

## **LOVE--THE BOND OF PERFECTNESS.**

Love... Such a little word, yet into it is compressed all that God is. The glories that compose His Name, the motivating Spirit of His Mind, the very atmosphere of heaven itself, love is the sum of all that He is. We speak of divine love, and recognize at once the problem of having to share this term with the world where the word means something very different. Divine love is abounding love, and thus defies definition, for to define a thing means to set and describe its bounds, whereas the love of God, the love that God is, is boundless, overflows all human concept.

To walk with God is to walk with divine love. Indeed, as brother John pointed out, our knowing of God, our walking with God, is reliably indexed by the manifestation of the love of God in our life. The fullness of that love is token of the closeness of our walk. The Lord's people are children of His love. He it was Who in love previously marked out His family, sowed the seed in your heart and mine, and husbanded and tended it, then patiently, Oh so patiently waiting for its full development. This fruitage is so very precious to the Lord, and even now He watches for that full ripening process to reward His patient care. These are they with whom He plans to spend eternity in closest union, with whom He is at home and at rest forever. Before their course is done their preparation must be complete, their love made perfect. Because we delight in Him, we desire that His wondrous design for us be fulfilled, and it is our earnest plea that He will by all means make us the vessels of His love. The index of our progress, the sign of the closeness of our walk with God, is the manifestation of that love abundantly in our lives.

This calls for frequent examination of our own hearts, our attitudes, and our responses to the varied circumstances of life. None of us are there yet. We count not ourselves to have apprehended. We each know there is more to overcome, and we each long for that full mature ripeness of character, the completion of that wondrous work of His Spirit within, the moment when He will look upon His work in me, and say, "It is done. Come up higher." The glory will be His, the Master Craftsman, the Divine Potter, yet there is an important difference between the materials in the hands of craftsman, the work, metal, or clay, or jewel, and the material in Our Father's hands. Wood, and all these other things, are inert, incapable of any contribution of its own. Clay does not need to be told to lie still and let Him mould thee, for it is unable to do otherwise. With us it is so different. What the Lord is making is a character like His own.. "after the image of Him that creates us.." Free-wills are involved, and hearts and minds full of living active thought and feeling. He works upon our ways, and brings them into line with His Ways, not by outward coercion, but by His Spirit within, by the compelling of heavenly love. The work is His. No glory shall we ever claim. But by its very nature it demands that full response of our hearts. Our goal cannot, must not be any lower than that of Our Father for us. He wants, He will have, each one of His own made perfect in love.

So this moment as we look within our own hearts, how much of His likeness do we see therein? How ready am I for the perfect day? Do I find it easy to love that dear sweet soul over there, whose ways are so appealing, and who is warm towards me. Of course I do, yet regretfully I must dismiss this as any index of the closeness of my walk with God. Of course He loves the lovable, but He loves the unlovable too. He loves me... loved me even sinner like the rest. The cross stands symbol to the love that is of God. This is a love that counts as precious even the unlovable. ..Precious! Precious enough to give much for? We will give little or give much according to the preciousness of something to us. Someone has recently

paid one million pounds for a Bible. He got it cheap! How much is that Word worth to me? Can I regard as precious someone who is unlovable, ugly, unpleasant to be with? Can I see such a one as a child of God, be he of the brethren or the world? Can I see him as he will be when God has finished with him, completed His design? Can I feel now towards him that he is worth much to me, that I would be willing to give much for him, ... even give my life for him? The cross stands there for me to lift up to its light the love now dwelling in my heart and ask, is this the same? That love of God in Christ, does it now dwell in me?

Sometimes when learning a subject by means of a text-book we may happen to glance at some future page and find a test set at the end of a later lesson. We shake our heads and know we yet must slowly persevere and work our way through many pages yet before we can with any hope attempt that exam, or we would fail the test. Each time we check our progress with that cross maybe we feel the same. Yet that is the goal. That is what Paul meant by being found in Him. It is to that end He has laid hold on us, and to that end have we laid hold on Him. There will be no getting by with something less than the love of God in Christ.. in me. If we have problems with our love, it is no use, no purpose would be served by forcing feeling, putting on a show, politely hiding our true inward thought, to feign to some a love we do not have. It is no easy test. Where human love asks much this love of God asks all. It gives, and gives again, and what it gives bears no relation to the loveliness or otherwise of its object. If it is there, the glory now is His Whose work bear such sweet fruitage to His praise. If not, the answer lies in closer walk with God Who is the Source, the only Source of such a love.

Whatever eloquence we lack in speaking of so glorious a theme as heavenly love, it matters not, for this love is not 'talk', but 'walk'. This is that eternal life. To what degree we have the Lord before our eyes, that all enabling grace, the sacrifice of love divine, and love's compelling claim upon our all, so much do we with purpose now lay hold on life eternal. This is that eternal life, which is (I John 1:2) "with the Father.." the word is "pro", "towards the face of the Father.." Our angels are always beholding the Father's face, and so does every saint who knows that closer walk. The mind is centered there, the heart's desire to please, delight to share those sacred things so dear to our Father, now made dear to us.. As dear children do we wish to walk, and know a Father's smile on all we think and do. For this is holiness, a realm of beauty, in which all those glorious hues of love combine and with each thought, each wish, and every act entwine. It sounds a bit like poetry, brethren! The word 'poem' means a work, and to our minds conveys the thought of aptness of expression to oft describe in so few words so much. It does this, as does the Word of God, by use of imagery, the colour of figure, picture language. Poetic minds have been at work upon our theme of love and we feel help the mind retain in easily remembered lines inspiring thought.

"Love is the filling from one's own another's cup," How true those words, and how much they convey of love distinguished from the world's by total selflessness. "Love is a daily laying down and taking up;" It is indeed, the constant attitude of heart and mind, not just reserved for meeting time or place. Its living lies in giving. At day's close it counts its gains in terms of what was spent. And in abundant giving, like the Lord's, reveals its source, and finds abounding joy. We speak not of man's silver or his gold. As brother Peter said to that lame man, we have more precious things to give than ought that money could acquire. The Lord's people are so rich. Their wealth, their treasure house above, will not grow less however much they give away, but gains with interest every time the talent changes hands.

"A choosing of the stony path through each new day, that other feet may tread with ease a

smoother way." That bears a moment's thought! We see something advantageous to us, a situation, .. can be anything! At the checkout in the queue with patience waiting while the check so far ahead is written out and all the bits and pieces cards and notes are signed. Another checkout opens at the side. We rush for it! Or do we say to that dear older soul behind. "You take it dear, no hurry," though our basket weighs a ton. So many situations are assessed by love divine, and other souls catch something of the light of Our dear Father's smile, Who notes and says "There goes a child of mine."

"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/sister, hast thou a love like this within thy soul? 'Twill change thy name to saint when thou dost reach thy goal."

Amen.