

THE SUM OF ALL GRACES

"And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." – 1 Corinthians 13:13.

THE Apostle Paul has just been referring to the various miraculous gifts of the Spirit then granted to all begotten of the Spirit to the new nature. Any one lacking some such special gift at that time would thus manifest to all believers that he had not become a member of the Church of Christ. These supernatural gifts also served to assist the primitive Church in spiritual growth. They did not have the Bible in those days, and if they had possessed it, but very few could have read it; hence, they needed special assistance which the Church afterward did not need, and which later was taken away.

In this letter to the Church at Corinth, the Apostle, after discussing these various gifts, says, "And yet I show unto you a more excellent way." Then he proceeds to point out the super-excellence of the fruit of Love. Whoever has the Holy Spirit must have a measure at least of this fruitage, whether it be the little flower that contains the fruit-bud or whether it be the partly developed fruit, the fully developed fruit or the ripened fruit. God our Father, who looks upon the heart, knows how His Holy Spirit in the heart is seeking to control the flesh, to guide the mind and all the words and actions. We are not able to judge one another's hearts. The Apostle said that he did not feel able properly to judge even himself, but left judgment to the Lord. He knew that his heart was loyal and that he was endeavoring to be all that the Lord would have him be. Though he was conscious of his inability always to "do the things that he would," he knew that the Master would accept his loyalty of heart; so he would do his best and leave the remainder with God.

Our faith and our hope in the Lord lead us to earnest endeavor to develop the fruitage of love in all its varied and beautiful phases. Gentleness is a part of love; meekness is a part of love; so also are humility and brotherly-kindness. The question at issue with each child of God is not, How tall and well-built am I? or, How fine-looking or well-educated or well-connected am I according to the flesh? or, How many or how fine sermons have I preached? or even, How many have I brought to a knowledge of the Truth? But the vital question is, How much of the quality of love have I developed? How great is the likeness of my character to that of Christ?

LOVE IS THE PRINCIPAL THING

Why is this quality of love made so prominent in the Word of God? We answer, Because it is the *first* thing, the *most important* thing, the *principal* thing. It is the fulfilling of God's Law; and, indeed, the sacrificial love enjoined upon God's saints of this Age goes even beyond the requirements of the perfect law. But *why* is Love put first? It is not because God arbitrarily so placed it, not because He exercised His power of fiat and declared that it should be first. No. It is because no other quality of character is so lovely, so beautiful, so productive of happiness and joy, so great a blessing to all upon whom it operates. It is the very essence of God's character. "GOD IS LOVE!" This quality particularly represents His personality. While God is all-just and all-powerful, we do not say that God is Justice or that God is Power, but that God is Love. He uses His great Power only as Love dictates and approves. He uses His Justice only in fullest harmony with His glorious attribute of Love. Love is the mainspring of all His doings.

Whoever, therefore, would be God-like must be loving, must have love as the dominating quality of his character and his life. Love and righteousness are inseparable. Love is to continue to all eternity; and only those who become the active embodiment of this

gracious quality of character will live eternally. Hence we see the paramount importance of its development in every life.

Next to our Lord's marvelous Sermon on the Mount stands this great homily on Love, recorded in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians. Both discourses teach the same lesson, but approach it from different standpoints. As pupils in the School of Christ, all the instructions of the Divine Word and the Divine providences in our lives are designed by the Lord to develop our characters and to influence our conduct in harmony with the requirements of Love. The Master said, "A new commandment I give unto you [the Church], that ye love one another." Since "Love is the fulfilling of the Law," and is "the bond of perfectness" in the child of God, no wonder we are assured from the Scriptures that "God is Love," and that "he that loveth not, knoweth not God!" Our Lord again declared that "this is life eternal – that they might know Thee, the only true God" – the God who is Love.

This noble quality of Christian character cannot be acquired instantly. It is a *growth*; and its development is the chief business, the chief concern, of every spirit-begotten child of God who would know God, who would win the great reward of life on the highest plane of existence and who would see our Father and our Savior [R5668 : page 116] face to face and dwell in their presence forevermore.

ALL ATTAINMENTS VALUELESS WITHOUT LOVE

In this wonderful discourse under consideration, St. Paul points out that this crowning grace of Love is the necessary quality to make any service acceptable to God. If Love is not the motive power controlling us, the greatest zeal, the finest rhetoric, or the richest eloquence, on behalf of Truth and righteousness would pass for nothing in God's estimation, and would bring no reward from Him. If love be lacking, great ability in expounding the mysteries

of God, much study and great knowledge, would be as naught in winning the approval of the Lord. Even a mountain-moving faith would be valueless, if, looking into the recesses of the heart, the Father could see that love is wanting. The giving of all one's possessions to feed the poor or to spread the Gospel, if done without love as the moving impulse, would be powerless to bring us God's approbation. Death as a martyr would not be acceptable except it was undergone from love to the Lord and loyalty to His Truth.

Why is this? It is because all these things might be done through selfish motives – to be seen of men or to feed pride or to exercise the spirit of combativeness. Love must prompt all our service for God or all will be utterly without value – as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

THE SPECTRUM OF LOVE – ITS COMPONENT ELEMENTS

A college professor, commenting upon this word Love, said, "As you have seen a man of science take a beam of light and pass it through a crystal prism, as you have seen it come out on the other side of the prism broken up into its component colors – red, and blue, and violet, and orange, and all the colors of the rainbow – so St. Paul passes this thing, Love, through the magnificent prism of his inspired intellect, and it comes out on the other side broken up into its elements. And in these few words we have what one might call the spectrum of Love, the analysis of Love. Will you observe what its elements are? Will you notice that they have common names, that they are features which we hear about every day, that they are things that can be practised by every man in every place in life; and how by a multitude of ordinary virtues, the supreme thing, the *summum bonum*, is made up?

"The spectrum of Love has nine ingredients:
Patience – 'Love suffereth long.'

Kindness – 'and is kind.'
Generosity – 'Love envieth not.'
Humility – 'Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.'
Courtesy – 'doth not behave itself unseemly.'
Unselfishness – 'seeketh not her own.'
Good temper – 'is not easily provoked.'
Guilelessness – 'thinketh no evil.'
Sincerity – 'Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth.'"

To the above we add three other ingredients:

Fortitude – Love "beareth all things,...endureth all things."
Trustfulness – Love "believeth all things."
Hopefulness – Love "hopeth all things."

We cannot agree with the professor that these graces can be practised by every man, in every place, nor that they are ordinary virtues. We must contend that these fruits as a whole cannot belong to the "natural man." He may indeed *put on* some of the gentleness, some of the humility, some of the courtesy, some of the patience, some of the kindness, as men may attach grapes to thorn bushes or figs to thistles; but with the natural man these graces are wholly put on, and not the outgrowth of the inward grace, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love. They are not an evidence of relationship to God. Where the individual has not been begotten again by the Word of Truth and by the Holy Spirit, his imitation of certain outward manifestations of love will not constitute him a son of God nor bring to him the rewards and blessings of sonship, to which there is only the one Door – Christ Jesus.

And with the Christian a mere outward manifestation of patience, meekness, etc., is not sufficient, either in God's sight or in his own sight. These rich fruits are produced only by the indwelling Spirit of love in his own heart. In civilized countries many of the fruits of the Spirit are recognized by the unregenerate as desirable traits and are imitated, as marks of good breeding. In

many cases they are successfully worn as a cloak or mask, covering hearts and sentiments quite antagonistic to the Spirit of Love.

WORLD'S IMITATION OF LOVE AN OUTWARD VENEER

While even an outward imitation of the fruit of Love mitigates to some extent the evils and distresses and frictions incident to man's fallen condition, yet it is only a veneer, as times of stress and trial often manifest in a painful manner. We remember a report which we once read of a conflagration at a certain Charity Bazaar in Paris, which showed that the most polished and aristocratic young gentle-men of the most polite city and nation of earth displayed the ferocity of brute-beasts when face to face with death, and that in their mad rush to escape the flames they knocked down and injured each other, and treated thus even ladies of the first rank in France, to whom they had just before been overly polite. We cannot expect more of a love-veneered, selfish heart – even the strong glue of chivalry will not hold the veneer under such circumstances.

The time is now very near when a far greater and more terrible crisis will make manifest to the whole world that much of the politeness and gentleness of our day is only skin deep, and is not from the heart, not the fruitage of the Holy Spirit of Love. In that great crisis, every man's hand will be "against his neighbor and against his brother," as the Word of the Lord graphically portrays. In that great Day of Vengeance, the masks of formal politeness and chivalry will be discarded, and the world will for a short period get such a revelation of its own hideousness and selfishness as will horrify it and will help to prepare it for the blessed Kingdom of Love then to be established by the great Immanuel, the Messiah of God. And this great Day of Vengeance has already begun.

DRAWN BY LOVE DIVINE

The Scriptures inform us that in our fallen estate unselfish love is foreign to our natures, and must be introduced into them by the Power of God. The Apostle says, "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." As we learn of this great love of God, and accept the conditions which He has made for our return to Him, through His Son, the love of God constraineth us to love in return.

The measure of our appreciation of Divine Love will be the measure of our zeal in conforming our characters to the Divine pattern. A naturally rough, uncouth, depraved disposition may require a much longer time after the grace of Divine love enters his heart, before that grace is manifest in all the words and thoughts and acts of the outward man. Others of more refined nature, of gentle birth and cultured training, might even without the grace of God within have many of the outward refinements, so that as a Christian his outward conduct might be much more pleasing. None save He who reads the heart is competent to judge as to who has and who has not this quality of love well developed in his character. We will now take up the various elements of Love.

ANALYSIS OF LOVE'S COMPONENT ELEMENTS

Love is *patient* – it is longsuffering with the weaknesses [R5668 : page 117] and imperfections of those who give any evidence of good intentions. Moreover, it is patient even with those who are out of the way, and who oppose themselves to righteousness and Truth, realizing that the whole world are more or less under the influence of the great Adversary and his demon host, who blind the minds of the masses. This manifestation of love was very prominent in our Lord Jesus. How patient He was with His opponents! Let us heed the Apostle's words in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "*Consider Him* that endured such contradiction of

sinner against Himself, lest ye be wearied [in well-doing and patience] and faint in your minds."

Love is *kind* in its methods. It not only seeks to do good, but seeks to do it in the kindest possible manner. In proportion as love is attained the effort of the heart will be to have every word and act, as well as the thought which prompts them, full of kindness. Love is tender, affectionate. It has a real and deep interest in others, especially the brethren in Christ. We do well to remember the motto of the old Quaker: "I shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." This sentiment is especially applicable in the Church of God.

Love is *generous*, and has no place for envy, which, on the contrary, springs from a perverted nature – from selfishness. Love rejoices with them that rejoice; it rejoices in the prosperity of every good word and work, and in the advancement in Christian grace and service of all who are actuated by the Spirit of God.

Love is *humble* – it "vaunteth not itself." It does not sound a trumpet before it. Its good deeds are not done to be seen of men, not done to be praised of the brethren, but would be done just the same if no one should see or know but the Lord alone. It is boastful neither of its knowledge nor of its graces, but in humility acknowledges that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father, and returns praise to Him for every mercy received. Love seeks rather to keep self in the background. Some one has truly said, "Love saves a man from making a fool of himself by consequential conduct, and by thrusting himself into positions which betray his incompetence."

Love is *courteous* – "doth not behave itself unseemly." How beautiful is this trait in the child of God! How much pain is caused by the lack of courtesy, of that thoughtful consideration for others

which springs from real love in the heart – love that is trained! Pride and selfishness are at the root of most of the unseemly conduct and boorishness so common to those who think themselves somebody, either intellectually or financially. Perfect love, on the contrary, manifests courtesy along with humility. Politeness, courtesy, may be defined as love in the *little* things.

The secret of *real* courtesy is love. A gentleman or lady is one who does things gently, thoughtfully, kindly, lovingly. A true Christian, then, should be a gentleman or a lady in the most real and perfect sense. To ignore the little courtesies of life as unnecessary is a serious mistake in a child of God. A kind greeting, a pleasant smile, little acts of thoughtfulness for others – who has not realized their potency or felt pain from the lack of these?

UNSELFISH, SWEET TEMPERED, SINCERE

Love is *unselfish* – "seeketh not her own," exclusively or pre-eminently. It never seeks to take advantage of others or to promote its own selfish interests. It goes out to others, and seeks to promote their comfort and happiness. It does not desire to grasp the best of everything for self, nor to have the chiefest seats or the most attention or the highest honors, but rather prefers others in honor, and is willing in cheerfulness to take the lower place. Put into practise, this phase of love – unselfishness – has a great influence for good upon all the affairs of life, in the home, in the Church of God, everywhere.

Love is *good-tempered* – "not easily provoked." Among the evils abounding today is that of ill-temper, fretfulness, bad humor, touchiness, quickness to take offense. To whatever extent this disposition is fostered or willingly harbored, and not fought against, it is an evidence of a deficiency and a lack of development in the Spirit of God, of deficiency in likeness to Christ, our Pattern.

Very few of the evidences of a wrong spirit receive as much leniency and as many excuses for its continuance as does this fault. However much natural weakness or nervousness may tend in this direction, every true member of the Body of Christ must surely vigorously oppose this disposition to be irritable, fault-finding and morose. He must fight this tendency of his fallen flesh, must wage a good warfare against it in the strength of the Lord. The imposition of a penalty upon one's self for every outbreak of irritability or of unlovely temper would soon bring greater watchfulness over the tongue and over the unloving impulses of the old nature. Few traits of character more truly glorify the Lord than sweet temper.

Love is *guileless*. It "thinketh no evil" – does not surmise evil. It seeks to interpret the actions, words and manners of others charitably. Being pure and well-intentioned itself, it endeavors so far as possible to view the words and the conduct of others from the same standpoint. It does not treasure up animosities and suspicions, nor manufacture a chain of circumstantial proofs of evil intentions out of trivial matters. "Faults are thick where love is thin," is a wise and true saying. Love makes all possible allowance for errors of judgment rather than impugns the motives of the heart.

Love is *sincere* – "rejoiceth not in iniquity." It is grieved by evils wherever encountered, but is sympathetic toward all who fall into evil through weakness or who are beset by temptations. In this respect love prompts to an opposite course of action from that of Balaam, who "loved the reward of iniquity." Balaam, it will be remembered, feared the Lord, and as His prophet could not think of doing otherwise than according to the strict letter of the Lord's injunction; but he did not have the spirit of obedience and loyalty, the spirit of love; and hence when a reward was offered him if he would curse Israel, he was willing, in order to secure the reward, to conform to the evil proposition, if only the Lord would permit him.

So there are some Christians who have a respect for the letter of the Divine Word through fear, but who lack the Holy Spirit (disposition) of love, and who by reason of a love for wealth or popularity or ease, etc., are willing to engage in various practises which come as near to injuring the Lord's Cause as possible without being in open opposition to Him. Some of these Balaams are in the ministry; and for the sake of salary and prestige and the friendship of wealthy Balaks, they are willing to preach doctrines which they do not believe, to wink at unholy practises, and in various ways to cast stumbling-blocks before Spiritual Israel, and encourage others so to do. Both our Lord and the Apostles mention these Balaams as being false teachers in the nominal Church. See 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14.

Every one who is seeking to develop in his heart the Holy Spirit, perfect love, should guard this point of sincerity [**R5668 : page 118**] of motive as well as uprightness of conduct. The least suggestion of rejoicing at the fall of any person or thing that in any degree represents righteousness and goodness is to be deplored and overcome. Perfect love rejoices not in iniquity under any circumstances or conditions, and would have no sympathy, but only sorrow, in the fall of another, even if it should mean his own gain.

Love "rejoiceth in the Truth." However profitable error might be, love could take no part in it, and could not desire the reward of evil and error. But it takes pleasure in the Truth – truth on any subject, but especially the Truth of Divine Revelation, however unpopular it may be, however much persecution its advocacy may involve, however much it may cause the loss of the friendship of this world and of those blinded by the god of this world. The spirit of Love has so strong an affinity for the Truth that it rejoices to share loss, persecution, distress, or whatever may come against the Truth and its servants. In the Lord's estimate it is all the same whether we are ashamed of *Him* or His *Word*; and of such He

declares that He will be ashamed before His Father and the angels. Love has no sympathy with hypocrisy or pretense. It is transparent and honest in character.

STRONG, TRUSTFUL, HOPEFUL

Love is *strong* – it "beareth all things." It is both willing and able to endure, for the Cause of God, reproaches, reproofs, insults, losses, misrepresentations, privations, and even death. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith" – the very center and life of which faith is the holy spirit of love to the Lord, to them that are His, and of sympathetic love for the world. Perfect love can bear up under the most trying circumstances and conditions which the Lord shall permit to come upon His children, and by God's grace come off "more than conqueror through Him that loved us and gave Himself for us."

Love is *trustful* – it "believeth all things." It is not suspicious, but on the contrary is disposed to have confidence in others, so far as possible, and to give them credit for sincerity. It acts on the principle that it is better if necessary to be deceived a hundred times than to go through life soured by a distrustful, suspicious mind – far better than to accuse or suspect even one person unjustly. This is the merciful disposition applied to thoughts; and of this disposition the Master said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." The unmerciful mind and heart, ready on every slight provocation or imaginary one to think evil of others, is father to unmerciful words and conduct toward others.

Love is *hopeful*, buoyant – it "hopeth all things." It is not easily discouraged. Hope is the secret of Love's perseverance. Having learned of God, and having become a partaker of His holiness, it trusts in Him and hopes undismayed for the fulfilment of His gracious Covenant, however dark the immediate surroundings. This hopeful element of love forms one of the striking features in the perseverance of the saints, enabling them to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." Its hopeful quality hinders Love from

being easily offended or easily stopped in the work of the Lord. Where others would become discouraged and put to flight, the spirit of love gives endurance; for its anchor of hope is fastened securely "within the Veil." It holds firmly to the Rock of Ages, and hence cannot drift into despair.

Not only is Love the greatest of all the graces, but really, as we have seen, it is the sum of all the fruits of the Spirit. It is *everlasting* – "Love never faileth." It is for those who develop this quality to its glorious perfection that eternal life has been provided. And those who possess the sacrificial love which our dear Master possessed, who so love as to gladly lay down their lives for the brethren, will gain the fullest and grandest life of all – Divine life. – 2 Peter 1:4.

THE EDITOR'S PROPOSITION

Let us then, dear brethren, more and more cultivate *love*, remembering that whatever else may be our attainments, all will be in vain without this crowning grace. The Editor has a proposal to make to every reader of this journal, which he believes will prove very helpful to each one who shall co-operate. It is this: That during the remainder of this year (if we shall be spared so long in the flesh) each of us pray every morning that the Lord will bless us in the cultivation of *love*, in thought, in word, in deed, throughout the day; and that every evening, in reviewing the events of the day at the Throne of Heavenly Grace, we remember to report to the Lord respecting our measure of success or failure.

Then note the results of your watching and praying; keep on the lookout for all encouraging evidences of growth in this fruitage of the Holy Spirit; and when you write us, if you please, mention your progress in *willing* to love, and in *practising* it. We shall be especially glad to know of your growth along this line.

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