

SACRIFICIAL LOVE VS. DUTY LOVE

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind...Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matthew 22:37-39.) "This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." – John 15:12,13.

THE qualities of Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power are fully harmonized and unified in the character of our Heavenly Father, our Creator. In Him these qualities are supplemental to each other, and in the fullest harmony. And we are to strive to incorporate into our own characters these same qualities. When we use these terms in reference to mankind, we are bound to recognize in how comparatively small a degree these character-qualities are possessed by humanity.

We use the terms justice and love as representing characteristics which are more or less imperfect in all mankind. We speak of charity, or generosity. This quality, a certain manifestation of love, goes beyond mere justice. Here is a person to whom we owe a dollar. It is not charity for us to pay him that dollar. It is duty, justice. A certain course would be right, and nothing less than that would be right. Certain things are obligatory. Beyond obligation would be mercy, compassion, love.

What is our duty toward our neighbor? Suppose that the neighbor has fallen into debt or that his life has been forfeited. What ought we to do for him? Shall we give our lives for his life? Shall we assume his obligation? To do so would be a very loving deed. It might also be just, but it would go beyond the line of mere justice; for justice would require merely that we do for our neighbor just as we would have him do for us, if our positions were

reversed. The Golden Rule would measure what we should do for our neighbor. If after we have done this, we wished to do a little more, this would go beyond the demands of justice; it would be love, favor.

But we should notice that the Law of God demands not only justice, but also love – love supreme to God, and love to our fellowmen. It demands mercy, kindness. Let us note the injunctions along this line which God gave to natural Israel under the Law. Let us see how far-reaching they were. "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." (Exodus 23:4,5; Proverbs 25:21,22.) If love so broad and so comprehensive as this is demanded by God's Law, and was obligatory upon Natural Israel, to what degree should Spiritual Israel possess and manifest this noble quality!

JUSTICE PRONOUNCED MAN'S SENTENCE

The penalty that God placed upon our sinner race involved humanity in crying, sighing and death. It was not a special exercise of Love that pronounced the death penalty. It was a special exercise of Justice. However, there was no violation of the principle of Love in this death sentence; it was in full harmony with Love. In due **[R5644 : page 72]** time God manifested His Love for man, even in his fallen condition, by the gift of His choicest treasure – His Only Begotten Son. He was not deficient in Love during all those four thousand years before He sent His Son to earth. His Love remained as far as compatible with the perfection of His character. It was no longer a love of fellowship, as with a perfect being; but it was a love of pity, of compassion.

Love was not obligated to make provision for the redemption of fallen man. The act was one purely of grace; and if redemption was of grace, it was not of Justice. In sending His Son, then, to be man's Redeemer, God took a step beyond anything that Justice could require. Herein was manifested the Love of God, the compassion of God, superabounding over what was His duty. No duty-claim could be pressed by man; for he had forfeited all his rights, and had become a convict before God's righteous Law. But God's great mercy in providing a deliverance for this convict race illustrated His glorious and beneficent character. In this was manifested the *Love* of God for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; and this was Jehovah's own Plan. So Love can go beyond Justice, and even beyond the measure of love demanded of a perfect character.

The Love of God and of Christ, as manifested in the great Plan of Redemption, was a *sacrificial* Love. So those who are invited to become members of Christ's Body are to have this same love. It is not merely the love demanded by God's perfect Law, which is incumbent upon all His intelligent creatures on whatever plane; but it is more. It is a love which will gladly lay down the life purchased for them by the death of Jesus. This life is laid down as a sacrifice with their Lord and Head. We lay down our lives in service for the brethren, and this sacrifice is acceptable because the merit of Christ is imputed to us, making us reckonedly perfect before God. As the Apostle says, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." The brethren could not demand this of us, nor we of them; but we should all do so gladly, as we have opportunity. – 1 John 3:16.

LET US HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST

As Christ redeemed us by laying down His life as a willing sacrifice, so let us have this same mind, this same disposition, this same will. This is the special Covenant of the Church – the Covenant of Sacrifice. (Psalm 50:5.) This is the Covenant which

our Lord made with the Father, and we are to follow in His footsteps. The world will gain everlasting life if they come up to the standard of justice required by God's Law. But as for us, we must have a still higher standard.

So when the Apostle declares that "Love is the fulfilling of the Law," he is not limiting those who are so governed by love as to do the Father's will even unto death, to the mere keeping of the Law given to Israel. To be of this elect class, a member of the Royal Priesthood who covenant to lay down their lives as a sacrifice, requires more than merely fulfilling the demands of the Law. It requires love to a self-sacrificing degree. And so by gladly carrying out our Father's will for us, we shall prove ourselves worthy of glory, honor and immortality, the Divine nature – which has been promised to the overcoming class – the "more than conquerors."

"Love is the filling from one's own another's cup,
Love is a daily laying down and taking up;
A choosing of the stony path through each new day,
That other feet may tread with ease a smoother way.

"Love is not blind, but looks abroad through other eyes;
And asks not, 'Must I give?' but, 'May I sacrifice?'
Love hides its grief, that other hearts and lips may sing,
And burdened walks, that other lives may buoyant wing.

"Brother, hast thou a love like this within thy soul?
'Twill change thy name to saint when thou hast reached this goal."

=====