

Manna – March 7

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

WHETHER I am something or nothing in God's estimation is to be measured by *my love* for Him, for His brethren, for His

SM11-12 "Those initiated into this Order are persons of like passions with ourselves, as the Apostle said. (Acts 14:15.) Some of them naturally are more fallen than others, and have less of love and more of selfishness than others; but all who join the Order are required to make resolution in their hearts as respects this law of Love—and all the internal workings of the Order are with a view to the perfecting of its members in love. They must learn to love the great Founder of the Order supremely, and in turn to trust to His Love as well as to His Wisdom and Power, so that in obedience to His will they consecrate to spend time, talent and influence, yea, all that they possess, in His service.

Secondly, He admonishes that to love those who love them is not the test which He will apply; but that they will be expected to sympathetically love all mankind, to do good to all men as they have opportunity, especially the Household of Faith. (Gal. 6:10.) It is required of them that they shall especially love the brethren, the members of the Order, and be ready and glad to lay down their lives for the brethren. Tests along this line are continually necessary to weed out of the Order all who are not approximating its standard of Love Divine..."

R2649 "Altho the first evidence of the possession of "the love of God" is a love for God, nevertheless the Scriptures distinctly point out to us that an additional requirement is specified, viz., love for the brethren—for those who have the spirit of God, especially, but in a general way at least a sympathetic love for all mankind. Thus the Apostle says, "If we love one another, [it is an evidence that] God dwelleth in us, and [that] his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:12.) The same Apostle emphasizes this same point, saying, "Whosoever hath this world's goods [interests, affairs], and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17.) The intimation is that such a lack of love and sympathy, and such a restraint of assistance from a brother in need, would imply that the love of God either did not at all dwell in such an one, or that it was but slightly developed--far from being perfected.

Nor does this love merely exercise itself toward the brethren in matters of temporal necessities; rather, it affects all the affairs of life, leading the one who enjoys it to "walk in love," "forbearing one another in love." (Eph. 5:2; 4:2.) And even were it necessary to speak an unpalatable truth, the spirit of the Lord, "the love of God," will dictate the speaking of the truth in love, which the Apostle assures us is essential to our growth in Christ.--Eph. 4:15.

Knowledge is valuable, but only incidentally; of itself the Apostle assures us knowledge would be inclined to puff us up, make us vain and boastful, and thus quite out of harmony with the spirit of God, the spirit of love, meekness, gentleness.

cause, for the world in general, and even for my enemies,--rather than by my knowledge or fame or oratory....

In the measurement of character, therefore, we are to put love first, and to consider it the chief test of our nearness and acceptance to the Lord....

Knowledge might make us merely tinkling cymbals giving out a sound, but possessing no real merit in the Lord's sight. But knowledge, when it serves its proper purpose, brings us to the appreciation of "the love [that is] of God" and to a realization of the wisdom of copying his character....

Undoubtedly love is the principal thing to be studied, to be appreciated, to be copied and practiced in our lives. We trust that a large proportion of the WATCH TOWER readers have already become partakers of this "love of God," and that all such are seeking to have it perfected in them, and to be rooted and grounded in it. We have the Apostle's assurance that only those who take this standpoint can make permanent and thorough progress in grace and knowledge....

It devolves upon us to keep ourselves in the love of God: and we can only thus *keep ourselves in his love* by seeking to practice in the daily affairs of life the principles of his love: permitting the love of God to constrain us daily to sacrifice ourselves in the Lord's service, for his honor and for the spread of his truth; permitting the love of the brethren to so fill our hearts that, as the Apostle expresses it, we may be glad to "lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16); permitting a sympathetic love for mankind in general, the "groaning creation," in all of its trials and difficulties, to exercise our hearts so that we shall more and more feel kindly and generously toward all with whom we have contact and to make us helpful to them as we have opportunity; permitting this love even to extend to the brute creation under our care, so that we will not be negligent of their interests; all this seems essential to our keeping ourselves in this love of God. Let us more and more practice, and thus become more and more perfected in this love, which is the spirit of our Father, the spirit of our Lord, and the spirit of all who are truly members of the body of Christ."

R4153 "HOLDING FAST AT THE MARK... The rewards are not promised to consecrators, but to "him that overcometh." Thus in the case of the Master himself, our forerunner, it was necessary that he should suffer and thus be proven worthy of entering into his glory. In a word, as the child cannot be graduated the day he enters school, no more can we who enter the school of Christ.

The rapidity of progress in learning the lessons depends greatly on our temperament and our zeal. Some evidently make as much progress in one year as others do in twenty, and very many never graduate at all--never reach the mark or standard which God demands, perfect love. The Word of God, our textbook, informs us that "Love is the fulfilling of the Law" (Rom. 13:10); that "The end or purpose of the divine commandment is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience." (1 Tim. 1:5.) "As many, therefore, as be perfect [-willed, at the mark of perfect love] should be of this mind."--Phil. 3:15-17

Those begotten of the Holy Spirit should all be good tempered. In no way can we better show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light than by the exhibition of the spirit of love in the daily affairs of life. Z.'03-56,57 R3150:3; R3150:4; R3151:2

Those who have "thus learned Christ," he has taught the meaning of (1) *perfected love toward God*, which would prompt them to do and to dare anything in his service; (2) of *perfected love for the "brethren,"* which would prompt the laying down of life itself in their service; (3) of *perfected love for the world, yea, even for enemies,* which would lead to do good to them that hate us and despitely use us, and say all manner of evil against us falsely....

It is well to remember that this "mark" or standard of love is not of the flesh but of the mind or heart. As the Apostle says, "We cannot do the things that we would." Our blemishes of the flesh sometimes momentarily stumble us into an unloving word or act, which if repented of will not be reckoned against us nor put us away from the mark and the loving acceptableness of our Lord, which the mark represents.

"LET NO MAN TAKE THY CROWN"....

Apparently, the severest struggles, tests, temptations, assail those who are *at that mark*... Those who have "done all," who have attained the mark of character and "put on the whole armor," are the ones who are cautioned, warned, to "hold fast" and "stand fast" and "fight a good fight."

"WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO STAND?"

These fundamental truths have been true and applicable to the Lord's people throughout this Gospel Age, and hence the narrowness of the way and the few there be who have found and walked therein--in all a little flock. But now, more particularly than ever before, this warning applies and probably to a larger number of the Lord's people than at any time in the past... Many Scriptures seem to specify our time in connection with these warnings. For instance, we read, "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand in *the evil day*, and having done all to stand!"--Eph. 6:13.

The logic of this situation implies that during the few years immediately before us will come the severest of trials and the most subtle tests of our love: (1) For God as represented by our love for his Truth and the honor of his name; (2) our love for the Lord's brethren; (3) our love for our enemies. And whenever the "brethren" (of whom so much might be expected) become our enemies the test of our love will be the severer. In view of these things, "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy living and God-likeness?" In view of the solemnity of the situation, how "circumspect" we all should be! How we should scrutinize our every act and word and thought! And our thoughts require our special care, because by the *thoughts and intents of the heart* we are being judged. And words and acts proceed therefrom. How often *ambition* hides its envious desires under the cloak of *duty!* How many of the fires of the "Holy Inquisition" were lighted by the torch of "duty!" Let us each be on guard. Ourselves or others we might deceive, but not God, who says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; he that doeth

righteousness is righteous"--not merely he who professes. He whose acts and words are loving, gentle, kind, considerate under trying conditions gives evidence of being begotten of the God of love and of having developed much Christ-likeness! Consider our Lord's love for his enemies and his forbearance for them when railed at, "Come down from the cross!" Consider how, when reviled and slandered, he reviled and slandered not in return! Consider how gentle

was his reproof of the perfidious Judas and how he merely hinted a reproof to Peter, who denied him with cursings! In his case surely Love was ready to cover a multitude of faults. Let us not be easily offended nor of implacable spirit. Let us with generous and forgiving spirit say with the Apostle, "None of these things move me"--from my stand at perfect love; it shall grow more rooted and grounded in proportion as it is tested. Let us also be on guard against the

spirit which is envious of the honors, privileges and blessings granted to another. Contrariwise let us have so much of the spirit of love that we will rejoice with all who rejoice in the Lord and will mourn with all in distress. To feel even a coolness of sentiment in connection with the prosperity of a brother or a lack of interest in his welfare is a sign of serious danger-- that we have slipped from the mark. This should alarm us and lead to fresh energy."

R4849 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2008)

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 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 everyday 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 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.

R3150 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)

"LOVE IS THE PRINCIPAL THING"

--1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13.--FEBRUARY 22.--

"Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

IN THE preceding chapter the Apostle has recounted the various "gifts" of the holy spirit conferred upon the early Church for its establishment and development. He closes the chapter with the exhortation that while esteeming all of these gifts, each member of the Church should covet earnestly the superior ones; and then he adds, "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way"--something still better than any of those gifts of the holy spirit. Our lesson pertains to this more excellent ambition which should actuate every child of God; viz., the acquisition and development of the spirit of love, the spirit of the Lord. In proportion as we have the mind of Christ, in proportion as the holy spirit dwells in us and abounds, in that same proportion our love abounds.

There are different kinds of love, however, and the Apostle is here not speaking of general love, but of one particular kind, which belongs to God, and to the New Creation begotten of him. There is an animal love, such as the brute creation exercises toward its young, a love which frequently leads to the sacrifice of life in its devotion. This same kind of love inheres in the natural man, even in his fallen condition. It is all more or less selfish love,--ready, perhaps, at times to rob others that it might lavish good things upon those it favors. This is not the love which the Apostle describes, nor is he addressing his language to the natural man. He addresses the New Creation, informing them that the natural man will not be able to receive, to appreciate, to comply with, that which he presents. In order to a clear comprehension of this love, and a hearty acceptance of it as the rule of life, it is apparently necessary that we be "begotten" from above.

⁽¹⁾It seems impossible to describe love itself; the best we can do is to describe its conduct. Those who possess a love with such characteristics are able to appreciate it, but not able otherwise to explain it-- it is of God, god-likeness in the heart, in the tongue, in the hands, in the thoughts--supervising all the human attributes and seeking fully to control them.

Before describing the operation of love the Apostle impresses upon us its importance, assuring us that if we possess the very choicest of the "gifts" already explained, and do not have therewith love, we will still lack the evidence of our being New Creatures in Christ Jesus. We should be merely "sounding brass or cymbal" --making a noise, but having no acceptable feeling or virtue in ourselves in connection with our words. He assures us thus that ability to speak fluently on gospel themes, even, might not be a proof of our relationship to the Lord as New Creatures. The Apostle's declaration is introduced with an "if," which might be challenged, to a certain extent, by the assertion that no one could speak forth with power, with force, the gospel of God's dear Son unless he possessed the spirit of love. Although we have all met public speakers who could deliver very beautiful essays, we have generally perceived a hollowness in their teaching unless they spoke from the heart, prompted by love of the truth,--not by love of applause, nor for love of money.

Amongst the gifts, prophecy or oratory was one which the Apostle commended. Knowledge of mysteries of God is also commended, and large faith is reckoned amongst the chief of the Christian requirements; yet the Apostle declares that if he possessed all of these in their fullest measure, and love were absent, he would be nothing,--a mere cipher--not a member of the New Creation at all, since love is the very spirit of the begetting to the new nature. What a wonderful test this is! let us each apply it to himself. ⁽²⁾Whether I am something or nothing in God's estimation is to be measured by *my love* for him, for his brethren, for his cause, for the world in gen-

eral, and even for my enemies, --rather than by my knowledge or fame or oratory. Yet we are not to understand that one could have a knowledge of the deep mysteries of God without having been begotten by the holy spirit of love; for the deep things of God knoweth no man, but by the spirit of God; but one might lose the spirit before losing the knowledge it brought him. In the measurement of character, therefore, we are to put love first, and to consider it the chief test of our nearness and acceptance to the Lord.

The Apostle next takes another line of argument: his hearers already understood benevolence, alms-giving to the needy, to be commendable; and to impress upon them the importance of having love as the controlling principle of their hearts, the Apostle declares that if he should give all of his goods to feed the poor--keeping nothing back--and yet do this without proper love as the mainspring to the conduct, it would profit him nothing. He goes still further and declares, that even if he should become a martyr, and be burned at the stake, it would not bring him the blessed reward sought, unless that martyrdom were prompted, impelled, by love.

But it may be inquired, How could anyone practise such self-denial, such sacrifice, such faith, etc., and yet be without love? It is not our thought that they could practise these and be devoid of love; that there must be some measure of love. We understand the Apostle to make this strong statement of the case in order to show us that our almsgiving, our sacrifices, our knowledge, our teaching, are acceptable to the Lord and appreciated by him, only to the extent that they have love behind them. If love enters slightly into them, then they are slightly appreciated; if love enters largely into them, then God appreciates them largely. If they are prompted wholly by love, then God accepts them fully. If love be only a part of the motive power behind our conduct as New Creatures, it implies that other motives are active in us, tending to neutralize in the Lord's esteem even services and sacrifices performed in his name and upon worthy objects. Let us be on guard against these neutralizing influences, and earnestly seek to be whole-hearted, full of love;-- that our every service of the Lord and of the brethren and of the truth be from a pure heart, free from personal ambition, pride, etc.

Having given us such a conception of the importance of love, the Apostle proceeds to describe what it is and what it is not--how it operates, and how it does not operate or conduct itself. Let us each make a practical application of this matter to himself, and inquire within: Have I such a love, especially for the household of faith, as leads me to suffer considerable and for a long time, and yet to be kind? How quickly do I get offended? If very quickly it surely indicates that I have very little of the spirit of the Lord,--love. If I am disposed to resent the trifling wrongs of life,-- if I have the spirit of resentment, am disposed to render evil for evil, and railing for railing,--it marks my deficiency in this greatest of all the graces, so essential to my ultimate passing, as an overcomer, the divine inspection.

Of our heavenly Father it is said that "he is kind to the unthankful." Have I this spirit of kindness-- his spirit? Am I kind to my friends? gentle? courteous? Have I this mark of love pervading my actions and words and thoughts--that I think of and am considerate of others? that I feel and manifest kindness toward them in word, in look, in act? A Christian, above all others, should be kind, courteous, gentle, in his home, in his place of business, in the Church--everywhere. With the child of God this patience and kindness are not merely put on, as grapes might be tied to a thorn-bush, but, on the contrary, they are the *fruits* of the spirit--growths from or results of having come into fellowship with God, learned of him, received of his spirit of holiness, spirit of love.

Have I the love that envieth not, so that I can see others prosper and rejoice in their prosperity, even if for the time my own affairs be

⁽¹⁾ ½ Sept. 30 Manna, 2Cor. 5:14

⁽²⁾ ½ March 7 Manna, 1Jn. 4:12

not so prosperous? This is generosity, the very opposite of jealousy and envy. The root of envy is selfishness: envy will not grow upon the root of love. Love envies not, but rejoices in the prosperity of all that is good.

Have I the love that vaunteth not itself?--the love that tends to humility, that is not boastful, not puffed up? Some one has truly said, that "love saves a man from making a fool of himself by consequential conduct, and by thrusting himself into positions which betray his incompetence." Boasting--over self-esteem --has led many a man not only into folly, but sometimes into gross sins, in his endeavor to make good his boasts. The spirit of the Lord is a spirit of a sound mind, which not only seeks generously to esteem others, but also soberly to estimate oneself, and not to be puffed up.

Have I the love which does not behave itself unseemly --discourteously, impolitely? Politeness has been defined as love in trifles. Courtesy is said to be love in little things. The secret of politeness is either a surface polishing or love in the heart. As Christians we are to have the heart-love, which will prompt us to acts of kindness and courtesy, not only in the household of faith, but in our homes and in our dealings with the world.

Have I the love that seeketh not her own merely? --that might even be willing to let some of her own rights be sacrificed in the interests of others?--or have I the selfishness which not only demands my own rights on every occasion, but which demands those rights regardless of the convenience, comfort and rights of others? To have love in this particular means that we will be on guard against taking any unjust advantage of others, and to prefer rather to suffer a wrong than to do a wrong,--to suffer an injustice than to do injustice.

Have I the love which is not easily provoked? Indeed, the original omits the word "easily," and gives rather the thought that love does not become irritated, roused to anger. Love enables its possessor to see both sides of a question; it makes of him a veritable philosopher; it gives him the spirit of a sound mind. He perceives that exasperation and violent anger are unbecoming and worse than that, injurious, not only toward those against whom they may be directed, but injurious in their effect also upon his own heart and body. There may be times when love will need to be firm, almost to sternness and inflexibility, where principles are involved, where valuable lessons are to be inculcated; and this might come under the head of anger, using that word in a proper sense in regard to a righteous indignation, exercised *for a loving purpose*, for doing good--but then only for a time. If justly angry we should see to it that we sin not, even with our lips or in our hearts, in which at no time may we entertain any but loving and generous sentiments toward those who are our enemies, or toward those of our friends whom we would assist or instruct or correct.

To be easily provoked is to have a bad temper, to get worked up into a passion, where evil looks and evil words and angry sentiments are involved. This is wholly contrary to the spirit of love, and whoever is on the Lord's side and seeking to be pleasing to him and to attain to an overcomer's position should jealously guard himself against this general besetment of our day. ⁽³⁾Those begotten of the holy spirit should all be good tempered. In no way can we better show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light than by the exhibition of the spirit of love in the daily affairs of life.

Have I the spirit of love which thinketh no evil? --which is guileless, not suspicious of evil or looking for faults in others, or attributing to them evil motives? It is an old adage that "faults are thick where love is thin."

The Revised Version presents a slightly different thought here--"Taketh not account of evil"--does not charge up the wrong against the evil-doer, as if waiting for an apology or a restitution or an opportunity to "get even." But while love passes over offenses and takes no account of them, holding no grudges, this would not mean that love would necessarily treat evil-doers in precisely the same manner that it would treat its friends. It might be proper or necessary, even, to take some notice of the offenses to the extent of not manifesting the same cordiality as before, but no hatred, malice or strife should be manifested--nothing but kindness and gentleness, leaving the door of opportunity open for a full reconciliation as soon as possible; doing all that could be done to promote a reconciliation and evincing a willingness to forgive and forget the wrong.

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⁽⁴⁾Have I the love which rejoices not in iniquity (inequity) but rejoices in the truth? Are the principles of right and wrong so firmly fixed in my mind, and am I so thoroughly in accord with the right and so opposed to the wrong that I would not encourage the wrong, but must condemn it, even if it brought advantage to me? Am I so in accord with right, with truth, that I could not avoid rejoicing in the truth and in its prosperity, even to the upsetting of some of my preconceived opinions, or to the disadvantage of some of my earthly interests? The love of God which the Apostle is here describing as the spirit of the Lord's people, is a love which is far above all selfishness, and is based upon fixed principles which should, day by day, be more and more distinctly discerned, and always firmly adhered to at any cost.

Have I the love that beareth all things?--that is impregnable against the assaults of evil? that resists evil, impurity, sin and everything contrary to love? Have I the love that believeth all things? that is unwilling to impute evil to another unless forced so to do, by indisputable evidences?--that would rather believe good than evil about everybody?--that would take no pleasure in hearing evil, but would be disposed to resent it? Have I the love that hopeth all things, that perseveres under unfavorable conditions, and continues to hope for and to labor for those who need my assistance? Have I the love that endureth all things?-- that is, that continues to hope for the best in regard to all and to strive for the best, and that with perseverance --not easily discouraged?

⁽⁵⁾As disciples or pupils of Christ, we are in his school, and the great lesson which he is teaching us day by day, and the lesson which we must learn thoroughly if we would attain the mark of the prize of our high calling in all its various features and ramifications, is the lesson of Love. It takes hold upon and relates to all the words and thoughts and doings of our daily lives. As the poet has said,

"As every lovely hue is light,--so every grace is love."

Next the Apostle points out that ⁽⁶⁾as love is the most excellent thing, so is it the most enduring. The gift of prophecy would pass away; the value and necessity for speaking with other tongues would cease; and all knowledge of the present time, imperfect as it is, must surely cease to be valuable when the perfections of the new dispensation are fully ushered in. The very best informed now know only in part; but when perfection shall be attained in the Kingdom, and under its ministration, all the partial and imperfect conditions of the present time will have been superseded, and only the one thing may surely be said to endure and be everlasting,--and that one thing is Love.

An illustration of the growth which we must expect as between the present knowledge and attainments and those of the future, is of the child and the growth to manhood. Another illustration is seeing obscurely in one of the old-time mirrors, which gave but imperfect reflections. With the perfections of the new condition we will see perfectly, know perfectly, understand perfectly. Just so the gifts which were in the early Church were very suitable to it, as fitted to its infantile condition; but as it would develop to maturity the value of those "gifts" would diminish, and they would be no more; but higher developments of divine favor were to be expected, faith, hope and love. All three of these the Church of God is to cultivate, and to esteem as *fruits* of the spirit, far above the *gifts* of the spirit,-- and the greatest of these three is Love.

Love also is the most enduring; ⁽⁷⁾for will not faith practically come to an end when we shall see and know thoroughly? And will not hope practically be at an end when we shall reach the fruition of all our hopes and be possessors of the fulness of our heavenly Father's promises? Love, however, will never fail, even as it had no beginning. God is love, and since he was without beginning, so love was without beginning; because it is his character, his disposition; and as he endureth forever, so love will endure forever. Whoever, therefore, learns thoroughly the lessons of this present time in the school of Christ, and thus becomes well stocked with this wonderful grace of love, lays up treasures which may be his to all eternity--a great blessing to himself and to all with whom he comes in contact now; and a blessing to the world to which he will be permitted to minister during the Millennium;--a blessing everlasting, because it is a seal of divine approval.

⁽⁴⁾ Nov. 10 Manna, 1Cor. 13:6

⁽⁵⁾ ½ Sep. 30 Manna

⁽⁶⁾ ½ Aug. 23 Manna, 1Cor. 13:13

⁽⁷⁾ ½ Aug. 23 Manna