselves a kind of glory from our much doing, then we ought not to be surprised how quickly we flare up at the slightest provocation.

Of course some are busy because they dare not face quietness. Perhaps somewhere they have lost their zeal, have unconfessed sin, have bitterness in the heart, even have grievances against God—and what better way to avoid God than to be busy in His work? Again, the person may be seeking for the applause of fellow Christians in order to escape the deeper insecurity of not being quietly in the center of His will. Busyness is one thing, and restless busyness another.

We will understand that wrong reaction to provocation means that we are not living in regular fellowship with God and our fellow-creatures. Our spiritual exercises are our opportunity to retain horizontal fellowship with our brethren, and vertical fellowship with our Father. If we find ourselves easily provoked, then we ought to seek farther back than the specific occasion to understand the cause. The constant warnings in Scripture to “watch and pray,” to “be vigilant, be sober,” to “study to show thyself approved,” to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” show us that there is a steady work of daily spiritual exercise which we ought not to neglect. In other words, true loving is connected with real spiritual labour.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LOVE IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE

WE have seen thus far that the child of God can love, and that this truth is based upon the following facts. Because (1) we have been born of God and He has implanted within us a nature which loves, naturally, instinctively. (2) The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit by Whom every child of God is born and daily renewed. (3) Paul speaks of a personal teaching which we have from God. (I Thess. 4: 9). (4) It is a command. The command shows us, (a) If we are commanded, then we must obey. Not to obey is disobedience. (b) If God demands obedience then we must be able to be obedient. That is, the command is also a promise.

We have seen, too, that love is absolutely limitless. To stand and gaze at a vast ocean would be but to touch upon the fringe of what God's love is in extent. We have seen that love is depthless. We have seen that it cannot be provoked. Real love is fully symbolised by the Cross for it places man in full-orbed fellowship with God and man. The Cross points not only upwards to the Father, but down to the lost. Its two arms, held outwards, embrace the whole world which God so loves.

Yet Satan is ever ready to tell us we cannot love.

No doubt there are those sincere people who having read thus far, are saying, "Yes, all that is written here is Scripturally true but, nevertheless, with me anyway, it doesn't work." They have tried, but it doesn't work. There can be only two reasons why a person who is born again of the Spirit of God cannot love. (i) He does not wish to. (ii) He believes he is unable. Let us deal with the latter reason first. If a man is in ignorance of the points written above then, of course, he does not know he can love. He is simply ignorant of the facts. If the facts seem either too good to be true or oversimplified, then let the one who doubts search the Scriptures and see if these things are not so. If the facts are true then let the inquirer realize he can and must love and that it is a matter of the will—a will that is primarily surrendered to Christ. Because we can love we must choose to do so. Once I have chosen then I move out to love—and there, I love! It is so beautifully simple that many will not believe it. This unbelief is refusal to act on the facts.

We have already seen why a person does not wish to love. It is connected with conscious or unconscious inner attitudes. Primarily, of course, it is based on a misunderstanding of what God's prime intention of love is. Love redeems mankind. It brings him back to God. God's life begins to flow in him. Then he discovers that this is not individualistic. It is personal, but not individualistic. It is part of the stream of all redeemed humanity flowing together. Or, to go back

to Paul's metaphor, it is the Body of Christ compounded of every joint, muscle and sinew, each separate part supplying its own measure of love and the whole upbuilding itself in love. It is this experience of wholeness and fellowship which is so important. Almost every letter of the early shepherds of the Church was concerned with it.

If, then, a person does not realise' the importance of love he may refuse to love. If he could see the disastrous nature and consequences of his refusal he would surely change his mind. Perhaps more than anything, that which will change this kind of thinking would be to see love in action. We have seen love in action at Calvary. But then to many of us the Bible is a book far separated from us. We expect wonderful things to happen in it, but not outside. We have frozen our credits because our faith has gone cold on God's promises—a subtle way of evading His commands.

However, history has shown that mighty gates did not close at the end of the Apostolic Era, so that, today, all we can do is to look wistfully through their bars. History records, "How these Christians love one another!" And history has shown that it is the Christians who have tramped the world to bring their unique message of love. Honourable living, culture, distinguished maxims—many lands and religions have these; but Christianity alone has shown the true way of love. Sadly enough many of her ambassadors have been faulty and able only to talk about this. But then many have believed it is only a matter to be talked about.

Nevertheless love is a fact. History has demonstrated that. The revivals down through the centuries, especially when they have been allied to the commands and promises of Scripture, have demonstrated the truth of love. So, then, the person who has refused to love will be struck with surprise and horror when brought to an understanding of what love really is. He will see that it is some inner self-motive which makes him refuse to love. He is afraid of mankind, afraid to let down the barrier, is suspicious, is cautious, or perhaps afraid of others taking advantage of him. Such attitudes are only a little, if at all, removed from unbelief.

However, there is a real problem which confronts both the person who does not love because he is ignorant of the fact that he can, and the other who refuses to love. It is this. Satan beguiles us into believing that we are the exceptions. Yes, others can love, we admit, but we are different. We have tried to love, but have failed. Satan says, "Well, you are not the kind of person who loves. You have not been made that way temperamentally. Yes, you ought to love, but you don't because you can't. You are an exception." Being an exception in anything is always a form of self. And self criticism is one of the most deadly forms of self.

But we have seen that it is as natural for the Christian to love as it is for him to breathe. And it is wrong not to love. We know it is possible that the child of God may sin, but in between the two heresies

of sinless perfection and sinful imperfection, lies the real truth. We fail because we are in a battle and lose some of the minor engagements. Yet even then we have no excuse.

The real problem lies in our listening to the accusations of Satan. His favourite role is that of Accuser. He says, "Look, you just met that person and you instinctively recoiled." On another occasion he says, "See what an evil thought you have just had." The truth is, of course, that the initial thoughts were not ours. It is true we recoiled. It is true we had an evil thought, but that was from the outside, not within. Being children of God we think as we are led by the Spirit of God. If we agree to Satan in his accusation we are no different from what we were before, except, in some curious way, we have obtained eternal life though the evidence is entirely lacking because we deny we are creatures with a new life.

Of course we recognise that none of this new nature—our new life—is of our own making. It is dependent every minute upon the Indwelling Spirit for its being and action. But it *is* there. And so we can set our affections on things above because that is where we belong. We can have pure minds because that is what He has given us. Conversely we can leave our minds open to every evil and then we will be hopelessly defeated as many Christians are.

When I think an impure thought, am I to imagine that this is the natural outflow from the new creature in Christ? No, it is an intrusion from the Evil one,

and to such I will ever be subject while I am in this body and from which I will never be free until I have a new body. When Christ was tempted to hurl Himself from the Temple's pinnacle, to turn the stones into bread and to kneel before the Evil One in worship, did He even dream these were His own thoughts? If He had done so, He would have been evil. The evil of tempting God is that the tempter believes God's character to be such that it can listen and, possibly, accede to such temptation. James speaks of a rejoicing the believer can know when he is tempted, because it shows what God has done in him. This testing results in deeper patience.

Someone has said, "You may not be able to prevent a fly landing on you, but you don't have to allow it to remain." Another saying is, "You can't prevent birds flying around you, but you can prevent them nesting in your hair." So it is with an evil suggestion.

When once we realize the initial thought is from Satan, then we may quickly return it. If we retain it, either through desire or despair, we become its slave. When the Accuser tells us it is our thought, then we sink in despair, admitting what evil creatures we are. Despair is the ground where faith is defeated. It was in Doubting Castle that Giant Despair abode. That great fraud could never abide a brilliant dose of sunshine!

So then when an evil thought flashes to our minds we must return it. We must turn it down as dishonourable for a son of the King. We must remember the Rock from whence we were hewn. We must remember the Love that bought us. We must remember that we are called unto holiness. We must remember we are those in whom every thought can be brought under the captivity of Christ, and that we can set our affections on things above. Whatsoever things are pure, true, just, honest, lovely and of good report, we can think on these.

This brings a lovely sense of release. Many of us have never used the wings of love He has given us. We imagine all the joys that Christ and His Apostles talked about are on the other side of death—in Heaven. We will have to accustom ourselves to things we have never tasted. Let us build up our appetites here. If these experiences are our birthright, then let us move in them, as the bird ranges in the heavens.

One final point has to be considered—the occasion of love. Paul in Ephesians 5:20 writes, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is interesting to note the context, for two verses previously he has said, “Be filled (continuously) with the Spirit.” Thus he is telling us that a Spirit-filled person (which we all ought to be) must give thanks for all things.

It seems clear that these “all things” are the same as Paul mentions in Romans 8: 28. Many and varied have been the explanations given for these two verses.

and many the excuses. But it is clear that Paul in both contexts is speaking of the experience of the Christian life. Most of us would feel like hypocrites, thanking God for everything when some things have infuriated us, especially when they have been in the form of disagreeable persons. What then is Paul’s meaning?

Surely it is that every occasion is one in which God continues His work of transforming our lives. In II Corinthians 4:15 Paul says, “For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.” He then goes on to show a process which seems to pull and tear at our physical frames, yet which builds up an inner glory, “a far more eternal weight of glory.” The affliction, he says, is but momentary. Glimpsing something of its final result we scorn to consider any suffering as being of great import.

We can see then that irritating, frustrating, provoking situations do something to us. They knock off the edges and polish us. Perhaps Paul and Barnabas failed their Lord when they argued over John Mark. But it may have meant much in their lives, for God uses His children’s failures to teach them. He turns even the wrath of man to His praise. Not even crumbs are lost.

But there is an even deeper meaning to Paul’s words in these passages. Each occasion is an opportunity to glorify God. We have seen that the greatest act of provocation in history was Calvary. Every pos-

sible mean and despicable act was done in order to provoke the Lamb of God, but His lamb-like nature would not respond. In the Book of the Revelation His lion-like strength is symbolised by His lamb-like nature. True strength resides in humility. Because the occasion was one of provocation, then and only then could He demonstrate love. So with us. When we find it “easy to love people,” where is the occasion to demonstrate love? It is in the irritating, frustrating, exasperating experience—when the fault truly lies on the other side—that we can genuinely demonstrate love.

Thus we see that the most petty incident or the most trivial moment is always the occasion for showing love. The more difficult the circumstances, the more we are able to show love. Indeed, we can sincerely thank God for the really difficult moments, even more than for the easier ones.

Once we have grasped this the tension goes out of life. No matter how frustrating the situation, it is a wonderful opportunity to let His love be perfected in us. We no longer have to wait for special situations in which we can heroically (or otherwise) show our love. It is the domestic situation which shows the stuff we are made of, and whether it is of love or of self.

So we thank God for these opportunities. Christ never looked upon His sufferings as simply to be endured, but to be embraced as the moment of love.

Stephen doubtless did not realize he was becoming the first martyr and that he would heap posthumous glory to himself. He used the moment to advantage (albeit instinctively, reflexively) in a wonderful way. He was truly conformed to the image of His Saviour and of His death. “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

Of course it is not effortless. Much of the Christian life is taken up in reminding ourselves what we are and what He has made us, and forgetting what we were. The old life comes back time and again attempting to reinstate itself. Self has a thousand pretty little tricks to assure us it has lost its old habits. Sometimes we fall for its allurements, and forget the slavery of Egypt, remembering only its charming leeks. Yet we know that there is no clear clean joy like that of moving out into this new land He has prepared for us. The exercises of love bring great joy and we long to be masters in love.

The skilled athlete spends many years of perfecting his art. The tiring unseen hours he toils away are lost to the cheering public when he plays his apparently effortless shots. Yet those shots were born in practice. The player knew he could do it, and because he could, he would. And so he does them in easy fashion. So with us. We have many old lingering notions which have to be discarded. We have to discover all the blessings with which we have been blessed in Christ Jesus.

And not only for ourselves. Theology is good for men. But men sometimes dissociate truth from action. Belief and action ought to be one. How many hungry hearts are looking to see faith which worketh by love. Our love is not *our* love. It is His. The love perfected in us is His love. No man has seen God at any time. When love is seen perfected in us men and women are seeing God. It is certain they are not seeing us. It is just as certain, however, that they are seeing what God can do in us.

The spiritually hungry living in dry, waterless deserts are sure to be attracted if they see rivers of living water and trees hanging heavy with the harvest of the Spirit. And they will surely want to partake of this love if they are unsatisfied by what they have found elsewhere.

CHAPTER NINE

THE BARRIERS TO LOVE

WE have seen the picture John has drawn for us of the children of God in whom God's love is perfected. This is brought about by loving the brethren, by being obedient to God's command, and by faith in Christ, as Messiah, and as the One Who has defeated Satan, and with him sin and self, the world and death. We have seen that it is possible for the child of God to have His love perfected in him through these measures and that he is, therefore, under obligation to live such a life. John in this context says in effect, "No man has seen God at any time. But a man may see God when he sees God's love perfected in us."

Speaking of Christ's incarnation John uses much the same words. He says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." (John 1:18). John meant that by His life of love Christ showed forth to men God's Very Being. Later, as Christ was about to go to the Cross, He said to His disciples, "If ye had known me., ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and *have seen him.*" His meaning here is clear. However, Philip requested, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." To which Christ answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that

hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

From this we understand clearly that the Father manifested Himself through the Son. At no time were the apostles or those of their generation exercised with the philosophical problem of the Trinity. Doubtless they would not have used the word Trinity. But the experience of the Trinity was not in doubt. The early Christians were urgent with the message of the Father Who loved, the Christ Who redeemed and the Holy Spirit Who moved among His people with power, glorifying Christ and leading them to the Father. So the apostles showed the glory of the Father and men saw God in their love.

Today we deplore the lack of power in our lives. We see the problem clearly. We know the power which should be manifest in our midst. If John is correct, then men and women should see the glory of God in love-filled lives. This is the demonstration. It is not some special, emotional experience. It is not a working up of ourselves but a genuine day by day experience—an everyday experience of moment-by-moment obedience and faith. This very thing Paul tried to teach the Philippian Church when he said, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Paul was not simply content with the fact that they possessed love. He wanted it to abound more and more. Not in uncertain emotional fervour, but as a tide deliberately swelling until it reached and surged up on every shore of their beings. He wanted to see their love abound in increasing knowledge and discerning insight. This is a very practical exercise for all of us and not the product of an inadequate emotionalism. It leads on to a testing of the things that are excellent and a receiving of them into ourselves, making them part of our character. A further result is that we are transparent and guileless, not weak and stumbling, and a burden and problem to others. This experience fills us with the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of God. Many who see will know that God is working. They will turn their eyes to God and not to the person in whom He is working His work of love.

One thing is clear from this passage. Paul is saying, as we also observed in our last chapter, that love is a matter of will and labour in the ultimate. In this vein the writer of the Hebrews deplores the fact that his readers are still immature, unable to digest a solid spiritual diet. Consequently their "senses are not exercised to discern both good and evil."

Much nonsense has been written about love and revival. While on the one hand it is good to see the hunger for God's reviving power to sweep through His people, yet it is sad to see the waste of effort in unintelligent longing. It is conceivable, nevertheless, that

when hungry folk spend hours before God in prayer, that same prayer may lead them back to the Scriptures and the conditions that are laid down for revival. These conditions are simple—faith and obedience. If we humble ourselves, repent of our sin, seek God with all our heart, weep before the altar—the Cross—then He will visit and heal His people. Where the deserts are dry He will pour forth rivers of living water and produce streams in the desert.

But the conditions are quite clear. They can be fulfilled by any heart desiring obedience. Indeed these conditions are so well known and so obvious that one hesitates to include them in yet another volume which may find its way to a revival-hungry reading audience. Nevertheless the key to a living demonstration of love is just these things and in no other way may we know it. It is good to pray for a baptism of love. It is better to realize we have already been baptised with love and now all that we need to do is to give love an opportunity to be manifested—through simple obedience.

Some are praying and not doing. Often our prayer has lesser motives. It has been observed that many of us would be shocked at what revival would require of us were it to come. Our half-casual, half-sincere, although fully-impassioned prayers might, if answered, astonish us.

Writing to his beloved children in Christ, John said that his fellowship was with the Father and the Son. He wrote in order that they might have that

same fellowship, and that their (and his) joy might be full. The message was that “*God* is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practice the truth.” Walking in the light as Christ also walks in the light, all have fellowship together. John is, of course, talking about the fellowship of light.

This is very simple. In God is no darkness. In us there ought not to be darkness. If there is darkness in us—any sort of sin—how can we walk together in fellowship? If there is darkness then we must repent of it, confess it and be cleansed by the blood of Christ. That also is simple. However, we may not ask for cleansing lightly. We cannot ask for cleansing from sin which we do not intend to leave. Our spiritual powerlessness and our spiritual malaise will indicate a deeper condition, a place which needs to be cleansed, and the light allowed to flood in. We can see very readily that once these things are cleansed fellowship will follow naturally—with God, and with our brethren.

What are these things which need to be cleansed? Sins, of course. What are these sins? We shall see in a moment, but it is obvious that unless we have completely surrendered our lives to Christ, know what it means to have been crucified with Him, and are resurrection creatures, we will not want this detailed cleansing of things hidden and things known.

Some, too, will feel that listing things requiring to be cleansed gives a wrong and even an unhealthy emphasis. They will say that there will be many unknown things. Perhaps they are right, but healthy confession has a way of unearthing other matters which require confession and adjustment. It would be well to look at and name some of the matters which need to be cleansed. Not that this subject has not already been dealt with exhaustively. However, the writer has met people in missions and conventions who blamed their circumstances, or the people with whom they were placed. Indeed, they blamed anyone and anything but that half-buried hatred, that simmering resentment, or some matter in which clear restitution needed to be made. For this reason we should freshly examine hindrances to love.

Perhaps our prayer life ought first to be examined. Generally, failure in our prayer life is not failure in prayer technique, but failure because sin is unconfessed or relationships with another are defective. The psalmist said, (Psalm 66: 18) "If I regard {cherish} iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." James said, (James 4: 3) "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Prayer with a wrong motive will draw no required response from God. Even prayer for revival can conceivably have wrong or mixed motives. If we are still clinging to sin, or seeking our own glory, then it is certain our

prayer life will be distasteful to God and dry to ourselves. Fitful and unsatisfactory prayer can always be traced to something wrong.

A further cause is our failure to make things right with another who has, or imagines he has, been wronged. In Matthew 5:22-24 our Lord says, "*I* say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother ... shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (vain fellow), shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool (a term of condemnation), shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." This is clear enough and needs no comment. Yet it would be interesting to know how many men and women have matters which have been standing for years, unhealed. No wonder there is bitterness, sourness and barrenness.

Unforgiveness is another hindrance to love. Our Lord has much to say on the subject. As we have observed above, only he who has forgiven can love. He who sees no need for forgiveness cannot know forgiveness. "Take heed to yourselves," said Christ, "If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent: thou shalt forgive him." "And when ye

stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” Our Lord used the story of the two debtors to illustrate the vastness of God’s forgiveness and the pettiness of our own unforgiveness.

Paul knew that the Spirit, when grieved, is unable to do His great work of love. He said to his Ephesian hearers, “Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4: 30-32) How many failures to forgive are among God’s children? How many are being soured as each year passes because of this unforgiveness? Often both the one who has not been forgiven and the one who has failed to forgive, are suffering. Forgiveness is simple and easy. Only personal pride stands in the way.

Linked with forgiveness and the righting of wrong relationships is the vexed question of restitution. Some object to restitution saying that we ought to let bygones be bygones. They say that forgiveness has covered all. That is true. Yet we know that when a sin is committed its reactions continue in a chain of cause and effect. We need specific guidance in some cases and must beware of opening old scars. However

in many cases restitution is plainly necessary. During revival in one country special buildings had to be erected to contain the stolen goods which those who had taken them were compelled by the Spirit to return. There is an interesting passage in Leviticus 6:2-7, which says, “If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour; or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely “he must not only make restitution in full but add one fifth to it. He must also recognise it as sin against God and make a special offering to God. It is a curious idea, or perhaps excuse, which suggests that the passage of years dulls the fact of the sin or the need for repentance or restitution. Sin is sin, whether it happened twenty years ago or twenty minutes. And we are foolish to allow darkness in any form to remain within us. Paul’s advice is good, especially to those who are careless about money obligations—“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another” (Romans 13: 8).

Perhaps more than anywhere, hindrances to love are evident in the home-life. Here is where we expect to see love in operation. It is not always so, even in the homes of fine Christians. There is no more powerful unit for witness than the home. Paul, giving his injunction, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5: 18), goes on to show that such fullness of Spirit is

for the home life. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Likewise the problem of servant-employer, employer-servant relationships, which is also intimately connected with the home, is discussed. Peter gives a great deal of attention to the husband-wife relationship in I Peter 3:1-9 when he says, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life; *that your prayers be not hindered*” (v.7) Christian parents will not need to have it pointed out that they can scarcely expect to love those outside until they have shown love in the home. In this passage, Peter calls all to such love. He says, “Be ye all like-minded, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous (humble-minded): not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing.”

Meanness is a form of self-preservation and a real barrier to outflowing love. Our Lord’s advice to give liberally and we would even more liberally receive was based not on the idea that it “pays well to give,” but on the knowledge of God’s character, for God always gives. He so loved that He gave His only begotten Son. He gives daily as He upholds the

universe. He gives Himself to those who are hungry and thirsty. His rain falls on the just and unjust alike. The writer of Proverbs (ch. 11:24-25) speaks concerning a spiritual law which he who saves his own life and his possessions does not discover: “There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” These truths do not need to be laboured. The Bride, in the Song of Solomon, knows this truth. “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.” She wants to give. But she wants to give in order to draw and so she says, “Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.” That is what our Beloved is waiting for us to say. If we keep our pleasant fruits for ourselves they will soon be dried and sour.

Israel felt she must busy herself with herself, but both her hopes and her crops were blighted and God told her the reason. “You have robbed Me.” “Wherein have we robbed God?” The prophet answered, in effect, “Because you have considered yourselves, and thought you were not able to afford tithes and offerings, you have failed. The truth is you cannot afford not to give.” The Scripture makes it quite plain that the ungodly are the unthankful, and that unthankfulness in God’s sight looms as fearfully evil. God promised

His people that if from their hearts they were obedient in the matter of tithes and offerings, the very earth should not contain the blessing poured out.

Some of course will argue that those were days of law, but the law of thanksgiving has never been rescinded and we have so much more for which to thank God. We are privileged to partake of those things which the patriarchs and prophets hungered to see. Grace leaps higher than law and gives no less. Only the liberal soul shall be made fat. The rivers of God are filled with water and the valleys and the hills are fat with his bounty. The lean soul hides behind no giving, or the mean tithe.

These things—prayer that is selfish, petty hatred, unforgiveness, wrongs left unrighted, wrong relationships in the home, withholding from God that which is His, withholding from others that which is theirs, and from the lost the Gospel, and from the workers their support—these are things which need to be righted. Until they are we are living negatively. They can be righted, quickly. Let us be rid of the nonsense that says this is difficult. This is a matter of clear obedience, no more and no less.

There is, too, a positive sort of obedience required of us, first for spiritual vigilance in our own lives, and then for watchfulness for others. Paul exhorted his brethren to be, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for

me . . . that I may open my mouth boldly.” Such prayer was general in the early church. The same vigilance requires that we be quick to restore one who has been overtaken in a fault, and to exhort one another daily because of the exceeding deceitfulness of sin. We should learn to reprove one another in love and to rebuke the works of darkness. The early Christians were not queasy about these things. They knew the battle was too serious to allow a defaulting brother consciously or unconsciously to betray the cause.

But they knew also that they could only carry out such a positive ministry under the impetus and guidance of love. They knew that love alone would reach the heart of the erring or defaulting brother. They knew that judgment was not their business, but the Father’s, and so left it to Him. Nor did they speak from any high throne of a personal, superior holiness. They were able, with Paul, quite naturally to call themselves the chief of sinners. But it did not prevent them telling their brother that his sin wasn’t really necessary.

The warning given us by Achan’s sin—a secret love of possessions—should make us see to it that there is no Achan among us, or personally within us. Achan-greed betrays the group of believers, whether it be greed for honour or possessions. These foolish things purged from our midst should make the way to love easier. Satan may lodge in any patch of darkness, but we should be as Him Who said. “Satan

cometh and hath no part in Me.” His meaning was, “Satan can find no point of provocation, no patch of darkness.” That is what Christ wants of us—no patch of darkness, no hatred, lack of love, unconfessed sin, unrighted wrong, unforgiveness, self-motivated prayer or works, no bitterness, unclean thought, concealed lust, no wrong family relationship, no failure in restitution, no holding back, no coveting, no meanness or retention of so called personal “rights.”

Then it is we walk in the light. Then it is that light floods God’s people and they burst into the experience of love, or revival—call it what you like.

CHAPTER TEN

THE PROBLEM OF IDENTIFICATION

IF obedience is the key to liberation then willingness is the final problem to be discussed. Yet we cannot discuss it because we must simply be obedient. No one ought to cajole the disobedient into obedience. Those who have been reconciled to God through Christ ought to live without disobedience for they are no longer alienated from Him. As Peter reminds us (II Peter 1: 3-9), God, by His divine power, has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. He does not suggest that we ought to set out on a new pilgrimage but rather discover what is already ours. He reminds us that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. He urges us to add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, and to godliness love of the brethren. “For,” he says, “these things are yours and they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He closes this section by pointing out that those who lack these things have simply forgotten they were purged from their old sins. That is, he urges us to look back to what we became when we became His. We cannot become more than what we have been given, but we can either fill that out, or inhibit its filling-out process.

Paul prays for his Ephesian children “that they may *know* what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe.”

These things show that only *unwillingness* prevents us from moving into all that God has for us. And what thrilling things He has for us! Paul prays, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to *know* the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, *that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*” This last phrase, if it means anything, means everything—a human creature may be filled with all the fullness of God.

But when a congregation sees its pastor or elders in action or when a strange people sees a missionary, or a national sees a fellow-national proclaiming the Gospel—do they really see all the fullness of God displayed? Paul tells us that the treasure is contained in earthen vessels that the excellency may be seen to be of God. But as earthen as the vessels may be they *are* filled with the excellency of God. Should they see less? When Peter said, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things,” did he really mean that he expected men to see that he was possessed of the power of the Most High?

Why then is it that there is not sufficient witness of Christ in our ministries? There never was a day when more was known about the Scriptures and when more books on theology and devotion were written. Yet it would be untrue to say that there was never a day of greater power. Countless numbers know about Christ. Fewer know Him. It is not belittling the Christian witness in the world today to say that it is much less than it ought to be. Would it be wrong, then, to say that the key to demonstrating the Being and the power of God resides in this love? No man hath seen God at any time, but if we love one another God’s love is perfected in us.

This brings us to the point of identification. Some moving passages tell of what God has done in the matter of reconciliation. First He has reconciled us to Himself, and then to each other. “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled” (Colossians 1:20,21). The following passages deal not so much with our reconciliation to Him, as with our reconciliation to one another. “Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3: 10,11). It is on the basis of this recon-

–ciliation that Paul can exhort them to “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 love, which is the bond of perfectness.”

We see from these verses that the rift which came when man rebelled against God has been closed. The life of God now flows into man and he warms with love. The rift which came between man and man at that time of rebellion has also been closed. We are all made part of the One New Man, Christ; and in Him, Paul tells us, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3: 28). That is, race, class, caste and creed have all disappeared, not only in the pulpit and the pew but everyday, in the street, in the home and in the market.

An onlooker, however, would not often be deceived into thinking we lived this way. When he sees Christianity dividing, redividing and subdividing he does not think we are building up into one body. When he sees our hopeless efforts to unite ourselves into one great church in which uniformity is mistaken for unity, he is even less impressed. There is real unity in diversity as surely as there is harmony in orchestration, albeit different units make the whole. But when

unity is lacking and there is no harmony but only discord, then the onlooker will be justified in thinking that the great theme of love, which is the Christian’s “piece de resistance,” his major theme, is missing.

On the mission field the national looks to the missionary to demonstrate this. The nominal Christian looks to his national brother. The non-Christian looks to all, and we look to one another. One missionary reading Psalm 41:5-7 was struck by the words He said, “For the sake of personal application, I changed the relationships to fit me in the verses. ‘I say of my enemies in malice: “When will he die and his name perish?” And when I go to see someone, I utter empty words, while my heart gathers mischief; when I go out I tell it abroad. I whisper together about those I hate; I imagine the worst for them.’ I found seeds of malice and hatred in my own heart—just the opposite of love—that love which desires to build up and not tear down.” This confession is revealing. It is wonderful because it shows that the *condition* is recognised. He who sees this will never rest content until his heart is utterly flooded with love. It is because we have minored on the evils of pride that we are surprised by its vicious snake-like character when it rears its head. Christian workers living together are often horrified by the depths of hatred that seem to spring from themselves. The Body, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, master nor servant, missionary nor national, may suddenly find itself in a terrible confusion of hatred, which breaks into party groups. Emulation

becomes the order of the day. Disintegration and not unity proceeds apace.

And I am the problem—not another—I! I am the one through whom the love of God must flow, but I refuse to be that one. I know others refuse, but that is not my business. That love must first flow through me. I excuse myself. Others are on a higher plane, I argue. It is their duty to be so, of course. God has called me to an insignificant ministry. But I am the problem and more so because I will not admit it. Situations may change, but not by me until I am changed.

The problem of reconciliation is one. Identification although linked with it, is another. Reconciliation means I am at one with God and with my brethren. Identification means I go out and make myself one with those who are afar off from God—brethren who have erred and who have never come under the discipline of the Cross. In this identification the other does not notice that there are differences. He knows I am one with him although my talents, my abilities, and even, perhaps, my possessions, are different.

Even a cursory study of the Scriptures will show the character of identification. The supreme example of course is our Lord, though He is not so much an example as Identification Himself. From Him we learn its principles. Paul shows us this in the second chapter of Philippians where we see Christ emptying Himself of glory—although not of His Being—and taking those

successive downward steps which identified Him with man. He did not become like man. He became man and, what is more, still is Man. He will never cease to be Man. His Manhood has not been dissolved by absorption into the Godhead; that is why we never think of Him only as God. His birth in a stable, His ordinary childhood, His work as a carpenter, His baptism by which He identified Himself with sinful man—"it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." We think of His being gladly heard by the common people, His eating and drinking with sinners, His being born of a woman that He might come under the curse to which we were subject—and remove it. Finally His being made sin for us brought Him to a point of identification. In His joy, His weariness, His tears and His triumphs, we see Him as Man and know He was our Brother.

The writer of Hebrews develops this theme when he says, "For he is not ashamed to call them brethren. saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Hebrews 2:11). Because they were made of flesh and blood Jesus also partook of the same. He tasted death for every man. He omitted no experience. apart from sin, in which He might be identified. His life might be summed up by the words, "In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto his brethren."

Paul knew this secret. He said, "Always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus . . . so

death worketh in us, but life in you.” He speaks of “filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.” He agonised for the Galatians until Christ be formed in them. He is forever a debtor to both Jews and Gentiles until they are won to Christ. Christ’s love for him has placed him in a debt of love which he will never be able to repay, and when he thinks of Israel he is prepared even to forfeit the joys of heaven and fellowship with Christ, that they might be saved. He becomes all things to all men if by any means he might save some.

The same spirit of identification was known to Moses. He was prepared to be blotted out of the book of life to save his people from the wrath they deserved. He bore his people up before God on many an occasion, and constantly interceded for them. He truly loved them and although he failed on one occasion when he struck the rock, and “spoke unadvisedly with his lips,” we still find him talking to God about his people, “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.” Moses knew the need of one to love and shepherd them, who would identify himself with his people. He must have a heart of compassion, as Matthew records (9: 36), “When he (Jesus) saw the multitudes, he was moved with corn-

passion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” This was common to both Christ and Moses—true shepherds at heart.

When we penetrate deeply into the prophets we find the same spirit of identification. They are identified with God and speak to their people as from Him, but they stand as one with their people and look up to God. In God’s presence Isaiah knew he was a man of unclean lips, but he also identified himself with the sins of his own people. That is the mark of a true prophet. Cleansing brought him to a deeper place of identification. He cried to be sent even though he knew his message would be rejected and finally abandoned. This is identification in the spiritual realm. We must learn this afresh in this day when many are wanting their ministries to fall in pleasant places with much glory to themselves.

Ezekiel participated with his brethren in captivity. “Then I came to them of the captivity of Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I *sat where they sat*, and remained there astonished among them seven days.” Hosea went down into costly identification. Indeed so close was his identification with God and with Gomer his unfaithful wife and with unfaithful Israel that it is difficult at times to know when it is the prophet and when it is God speaking.

We must first be identified with Christ if we would be identified with the people. It must be iden-

tification with Him in His life, in His death, in His resurrection, ascension and exaltation. This identifies us with the Lover and with His acts of love. We then become identified with the loved—redeemed and lost alike. Hosea was identified with God, and because of that, with wandering Israel. Only one so identified can be God's voice to cry, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

It is exactly this identification which should have its imprint upon our ministries today, but which is too often sadly lacking. Some missionaries realising this have tried to identify themselves with the food, dress and culture of the people to whom they minister. Fine and commendable as this is, it is not the full answer. It is only part of the answer, and will not be a good part until there is the identification of love—identification first with God Himself, and then with our brethren. We cannot identify ourselves with the beloved until we identify ourselves with the Lover.

Men and women the world over are waiting for this kind of love. They want to see God's love perfected in us. Of that they are not suspicious. Of imitation love they are suspicious, for it is more dangerous than no love at all. They may reject true love—undoubtedly many will, for many reject God's love in whatever form it comes to them. But those who

reject will know what it is they are rejecting. And those who accept will be blessed by it, even as we are blessed by it. They will see the glory of God. Less than this we have no right to give them. Such love is not impossible. But without such love it is not possible to preach the full Gospel and the whole counsel of God.

Of course it will mean coming down from the heights of our own self-esteem, if that is where we dwell. Or if we have been wallowing in the pit of false humility and real fear of others, then we will have to come up, until we all get to the same level around the foot of the Cross. It will mean putting many of our treasured and private concepts into the melting pot—of love. It will mean discovering how cold and hard and critical we have been. It will mean standing alongside our brethren refusing to criticise them for failure, wrong thinking, wrong doctrine, wrong attitudes. It will mean refusing to accuse them, in word or thought, of hypocrisy, lack of power, immaturity, or headstrongness. It will mean that we will try to understand these things, helping them to build anew; and also to build ourselves anew and not to tear down. It will mean refusal to be angered by failure in others, or to be puffed up by any success in ourselves. It will mean standing *with* our brethren, however far they may have fallen or failed, and as one of them, turning to God and speaking of "*our* sins," "*our* failures," "*our* hunger" and "*our* longings."

It will mean humbling ourselves in the eyes of our brethren whom we have wronged. Often it will mean confession of our proud natures, our coldness our harshness, our lack of love, and our unloving natures. No longer will we be worshipped because we are a special people. Our special ministry will be that of bearing up our brethren in love before the Father. It will also mean that we will no longer be feared, or suspected, or hated because we will all be together. When we are all together at the foot of the Cross none is higher than another; therefore there is no need to fear and no place for envy.

It will surely mean more than we dare to envision. The tides of love will be rising. We will learn that true fellowship together in the realm of love and light is not the dream of a few idealists, but the daily experience of ordinary men and women.

We shall not only see the flooding waters of love, but know, at the same time, that these are the rising tides of revival. Men and women will see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and the love of Christ in the face of His children. We have talked about paying the price as though we had to buy revival from a reluctant God with an agony of all-night prayer vigil and fasting. But he who has learned to pray all night, or to fast because he cannot bear the travesty of love in his own and in others' lives, will know there is no "paying the price" to be talked about. Christ did that long ago at Calvary. It is for us by obedience

and faith to launch out to experience and demonstrate that same Calvary love.

Then we shall know the surge of the old Apostolic power as the same Holy Spirit Who inhabited them now dwells in us who have had the darkness cleansed from our lives. He will be completely free to range in our lives, and draw many to the foot of the Cross, because they see our joy and our fellowship as we live the reality of liberating love.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

LIBERATION AND CONSTRAINT

GLANCING back over the past chapters we might be pardoned for thinking that liberation comes from loving, rather than that loving comes from liberation. We might also gather the impression that love is an extremely complicated thing. Part of the reason for this is that many of us have not fully emerged from the haziness of theological thinking. This clouds a clear perception. We are in the mists of law-grace thinking, not quite able to define either. Even our ministry of loving becomes something that justifies us rather than justification itself being the impulse of our love.

While then it is true to say that the very experience of loving brings fresh areas of liberation, it is truer to say that liberation brings the freshness of loving. John's axiom is simple—that he who loves is born of God and knows God, for God is love. He that loves not has not been born of God and does not know God, for God is love. We love only because He first loved us, and until we clearly see that He loved us we cannot truly love. Love is to be seen through God giving His Son that we might live, sending Him to be the propitiation for our sins. Both are ultimately one and the same.

FORGIVENESS THE SOURCE OF LIBERATION.

There are many passages which show us that forgiveness frees. It peels away the layers of guilt. It takes out the damning sting of sin. It removes the grey beclouding veil of fear and suspicion concerning God and reveals the brilliance of His shining love. We are warmed. We are grateful. Love leaps out in response. Love liberates us and this liberation is infectious. It liberates others also.

What of the vast resources of liberation? Are they dissipated in an aimless outpouring? Is there a glorious yet pointless prodigality of these riches of God? No, indeed. The New Testament tells us that, in fact, love is constraining. Paul says simply, "The love of Christ constrains us" (II Cor. 5: 14). Note, not our love *for* Christ but His love which we experience through the Cross. This love now actually possesses and constrains us.

The word "constrain" has been interpreted in two ways. Some take it to mean motivating or impelling. Many translations have it that way. The thought is excellent. Philips has it:—"The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ." This could not be bettered. Jeremiah 31:31-34 reveals that spontaneous knowledge of God and inner obedience both spring from the one source—the forgiveness of sins. The liberating word is, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go thou and sin no more."

Others, however, are of a different opinion. The Revised Standard Version translates the verse: "The love of Christ controls us." The New English Bible has, "The love of Christ leaves us no choice," while the English Revised Version links the verse to Acts 18.5 where Paul is said to be "*pressed* in the Spirit." Bishop Handley Moule says "the love Christ shuts us up to" an aim, that is service. Vincent in his "Word Studies of the New Testament" says (ad.loc.) that shutting up is undoubtedly the thought here and quotes Paul's "I am in a strait betwixt two . ." (Phil. 1:23). There is no doubt that the better sense here is that love shuts one up to a definite line of action and does not allow our ministry to be haphazard, or its energies uselessly wasted.

This does not mean that the first use of the word is inadmissible. Both are included. The dynamic of love's pressure is there but that dynamic is contained and cannot be dissipated. It is a river running between the narrow, high walls of a gorge, building up a mighty momentum in contrast to the uncontained river which dissipates its waters (and its usefulness) across fiat country.

In this relation we are often conscious of an inner guilt, an incipient dissatisfaction at love's energies uselessly expanded. We also sense the continual constraint of love to minister Christ. It does not allow us to expend our energies in vague general ministry. We keep being called sharply to "attention" from our own natural "stand easy" position.

THE SOURCE AND THE FLOW OF LOVE.

We need then to remember two things: (i) The Cross or Atonement is the source of love. There is no other. It is true that the Spirit is the Agent of communicating love, but He draws from the bountiful ocean of the Cross. He floods our hearts with the love which flows from the Cross (Rom. 5: 5-10). This in turn is the revelation of God's nature and His active destruction of evil with its corroding guilt. We must constantly remember that only from the Cross can we receive love. While the Spirit continually communicates love to us (and daily we stand in need of seeing it clearly and responding to it), yet the initial act of the inpouring of love commits us forever to Christ and to a life-long ministry of love and obedience. Love is not some kind of a fluid which evaporates with use, or, by use, becomes less. Once and for always, that love has been poured into our hearts. We have recognised it, have been captured by it, and so committed to its life. Far from diminishing, its constant use advances us in the experience of loving.

THE FLOW IS CONDITIONAL.

We have plenty of warnings that love received does not mean love continues automatically. The letter to the Ephesian church (Rev. 2: 11) is a clear indication of this. We have already observed that all the Apostolic writers are one in seeking to stir their readers to active love. It seems, then, that we are

faced with something of a paradox. While on the one hand we should love spontaneously, on the other we need to be reminded to love. Even loving we must “keep ourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21). Any attempt to strain at love or to make it an act of our own creating brings us dangerously near self-righteousness. A conscious attempt to fulfil the unselfish demands of love may result in an inverted Pharisaism.

In practice we discover that love is a matter of the will. Indeed all obedience is connected with the will. We are commanded to love. Even Christ was commanded to lay down His life. (John 10: 17,18; 14:30,31). God’s love constrained Him, that is, shut Him up to one definite line of action. This we always call God’s will, so that love is the exercise of wills in conformity with His. Christ does not see the command as an intrusion on spontaneous love, for in this sense love is never spontaneous. Love is shown and worked out only in obedience. We repeat, then; love is connected with the will.

Does this not destroy the character and nature of love? No, it simply guards it against being arbitrary—that is, a thing of natural human impulses. This would be disastrous. Love brings constraint. It shuts us up to one line of action and a given aim and goal. At that point we are brought to obedience—that is, to submit from the will and take love’s course of action.

This brings us to the deeper subject of impulse of the will and the power to obey. The impulse must always come from the Cross—“God forbid that I

should glory save in the Cross...” and the power of that Cross must come through the Spirit. The power is the “Word of the Cross” (Rom. 1: 16,17; I Cor. 1: 18) and the Agent is the Holy Spirit. A circuit of dynamic is established. The Word, the Spirit, the power, and so on.

In the human situation we never question this principle. The love of husband and wife not only constrains to obedience and loyalty but enables. The joy and liberty of such love sets up the transformer of power, and so further dynamic is established for increasing love and mutual obedience.

THE CAUSES OF FAILURE TO LOVE.

In other chapters we have considered hindrances to love, but here we are concerned with causes at the source. We must admit that the spontaneity of love is too often missing. Our complicated approach to it, is evidence of that. What then is the cause of failure? We have seen that the Cross is the source of love, and the Spirit the Agent of dispensing it. We agree that having been commanded to love, and knowing that there are ways of removing the hindrances to loving, we often see much lovelessness, and a constant reversion to those naturalistic patterns of living which belong to the old nature.

Jude’s injunction to “keep yourselves in the love of God” is close to the point. He sees love as a power which protects and covers. He actually uses a verb

which indicates both “being kept” and “keeping one self.” This is in line with Paul’s statement in Romans 8:37-39. We conquer through love; we cannot be separated from love; that is, it keeps us. The enemies are formidable but love is more powerful.

At the same time Jude’s verb points to action on our part. The closest Ave can get to it is Ephesians. 5:18 where Paul warns against intoxication through liquor but enjoins an intoxication through the Spirit. Yet he also enjoins that state of active-passivity which receives the Spirit continually. “Go on being filled with the Spirit.” It is clear that I cannot fill myself but I can lay myself open to being filled. Likewise I may passively resist being filled. Again it is a matter of the will, of being willing to receive. The word *receive* in Greek also means to *take*. To receive is to take. The will is surely involved.

This brings us to the central point of this chapter. Love is of itself (Himself) a powerful constraining force. We do not make it so. It presses upon us. It constrains us. Not to be pressed or constrained indicates that I have opposed constraint. And if I do not receive love, or keep myself in love I am simply and deliberately rejecting it. We “have no other choice” the translation tells us. This is right. Man in-Christ has no other choice. Yet often he makes another choice. That is a fact of experience and that is the cause of failure.

In II Peter 1:9 the writer says that a man lacking spiritual power, fruitfulness and discernment has “forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” Here the source of his spiritual power and fruitfulness is shown to be forgiveness. The word “hath forgotten” in the Greek indicates calculated and deliberate forgetfulness. This is the cause of the lack of love. The mind sees the obligation—the constraint that lies in love—and deliberately rejects it. Undoubtedly this refusal is nicely covered over, tempered with rationalisation, but it is, nevertheless, calculated refusal to obey the constraint of love.

To keep oneself in love or to be kept by love involves a constant coming to the source, there to imbibe of it. No one examination of the Cross—or series of examinations of it for that matter—will suffice for always. It has been the experience of the great saints of God that the depths of the Cross have never been plumbed by the human spirit. The Spirit searches the deep things of God and reveals them, and these depths are there in the ocean of the Cross. The deepest of his experiences of the Cross will only be preliminary to further revelations of the Cross.

MODERN, SHALLOW UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE CROSS.

It is dangerous to encourage esoteric understandings of the Cross or mystical experiences as though they were basically necessary, yet too often much modern evangelism, while being well-intentioned, scarcely touches upon the dynamic of the Cross. The

naturalistic explanations of sin, the smooth and symmetrical love—theologies which mainly evade the relentless wrath of God and the unerring nature and intention of His judgments—are hastily passed over in order to get to the “*comfort* of Jesus.” The “weary and heavy laden” are not made aware of the repulsive nature of their burdens or of the futility of straining to be righteous in their own strength. The grace of God does not shine out in brilliant contrast against the darkness and evil of their sin. Whitfield’s saying “every morning I have a level of wounded souls—quite slain by the law,” sounds strangely unfamiliar in our ears. The glory of Calvary is dimmed because there is little prior portrayal of fierce and terrifying Sinai.

THE SOLUTION TO LACK OF LOVE.

It is clear that we need to retrace our steps. Generations of liberalism have not been without effect. The incursions of natural thought and semi-secular theology have diluted the strong and vital message. Much of our devotional literature, pouring out in a never-ending stream, seems to be no more than a sedative for minds that have never been fully purged of guilt. It needs to be replaced by something vital, distinguishing between grace and law. We need something clearer, firmer, more incisive. We need less of the stultifying crucifying of ourselves, and more looking to what He has done, once and for all, upon the Cross. The devastating power of the Adamic nature

must be deliberately, and by a bold act of faith and will, shorn off for ever, and by an equally firm act of will, love must be continually received and then expended in active ministry. True, love is made real to us by the Spirit, and the secret of a life of love and power is submission to the Spirit, walking daily in accordance with His guidance. At the same time there is the need for us deliberately to respond to the love that works upon us. We must gladly submit to its constraint and grow by positive experience of its power. To deny it is nothing less than positive rebellion.

We may conclude then that love is linked with a life of devotion, inquiry, worship, and obedience. All these spring from love. They are the elements required to sustain a daily life in love. The nearer we come to Him, the more we will discover of Him, and the more our love increases, the more the mutual life of the church will become enriched, until in fact all are filled unto all the fullness of God.

To this end, and to no other, the love of Christ constrains us.

Identification

(I Corinthians 9: 19-23)

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, as without the law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.