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## THE GREATEST THING IN THE UNIVERSE

### PART II – PHILOSOPHY OF THE ATTITUDE OF SYMPATHY

BE ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "For if ye do not forgive those who trespass against you, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive you." This means that if we would insist upon having from others abject acknowledgement of everything that is wrong, and if we carry this matter of judgment to an extreme, it would indicate that our own hearts are in a wrong condition. And then the best thing that could be done for us by the Lord would be to give us some of our own medicine. By this He would be teaching us a corrective lesson, that thus we might become sympathetic toward others.

This matter, then, of forgiveness and sympathy toward the world, is one that God inculcates or enjoins upon His children after they come into His family. And this is in order to give us education. "For what son is he whom the father correcteth not?" "For if we be without chastisement,...then are...we not sons." These lessons are intensified to us as we grow in grace and in knowledge. – Hebrews 12:7,8.

As our knowledge increases, we see how all fell through one man's disobedience. And this gives us a basis for sympathy. And our sympathy increases as we become more mature children of God. God desires this, that by the time we are ready to graduate, we will be very helpful. This should become the pleasure of our hearts – to be sympathetic with our enemies, no matter how they treat us. We know that they are doing these things because of the Adversary's influence over them. And we [R5275 : page 213] should desire to bless them and to do them all the good we can. The fact that they have done evil to us should not alter our attitude toward them – to

do good unto all men as we have opportunity, praying for those who despitefully use us and persecute us.

The thought would not be that we should especially devote our prayers to our enemies and persecutors, but rather that we should pray *for* them instead of *against* them. Some who are immature in spiritual things might think, "I will pray to God to punish them." But Jesus says we are not to do that. "Pray for your enemies." What shall we ask for them? He does not tell us this. The best thing we could ask for them would be that we might be used, or useful, if possible, in breaking this superstition upon them, that the eyes of their understanding might be opened. That is the very best thing we could ask for them. We may pray for them along that line, and God will bless *us*. And if it is possible for us to be helpful to them, God will show us how to do it.

### **JUSTICE FIRST, LOVE FOLLOWED**

God is very great. We are very small. It is a wonderful thing to be informed that God loves us! The heathen religions seem to recognize nothing of this kind. The thought that pervades their votaries is that their gods need to be placated, or they will do them injury. And as for a God of love – that is a thought peculiar to the teachings of the Bible, and this feature of His character is not clearly exhibited in the Old Testament Scriptures – in His dealings with the Israelites. God manifested most plainly His Justice, and allowed the penalty to come upon the sinner. We are sure that He loves the angels. But man God placed under a ban and sentence. And year by year and century by century that sentence was executed.

Then the proposition was made by the Lord that Israel might come back into His favor, if they would keep the Law; and it again looked favorable for them. But Israel failed. When man became degraded, sick, dying, humanity lost their beauty in God's sight. Man lost the gem – like qualities that made him pleasing to God. "We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God."

We come down to the New Testament times, and find a new thing brought in – a double testimony – that God loved the whole world, even while they were sinners, and also the testimony that He loves the Church. "God so loved the *world* that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The penalty upon mankind was to *perish*, as being unfit to live and enjoy God's blessing. God had a sympathetic love for all His creatures who were under such condemnation. How was this love shown? We make inquiries and find out that the first manifestation of His Love was that He gave His Son to die for the world. Here He was merely beginning to show us how great He is and how great is His Love.

### **THE BASIS OF GOD'S LOVE**

The Scriptures assure us that the great difficulty with mankind is that they are weak, fallen, ignorant, under bonds of superstition and misled by the Adversary. It is because God saw that the hearts of humanity are not really in that deplorable condition intentionally or deliberately that He has provided the way of escape. If we were wilfully, intentionally wicked, then the Lord would have no sympathy for us at all. When God looks at us as a race, He perceives that only very few have any knowledge of Him and of His character of Justice, Wisdom, Mercy and Love, and of the principles of His Government. And so God said, I will see what can be done with these creatures; I will make a Plan by which every one of them may be recovered through the gift of My beloved Son, the Logos. They shall be lifted up out of sin and degradation, and it will be the only lesson of the exceeding wickedness of sin that they will need throughout eternity. I will make the provision broad enough to include Adam and all his race.

### **THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S LOVE**

The first feature of this Plan began to be manifested when our Lord Jesus came into the world. So the Scriptures say that Christ

"brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." What *good tidings* did He bring? Blessings for all of humanity who would seek Him in honesty and earnestness of heart! He brought the *good tidings* that all who would manifest their love for Him should have eternal life; and that a special class, who would manifest special love for the Lord, might become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ His Son. "So great salvation began to be spoken by our Lord." – 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:3.

Not all can hear this Message, because some are so stupid through the blinding of the Adversary that they cannot believe it. To such it is not good tidings at all, but foolishness. Such have no ears to hear, the Bible says. Others can hear a little, and say that there is one chance in a million of escaping eternal torment. Others have their eyes and ears more widely open, and these are able to hear something, to appreciate something more than the majority. The Apostle tells us that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." – 2 Cor. 4:4.

Looking back to the days of Jesus we find that, when He preached, many of the people delighted to hear His words. They said, "Never man spake like this man." He told the people that God loved them. And the people said, The Scribes and Pharisees will not have anything to do with us; but this man loves us and tells us that God loves us, that God does not despise even us poor miserable sinners! Oh, "never man spake like *this* man"!

But their minds not being free, they were not able to appreciate all that He said. They thought that this Message which He brought them might be fabrication, and they *dared not* believe it. They asked, Have any of the Scribes and Pharisees believed and become Jesus' disciples? And when they learned that not many of them had, they said: Perhaps we are incompetent to judge; **[R5276 : page 213]** these are our leaders, we must follow them.

But there were some who were able to take in the matter more fully. And to these Jesus said, "Blessed are *your* eyes, for *they see*; and *your* ears, for *they hear*." Then to these who could see and hear Jesus gave certain special lessons applicable to them – and not only to them, but to a certain like company, or class, all the way down through the Age. He told them that because they manifested a responsiveness of heart they were pleasing to Him. He told them that in proportion as they would make progress in imitating Him, in that same proportion they would come into fellowship with the Father and become participants in His Love.

And when some took this step of consecration, Jesus told them, "The Father Himself loveth you" – He loves you because you have taken a stand for righteousness; because when you saw these principles of righteousness you were willing to do in accordance therewith. And the Father loves you because you are seeking to walk in the narrow way – the way which is difficult. The other way is a *broad* way, leading now to death and destruction. But this *narrow* way that I am pointing out to you, My [R5276 : page 214] dear disciples, is the way to life. It will cost you a great deal to be My disciples. But the Father will love you, and I will love you, and We will manifest Ourselves to you. And although you will have trials and difficulties you will have the peace of God ruling in your hearts. Then the disciples said they would leave all to follow Him.

## **HOW TO KEEP OURSELVES IN GOD'S LOVE**

The Apostle Jude admonishes, "Keep yourselves in the Love of God." Here the Apostle is addressing those who have passed from the condition of the world into this special love of God – those whom He has brought into His family, as His children by adoption, through Christ Jesus. God does not love us because we are doing great and wonderful things. His special love for us began when He begat us, because of the consecration we had made – because we had entered into the Covenant of Sacrifice. And the Father delights in all those who desire to be sealed with His Spirit – who desire to become His

children. He began thus to love us as babes in Christ, and He loves us as we grow stronger, and He will love us to the end!

The Apostle intimates that there is a growth in us. We are babes at first, and then children, then young men, then more fully developed. As we learn the principles of justice which permeate the Heavenly Father's character, we are to rejoice in these, and to have no other standards before our mind. We are to say, That is our Father's instruction, our Father's standard. So we become transformed more and more, and all standards other than those of the Heavenly Father become more and more displeasing to us.

As we journey along, we need to keep ourselves in the Love of God. It is necessary as babes that we should keep ourselves in His Love; it is necessary as children; it is necessary when still further developed. How can we do this? By keeping His commandments. Thus we bring the body into subjection to the perfect will of God in Christ. Whoever does this finds himself growing. Day by day we are to grow and increase and become more and more Godlike; so we are more and more transformed as the days go by. Thus are we to keep ourselves in His Love.

But if at any time during the race we should drop out and cease to cultivate these qualities, cease to be obedient to God, then we would cease more and more to have His Love, until finally we would cease to be in His Love, and the curse, the wrath of God, would abide on us. Thus we would be in a far worse condition than at first, because in the second case it would be a matter of knowledge, whereas in the first case it was a matter of ignorance, a matter of heredity. In this worse condition God would have no sympathy for us at all.

Thus it will be with the world in the future, when they will be brought in God's providence to a full knowledge and full opportunity, when they shall come to understand God and His

righteousness. If they do not seek to be in harmony with Him, they will be destroyed in the Second Death. – I Tim. 2:4; Acts 3:22,23.

## **OUR HIGHEST AMBITION**

The Lord Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Our love for God and God's Love for us are two different matters, of course. We *revere* God even before we *love* Him. We do not know enough about Him at first to love Him. We know that we have very little power of ourselves, that we are surrounded by difficulties here, and that the Adversary has beset us on every side. And so this is the beginning of Wisdom, that we should have a reverential fear of God.

As we come to know God more and more, we see that He would not wish to do harm to any creature. And as we grow in our knowledge of God, our love for Him increases accordingly. We grow in our knowledge of how much He loves us. We did not know this at first. God is not pleased to reveal Himself to any except those who have His Spirit; therefore the very highest ambition any of us could have would be that we might know Him, that we might know more of His wonderful Love, His wonderful peace, because to have this knowledge draws us nearer to God. As St. Jude says, we must continue to keep ourselves in the Love of God.

Whoever would come to a full knowledge of God must first come to an appreciation of His Word and must follow a line of obedience such as would enable him to love the Lord and to appreciate His Plan. And all things working together – love, appreciation, desire to be obedient – lead onward and upward to the goal which the Lord has set before us.

## **WHAT CONSTITUTES GOD'S LOVE**

The expression Word of God is sometimes used when speaking of the Bible, and sometimes when meaning a message of God. Our

allegiance is due to the One from whom we have received every good and every perfect gift. There is an eminent fitness in the thought that the One who has given us *life* should have our attention to His Word, our obedience to it. Some are disposed to be self-willed; some disposed to regard the words of man, the creeds of man. Such do not pay sufficient attention to the Word of God.

God's Word is the great Standard by which all of His people should regulate their lives. We might have some thought respecting the Divine Plan, or others might make suggestions to us respecting God's will. But any suggestions, whether from ourselves or others, are all to be subject to investigation in the light of God's Word. Of course, we are first to ascertain that the claim of the Bible to be the Word of God is supported by really good evidence; then we are also to notice whether various portions are interpolations, or additions, that we may have the Word of God as pure as possible. But having *found* the Word of God, we should *keep* it, in the sense of reverencing it and obeying it. We should strive to regulate our lives and all of our doings by that Word. Whoso keepeth God's Word will as a result find that God's Love is perfected in Him. – I John 2:5.

The question then arises, What is God's Love? and in what sense can it be perfected in us? The Apostle John evidently refers to that love which is most perfectly represented in God – that love which is pure, free from all selfishness, from all stain – God's Love, because it is the right principle, the very underlying principle of His character. And all those who are keeping God's Word must have the same kind of love that He has.

At first we had a duty love. We knew that God had done great things for us, for which we should be very thankful. There was a debt of obligation on us in that respect. Then, too, we loved God because He has indicated that He will give His favor to those who love Him. Therefore a measure of selfishness would be in our love for a time. But we believe it is possible for us to have this perfect love of God. If it were perfect works of the flesh that were required,



we might doubt our ability to have perfection. But since it is a matter of the *heart*, it is possible for us to attain it; for we can be pure in heart. So as our hearts become more and more free [R5276 : page 215] from selfishness and sin, more and more will this proper, high standard of Love be appreciated by us and perfected in us. Our minds will be influenced by this Love; and all of our conduct, our thoughts, will come under the same regulation.

To have, then, this Love of God perfected in us, would seem to indicate that we would have the very highest ideal – that we love as God loves. We love our neighbor – we realize that he has certain rights which we are glad to respect. We would rather help our neighbors forward than to do anything which might hinder their progress in any way. God is not an envious, jealous, hateful God, but the God of Love. God is the *true* God, and not the one who is set up in our creeds.

As we appreciate the Word of God, it gives us the necessary instruction and guidance. All sin is selfishness, and all selfishness is sin. As the child of God comes to see the character of God more clearly, as he is desirous of being taught of God, he will come under the influence of God's Spirit. And he will study the Word and get clearer insight into it. Thus we grow in the knowledge of God. It is a progressive matter. God wishes all of His intelligent creatures to be animated by the spirit of His Word – Love.

### **LOVE BASED ON FAITH**

We see that the love above described would not be a love based on ignorance. On the contrary, it is a love based on a clear knowledge of God, on an undissembled faith, a faith fully appreciating what He has said. For instance, one might have a certain love for God, and by [R5277 : page 215] and by a clearer understanding of God's character might shake that kind of love. God's intention is that mankind shall understand His arrangements thoroughly; and if they then appreciate His character, they will have

the undissembled faith, and a love that appreciates all the features of His Plan.

We all see that in our experiences God gives us instruction respecting Himself. As we come to know Him, and to love Him *because* we know Him, we are proportionately getting this faith in Him of the undissembled kind. It is a faith based on a knowledge of God's character and Plan. An angel may be said to have faith – a well rounded out faith. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him as worship Him in spirit and in truth." And God wishes that all of His intelligent creatures shall worship Him from this standpoint of undissembled faith – a faith that is genuine, a faith that is well rounded out, knitted together, a consistent faith. Therefore God wishes to have all men come to the knowledge of the Truth. – I Tim. 2:4.

God's arrangement is that we first make use of what truth we have, and thus have more appreciation; then more knowledge, and then more appreciation. A *well rounded out* knowledge is not yet possessed by any except the Church, and we do not have *full* knowledge. But it is God's will that we shall all come to an *appreciation* of the Truth. It is not to be merely a *knowledge*, but a full *entering into* it that we may the more appreciate it. "This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee," that we should become personally and intimately acquainted with the Lord. In order to this, it is necessary that we apply our hearts to this Wisdom, that we grow in grace, grow in knowledge, that we may know His Love.

This will also be the procedure in the next Age. The object of Christ's Kingdom will be to bring mankind to a full, clear appreciation of God's character. Such as attain this and sympathetically enjoy God's character will appreciate the principles of Justice, Love and Mercy represented in Him. Only as one appreciates these qualities in his own heart can he appreciate them in God. Only those who appreciate them will have everlasting life.

Even though such should enjoy the full thousand years, they still might not be of the class to whom God would give everlasting life.

### **THE END OF THE LAW IS LOVE**

It is not merely *faith* that is necessary – not even the well rounded out faith – there must be a *pure heart* also. We could not get the well rounded faith unless we had a pure heart. A pure heart would be a *fully consecrated* heart – the whole mind given up to the Lord's will. Such a condition is necessary before we can enter into and make progress in the Lord's way. God would not accept us at all unless we had love and purity of heart. And even more than this is necessary. We must maintain it with a good conscience. Our consciences must be able to say, "I have not only a good *wish* respecting the right, but I have good *endeavors*." We should not only be able to say, "I did right," but our consciences should be able to say, "I did the very best I was able to do." Anything short of this would not be pleasing to God.

So, then, the end, or intention, of the Divine Law is to develop in us this love – a love fully consecrated to the Lord, a love like His, a love that will be in accord with a good conscience and an undissembled faith – a faith that is well founded on the teachings of God's Word, a faith that is anxious to know God's will, and that searches the Scriptures and delights in God's Law, and that can say as the Psalmist has expressed it prophetically, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God!"

A man may discern the principle of *justice* and say, "There is the standard one must go by." Another sees *love*, and says, "There is the best standard! Is not that grand? I wish to conform to that fully!" A third recognizes that *perfection* is the standard of the Divine Law, and having consecrated himself unreservedly to do the will of God, says, "Thy Law, O God, is my delight." This one delights in God's Justice, he delights in God's Love. He sees more than merely, Thou shalt, and Thou shalt not. He sees things from

God's standpoint. He sees the principles of God's character which govern the universe. So all who will ever come to an appreciation of everlasting life must learn to view matters from the standpoint of Love.

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### **WATCH AND PRAY!**

Watch and pray, the storm clouds hover over,  
Fierce billows gather near with threat'ning shock;  
Watch and pray, no harm can e'er come nigh thee  
If thou art safely anchored to the Rock.

Watch and pray, the powers of night and darkness  
Determine to engulf thee in their sway;  
But swift the answer cometh from our Tower,  
"I still am with thee, loved one – watch and pray."

Watch and pray, temptations round thee gather,  
Cling to the Rock – its shelter hideth thee.  
Tho' thousands fall, thou'rt safe if thou art watching,  
Safe, in its shelter, from the angry sea.

Watch and pray, trust fully, thou wilt never  
Be swept away, then, by the seething foam.  
A little while, the storms will all be over,  
Then, child, a loving God will take thee Home.

– W. H. BUNDY.

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