

"WITH A PURE HEART FERVENTLY."

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." – 1 Pet. 1:22,23.

"LOVE is the fulfilling of the law" of God, and God himself is love. So all creatures in his likeness, whether human or angelic, have this same chief characteristic. Love presides and rules in their hearts, always exercising itself in ministries of kindness and benevolence. Its most refined and exalted impulses are necessarily toward the fountain of all goodness and grace and glory, but in sympathetic solicitude it reaches out to help and lift up the degraded and vile, while with tender and fervent appreciation it regards the fellowship of all kindred minds. Thus, God-like love may be viewed in its three aspects – first, the love of *reverence*, which is centered in God, whose supreme goodness calls it forth; second, the love of *fellowship* or *affinity* for all those actuated by the same sentiments; and, third, the love of *pity* and *sympathy* toward all those who have fallen below the standard of moral excellence, or who suffer in any way. While we love God with supreme reverence, surpassing the love of self or of our fellow men, he also graciously condescends to take us into fellowship with himself; and all such are co-workers together with him in benevolent kindness for the lifting up of the fallen, whom God so loved that he gave his only begotten Son to redeem them, and then highly exalted him and gave him all power in heaven and on earth to restore them. – John 3:16; Phil. 2:8-11; Matt. 28:18.

As members of the fallen race we do not inherit this God-like quality of love. It is only in obedience to divinely revealed truth that we acquire it, being purified thereby from the downward and selfish tendencies of our fallen nature. In other words, as the Apostle here

expresses it, by the incorruptible seed of divine truth, which liveth and abideth forever, we are begotten again, and have become new creatures in Christ, so that now as new creatures we partake of the new, loving, glorious nature imparted through the Word of truth.

Yet, since we still have this new treasure in the old, marred, earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7), it behooves us to take heed lest we lose it, and lest the old selfish nature of the earthen vessel again rise up and re-assert itself. Consequently, we must be diligent in the exercise and cultivation of the powers of the new nature, that it may thereby develop strength sufficient to ever keep the old nature under full control, so that none of its evil propensities may rise and gain the mastery. Therefore, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart [with disinterested benevolence] fervently."

The language here is addressed not merely to babes in Christ – though it is wholesome counsel to them also – but to those of some degree of advancement, to such as have purified their souls unto *unfeigned* (not merely professed) love of the brethren. Let all such cultivate this grace more and more, that the whole body of Christ may be firmly knit together in love.

The tendency of all divine truth is to purify the heart. "He that hath this hope [the hope that the truth alone inspires] in him, purifieth himself." Otherwise, though he may for a time hold the truth theoretically, – hold it in unrighteousness – he cannot hold the hope; for *the hope* springs up in the heart only through obedience to the truth.

Righteousness, and the hope of the rewards of righteousness through Christ, are the legitimate effects of the truth upon the heart that truly receives it. But where it is only received into the head, and is resisted in the heart, it only deepens the dye of sin by hardening the heart, thus bringing additional condemnation, and a fearful looking for of judgment. – Heb. 10:27.

This purifying of the heart by the truth is both an instantaneous and a gradual work. When a man is truly converted to God, there is necessarily a purifying of the heart (the will, the intentions) – a full turning away from sin and evil, and an unreserved surrender of the whole being to God. But as the constant tendency of the old, sinful nature is to **[R1670 : page 215]** re-assert itself, the purifying influences of the truth must be continually applied that the heart may be kept pure and acceptable with God. But let none make the mistake of presuming that the pure in heart are necessarily free from all imperfections. As long as we have this treasure in the earthen vessel we shall be conscious of its imperfections; yet if the heart, the will, the intentions, be pure, holy and true and loyal to God as the mariner's needle to the pole, we are pure in heart, holy and acceptable with God through faith in Christ Jesus, whose imputed righteousness fully supplements all the imperfections of our earthen vessels.

We notice also that this special love of fellowship, to which the Apostle here refers, is not to be exercised toward the world, – to whom belongs only the love of pity and sympathy, nor toward Satan or any of the wilful enemies of the Lord and his cause, against whom true love and loyalty to God ever arrays us in vigilant and determined opposition, – but toward *the brethren* – toward them of like precious faith and hope, and of one mind with us, and the Lord. Fervent love, the love of true brotherly fellowship, should indeed exist among all such. They should be in fullest sympathy and co-operation. They should bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; they should in honor prefer one another, and in love each esteem the other better than himself. They should love as brethren, be pitiful, courteous, kind, gentle, true and loyal. As Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." – John 13:34.

May the love of Christ more and more abound among his people, until the whole body of the Anointed, knit together in love and made all glorious within by its purifying power, is "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

RETROSPECTION.

"Thou shalt remember the way which the Lord thy God led thee."
"Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." – Deut. 8:2; Heb. 10:35.

He was better to me than all my hopes,
He was better than all my fears;
He made a bridge of my broken works,
And a rainbow of my tears.
The billows that guarded my sea-girt path,
Carried my Lord on their crest;
When I dwell on the days of my wilderness march,
I can lean on his love for the rest.

He emptied my hands of my treasured store,
And his covenant love revealed;
There was not a wound in my aching heart,
But the balm of his breath hath healed.
Oh, tender and true was the chastening sore,
In wisdom that taught and tried,
Till the soul he sought was trusting in him,
And nothing on earth beside.

He guided my path that I could not see,
By ways that I have not known,
The crooked was straight and the rough made plain,
As I followed the Lord alone.
I praise him still for the pleasant palms,
And the water-springs by the way;
For the glowing pillars of flame by night,
And the sheltering cloud by day.

And if to warfare he calls me forth,

He buckles my armor on;
He greets me with smiles and a word of cheer
For battles his sword hath won;
He wipes my brow as I droop and faint,
He blesses my hand to toil;
Faithful is he, as he washes my feet,
From the trace of each earthly soil.

There is light for me on the trackless wild,
As the wonders of old I trace,
When the God of the whole earth went before
To search me a resting place.
Has he changed for me? Nay! He changes not,
He will bring me by some new way,
Through fire and flood, and each crafty foe,
As safely as yesterday.

Never a watch in the dreariest halt,
But some promise of love endears;
I read from the past that my future shall be
Far better than all my fears, –
Like the golden pot of the wilderness bread,
Laid up with the blossoming rod,
All safe in the ark with the law of the Lord,
Is the covenant care of my God.

– *Anna Shipton.*
