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THE LOVE REQUIRED OF THE NEW CREATION

"If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." – 1 John 4:12.

THERE IS a great difference between human or animal love, such as the members of a family have for one another, and that love to which this text refers. The love required of members of the Body of Christ is a love resulting from mutual relationship to the Lord, and comes from the Spirit of God dwelling in them – a God-like love, which marks them as of His Spirit, having been begotten to His disposition. There should be something about the character of the Lord's people which would demonstrate on all occasions that they possess true love for one another. If this is not the case the lack of love would be a reflection upon them all.

As we learn to love one another the love of God is being perfected in us, the true, benevolent love which the Lord commands. The Lord said that we should love one another as He has loved us – to the extent of being willing to lay down our lives for one another. We are not to love *some* of the brethren *some of the time*, and *some* of the brethren *all of the time*; but we should *love all of the brethren all of the time*; and overlook their frailties and imperfections, taking that high standpoint from which God views them, forgiving one another, as God, for Christ's sake, overlooks *our* blemishes. We ought to forgive those who trespass against us as we hope and trust [R4850 : page 205] that God will forgive our trespasses. No one can be of the "elect" class unless this love be perfected in him. He may not gain so full a control of the flesh that he will never speak sharply, hastily, etc., but he must reach the place where he will be perfect in intention before he can be accepted as a member of the Kingdom.

The Apostle Paul says that "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the Law." (Rom. 13:10) The Divine

Law which the Apostle had specially before his mind was the Law given to Israel – "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might"; and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18.) This Law of God fulfilled – filled full, completely met – requires that the heart shall be full of love. All the mind and soul and strength are required to fulfil this Law. "**Love** worketh no ill to his neighbor." Yet one might work ill through ignorance and superstition and misunderstanding, through imperfection of the flesh, while his heart intentions were good. Saul of Tarsus worked much ill to his neighbors. With good intention, doubtless, some of our Catholic friends and some of our Protestant friends have worked ill to their neighbors. We cannot say that because they worked ill to their neighbors they had no love, but that they did not have it to the degree required by the Law; for **perfect love** would work **no ill** to his neighbor. Whoever would work ill to his neighbor, with full knowledge, would not have love.

GOES BEYOND THE JEWISH LAW

There is a force in the word **therefore** in the text, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, **therefore**, love is the fulfilling of the Law." The Law was given to restrain wrong deeds, wrong words, wrong sentiments toward another. That Law was evidently not intended to enumerate all the things that should not be done, for it **works no ill**. One might, therefore, fulfil the Law of the Ten Commandments if he works no ill to his neighbor, but loves him as himself. The word **therefore** gives us the thought that the Apostle had in mind the Jewish Law and not the Law of the New Creation. Merely abstaining from evil and loving our neighbor as ourselves would not fulfil the Law as given to the New Creature by the Lord; but it would fill the Law of Justice given to the Jews.

But our Lord magnified that Law and also gave us a **new** command. The Love that would be in His followers, His disciples, was shown in His words, "Love one another as I have loved

you." (John 15:12.) To do this would be far more than to do no injury to another. It would be *laying down our lives* for one another. This is far beyond any requirement of the Law. Justice could not say, "You must go over and clean the snow from your neighbor's pavement"; but Justice would say, "You must not throw any snow upon your neighbor's pavement." But Love says more than this. The new Law that is given to us is the Law of Sacrifice. We who are in the Body of Christ must love one another as Jesus loved us, to the extent of sacrificing our interests, our comforts, our privileges, in the interest of others.

He who does not find his heart in harmony with this Law of the New Creation – love, mercy, kindness, gentleness, goodness – lacks the evidence, or proof, that he is in any sense accepted of God as a joint-heir with Christ. If we have not love in our heart for the brethren, and the love of gentleness and benevolence toward all men, and even toward the brute creation, we have not the spirit which will carry us through in making the sacrifices necessary under present conditions. It will be only a question of time with such when the power of pride or vainglory holding them in the way of self-sacrifice will snap asunder and selfishness take full control. We are to keep the Law in our *minds*. But while our *minds* are *perfect*, we find imperfections of the flesh which hinder us from doing all that we wish to do. Hence, we need the sufficiency that is in Christ. We are trusting that God will accept the good intentions of the heart, of the mind, instead of counting against us the imperfections of our flesh.

AN AGGRESSIVE AS WELL AS DEFENSIVE WARFARE NECESSARY

God would have us watch for evidences of His will and profit by all the experiences which He permits to come to us in our every-day life, humbly accepting any discipline; and having this spirit we shall be led on from grace to grace and from victory unto victory. Merely to stand and battle on the *defensive* is very wearisome and gains no

victory. To gain the victory we must not only put on the whole armor of God, but we must be heroes in the strife and wage an *aggressive* warfare upon the lusts of the eye and flesh and pride of life and all the foes of righteousness and purity.

Love – love for the Lord, for the Truth and for righteousness – must inspire us or we shall never be victors. Love will keep us faithful even unto death and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Where fervent love rules in the heart it implies that the heart is *fully submitted* to the Lord, and that means that nine-tenths of the battle is already won. But even then, as the Apostle Jude says (Jude 21), we must *keep ourselves* in the love of God, in watchfulness and prayer and zeal; and grace will abound where love abounds.

We keep ourselves in the love of God by striving to do always those things that are pleasing to Him. He can love *only perfection*; and it is impossible for us to be perfect. He perceives, however, that our weaknesses are not of the will but of the flesh, and He has provided an Advocate for us to whom we may come if we commit trespasses. Thus we keep ourselves in the love of God and walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Where our footsteps [R4850 : page 206] may deviate from the way we have the precious blood of Jesus to cleanse us. When we have our new bodies we shall be continually in His love and always pleasing to Him, because we shall have no bodily imperfection to mar the perfection of our will.

LET US BEWARE OF SELFISHNESS

Selfishness is the surest cause of separation from the love of God. When we made our consecration to the Lord and He accepted us as New Creatures in Christ and begat us with the Holy Spirit, it was because we surrendered *self*. If at any time we turn back to walk after the flesh, we are departing from our consecration. This might be manifest in many ways: in slackness instead of zeal; in carelessness instead of carefulness; in a selfish feeling of jealousy of spirit; or in anger, hatred, strife. All these are so much of the Old Creature – wrong

conditions from which we thought we had escaped. In proportion as the Old Creature triumphs the New Creature will fall; and thus we will gradually cease to be in the love of God. These wrong conditions will hinder the keeping of ourselves in the love of God, which signifies the keeping of ourselves in the proper attitude toward God and Jesus. We are to press on and make our sacrifice, if possible, larger every way to the Lord and the brethren.

Daily and hourly we may keep ourselves in the Lord's love by obedience to the principles of righteousness and faithfulness to our covenant and a growing love for these. We are to rejoice in every experience of life – its trials, difficulties, sorrows, disappointments, no less than in its pleasures, if by any or all of these means the Lord shall instruct us and give us clearer insight into our own deficiencies and a still clearer insight into that perfect law of liberty and love which He has established and to which He requires our full and loyal heart-submission.

In such faithful obedience to the truth and earnest endeavor to conform to its principles, the way and the truth grow more and more precious and our willing feet with joy are led in the paths of righteousness and peace – into life everlasting.

