

THE LOVE TO BE DESIRED

"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." – 1 Peter 1:22.

THE word "souls" in this text stands, as usual, for the being, and not merely for the physical being, which is included. The purifying, therefore, refers to a thorough cleansing of the heart (the mind, the will, the actuating intentions, or motives), as the effect of such purification will be manifest in the outward life and conduct.

We purify our souls – that is, our souls are purified (have been purified if we are saints) – by obedience to the Truth through the spirit; that is to imply that it is necessary for us to know the Truth; not necessarily that we know *all* truth, but necessary for us to know the great truth on this subject – the truth that God condemned sin; to know the truth that the whole world of mankind came under this condemnation; to know the truth that God has provided a way of escape from the condemnation that is upon the world; to know the truth that there is but one particular way in which any can avail themselves of this Divine provision, namely, that of being justified by faith in Christ, and taking up the cross and following in his footsteps. When we presented ourselves in spirit and in truth, through faith, our sins were forgiven; we were accepted as New Creatures in Christ; our souls were purified; we were started in a new career.

In our text the Apostle proceeds to say that, having had this glorious transformation of character, through the knowledge of and obedience to the spirit of the Truth, we have learned to love the brethren with an "unfeigned love," a love that is genuine, without pretence – not merely an outward profession, to have a smile upon the face or to give a cordial grasp of the hand, but that through this spirit we have recognized that all who trust in the precious blood and are consecrated

to the dear Redeemer, and are seeking to follow his leadings, are "brethren," regardless of race or color or education or poverty or homeliness. We have reached the point where our hearts are so full of the Spirit of the Master that we can truthfully say we love all the brethren with a love which is sincere and not at all feigned.

Now, having gotten along thus far in the good way, the Apostle shows us that there is yet an advance step of love, and states what next we must do in order to keep our hearts pure: "See that ye love one another with a pure heart *fervently*." We must not only regard them as brethren and give them "unfeigned love," but should recognize the principle underlying *our* relationship to the Lord and *their* relationship to the Lord; how they, like ourselves, are New Creatures in Christ; and this should give us great sympathy and a desire to do everything we can to encourage them, to help them.

DISINTERESTED LOVE – STRONG AND INTENSE

This love is different from the other love – brotherly love. It is disinterested love; so warm, so intense, that we should be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren. This love is the kind exemplified in our Heavenly Father. While we were yet sinners he loved us. So the love of Jesus is unselfish, pure, benevolent; a love which undertakes to do good for us for our own sakes, not from a hope of getting anything from us.

The Apostle proceeds to say that we should not only have this love, but that we should have it with fervency, warmth, ardor; not with a semi-indifference, but with a real interest in each other's welfare – the rich as well as the poor; the educated as well as the ignorant. Our love should go out to these as we see any lack in them that we could supply – rendering assistance of any kind; using always, of course, discretion, for love learns to be wise, and to take into consideration our motives while we endeavor to do them good.

The Apostle suggests that we see to it that this is our own experience; not merely that it is a principle which we recognize, but that

we should give heed to ourselves that this should be accomplished in us, in our own lives. It would not be natural to have that benevolence of mind which would practise forgiveness of those who trespass against us. But when we think of the fact that the whole race is fallen and degraded through heredity, it should make us sympathetic; if some are more depraved, we should have the more sympathy for them. As we think sympathetically along those lines, our sympathetic love will increase; as we practise sympathetic love the New Creature develops.

Our Lord Jesus says, "Love one another, as I have loved you." Set this standard before you. Our love for the brethren might, at first, be merely obedience in following this command; but as we follow on, obeying the Divine command, our love increases, our sympathy expands. The Apostle says we must see to it that we do not neglect this. If we fail to heed this admonition we are not of the kind that the Father is choosing; for the Apostle also tells us that he predestinated that all those **[R4767 : page 57]** who should be members of the Body of Christ should be copies of him; copies in having an unfeigned and fervent love.

STRENGTH IN THE LORD PROPORTIONATE TO KNOWLEDGE OF HIM

No one can grow strong in the Lord unless he grows also in knowledge. We properly esteem most highly those whose love for the Lord and for his Truth are evidenced by their zeal in the study of his Word, and whose favor with God is manifested by their being guided more into the deep things of God.

Nevertheless, the weaker ones of the household of faith are to be cared for and loved and helped that they may grow strong in the Lord. And just here the Apostle offers another word of counsel, saying, "We, then, that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Rom. 15:1.) This does **[R4767 : page 58]** not imply that we should not expostulate with such a one and endeavor to help him get rid of his infirmity. This we should do, in the spirit of meekness and kindness, while we endure with gentleness the trial of our

patience, not seeking to please ourselves, but rather to help a weaker brother or sister. "Let every one of us," as the Apostle enjoins, "please his neighbor [brother] *for his good, to edification*" – i.e., not by simply ignoring his fault as though we considered it all right, but, while kindly urging him to strive against it, still humbly and patiently submitting to the discomfort it brings to us.

If this spirit prevails among the members of the Lord's Body, the members will all have a mutual love and a mutual care one for another – a care which seeks to encourage and strengthen all that is good and to discourage all that is unbecoming, and a love which throws its mantle over a deformity and endeavors to conceal a fault, rather than to expose the weaker brother to the reproach of others.

For such self-sacrificing love how necessary is the spirit of humility and gentleness and patience and faith! How forceful are the Master's words, "Except ye be converted [from the spirit of the world to the Spirit of Christ] and become as little children [in meekness and teachableness], ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven." – Matt. 18:1-6.

