

LOVE DEFINED.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Love is that tender solicitude and affection with which anything commanding admiration and respect, is regarded. That which is not lovely never can be loved in the true sense of the word. A degenerate nature may desire and find a morbid satisfaction in that which is unlovely, but that is not love. Love wherever found is a gleam of the divine likeness, and is spontaneously awakened by the presence of that which is noble and pure and good. This wonderful principle binds in holiest and most delightful union and harmony all intelligent beings controlled by it. God is the most glorious exhibition of its nobility and grandeur. It is the law of his being, and shall ultimately be the controlling law of all his universe.

But one inquires, if only that which commands admiration and respect can be truly loved, how could God love sinners and tell us to do the same? We reply that God never loved sinners as such; he loved the jewel he had brought into perfect being because it was truly lovely; and when, under temptation it lost its excellence and glory, his love for its perfection pitied it in its fall, while his justice condemned it; and that love devised the wondrous scheme for its recovery.

Let us here note the attitude of Jehovah towards those whom he so loved as to give his only begotten Son to redeem them. For six thousand years he has permitted their adversary to have dominion over them: Famine and pestilence have stalked abroad; hatred and strife, and war and bloodshed, have filled the earth with untold agony and woe, until the grave closed over generation after generation. Six thousand years, but no deliverance yet; God still stands off, and still

the king of terror reigns. When the long promised Deliverer comes, it is to rule with a rod of iron – to dash in pieces as a potters vessel the kingdoms of earth, which from human standpoint seem necessary for protection against greater evils. In fear and dismay men look upon God as an enemy, and seek to hide from his presence; yet "God is love," and

"He knows, not they, how sweet accord
Shall grow at length from out this clash
Of earthly discords, which have jarred
On soul and sense: They hear the crash,
But do not know that on His ear,
Breaks harmony – full, deep, and clear."

Now the love of God is veiled, but soon it shall be revealed in the glorious restoration to Edenic perfection and bliss. Soon "the redeemed of the Lord (all mankind) shall return and come with singing unto Zion, (the church in kingdom power,) and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." Thus viewing God's dealings, we see that his wisdom often veils his love.

True love while it seeks to shield and protect, will justly judge and endeavor to eradicate a fault – expose it, let the light shine on it and show it up to those affected by it, that it may be removed, and grace and beauty take its place.

A very false notion of love obtains among the majority of christian people, and under this false notion our adversary endeavors to shield some of the most dangerous and deadly errors that seek to sap the very foundation of the christian's hope. Let this deadly thing which the adversary dares to present to God's children be touched by the sword of the spirit **[R416 : page 2]** which is the Word of God, and he who wields it is said to be uncharitable, loveless. But does this make it so? By no means. Jesus was full of the love of God, but he

spoke most emphatically against evil-doers: – "Ye blind guides which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel;" "Woe unto you for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." (Matt. 23:13-33.) And again he said to erring Peter, "Get thee behind me Satan, (adversary) thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matt. 16:23.) But how differently the Lord's rebukes affected his loving disciples and the proud pharisees.

Paul was a noble pattern of his Master's spirit in his zeal for the truth, and his care for fellow members of the church. His usual manner toward all, like that of Jesus, was kind, generous, and affectionate, but did Paul cover the truth, shield error, or fail to warn an erring brother or the flock of God against the encroachments of the enemy? If he had so done, as an unfaithful steward he would have lost his stewardship. Though Peter was a noble soldier of the cross and fellow servant in the Lord, Paul withstood him to the face when, by giving way to the old nature for a time, he was to be blamed. (Gal. 2:11.) Note in connection with this, the sympathy and love existing between these brethren; (2 Pet. 3:15.) evidently the rebuke was accepted in the spirit of meekness. And again we find Paul faithfully warning the church against some ("many") who had become the enemies of the cross of Christ. (Phil. 3:18.)

Does some one object that we must "judge not that we be not judged?" We reply that to exercise human judgement in condemning others would be wrong; but to apply the judgement of God as expressed in his Word is right. We are commanded to do so. And the various descriptions of evil deeds, false teachings, and seducing doctrines, are given that we may judge – "That the man of God may be thoroughly furnished," for reproof, for correction of error and instruction in righteousness. (2 Tim. 3:16,17.) It is therefore the duty

of every child of God to judge what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. That against which we are cautioned is judging by other standards than the Word of God – condemning on our own, or any other human authority. That Paul judged according to God's Word and taught the church to do the same is very clear. (See 1 Cor. 5:3; Gal. 2:11; 1 Thes. 5:21; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor. 6:2,3. Note also Paul's prayer that love might abound in judgement, Phil. 1:9,10).

No doubt Paul's faithfulness in seeking to build up and establish the church in purity of doctrine and life, was often misunderstood, and failed to be appreciated by them. This is very apparent from 1 Cor. chap. 4. "But (he says) it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord." Then speaking of his labor and suffering for them, he says: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you." (Read the chapter throughout.)

Jesus said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another," and Paul says: "Let love be without dissimulation; abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." When contending with an unseen, but wily and powerful foe, what mere hypocrisy is that profession of love which fails to warn of immediate or approaching danger.

The new creature in Christ is a jewel of infinite value, "and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." (1 John 5:1.) Dearly beloved, "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;" "Reprove, rebuke, exhort (each other with all long-suffering and doctrine." Give and receive in the spirit of meekness, remembering that "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly (unbecomingly) seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

By this mutual love, and this care one for another, will all men be able to discover who are Jesus' disciples – "Let love be without dissimulation; abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." So shall you "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

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