

Love the Greatest

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INTRODUCTION

I have read with great pleasure and profit "Love the Greatest," by J. B. Moody, D. D. Bro. Moody has rendered a beautiful and effective service in this masterly discussion, With characteristic clearness and loyalty to God's Word, he builds his argument in every chapter upon the specific statements of the Bible. In love, he finds the procuring cause of man's redemption, magnifies that love by showing man's depravity, God's condescension, Love's unspeakables gift, and its glorious and eternal results; and thus fires the heart of the Cristian with the desire to honor Him who is capable of such love. It is the strongest argument with which one can appeal to the unsaved, and should lead every such reader to the Saviour.

J. A. BENNETT.

Beard, Ky., Dec. 16, 1902.

PREFACE

These thoughts were prepared in the spring of 1884. The writer experienced great pleasure and profit in the first writing, and, after the lapse of nearly twenty years, he has carefully re-read and revised them, experiencing a second benefit. He has not treated the subject so much as a sentiment, having to do with only the *emotions*, but more as a *principle*, having to do with the mind and with the life. "Love with all the mind, heart, soul, and strength," is more than a sentimental emotion. Love is doctrinal as well. It has to do with principles as well as persons. "Love rejoices in the truth." "If we say we love Christ, and not love his commandments, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "For this is Love, that we walk after his commandments." It is this larger kind of love that is a test of character. Let us be orthodox in our Theology of Love, since many heresies are running in its name. I heard one say, that all his love was for Christ and his people, and that put him above the law of obedience, in matters of church and doctrines and ordinances. He was a good man, but not righteous.

The aim of the writer has been to present the subject as revealed in the Scriptures. In these times of wrangling and alienations and disfellowship, there is great need of a revival of this heavenly grace. This, the writer has sought for himself, and he would be glad to help others who may "covet" this "best gift."

J. B. Moody.

CHAPTER I.

"The Greatest of These is Love."

You remember the picture of "The Three Graces," called Faith, Hope and Love. Hope holds the hand of Love, and with cheerful countenance gazes upward. But she sees not, "for hope that sees is not hope; for what we see, why do we yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, we must with patience wait for it." But if Patience should fail to do its perfect work. then Hope with heavy heart must hang her helpless head. And Faith, so often and so sorely tried, may falter, faint and fail; but falling on the faithful bosom of Love, as in the picture, it would be energized thereby Gal. v. 6), for faith is energized through love." But if by reason of the trial that tries it, Faith should fail to rally, Love, that suffers long and is kind, and seeks not her own, would haste to the rescue, and should it find Hope hopeless, and Faith unbelieving, then Love would hope for Hope, and would believe for Faith, and if the trial that happened to them should be strangely and uncommonly fiery, Love, that beareth all things, and endureth all things, would manifest her superiority, and taking Hope by one hand and Faith by the other, Love would hope did I say? Yea, Love would "hope all things" and Love would "believe all things." Love never fails; love envies not, for being chiefest of the three greatest, there is no occasion, as there is no disposition, to envy. Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, imputes not evil, rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices with the truth. Surely this love is of God, and every one who thus loves is born of God and knows God. Love is the end of the commandment. Love works no evil to a neighbor, as it fulfills the requirements of the law. Love is better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. If God is love, then love is omnipresent as well as omnipotent; and if love is of God, and from God, then as he is, so we should be in this world. If there be paternal, filial and fraternal love, it is because God is love. The love of husband and wife is but the overflowing of God's love "shed on us." If we love our fellowman and our country, and nature with its countless beauties

and blessings, it is because God is love, and love is of God. If we love the Lord and his word and his ways, it is because this love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. As one has said, the art of love is the best art, the science of love is the best science, the philosophy of love is the best philosophy, the poetry of love is the best poetry, the religion of love is the best religion, the world of love is the best world, and the being of love is the best being. And may we not add, the Christian is the child of love, the church is the home of love, the Bible is the book of love, and with infinite gratitude let us make known the God the Father is justifying love; the Holy Spirit is sanctifying love, and Jesus Christ is glorifying love. His religion is the fountain of love, and Christianity is a system of love. Its doctrines are the teachings of love, its principles the government of love, its precepts the exhortations of love, its invitations the proffers of love, its warnings the restraints of love, its threatenings the faithfulness of love, its reproofs, rebukes and chastisements the expressions of love, its promises the assurances of love, its songs the praises of love, its works the evidences of love, its sacrifices the proofs of love, its cross is the sacrifice of love, and its final home is the eternal reward of its love. Love is Christianity's lesson. life, law, language, logic, labor, and all else of it. if there be aught else. is likewise love. "By this shall all men know we are his disciples by the love we have for one another." John 13:35. "If, any man love the world. the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15. "Whoso hath this world's goods 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. "If a man say. I love God and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother. whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." 1 John 4:20. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also him that is begotten of him." 1 John. "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John 4:16. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. Let love be without hypocrisy. Let love be unfeigned. Let us show the proof of our love. Let us in love serve one another. Let us provoke one another to love and good works.

Let us earnestly covet this best gift and be knit together in it, and rooted and grounded in it, and abound in it yet more and more. Let us by the fruits of this love show that it is a fruit of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, shed abroad in our hearts. Then we can love even our enemies. If we love Christ, let us keep his commandments, yea, if we love him we will keep his sayings; for this is love that we walk after his commandments, which are not grievous. By this we know we have passed from death unto life, and by this we know we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments. Let us grow to know that love that passeth knowledge that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.

CHAPTER II.

"The Greatest of These is Love."

When Paul wrote the above words he was comparing particularly Love with Hope and Faith. But I understand from the closing of the previous chapter—"and yet I show you a more excellent way"—he intends that Love shall be compared with the other gifts which he had been considering, and the conclusion of the argument makes Love superior to all the "spiritual gifts"—ordinary and extraordinary. In chapter 12:8-11, he shows these gifts were sovereignly bestowed:

8. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

9. To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10. To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues;

11. But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

The Corinthians had made the usual mistake of esteeming that the greatest which produced the greatest sensation on the popular mind—speaking with tongues, and all it seems were coveting that gift, and perhaps were jealous of those who had it. But the mistake did not stop here but they "despised Prophesying," whereas the superiority of Prophesying to speaking with tongues, in Paul's judgment, was more than the ratio of five to ten thousand: - "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" I Cor. 14:19. They were zealous of spiritual gifts and were Coveting what they supposed to be the greatest, but their judgment was at fault, and perhaps their motives also, both of which needed direction. "Tongues was a sign to them that believe not," whereas "they should have sought to the edifying of the church."

Our ultimate object is to soar to our utmost height in contemplating the superiority of the Love of God "which passeth knowledge;" but let us begin with the first principles of love—the superiority of love to everything among men. Then leaving the first principles, let us stretch ourselves to "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." If in this journey in search of truth, darkness and weariness should overtake us, let us stop and rest, for who knows but the resting place may become a Bethel, though we have but a stone to pillow our weary head; and who knows but in our very sleep we may not discover the ladder of God's love reaching from earth to heaven; and who knows but we may be permitted to ascend it and descend it with the angels of God. But let us decide first if Love is a gift, or is it a dormant principle in human nature developed by appointed means.

Negatively, human nature is represented as "hating God," "enmity against God," "desperately wicked," "deceitful above all things," all of which is incongruous to love. "There is no love of God in you," says Christ. But positively we are informed that "love is Shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto us." Rom. 5:5. That it is a "fruit of the Spirit." Gal. 5:22. This gift is not only divine in its origin—"for love is of God"—but it is also under the superintendence of divine power—"The Lord direct your hearts unto the Love of God." 2 Thess. 3:5. This divine superintendence is also over our love to one another. "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, even as we toward you." 1 Thess. 3:12. "Thanks be unto God who put the same earnest care in the heart of Titus for you all." 2 Cor. 8:16. Now, if any of us have this divine principle implanted in his heart, let him not boast as though he did not receive it, but rather let him earnestly thank God that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ he has been made to differ from others in this regard. I am not disposed to magnify the principle over the practice of love, but think it well in passing, to note the principle for the effect it is calculated to have on our own minds and hearts. But lest vain man should claim a speck of imaginary ground for boasting, by claiming that they love their

family and friends --that sinners love them that love them"—and that "even publicans and harlots do this," we would reply to the praise of the same glorious grace. that is given unto natural men and to beasts and birds to love their families and companions and associates, and that if God were to withdraw his superintendence here and his restraining and constraining "powers" ordained of him to perpetuate it, that the whole social compact would be precipitated into an appalling chaos of destruction; men and beasts and birds would ruthlessly prey on each other, and every unsanctified human tongue would unceasingly spout its pantings for blood, and every one of its infinitely diversified movements would emit sparks of hell fire that would burn up every tie that sweetly binds together—"the whole course (or wheel) of nature," and there would be no union except for destruction. Devil-like, "seven" or a "legion" of us would combine to throw one in the fire or water or on the earth, and make him foam at the mouth, and if hindered in this, we would beg for the exquisite privilege of making the swine rush headlong into the sea.

Why are we not in this condition today? What keeps the dark picture from being a reality? LOVE. That love "that is of God," and that is infinite in its degrees, having been directed by God first in consanguineal and social relations, and then directed unto Christian fraternity and unto God himself.

The opposite of love is hate, the absence of love is hell, while all love and no hate is heaven, and this happy state is approximated as the one increases and the other diminishes.

But let us consider briefly the superiority of Love to the other gifts.

FIRST TONGUES.

In religion we should esteem that greatest which is capable of the greatest resultant good. What was the effect of tongues on the day of Pentecost? It made them wonder, and it finally led to the conclusion that the

apostles were drunk. They wondered, but they could wonder and then perish. God had said he would speak to them with other lips and with other tongues, and yet for all that they would not hear. Indeed a man may speak the thousand languages of earth with those of heaven—"the tongues of men and angels"—and then all who hear may be damned, and the speaker with them. It appears that man is cursed with a superabundance of tongue, when he speaks only one language, and the exhortation to use that under powerful restraints is recognized as eminently needful. A man may have all worldly wisdom in his tongue, and even love in it, and yet it may be "a world of iniquity—full of deadly poison." Arm one Christian with the gift of tongues—that sounding brass and clanging cymbal—and clothe another with the habiliments of love, and let each visit the sinner under condemnation and the saint under affliction, and use his gift in offering the provisions of the gospel. Which would result in the greatest good? The answer is evident to all. And yet the great majority of Christians are ready to excuse themselves, because they have not some imaginary great gift which has ceased because of no practical good, and not coveting the greatest of all gifts—a gift accessible to all, and a gift if diligently used by all, would soon cause this sorrowing earth to blossom as the rose. Then let all seek to possess and use this best of all gifts.

CHAPTER III.

Love a Gift.

There is a practical thought connected with Love as a gift, that I will refer to again; and would emphasize it: Those who theoretically hold that love is of man, because it must be exercised by man, and is in no particular sense a gift, and would therefore exhort man to "see ye to it," are in danger (both the teacher and the taught) of attempting a sort of love in frail obedience to a command—a legal love, the highest attainment of which is to imitate the forms and utter the words of love—"love in tongue, and not in deed and in truth." I have tried to weigh, measure or analyze this love, both in myself and in others, and the strong conviction has fastened itself upon me, that it is 'only natural love in a religious garb. That is to say, such "love of the brethren" is only the love that has sprung up from religious associations, just as love will spring up among those who walk together in any relation of life; in political parties and societies, whether for good or for evil. This is confirmed by facts innumerable and incontestable, as seen in the dismemberment of religious, as well, and as easily as in political and social bodies. I have examined this love also in myself, as well as others, as applied to the so-called doctrines of Christ—our religious platform—and I find that it will lead to no greater sacrifices than the love of political and social platforms. I saw and felt that- this love could not bear the test of I Cor. 13th chapter, that in the light of that and the general Bible definitions, that my love was only a base counterfeit, that I was not loving the brethren because they bore the image of Christ --begotten of God"—but because they were associated with me in a religious struggle; that I was willing to fight for them and for the doctrine, because the doctrine was ours, and they walked and talked according to our understanding of the rule, and but precious little further; and so far from "laying down my life for the sake of my brethren," that provocations were possible by which I could lay down the life of the brethren for my sake. The exhortation "to love our enemies and pray for them who despitefully use us and persecute us," was effectual only in leading to the formalism of love. This conviction of shortage in my banking account with

heaven, came well-nigh driving me toward infidelity, or to the belief that the Christian religion is a sham. But he who had begun a good work in me carried it on in his own infallible way. I came to the all-important conclusion, that I could not reach the Bible standard of love; that such love is not of man, but of God, and that I must seek it of him as a gift, with the vow that I would exercise it to the best of my ability. I found afterward that I needed "more grace" to help even in the exercise of the gift I had earnestly sought. I call to mind an occasion afforded in the person of one called a brother in the Lord; an occasion as aggravating as was possible for that stage of my Christian endurance, if indeed it did not far exceed it. The exhortation to love him fell like lead to the ground. I took the ease to the Lord, and asked him to give me love for that one called a brother, and then for grace to help in the exercise of it. I will never forget while memory serves, that precious moment when that so-called brother passed my window during my days of seeking, how my heart fastened on him with a warmth that instantly melted the icy obstacle between us, and the time and place became holy, because the veil was lifted, and the divine love flashed into my heart and radiated toward him. To say that love is not a gift of God—a fruit of the Spirit—to be sought as such, is to mock the experience of saints, the Word of God, and the multitudes who in all ages have "panted after God as the hart panteth after the water-brook." Although I thus humbly confess for myself, and adoringly profess the riches of his grace, I fear lest I arouse opposition from those who are jealous for human merit, lest the ground of it be encroached upon by the all-sufficiency of that divine grace. Most earnestly would I exhort all to seek love as a gift, and then seek grace to enable us to use that gift to the honor and glory of the giver. Thus would we confess our insufficiency—our impotency—and at the same time we would profess the sufficiency of that grace which "directs our hearts unto the love of God," and that "makes us abound in love One toward another and toward all." But let us advance one more step and compare love with the working of

MIRACLES.

Miracle working and Tongues are confessedly gifts, which I will not stop to prove, but would direct the mind of the reader to this thought that I deem worthy of their notice. While miracle working is a gift, yet not all miracle workers are the children of God. I will have use for this thought as I advance.

Christ says, "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, who shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect." Matt. 24:24. Paul speaks of "him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." 2 Thess. 2:9. "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast. Rev. 13:13. But the power to work miracles may be possessed and freely used to the immense astonishment of all that dwell on the earth, and to the immense gratification of one's own pride, and yet the wonder worker and the wondering multitudes may all be damned. See Rev. 16:20, where "the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." See also Jannes and Jambres in Ex. 7:11, 22, and 8:7, and 2 Tim. 3:8 and 9. Also the Witch of Endor in 1st Sam. 28:7-14, and Simon Magus in Acts 8:9-11. Indeed our Lord lifts the veil and shows us the judgment, and there we see MANY saying, "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works; and then he will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."—Matt. 7:21-23.

We see, then, that the good results of wonder working are very meager; and that wonder workers may do immense damage in the use of their gift. But none of these things can be said of love. The fruits of love, on both the lover and the loved, are always for the good of both, and yet the world is foolish enough to covet wonder workings and despise the greatest of all,

which is love. "Though we had faith so that we could remove mountains, and have not love, we are nothing." Reader! writer! Would we prefer the work of hurling mountains and sycamore trees, or the work of love? Do we covet the gift of Miracles, or the gift of love? Let writer and reader answer this before God. The gift that is greater than Tongues or Miracles is in our reach. Let us reach it, receive it, use It.

CHAPTER IV.

Love Greater than Prophecy.

Having compared Love with the gift of Tongues, and with power to work miracles, and having shown, as I believe, that it is the greatest of the three, let us now compare it here with the gift of Prophecy.

This is one of the gifts enumerated by Paul in 1 Cor 12:10: In Eph. 4:14 it is stated that God "gave some Apostles, some Prophets:" In Rev. 11:3 we read—"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy," etc. In Matt. 23:34 Christ says: "Behold I send you prophets," etc. In Acts 2:17, 18 we read, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. And on my servants and on my handmaids, I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." In 2 Pet. 1:21, Ox. Rev., we read: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but man spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."

But not all who possess this gift are children of God by regeneration. In Numbers 24:2-4 it is said, "The Spirit of God came upon Balaam, that he heard the words of God—saw the vision of the Almighty—had his eyes opened," etc. In chap. 22:13, we see that Balaam sent the princes of Balak back, saying, "The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." Let the reader stop now and read the 22d, 23d and 24th chapters of Numbers, and then say if God was not intimate with him, and was not he obedient to God, this abominable Balaam? Did he not say, "If Balak were to give me his house full of gold and silver, I could not go beyond the commandment of the Lord. to do either good or bad of my own mind, but what the Lord saith, that will I speak" (24:13). Was ever man more tempted to disobey? Did man ever prove more outwardly obedient? Did a man ever prophesy more correctly? even including the coming of Messiah? Yet he had a mind to do differently. See Deut. 23:4, 5, Josh. 24:10, and Num. 22:13. Peter said Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness. 2 Pet. 2:15. Jude classes him with Cain and

with Balaam. Christ found fault with the church in Pergamos because they had those that held to the teaching of Balaam, Rev. 2:4. Many beautiful compliments might be passed upon this man, viewing him as a prophet, under the inspiration of God; yet he was a wicked man both in heart and in life. His prophecy can not be considered even as an evidence of his conversion. See also Saul and his messengers in 1st Samuel 10:10, 11, also Caiaphas, John 11:49-52. This gift of Prophecy can't be introduced in any of these cases as even an evidence of regeneration. What effect had these prophecies on the prophets? "Many will say in that day, have we not prophesied in thy name? Then will he profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart, ye cursed," etc. But "whosoever LOVETH, is born of God, and knoweth God," and this labor of love will never be in vain in the Lord. Paul says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy * * and have not love, I am nothing." But if we have love and not the gift of prophecy we are the children of God. I think this was fully verified in the case of Balaam, to whom I have referred. He had the gift of prophecy, but he had not love. Now if the gift of prophecy minus love equals nothing, as Paul says, and the gift of love minus prophecy equals new birth, as John says, then the value of the new birth expresses the superiority of love over prophecy.

This can be seen also in the practical operations of the two gifts. If you could tell that fond mother that in ten days her babe will be a corpse, you would bring on her anguish ten days in advance, and rob her of the joys she might have had. Love could do more for her than that. God has told us enough about the future—much more than we are inclined to "give heed to." Saul was not brought to repentance, even when he was told that his awful death was so near at hand. It only produced that sorrow of the world which worketh death. Hence the limitations to the gift of prophecy were wise. No one ever prophesied only "in part," and prophecies, says Paul, "shall be done away." But not so with love. "Love never fails. Love abides. It casts out fear." It is evidence of discipleship, of the new birth. It leads to good works, to obedience, to endurance, and as I hope after a while to show it is greater than that gift that subdued kingdoms. stopped the mouths of lions, and

quenched the violence of fire. It is greater than the gift, a grain of which can hurl mountains into the sea; greater than that power that annihilates all impossibilities, if nothing is impossible to them that believe.

Let us exercise sufficient patience in comparing love with this and that great thing, until we can be sufficiently impressed with its superior greatness, to covet it above all other gifts. Both writer and reader ought to meditate much on the magnitude of this grace, for none of us begin to appreciate it as he should. While love is a gift, yet, like all other gifts, it is "for the profit of all," and is to be cultivated and developed and strengthened by constant exercise. If God gives one prophecy, it is that he might prophesy. So of tongues, and so of miracles. We must use the gift. Just so with love. It is a gift to be exercised. It has its degrees. Christ spoke of those who love little and those who love much. It is a gift that grows. and increases by use, and we have no doubt but that if we properly train and exercise ourselves in this gift, that we could at last love our enemies, even those who hate and persecute us. It is for this purpose I write. Let us all begin anew to seek greater degrees of love, and let us begin to exercise it toward those who do not love us. "For if we love them that love us, what reward have we?" Let us not be content to remain on par with publicans and sinners in this matter of love. Let us stick to the one lesson till we learn it.

CHAPTER V.

Having shown that Love should be desired above the gift of Tongues, Prophecy, and the power to work miracles, and that all these might be used to the injury of ourselves and others, let us show its excellence as compared with

Knowledge and Wisdom.

These terms are so blended in our common version, that I will treat both together, the reader understanding that wisdom is the right use of knowledge. Neither will I distinguish in this connection between the inductive, deductive, intuitive or other kinds of knowledge since these are only different processes by which we obtain knowledge, or attain unto it.

"A word of knowledge and a word of wisdom" are mentioned in the catalogue of gifts. 1 Cor 12:8. Bear with me while I try to impress my readers in these fearful times of departure from the truth. that it is a matter of first importance to realize That certain things are not of ourselves but the gift of God. And these certain things are the things that men moved by the Spirit of God, were constrained to specify as gifts.

We all recognize the importance of this in the case of Solomon, for it sent him directly to God to seek it as a gift. and God was so well pleased with his asking for it, that he bestowed it upon him in an unprecedented measure. We are told also in Acts 7:10 that God gave Joseph favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh. If it be claimed that these are special cases of inspired men, we turn to James 1:5. which reads —"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not." Paul also recognized this in his prayer for the Colossians in chapter 1:9. Peter speaks of Paul writing "according to the wisdom given unto him." 2 Pet. 3:15. James had his mind on this when he was discriminating between "the wisdom that cometh down from above, and that which is earthly, sensual, devilish." Jas.

3:15-17. Paul speaks disparagingly of "fleshly wisdom," "wisdom of this world," "man's wisdom," and "that wisdom of the world by which they know not God." This is the wisdom of the wise that God will make foolish, and bring to naught, and will utterly destroy. Read the first three chapters of 1st Corinthians, and mark the distinction between the wisdom that is of men, and that which cometh down from God. I refer to this as an eminently practical doctrine, the truth of which being fully recognized, will drive our editors, pastors, deacons, teachers, farmers, bankers, lawyers, &c., &c., to the great fountain of wisdom, with that sense of dependence that will enable them to ask and to receive wisdom as a gift, and to exercise it for the glory of God. "This would from many a blunder free us."

If the reader will now turn and read and mark and re-read the following Scriptures, he will be greatly benefitted, if he reads in the right spirit: 1 Kings 3:9-12, 4:29, 1 Chron. 22:12, 2 Chron.1:10, Ps. 119:18, 34, 73, 144, Prov. 2:3-6, Isa. 11:2, 3, Dan. 1:17, 2:23, Mark 4:11, Luke 18:31-34, Luke 24:45, Eph. 1:18, 2 Tim. 2:7.

These, with the Scriptures quoted above, teach all we claim on this subject, and they further teach that knowledge and understanding are just like wisdom in this regard. The more we seek these as gifts, the more ready are we to receive them.

Now, reader, don't turn skeptic and boastful, and say that knowledge and wisdom and understanding are to be attained unto by natural means and in the ordinary way. But what sort of knowledge and wisdom is this now filling the world, and so attained unto, and not obtained of God, I do not mean to say that, either of these should destroy the other. "Give us our daily bread" is not to dispense with plowing, but to encourage it. Plow and hay, and study and pray, and remember that every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, and they are to be sought. When God would give us, he would have us to ask and to receive, and if we receive anything of him, let us not boast as though we did not receive it. Knowledge is power, and

"wisdom is to be desired above rubies," yet if a man had all knowledge, and all wisdom, and understood all mysteries, and had not love, he is nothing. "Knowledge increaseth sorrow," and "knowledge puffeth up," "but love edifieth," or buildeth up. Our worldly wisdom needs to be sanctified, so as to be God-honoring, and in the highest sense man-serving. Worldly wisdom gets worldly honors and worldly advantages, but they will all perish with the using. He who is "wise in knowing the will of God," is wiser than any earthly Solomon.

We forget that the tree of knowledge was the "tree of knowledge of good and evil," and we can't eat of that tree without getting the evil. Christ rejoiced that the best things were hidden from the wise and the prudent, and unto babes. Wisdom can make the cross of Christ of none effect, and can make a man ignorant of God. Even the wise man Solomon, who saw that wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness, and that while the wise man's eyes were in his head, and the fool walked in darkness, yet one event happened to all. Then said he in his heart, as it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth to me; and why was I more wise? Then said he in his heart that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool forever: seeing that which now is, in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? As the fool," &c. Eccl. 2:12-16.

Ingersoll & Co. had knowledge and wisdom, and so has the devil, but these have not love to God, and hence they do not serve God. God may give man a knowledge of his Word, and wisdom of speech in imparting it, and yet without love as the motive, it will not profit.

CHAPTER VI.

Love Greater than Hope.

Having seen that love is greater than any or all of the extraordinary gifts, and also knowledge and wisdom, let us now compare it to the ordinary or abiding gifts—Hope and Faith. To a man in despair, hope might be considered the one thing needful. It is not my purpose to disparage Hope, but magnify it, and then show that Love is superior to it. The masters of the damsel out of whom Paul cast the evil spirit, were rendered furious when they saw "the hope of their gain was gone," and the terrible result was, the whipping of Paul and Silas, and their being thrust into the inner-prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks. This was the result of the loss of the hope of gain. Then what would be the condition of one, whose hope of gain, life, and all was gone? A picture of this kind may be found in Acts 27th chapter. The 20th verse reads, "And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest LAY on us, ALL HOPE that we should be saved was then utterly taken away." We have but to transfer ourselves to that scene, to realize the awful condition of one in the utter absence of hope. We can readily see from such a picture that hope is greater than the unusual gifts. If these passengers had had the gift of tongues, and prophecy and healing, &c., would they not have given them all for Hope? But in such cases only natural interests are involved. Add spiritual and eternal interests to these, and determine, if you can, the condition of one who is without Hope and without God in the world. Hence the wisdom in putting hope in the superior triplet of gifts. Let two Scriptures suffice to establish hope as a gift, that we may know how to obtain it. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST." Rom. 15:1: "... Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath GIVEN us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." 1 Thess. 2:16. So we see that Hope is a gift, to be sought by prayer. When in despairing moods, let us pray for Hope. When all hope had been taken away by Euroclydon laying on the ship for fourteen days and nights, so that no one

could eat, how could hope revive again, except through the power of God? Indeed we are said to be saved by hope; "to hope in God," "in Christ," "in his word," "promises," "mercy." It is called in Scripture "the hope of eternal life," and "that maketh not ashamed." It is a "good hope," a "lively hope," a "blessed hope." Saints are "called to it," should "rejoice in it," "abound in it;" "continue in it," "hold fast to it," "not moved away from it." The objects of hope are "salvation," "righteousness," "eternal life," "Christ's glorious appearing," "restitution," "glory," "honor and immortality." It leads to "patience," "purity," "assurance." We are called "prisoners of hope," and we should be "ready to give an answer concerning the hope that is in us." Hope is called a "helmet," "anchor," and its climax is to "hope against hope." Hope is "enduring," "abiding," "unending." I don't believe hope will be lost in fruition or anything else. I believe hope is greater than the extraordinary gifts in this, that they are temporary, and are to vanish and pass away; while hope abides. It is also greater than they, because its beneficial effects on us are greater. Those despairing sailors would have preferred hope to all the supernatural gifts referred to.

Hope has not to do with present things, but only with future things. When Paul inspired those heathen with hope of a temporal salvation, see how they began to live and to do again. They were saved by Hope, and not by extraordinary gifts, which are only signs, some for believers and some for unbelievers. Even in healing the sick and raising the dead these gifts were ineffectual without faith. But while Hope is greater than these, yet Love is greater than Hope in this—it is social, while Hope is individual—selfish. It operates in us and for us, but love seeks not her own. Hope serves and affects ourself, while love serves and affects others. Love binds all together and all to God.

Love is greater than hope, because love never fails." "These three abide," but it is said only of love that it never fails. Hope failed on the Adrian sea, above referred to, but it was energized and not a hair perished. It failed to sustain yet abided, or it could not have revived.

Our strength may fail in some great emergency and yet may abide. Our sight may fail in a thousand trials that called for greater power than God had given, and yet it may abide. So of hope and of faith, as we will see presently. These, like sight, and strength, may be overpowered if subjected to too great a trial, but like truth crushed to earth, they will rise again. But let who can overpower love—that love that never fails. A mother may have lost faith in her prodigal boy, and all hope that he should be saved may be utterly taken away, but how is her love? Does she not seem to love him better than all those who went not astray? But this is only natural love, love for the boy's sake, or for her own sake. Now bring into the arena spiritual love, love for Christ's sake—that love that is of God; then hiss on your dogs of war, your hell-hounds and hyenas, and let them howl and snarl, and snap and bay; the lover can tame them all. Or if they attack the beloved, they will be beloved the more. Who can separate us from the love of God? or from the love of another? provided we have been born of God.

Paul quarreled with Mark, and Barnabas, and Peter, not because he did not love them, but because he did, and would not consent to their going astray. Love may be interrupted, but if it is the true kind, as described in 1 Cor. Chap. 13, it never fails. Love can endure a greater strain than Hope, and is easier to revive. Those that love God, love also the children of God, and if we do not, we are in darkness. If a man say I love God and hateth his (spiritual) brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen. Love beareth all things, endureth all things, and never fails. Better be in despair and walk in hopeless night than to hate our brother and thus walk in the darkness of spiritual death. Better be without the fruits of Hope than the fruits of Love, and this shows that the greater of these is love.

CHAPTER VII: **Love Greater than Faith.**

Let us consider Love once more comparatively, and this time with Faith — that giant of Christian graces. It is the Lord's will that we consider these graces or gifts comparatively, and in this comparison to discover the superiority of Love.

The Greatest of these is Love was revealed by the Holy Spirit, and calls us to this very work. But we must not cripple or disparage Faith in order that Love may get the advantage. Let us put faith forward at its very best, and then Love will excel it.

FAITH IS A GIFT...

It is not something evolved out of man's enmity of mind, or corruption and deception of heart, but it is something involved, and that from God. This will not suit worldly wisdom, and human schemes of salvation, but it suits the teaching of God's Word. We must be brief here.

Turn to 1 Cor. 12:8-11, and there you find Faith in the catalogue of gifts—"To another faith by the same spirit." Now note, this is not as some say, faith to work miracles, for it is next added, "To another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; and to another the working of miracles." Miracles were wrought by faith. Matt. 17:19. This effectually cuts off this nor can we make faith the exception for the 11th verse says: But ALL these inworketh that one and the self same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. Add to this Rom. 12:3: According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 1 Cor. 2:5: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1 Cor. 3:5: Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? Gal. 5:22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. Eph. 1 :19: And what is the exceeding

greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power. Eph. 2:8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Phil. 1:29: For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. Heb. 12:2: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith. Acts 13:30: And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. John 6:29: This is the work of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent.

"Lord, increase our faith," and "help thou our unbelief," show that faith should be sought by prayer. Christ said to Peter: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," and this shows that faith is under divine superintendence. So Paul prayed for the faith of believers. When we consider with this the objects, of faith, the endurance of faith, its grand achievements and end, with its effects and accompanying blessings, of which time would now fail me to speak particularly of them all; when we remember that through it saints are purified, justified, sanctified, saved; that through it they stand, walk, overcome the world, death, and the devil; that it renders all things possible because it "moves the arm that moves the world;" that it can subdue kingdoms, stop the mouths of lions, and quench the violence of fire; that a mustard grain seed of it can hurl sycamore trees and mountains into the midst of the sea: when we gather up and comprehend all the excellent parts of this gigantic gift, we are led with astounding enquiry To ask—What advantage then hath Love? We answer, much every way. But briefly, Faith is excelled by Love in the following particulars: Love is greater in Age than Faith. Love always was. Before sin, love is. If there had been no fall, there need have been no faith unto salvation. But Love was before the fall. It is from eternity and to eternity. Love is greater in nature than Faith. Love is of God, and so is faith and hope. But God is Love, and it was never said that God is faith, or that God is hope. God can not hope, for he is all-seeing, and that which is seen is not hope. God knows all things, hence he needs no "substance," or under props in waiting for the things which he foresees. "He putteth no trust in his saints," and we may add, nor in his angels, for when he fails to keep these by his own omnipotence, they are lost.

Love partakes of the divine nature, but Faith and Hope do not. God does not hope, for he sees all things, and "hope sees not." God does not believe, for he knows all things. God does not trust, for he is independent of all things. But God not only loves, but is Love.

But love is greater in its latitude than faith. We have no faith in the unworthy, or in our enemies, yet we can love them. God so loved the world, yet he had no faith in it. Love can go anywhere and do anything, but faith, like knowledge, is limited, not only in degree, but in latitude. Our love is necessarily limited in degree, but in latitude it need not be, since we can love our enemies, and pray for those who persecute us.

Love is also greater than faith in its tenacity. A mother's faith and hope in her prodigal boy may fail, while love will hold on. She would say, "Thou art naught to all the world, Yet all the world to me." "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." It cannot be bought or sold, for "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love it would utterly be condemned."

Christ prayed that Peter's faith fail not, and afterward when he asked if he loved more than his brethren, the answer was, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." His going a fishing showed the poverty of his faith, while his penitential tears showed the richness of his love. When he jumped into the sea, the sight of the boisterous wind and waves shook his faith, so that he began to sink, yet his Love cried unto his Lord, and was saved. The 11th chapter of John shows that the love of Martha and Mary was more tenacious than their faith.

Love is a greater *witness* than faith. Faith appears in the case of Simon Magus, but the greater witness testifies against it. He *believed* Philip, but *loved* his money, and love got the victory. Many of the Pharisees *believed* in him, but *loving* the praise of men more than the praise of God, failed to

confess him, and *love* prevailed. When these witnesses conflict in their testimony, the greater witness always prevails. If we love the world, our faith is nothing. Faith can't overcome what we love. Faith can overcome the world, if love is not in the way. So while faith is greater than the world, and greater than he that is in the world, yet it is helpless when love is against it. This should increase our charity for errorists. Some can't believe half the fulness there is in Christ, yet in love they receive of that fulness, and this proves their love greater than their faith. Some don't believe in the final preservation of the saints, yet they lovingly and thankfully partake of it. Love gets the victory over faith when they are not agreed.

But the evidence of love is more weighty when both are agreed. It is true that the believer is born of God, and the testimony of faith may assure the believing heart: "whosoever believes has the witness in himself." But love assures the outer world. "By this shall ALL MEN KNOW that ye are my disciples by the love which ye have for one another." The testimony of faith is not weighty enough for this. That the believer is passed from death unto life is a fact recognized by himself. But the fact may need further proof with others; but when one loves, "we KNOW that he has passed from death unto life," and what need we of further witness?

Love is a greater motor than faith. Many believed on him who neither confessed nor obeyed, as at this day. Faith rather gives rest and peace, while love leads to action. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," is addressed to believers. "If ye love me, ye will keep my words." "This is love that we walk in his commandments." "In love we serve one another." Indeed faith itself needs to be energized by love. Gal. 5:6 in Greek. Faith is a moving principle, but love will move us when faith fails, as seen in desperate efforts to save a child from danger. Love will move against both hope and faith.

Love is greater in results than faith. The love of which we have been speaking, is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit —

the little inlets from the mighty ocean of divine love, and summing up the results of ocean and inlets for time and eternity, faith, with all of its subdued kingdoms and victories, veils its little face and withdraws from the awful contest. Did faith quench the violence of fire, heated seven times hotter than was wont? Then let it try its puny hand on the human tongue when it is set on lire of hell. When it fails, as fail it must, love can subdue the flame and tame the unruly member.

Though we have all faith and have not love, we are nothing. God was moved in all he did for us by love, and in all our suffering and sacrificing we are moved by love. The achievements of faith, according to Heb. 11, are great, but those of Love are greater. We will see how true this is as we advance. Let us earnestly covet these three best gifts, and the best of the best is Love. We go next to the fountain of Love.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Behold What Manner of Love is This."

Having considered somewhat the excellence of human Love as compared with other gifts exercised by us, I desire now to consider the excellence of God's Love as compared to human love. As the divine Love is our pattern, and it devolves upon us to compare ourselves to that which is perfect, that the perfection and imperfection may be seen in contrast, for our profit and growth in grace, let us patiently and diligently undertake the comparison. I think the text calls us to this work. Behold WHAT MANNER of love.

The word translated "what manner," occurs in five other places, and seems to suggest the idea of contrast. When Jesus rebuked the storm, and the wind and the sea obeyed him, the disciples exclaimed, "What manner of man is this?" They certainly viewed him in contrast with other men, Matt. 8:27. And so of the expression in Mark 13:1, "See what manner of stones are here;" viewing them in contrast to stones usually found in buildings. And so of the "salutation" in Luke 1:29, and in a reversed sense of the woman in Luke 7:39. When Peter in his second epistle 3:11 exclaimed "what manner of persons ought ye to be," he virtually said—seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what a contrast ought there to be in our lives, to those who do not see those things, and who are not looking for and hastening the coining of the day of God. These holy doctrines ought to produce such a holy effect, that all could see it in our "holy conversation and godliness." We ought to be unlike all other persons—in a good sense should excel them, so that the contrast would be evident to all. But whether we are justifiable in deducing the idea from the text, it is a Scriptural idea, as will be seen, and the work, we trust, will be profitable. Hence we undertake to consider the excellence of Divine love, by viewing it in contrast to human love.

First, the Love of God to us is unlike our love in that it is bestowed upon the Unworthy. We see, or think that we see, in the object of our love, something that is deserving, and our love proceeds upon that principle. We

love them that love us, or we love them that favor us, or we love them that please us. In other words, unless we discover some ground of desert, we are not inclined to love at all. To love the undeserving, to love our enemies, is a divine exhortation which calls far hence from the ordinary sphere of human love, and every saint knows something of the great difficulty of going on toward perfection in this. "But God commended his love toward us, in that, WHILE WE WERE ENEMIES, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:5.

Paul said this in contrast to human love. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some one would even dare to die," &c. The greatest expression God ever gave of his love, was in giving his Son—his well-beloved Son, in whom his soul delighted; and yet he did this—gave him to the death of the cross—a death of unspeakable anguish, the contemplation of which pressed the divine soul with EXCEEDING sorrow, even unto death—a death the very shadow of which would crush a million giants into nonentity—a taste of which would be more intolerable than the eternal torments of the undying worm and the unquenchable fire—a death that could not be brought about by the united council of kings, with the united efforts of Jews and Gentiles. but only from a stroke of the ominific fist of Jehovah—"smitten of God." And this he did "while we were sinners." "Died for the ungodly." "The just for the unjust." "God so loved the world."

"Herein is love, not that we loved God. but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "If ye love them that love you what grace have you," asked Christ. Luke 6:32. This is the ordinary rule. and surely there is no grace in such love; and more, if those we love should be irregular, and should sometimes backslide, our love would ebb and flow with their conduct. In the case of drawing back, amends must be made by the backslider. Our love imposes conditions, and hence it is not gracious. But what does God do in such cases? "He that has ears to hear, let him hear!" "I will HEAL their backsliding, I will love them freely." (graciously). When he set his heart on Israel to love them, it was not because they were the greatest of the nations, for they were the fewest, but it was because he had

purposed to do it, and hence had promised it to their fathers. Deut. 7:6-8:

6. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

7. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

8. But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deut. 10:15: Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

That was a truly philosophical way Job put this question in chap. 7:7: "What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him." See Tit. 3:3. and Eph. 2:1-10. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon US—surely the undeserving—infinately so.

CHAPTER IX.

Behold What Manner of Love.

We were last considering the peculiarity of the Divine love, in that it extended to the Unworthy. This is sometimes attained unto by the saints of God, where the unworthiness is supposed to be very slight. Hence the excellence of divine love is to be seen as it operates toward the greatest unworthiness. The degree of love is seen in the degree of unworthiness. The more we detract from the unworthiness, the more we detract from the love. If we would discover the infinitude of the one, we must also discover the infinitude of the other; and since it is our present purpose to "behold this manner of love," we must behold the manner of unworthiness upon which it is bestowed. This is the way "God commends his love toward us." when the inspired Paul uttered the last sentiment (Rom. 5:8), he had just laid the foundation of this gracious love in depths of human depravity, deeper than thought can fathom. Take a few expressions from the first three chapters. "God gave them up unto vile affections." "God gave them over to a reprobate mind." "Being FILLED with ALL unrighteousness." Not tainted with some unrighteousness. Not tilled with some unrighteousness. There is no unrighteousness outside; and there nothing inside but unrighteousness. FILLED with ALL. Nor is it "Being filled," as King James has it, and which, might imply that the filling was going on, and not complete; but the Greek has it complete—Having been filled. Neither is the unrighteousness of a negative kind, as the prefix un would indicate, but it is positive injustice. active iniquity. The apostle was talking about what they did, and not what they did not. But look again and you will discover not only infinitude in active iniquity, but also a corresponding degree of negative ungodliness. The Holy law required them to be filled with all righteousness—ALWAYS ABOUNDING in the work of the Lord, and also forbade any *transgression* or *short coming*. To be filled with all righteousness, is to be "free from sin:" to be filled with all unrighteousness is to be "free from righteousness." Sinfulness of omission and commission were both complete. Nor can ignorance be pleaded in extenuation. They did not sin *without knowledge*, but *against knowledge*.

And not only so, but a knowledge of the *consequences of their sins*. Who KNOWING the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of *death*, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that *do* them." Rom. 1:32. The *totality* of the depravity is here complete. Nor can we detract from its universality. It is true the apostle here was writing particularly of the heathen but he declared "they were without excuse." In other Scriptures where the Jews were under divine reckoning, both in Old and the New Scriptures, language equally, and if possible stronger, was used. But the apostle anticipated this cavil of modern Judaisin, and asks – "are we (Jews) better than they? NO, in wise; for we have before PROVED both Jew and Gentiles, that they are ALL UNDER sin..." "There is no difference." "None righteous, no, not one." "NONE understand," NONE seek after God," "NONE doeth good, no not one," "ALL gone out of the 'way,' altogether become filthy." "Their throat an open sepulchre; with their tongues they use deceit; the poison of asps under their lips; whose mouth is FULL of cursing and bitterness; their feet SWIFT to shed blood; destruction and misery in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known; and NO fear of God before their eyes." Here is depravity hereditary, depravity universal, depravity complete. Nor is it the finale of four thousand years of degeneracy. The oldest brother in the human race—the first ever born of woman, and she "not in the transgression," and he, the man of "one transgression," and the only human father that ever had a holy nature; the first born of the holy parents, one sin excepted, and we hope regeneration occurred before his conception; with a pious brother as his only associate, and his only brother, and he himself formally pious; this first born of the race, under all these favorable circumstances, *deliberately* and *premeditatedly* slew his only and younger BROTHER! And --wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." We challenge the history of sin, and records of crime for any act that excels this in depth of turpitude. We read in the next chapter but one, that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The combined powers of all tongues of men and angels could not construct a stronger sentence than this. It was not piccadillos God saw, but it was wickedness, not little wickedness, but great wickedness; not in hell, but in earth; not wickedness of devils or of Cain, but of MAN; not a man or some men, but man generically—one for all; not peccable, but evil; not evil sometimes, but continually; not some evil and some good, but only evil; not in unmeaning practice, but in thoughts not simply of the head, but of the heart; not confined to things known and knowable, but in imagination; not some imaginations, but "EVERY IMAGINATION of the thoughts of his HEART, was only evil CONTINUALLY." And mark you, this is not a man slandering human nature, nor is it what God heard of man; but it is what GOD SAW, and God sees the INTENTS of the THOUGHTS of the heart, and it is "impossible for God to lie."

Sin is exceeding sinful. Not some sins, but sin in the singular and in the abstract, as well as sin in the concrete. ALL sin, ANY sin, is just as sinful as can be, when committed against infinite goodness. The sinfulness of sin is "above measure," "out of measure," "beyond measure." Or, as the word is in another place translated, sin is "far more exceeding" sinful. The sinfulness of sin passeth knowledge. The superlativeness of this adjective is commensurate with that in the expressions--exceeding glory—glorious as can be; exceeding greatness of his power—power great as can be;--exceeding grace, exceeding riches of his grace --can't possibly be any richer — infinitely rich. Just so is sin infinitely sinful. This scripture is susceptible of ethical demonstration since it is committed against infinite goodness, to which we are infinitely indebted; hence guilt is infinitely blameable, and deserves infinite punishment, and can only be atoned for by an infinite sacrifice, and the love that can reach to such infinite depths of unworthiness, and lift us to such infinite heights of excellent glory, and that through the infinite sufferings of infinite merit, is a love that's peculiar indeed, excellent indeed, certainly excels our love and is worthy of our imitation. "BEHOLD *what manner* of love the Father hath bestowed upon US that WE should be called the CHILDREN OF GOD."

**Oh, for such love let rocks and hills,
Their lasting silence break;
Anil all harmonious human tongues,
Its ceaseless praises speak."**

CHAPTER X.

"Behold What Manner of Love."

We were last considering the peculiarity of divine love in that it is bestowed upon the unworthy; and we made some effort to measure the degree of love, by the degree of unworthiness upon which it is bestowed. We can only indicate to the thought, which we trust will be pursued with profit and pleasure. We will add to the praise of divine love this additional comment on human unworthiness. The best type of human nature ever displayed; the highest reach of moral excellence ever attained—that which was beautiful indeed without," and which "appeared righteous unto men ;" that class that had the "advantage much every way," yet displayed more zeal in the death of him who "came to save," and who went about doing good," and who "did nothing amiss," than has ever been displayed for any other purpose since time began. We believe that if Christ were to come again, and conceal his divinity as before, so as not to overawe, that those on earth to-day, who make the loudest and longest professions of holiness, would repeat he sad tragedy, with the same infernal greed, and would burn in their desires for his blood to be on them and on their children. The deepest depths of depravity, if depravity has deeper depths, is found where righteousness appears unto men. If satanic depravity is deeper than human, which we are inclined to doubt, and if there be degrees of satanic depravity, and the arch fiend Satan represents its lowest degree, is not the very bottom reached, when one so loves the Lord Jesus Christ, that he would be willing to make the word of God of none effect. through his own caprice and sickly sentimentality? This was the kind of love Peter had when he said: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me SATAN; thou art at offence unto me." Matt 16:22. The only test of a genuine love to Christ is a willingness to guard, defend, "KEEP," like soldiers keep a prisoner, and if need be thus die in keeping "ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER" he has commanded. The greatest depravity is found in that spurious love that would oppose nothing that opposes the doctrines of Christ. And yet the divine love can reach to this

satanic abyss, this fathomless depth of iniquity, that would put on the livery of heaven in order to hinder the free course of God's word. A Publican or Harlot may be a liar, but may tell the truth; but he that saith, I KNOW HIM, and keepeth (guardeth, defendeth) not his commandments, is a liar, and *the truth is not in him*. 1 John 2:4. If in the light of God's word we were called on to locate the place in the ocean of human depravity, where the Word of God fails to sound its utmost depths, we would locate it under the suds where two seas meet, and lull to rest the onward tides. Under the sparkling of a sanctified excellence, where the pro's and con's of "what is truth," are lulled into the sleep of death, is to be found the "depths of Satan." It is always a pretentious garb of piety. It was so with Cain. It was so with the Jews in the day of Christ's incarnation. It was so in the dark ages of persecution. It is thus today. And yet, be it said to the praise of God's infinite love, that he set a mark on Cain, and promised to avenge his slayer sevenfold. He set his heart on the Jews and saved the very ones that put him to death. Even out of Romanism will he call a people to magnify his love. His eating with publicans and sinners, and bringing them as lost sheep on his shoulders into his fold, was mighty love indeed; but that is ALL-mighty love that can save them who "trust in themselves that they are righteous," and continually thank God that they are better than others. It is the "beautiful whited sepulchres," that are full of all uncleanness, and rottenness, and dead men's bones. The whole head sick, the whole heart faint, NO soundness from sole of the foot to the crown of the head, was spoken of those who had the oracles of God, and who would compass land and sea to make one proselyte to its formal requirements. "The heart is deceitful ABOVE ALL THINGS and desperately wicked," was spoken of those who "tithed mint, anise and cummin," and who "made long prayers" and "oft repeated them," and "who LOVED to pray." Yet God has purposed to fill all worlds with the riches of the glory of his love, in making SUCH, the children of God. Infinite love that reaches to such infinite depths!

But another peculiarity of the divine love is seen in this, that having reached to the utmost stretch of unworthiness, it is unaffected in all its after

operations by this hindering cause which was overmatched in the beginning. The objects of the divine love will continue forever to be unworthy, yet the love will be constant, unchangeable, without fluctuation, variation, or shadow of turning. "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Isa. 49:11 "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my loving kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord who hath mercy upon thee." 54:10. If they forsake my law and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. NEVERtheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that has gone out of any lips. Ps. 89:30-34. "Whom he loveth he chasteneth," &c.

But not only is this love unchangeable, but it is also *unending*. It neither fluctuates nor fails. It has both constancy and continuance. It varies not while it lasts, and it lasts forever. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." John 13:1.

"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me saying, I have loved thee with an EVERLASTING love: therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Jer. 31:3. In these two regards the Divine love is peculiar. Our love is very much effected by the conduct of those we love," and purely human love may fail and come to an everlasting end. But the love shed abroad our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and which is described in 1st Cor. 13th chapter, will never fail. A man may fail to love his wife, but a *Christian* man will never fail to love his *Christian* wife, because she is Christ's. Yet the divine love excels ours both in constancy and continuance.

With a practical thought, I close. Set your heart on some unworthy person. Don't mistake respectable poverty for unworthiness, for Christ had this in abundance. Seek a transgressor, and if possible one who has transgressed

against you a thousand times; an inveterate enemy. Ask God to give you love for that one. Exert yourself to exercise it. Ask God to make it abound, but don't let it decline. Bend all your powers to that end. This exercise will bring more solid comfort to your heart than the opposite course ever afforded to all the generations of the past.

CHAPTER XI.

The Love of God Inexpressible.

Another feeble effort. to enlarge our views of the Divine Love may become profitable by considering next, the effort of the inspired writers to embody it in words. May we not remark then 1st, that in degree this love bestowed upon us in making us children of God is *Inexpressible*? We read of the "UNSPEAKABLE gift." 2 Cor. 9 :15; and this is the way God commends his love to us." When the Holy Spirit would give some idea of this measureless love, he expressed it thus—"For God SO loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. The first time I ever stood on the sea-shore, circumstances were favorable for the largest possible view. The expanse of waters impressed me with such overaweing grandeur, that in my mightiest. effort to conceive what was unseen from what I saw, a moment's contemplation so overcame me, that I turned from my mental effort, exclaiming—God has made SO much water. The solid contents of the "SO" is found by multiplying the length and breadth of the Atlantic by its depth. Then likewise the Pacific and all other oceans; then all the seas, and all the bays and all the lakes and rivers, and subterranean streams and pools, to which add the contents of all the clouds, &c. The failure of the mind to conceive, and the impotency of the tongue to express, is made manifest by the word SO. It was a gasping surrender under the weight of a crushing thought. And it thus appears to me when the Holy Spirt would record the inexpressibleness of the divine love, he staggered under the weight of the omnipotent thought, and finding language so weak, he chose a word of infinite elasticity, and allows us to give it length, and breadth, and height, and depth, according to our orbit of thought, and being filled with this, we are permitted and invited to continue our efforts at elongation of multiplying dimensions until we attain to any degree of excellence whatever; and should a million mental giants be made into one, and he were to exert his powers to the utmost, to conceive the degree of divine love. under the sinking weight of the mighty thought he could but gasp—"God SO loved us." 1 John 4:11.

In Eph. 2:4 we find another failure of the omniscient Spirit to express the degree of divine love.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his GREAT love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."

GODS LOVE INCONCEIVABLE.

The equation x equals x is incomprehensible, because both terms of the equation are unknown. There is no solution of such equations. And this is the invariable form of expressing God's love.

How much did Christ love his disciples? The equation is found in John 15:9. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Or put in the usual form—My love to you equals the Father's love to me. Now if we knew how much God loved his Son, then we would know how much Christ loved his own. Both terms being unknown quantities, the equation can't be solved. Hence the love of Christ is inconceivable, or, in other words, "passeth knowledge." Eph. 3:19.

How much did God love Christ's disciples? "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." John 15:17. Or the Love of God to the disciples equals the love of God to his Son. As we know not how much God loved his Son, we can't tell how much he loved the disciples. John 17:26. *Inconceivable* is the answer. Paul on this subject uses this language—"For this cause I bend my knees to the Father, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and upon earth is named, that he may give you according to his glorious wealth, to be strengthened through his spirit in the inner man; that Christ-may dwell in your hearts through faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able with all the saints to perceive, what is the breadth and length and depth and height, even to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; so that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God. Eph. 3:14-19.

Is not this the royal road to Godhood? Notice the steps and their order. 1st, strengthening of the spirit in the inner man. 2nd, Christ through faith dwelling in the heart. 3rd ourselves rooted and grounded in love. 4th, in effort to perceive and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Result, filled with all the fulness of God. Trusting that writer and readers have taken the first three, let us press on in the fourth, which is the object of this writing.

CHAPTER XII.

To Know the Love of Christ Which Passeth Knowledge.

The terms *inexpressibleness* and *inconceivableness* of the divine love, are not intended to convey the idea of mystery, but of infinity. Our ideas of the length and breadth and depth and height of infinite space are, in the main, proportionate to our efforts to "perceive that which passeth knowledge." Not that space is a mystery, for we have always and everywhere ocular, conscious acquaintance with it. It is the inexpressible and inconceivable boundlessness of space that is so profitable to consider. When we are able to locate our horizon and zenith and nadir at infinite distances from us, then we can realize that the focus of these interminable radii is a point without dimensions—nothing—vanity, and considering the quality of this egotistic centre, it is worse than vanity. By thus enlarging our views, we may at last be able to see that all these centres, constituting the nations of earth, are not only "as grasshoppers," but "as the fine dust of the balance." which is counted as nothing in making a discriminating weight. A man may magnify himself into an object of worship by continually measuring his own superficial contents. In order to become worshipful, he must lengthen his mental measuring rod, and apply it to immeasurable space. And so of God's love. It is not so much a mystery in fact, as in extent. Everywhere and always we have a conscious acquaintance with it *as a fact*. We see it, we feel it, we know it. But how much is there of it? Some, who have not occupied themselves sufficiently in trying to "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," persuade themselves and others that there is great danger of excessive love on their part. Who has not heard the warning from the pulpit against excessive love? We are represented as loving so much that God gets jealous, and takes away the object of our love. God has given us a measure of love, and if any one has gone beyond it, then to be sure he has made himself a transgressor. Here is one measure. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. * * * "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. * * "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the

church." Eph. 5.

Let all who have gone beyond in this, cast at as a stone. The perfect rule which God has given for us to love by is this—

Let our love for our wives equal Christ's love for his church; and let our care of our bodies and wives equal Christ's care of the church.

Then having the standard before us, we should make some effort to "comprehend," or perceive it. Notice first *who* gave. CHRIST, with "unsearchable riches," (Eph. 3:8) "who made the world and all things therein who "made the worlds," and upholds them by the word of his power. Who has all authority in heaven and upon earth. CHRIST is the giver. But out of his unsearchable riches what did he give? He says the gold is mine. Did he give that? Did he give the cattle on a thousand hills? Did he give a million worlds and a billion of angels? That would hardly have diminished his wealth. Love is measured by the number and value of its gifts, and also by the graciousness with which they are bestowed. Let us dwell upon these three principles until our views are enlarged. CHRIST gave HIMSELF. Let the gift—HIMSELF, be written LARGE; so large as to span the infinitude of space; for "the heavens are works of his hands." Let the motion of the earth in its orbit be as rapid as thought; and let the sun excel this in proportion to his gravity; then let that ponderous orb roll at a speed that would paralyze lightning; and give "eighteen millions and two hundred thousand years" in his run to throw his rays across this "excellent name;" and then let the size of the name suggest all it can of the value of the gift, and we have a beginning in that direction.

But what did he give himself *to*? Having the greatest glory, he gave himself to the greatest shame. Having unsearchable riches, he becomes poorer than the fox or the bird—so poor that he must borrow a grave for his dead body. Having infinite purity, he was made infinite sin. He changes unspeakable happiness for inconceivable woe. "Behold what manner of

love." Not a husband giving himself for his wife, but Christ giving himself for his *church*. Hear oh heavens, and give ear, oh earth! Bend your necks, ye angels! Let all the world stand in awe, and let there be silence in "heaven by the space of half an hour," while we read of this love. And let us understand what we read. Let this Scripture be written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. It does not read as the world affirms, but as the world denies. The world and they that are of the world affirm that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, because it is sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water in the word; BECAUSE it is presented to him a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; BECAUSE it is holy and without blemish. There would be nothing peculiar in the divine love if this were true. The Holy Spirit would never have said, Behold *what manner* of love, for this would be just like our love. He that hath ears to hear let him hear. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; that HE might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water in the word; that HE might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, BUT THAT IT SHOULD be holy and without blemish."

*Number of gifts, value of gifts, and the principle of giving, are three ways to enlarge our views of the love that passes knowledge. CHRIST gave himself. Christ gave HIMSELF. Christ GAVE himself. He did not loan himself, neither did he sell himself, but he gave; and if we can discover the principle of this giving, and if we can discover the same principle in all the gifts, and that principle should turn out contrary to the expectations "of them that are lost" to be a *gracious* principle, then the graciousness of the principle becomes an infallible measuring rod of the love that bestows the gifts. So having exercised ourselves a lillie in beholding the *nature* of this love, and a little also of its *degree*, let us consider it hastily in its benevolent operations, as it bestows upon us countless blessings of inestimable value, and on a principle that is purely gracious. May God help us to believe such a love, to receive it. to return it, to imitate it, and to manifest it for his glory.*

CHAPTER XIII.

The Principle of Love.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things. Rom. 8:32.

We opened three questions for our future enquiry—number of blessings, value of blessings and the principle of their bestowment. By these we hope to enlarge our views of the divine love. We will notice first the principle, "He FREELY gives us ALL things."

All giving is not beneficence, and all beneficence is not gracious. There are all sorts of giving among men except the divine sort, and unceasing and universal efforts are being made to bring down the divine to the human pattern. Let us notice some of the human principles of giving.

1st. There is compulsory giving as seen in Matt. 18:28—"But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, give me that thou owest." Then there is voluntary giving for value received; then giving freely but partially, in the sense of contributions, then giving a little at a time until all is given, as in 1 Cor. 13:3, and giving largely for a small consideration, as in Matt. 4:9, Luke 4:6,7, lastly, there is giving freely, giving all, giving all at once, and giving thus to the infinitely undeserving. When God gave his Son, he gave with him all he had, and he had "all things;" He gave his Son and "all things" to US and he gave them FREELY. Here is the principle of divine beneficence we wish to consider. He GAVE. He gave FREELY. He to US. He gave freely to us ALL THINGS.

Now. if God sells us anything, then he does not *freely give* all things, and so if he pays us anything it is a debt and there is compulsion. "But who hath first given to him, and it shall recompensed to him again?" Rom. 11:25. The Apostle said to the Corinthians, "All things ARE yours whether Paul or

Apollos or the WORLD, or life or death, or *things present*, or things TO COME; ALL ARE yours." 1 Cor. 3:21, 22. In the second chapter 17th verse, he says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are FREELY GIVEN to us of God."

This principle is illustrated in Luke 7:42, "And when they had nothing to pay. he freely forgave them both" (i.e. he gave them their debts).

This is the same Greek word and illustrates the principle. Instead of forcing them to give all they owed, or proposing a compromise by which they would give a part and the creditor a part, the creditor freely gave all, and if there any condition expressed or implied, it is seen in that state, or condition of having "nothing to pay." Christ was teaching the Pharisee that giving ALL the debt, and FREELY giving it all, was the way to beget love in return, and the more and freer the giving, the greater are the returns in love. Then if we can make ourselves conscious of the much God has given. and the freeness with which he has given, in that proportion will our love toward him be increased. Whether we consider the debt objectively as forgiven, that is taken away, or the debtor as receiving the amount of the indebtedness, to increase the feeling of obligation, we must enlarge our ideas of the amount of benefit received, since Simon "judged rightly," in saying, the one will love most who received the greatest benefit.

There is another enlarging element to this idea, and which must here be appropriated, and that is, the unworthiness of the recipients — US. When the recipient is worthy the free gift is no more than pure beneficence, but when there is unworthiness there is grace, and the beneficence is gracious in proportion to the unworthiness. To reach infinite or exceeding grace, there must be infinite or exceeding unworthiness, and *vice versa*. Nothing can reach infinite unworthiness but infinite grace. These are concomitants, and the one cannot exist without the other. and if the one exists the other does. An illustration of this principle:

A good member offers his pastor a horse worth 100 dollars for 50 dollars. This is a beneficent sale, and the beneficence increases as the price diminishes. If he should sell for the nominal price of one dollar, and there stood another man ready to give one hundred, the transaction would be ninety-nine parts beneficence and one part sale.

But if he should charge one cent, the transaction would be that much of a sale. A free, full delivery of the horse, without consideration, would make it a transaction of pure beneficence but not grace. And note, the reciprocal obligation would increase as the price diminished. The more the beneficence, the more the gratitude. The amount of one would be the measure of the other. Now let the mind enlarge on the idea, from one horse to ten horses, to a tract of good land, to a large estate, to unbounded wealth, and as the gift increases in value the obligation increases with it. So the rule is discoverable—the reciprocal gratitude is to be measured by the value of the gifts. But this idea carried to any extent can not reach further than pure beneficence. The beneficence never can become gracious on that line, because it all proceeds on some supposed worthiness in the recipient.

Let us now picture an absolute Monarch, with unbounded possessions and authority, a subject of total hereditary enmity, who all his life has transgressed the laws, and who has come short in no effort to spread disloyalty to overthrow the government. Now if in judgment the Monarch should, instead of death give him life, and freedom, his gratitude would not only be measured by the value of freedom and life, but also by the graciousness of the gift. All of our citizens should be grateful for freedom, but some have freedom from slavery, and they should be more grateful. A monarch may give one of his subjects life from death, and if to do this, he had to sacrifice his own Son in order to honor his law, and save the wretch, the gratitude must be measured by the unworthiness of the subject, the value of the benefits, and the sacrifice of the donor to effect it. Add to this *adoption*, and the gratitude increases. Of course, it is temporal life, from temporal death, and temporal honors and emoluments, hence finite—hence

limited gratitude. But coming at once to the gospel, the finite becomes infinite in all these, and infinite grace and gratitude are reached.

CHAPTER XIV.

"He Freely Gives Us All Things."

There is greater love in large gifts than in small ones. Indeed love may be measured by the value and number of its gifts. Love not only gives largely, but frequently. It loves to give. And if it is love indeed, it gives *freely* — *always* gives that way. When the gift is not free, it is not the gift of love. We give our laborers their wages, but it may not be the gift of love, but of justice. We may despise or even hate them, and yet give on this principle. So much labor for so much wages. The laborer first giving to us, and we give to him again, for he is worthy of his hire. We do not thus with our children, unless we do foolishly. We give to them *freely*, demanding nothing in return. Every good father scorns the idea. He disdains the principle, and will neither practice it himself, nor tolerate it in his children. A right-minded father would be tempted to disinherit his child if he discovered that all of his service and obedience was in order to gain the inheritance. He feels that the relation of parent to child is one of love, and not traffic. He freely gives, and the son must serve on the same principle, not *in order* to something, but because of the love binding them together. God freely gives to us, and he would have us freely give to him our service and all. Any other principle would be sin.

Love would be tarnished if it did not act thus in ALL things. Hence the principle of *freeness* becomes a measure of love. If God freely gives us *all things*, then the freeness is unlimited, and so is the love that gives. Let us trace this principle in things not disputed. All things are for the elect's sake, and all things belong to them. Upon what principle were they bestowed? The WORLD, says Paul, is ours. Did God give it to us freely? Rom. 4:13. "For the promise that he should be heir of the WORLD, was not to Abraham or his seed through law, but through the righteousness of faith." See Gen. 1:26, 2:8-15. What did God first demand of us? And what will we *now* give to him? If we pay, we must pay full value. God could not compromise. If we pay any, we must pay all; if he give any, he must give all.

But not only the world, but all things therein are freely given. "Things present" are ours. Earth, air, water, animals, fowls, fishes, minerals, vegetables, and "everything bearing seed after its kind." What are these worth to us? What would we take for water, for air, for anything? What did we pay for them? On what principle were they bestowed? If God owed us these, then they were given to us as a matter of debt, and no gratitude is due. But if they were freely given, gratitude is due, and due just in proportion to the freeness. God gave us our bodies, with all of their susceptibilities, relations, possibilities. Name the organ or mental faculty that we can value and would sell. What would we take for the conjugal, civil, social, fraternal, paternal, filial relations? What infinite blessings come through these! Which of these did God give in consequence of what we first gave to him? Ah! the question is answered to every conscience—"God FREELY gives all things." Let human eyes sweep heaven, earth, and seas, and what a grand display of the *freeness* of God's blessings. We defy devils and men to name the things that God did not *freely* give. It is claimed that God freely gives *natural* blessings, but that the blessings of *providence* are conditional. We deny it. Is "daily bread" singled out as a blessing of providence, bestowed in consideration of labor performed as conditions? We deny it with masculine energy. Daily bread has often been withheld, after man has done his best. Famines come in mid-summer, after our "work is done." Is there a law of natural life? We would emphasize our NO.

If health and prosperity and life are matters of law—things to be worked out on certain conditions, then they that do the things shall live in them. They come as matters of debt, and providence is a misnomer, and prayer becomes a puerile performance, and gratitude a hypocritical superfluity. But it is claimed that prayer and gratitude are among the conditions. That cannot be: for a holy God hates conditional prayer and gratitude with a perfect hatred. They are things his righteous soul would loathe with infinite abhorrence. The thought is too unholy for the natural man, and we doubt not but that devils would disdain it in their own practice. And yet, there are religious men, so-called and so-calling who make all blessings of providence

conditional. This shows to what disgusting lengths Satan can lead men captive at his will. He certainly pushes men into depths of infamy that he himself would dare not to go. He suggests that men plow and cultivate, and then they can take the Almighty by the throat and say, "Pay me that thou owest." PAY me this day my daily bread—is the language of Tartarus, and the idea is born of Perdition. Let men gladly and diligently use the means that a gracious and wise God has mercifully appointed for their good, and then dependently and daily pray, "GIVE us our daily bread." Perhaps he will hear our prayer, but if he sovereignly chooses, he will send the famine, despite our ploughing and praying. In which case, submission to the divine will would be infinitely better for us, than bursting barns of daily bread. The use of "means" leaves room for dependent supplications, and blessings thus secured, call forth up-streaming gratitude to the Giver of all. But compliance with conditions, accompanied with peremptory prayers, so-called, fosters an evil spirit that will cause the bosom to heave with volcanic vengeance, when the Divine debtor fails, according to our account, to pay us the uttermost farthing. But the awful evil stops not here. It works both ways. It not only ruins the spirit of him who legally plows and prays, but nine-tenths of the race would starve because its conditions would be harder than they could endure. How can they plow who have no strength, and how could nine-tenths call on him of whom they had not heard? The strong would defiantly live, and the weak would inevitably perish. Thank God for the freeness of his blessings.

CHAPTER XV.

"Freely Ye Have Received, Freely Give."

We are now discussing the principle of divine love, as displayed in its infinite benefactions. "Nature itself teaches us" that so far as material blessings are concerned—"the world and all things that are therein," that they were FREELY given to us of God. He charged us nothing for them, neither did we pay, nor did we ever attempt to pay the smallest conceivable fraction of remuneration. If God were to charge at all, he must of necessity charge full value, for he is infinitely just.

If he gives at all, he must of necessity give freely, for he is infinitely gracious. It was the devil who proposed to give largely for a small consideration. His proposition was — "If thou wilt fall down and worship me, I will give thee all the kingdoms of the world." This is the divine plan of giving just reversed, and this diabolical principle has a multitude of preachers on earth to-day. God has given the kingdoms of this world to his saints, but he did not do it because they fell down and worshipped him, for that they could not do while their carnal mind was at enmity against him. Neither did he renew our minds and hearts that we might comply with the conditions that pay the small price, for that would have been implanting a Satanic principle in the renewed heart. The principle cannot be tolerated in any of the sacred relations, even of depraved humanity. Picture an angel of light, with countenance clearer than sunbeams, with raiment whiter than snow, flowing down to his feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle; let his feet be like fine brass, when it burns in a furnace; then let this thing of beauty and purity get down and wallow with the sow in the mire, and we would say—the filth is "from without and can't defile;" then let him join the dog in eating his vomit, and we would say—"that which entereth in cannot defile." But when we think of an unrenewed man, offering to God a motion or two of his flesh, in order to the forgiveness and favor of God, we unhesitatingly pronounce it an infamous traffic. And should these fleshly emotions include the tears and sackcloth of repentance, we would pronounce

it the sorrow of the world that worketh death; and if this were accompanied by long, loud and oft-repeated prayers, we would charge that they called not on God out of a pure heart." Every such thought and act is demoralizing, and acts of obedience with this in order to principle, could be multiplied, until a man would become satanized. The more of such obedience a man has, the worse he is. A man can have the righteousness that is of law until he be blameless, and then he would be the chief of sinners. He could never win Christ until he counts all such righteousness as dung. A man may be beautiful indeed without even in the eyes of Christ, and he may appear righteous unto men, and with it all it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for such. And why? Is the law sin? God forbid. Do we make void law? Nay, we would establish law. Then how is it that all ought to have righteousness of law, and yet one may have it all and be damned, and another be saved without deeds or works of law? Why does the righteousness damn and the unrighteousness save? The answer is plain—the principle is wrong. Better, far better, have no righteousness at all, than to have all righteousness with the wrong principle. "For by deeds of law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Then how shall we be justified before God? "Being justified FREELY by his GRACE through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth—a mercy seat through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

Let us do all we can by the help of the Word and Spirit to convict all of sin, and let all who are convicted REPENT; but let them repent because they have sinned against God. A legal, or "in order to" repentance is unto death. It is an effort to purchase the GIFT of God, and one had as well do it with money as with repentance. The principle is the same. It shows a man's heart is not right in the sight of God. All such penitents, so-called, are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity; and on that principle can never have part or lot in this matter of salvation. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, IF PERHAPS the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." What is this wickedness? The thought that the GIFT of God

can be purchased. A man can freely receive any gift of God, but he can't purchase it with money, neither with repentance and prayer. Convert repentance and prayer into a law, and make them conditions, and there will be no "perhaps" or "peradventure" about it. Let us repent because we sin. Let us pray—"God be merciful to me a sinner," because his mercy is for sinners, and because his mercy endureth forever." Let us believe in Jesus Christ because he has power on earth to forgive sins, and because he is able to save our souls from death. Let us obey him in all things. doing all things whatsoever he has commanded," because we love him. Is repentance the cause, and forgiveness the effect? The right principle is life, the wrong principle is death. Even our contributions—the benefactions of our love to God and man, He accepts "if there first be a willing mind," "without grudging"—"cheerful," "FREE." "FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE." This is the principle of LOVE. Let us enquire into it until we see it, and love it, and act it, in ALL things. Let us proceed with the inquiry—does divine love FREELY give ALL things, and do we FREELY receive, and should we FREELY give?

We proceed next to the consideration of spiritual things, having briefly noticed material and providential blessings.

CHAPTER XVI.

Love Gracious in Spiritual Things.

We have been considering the principle of Love—that in its benefactions it is gracious—freely giving to us all things. This is certainly true as regards material blessings—the earth and all things that are therein. There may be, and I greatly fear there is, some hesitancy in some minds to gratefully accept this principle as regards temporal and providential blessings. In some of these, as daily bread, second causes are so prominent, and means are so important, that we are loath to give up the "natural" idea that the means are conditions to be performed by us, in consideration of which God pays us daily bread according to contract or covenant. In other words, let man do his part, and God will do his. But every reflecting mind knows the position to be false. If labor constituted the condition, then labor having been performed, God would be bound, for conditions bind with mutual obligations the parties to the contract. We simply repeat, that if the means constitute conditions, then God will not do to trust, for he has gone back on this contract (?) thousands of times. We must look at this matter in a different light. This idea of conditions is the poison in the spiritual blood, and it will soon prove an effectual antidote to all real gratitude. I confess, that my gratitude, while entertaining this legal idea, was only formal, that to write of it is now chilling, and I never hear the expression used, that I do not shudder as when a man blasphemes. It is so degrading and demoralizing and unscriptural, that the soul lives at a starving rate who feeds on it. Means are God's appointments—commandments—and in keeping his commandments there is great reward. But let us regard them as such, appointed for our highest good and happiness, and after using them diligently, let us dependently ask God to GIVE us our daily bread. And so of all other temporal or providential blessings.

Let us reverently and gratefully follow this gracious principle of divine love, as it operates in SPIRITUAL things. The Word of God is a great blessing. Shall we call it a gift or a purchase? What conditions did we

perform in order to its procurement? Let the legalist answer. God's answer is, "All Scripture is GIVEN by inspiration and is profitable," &c. See this principle in other Scriptures such as Rom. 15:4, 2 Pet. 1:21, &c. Clearly the Scriptures of divine truth constitute a free gift. But how about his Son? Is he a free gift, or did he impose conditions, in consideration of which he paid us his Son? Perish the thought! "God so loved the world, that he GAVE his only begotten Son." "When we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly." God commendeth his love toward us in that WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, Christ died for us." "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." "THANKS be unto God for his unspeakable GIFT."

Did this principle prevail as regards the Holy Spirit? or does he impart him on certain conditions, as some teach? Christ said: "If I go away I will send the comforter." Do you see the idea of traffic in that? "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard. Now if you say the hearing is a condition, and not the means, then if any hear, and do not receive the Spirit, God is made a liar, and is shown to be capricious, for all know that conditions bind both parties to the contract. "Giving them the Holy Spirit, as he did to us," is the way God puts it. "Who hath also GIVEN unto us his Spirit." 1 Thess. 1:8. "Hereby we know he abides in us by the Holy Spirit which he hath GIVEN to us. 1 John 3:24. Nor can we make faith a condition, for Paul asked, "Received ye the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" If faith had been a condition, the question would have expressed a suspicion of the divine integrity. Paul in Gal. 3:2 comes directly to the point—"Received ye the Spirit by works of law (conditions), or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" This question comes with peculiar force to our times.

But as we are now particularly on the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, let us offer satisfaction to every honest doubter by referring to the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians. Read the first eleven verses. Paul "would not have them ignorant concerning spiritual gifts." "Now there are diversities of GIFTS but

the same Spirit." "The manifestation of the Spirit is GIVEN to each for the profit of all." "For to one is GIVEN by the Spirit the word of wisdom." &c. "But all these inworketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to each one as he will." This is the end of this question, and of all questions. They end, of course, in divine sovereignty. The man that has not a sovereign God, has no God at all. The God who is not sovereign in all things, is not sovereign at all. Opposition, and even antipathy to divine sovereignty, is the fruitful mother of all the "broken cisterns that hold no water." It has invented all the multifarious genuflections by which we approach meritoriously to the divine favor. When the humble Christian lays down his arms of bitter rebellion against Divine sovereignty, and begins to worship a sovereign God, his worship will be accepted, and God will fill his poverty-stricken soul with the fulness of his presence. If the Spirit is sovereign, and bestows his blessings on whom he will, then we can "covet," or "earnestly desire," the best gifts. This is pleasing to him, and for aught I know, the desire may be a means of attaining to these gifts, but I do know that the desire is not a condition, for I have desired, and earnestly desired, and I have not these best extraordinary gifts, nor any of them. So one of two things follows, either the desire is not a condition, or God will not do to trust. The gifts of God can't be purchased.

Let us advance slowly and view the ground thoroughly, so our bosoms can swell with emotions of gratitude, as we consider the freeness of his blessings. If I succeed in turning the minds of only a few from that demoralizing idea of conditional blessings, I will be instrumental in giving them a breadth of happiness, a height of joy, and a depth of gratitude that legalists know nothing of. On this I have an experience—hence testify to that which I do know.

I repeat, the excellence of Love is seen not only in the number and value of its gifts, but also in the freeness with which they are bestowed. Does the divine love give us all things, and does it give them freely? If so, much that is called gospel in these times is the very opposite of gospel; for I have often

read and heard that God conditionally gives us all things. We will examine the supposed conditions.

CHAPTER XVII.

Is Spiritual Life Freely Given?

We have seen that earth, air, water, the world, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that in them is, our bodies with all their physical, mental and moral endowments, are freely given to us of God. So also his Word, his Son, his Spirit, and the gifts of that Spirit are all free gifts. Some of these may have been sought through appointed means, as daily bread, Holy Spirit, and his gifts, but the means cannot constitute conditions, else God cannot be sovereign and free in their bestowment. God's blessings are to be sought through prayer and other means, but we must dependently seek, and then we may not obtain. God may withhold and declare he will not hear. But make these conditions and God would be fickle, if he did sometimes give and sometimes not give.

But we have been testing the freeness of spiritual blessings, having noticed as many as are above enumerated. "When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive and GAVE GIFTS unto men." He gave in old times prophets, &c., for the perfecting of the saints. Did he give these freely? Who will name the conditions upon which they were bestowed? Did he give Spurgeon freely? What conditions did he require of London, and the world, and future ages? Can they estimate the value of this gift in corruptible things as silver and gold? I don't ask what the world ought to return because of; but what did it pay in order to? What did it pay for Paul, Apollos and Cephas? How would it appear in God to attempt to bargain and traffic with the world for such a sale? Or for the sale of any spiritual blessing?

But "life" is enumerated in Paul's inventory of God's gifts. Was natural life a free gift? Certainly, you say, in its origin, but not in its perpetuity. That is to say, natural life is a free gift, but it is perpetuated by conditions. Now let the man name the conditions, and he can sell the recipe for more gold than there is in California. He can put an effectual stop to this weeping business, and this coffin business, and this grave-yard business. If you say the

conditions are in the line of medicine, call for the medicines, and their proportions, and ten thousand quacks will give you as many different answers. If in medicine, food, clothing and exercise, what are the proportions? Answer, for a million invalids are waiting with suffering patience. Did God make a law of life and never revealed it? Ah! life has no law but the sovereign will of God. Convince me that it is of law, and I will never call on him again for health. Let the skeptical reader turn back now, and read the 6th chapter of Matthew, and parallel Scriptures, and then let streams of gratitude go up to him, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

But how about spiritual life? Having lost the image of God, it must be begotten again. But on what principle? Law? God forbid. "The GIFT of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "OF HIS OWN will beget he us with the word of truth." "Born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." "The wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh. nor whither it goeth, SO is EVERY ONE that is born of the Spirit." Yes, bloweth where it pleases, when it pleases, while it pleases, which way it pleases, on whom it pleases. Verily "he quickeneth whom he will." The time was when I would shake a forked tongue at this sentiment, but it was while I loved a god and hated the God. That story of the widow of Sarepta and the Syrian leper, while Israel had many such that were passed by, made the Pharisees fighting mad. Luke 4:25-30. Flesh will seek a ground of boasting, having always on hand a set of conditions that will flatter with a vain sense of meritoriousness. Opposite to divine sovereignty is perhaps the last enemy we have to destroy. But its destruction is like life from the dead, and leaves us gratefully susceptible to all God's blessings on the principle of freeness.

I read not long since of regeneration as a practical duty. Do we beget ourselves? Do we comply with the conditions of our own birth? I will not deny or undervalue the means, but I do deny that the means constitute conditions, either in the first or second birth. If the means constitute

conditions, then the result is mechanically certain—turn the crank and you have your music. The birth of Isaac explodes this double fallacy. Both means and the sovereign power of God were required, And so of every adult born of the Spirit. Paul plants. Apollos waters, but God gives the increase. Who, then, is Paul and who Apollos but ministers by whom they believed? But what was the measure of success? Were Paul and Apollos successful in proportion to their diligent use of means? No, but "as the Lord gave to each one." But is nothing proportionate to our labor? Yes, "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." Rewards, and not results, are proportionate to our labor. This explodes the idea that labor constitutes the condition.

This being true, and verily true it is, then regeneration is a matter of grace—a free gift. If it now be asked why all do not receive this free gift, the prompt reply is that such questions do not come under our jurisdiction. They belong to a higher court. Yes, we reverently intimate that it is right for the giver of all, to "do as he will with his own." Two practical thoughts and then we rest. 1st. If regeneration or spiritual life is a free gift, and God blesses our use of means with such glorious results, then thanks are due to his holy name, and with this sense of dependence upon God, we may seek through prayer the divine co-operation.

2nd. If we are subjects of regenerating grace, then we have no ground of boasting save this—"My soul shall make her boast IN THE LORD." Let heaven and earth rejoice, in the excellence of that love that can operate graciously—freely, in so great a matter as regeneration and eternal life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

There is another feature of love, the study of which has been interesting, and, I trust, profitable to the writer. There are two words in Greek for our word love, and the distinction between the two is of some importance. The exception to this statement is, that *thelo*, in its noun and verb forms occur some three hundred times, and only in Mark 12:38 is it translated love, and that should be desire, or wish.

Phileo as a verb occurs twenty-five times, and is translated "love" except in three cases, where it is said, Judas betrayed him with a kiss. Also five times compounded with the intensive *Kate*, it is rendered kiss, and means repeated kissing; referring to Judas, and once in Acts 20:37. There is no other word for kiss in New Testament Greek. The noun occurs thirty times, and is always translated "friend." This may help us to discover the distinction. *Agapee*, the true word for love, or the word for true love, occurs in its three forms about three hundred times, and, unfortunately, twenty-two times it is rendered "charity," and once "feasts of charity," See Thayer on *Phileo* for his distinction. I will try it in another way.

As *phileo* is the word so often compounded, it will help us to distinguish those cases also from the true idea of love. As the noun is always translated "friend," the corresponding verb would be befriend and applicable in all cases to persons, while customs, pleasures, money, &c., might require a different word. It would strain any one English word to supply all the demands, attachment, companionship, friendship, fondness, all clamor in my mind for this service. Any, or all, might be used, but love should not be brought so low.

The first occurrence of *phileo* is Matt 6:5: "They love to pray standing in public places, so as to be seen of men." They did not love to pray, but were attached to that custom that made them conspicuous in prayer. So of uppermost rooms at feasts in Matt. 23:6, and greetings in the market in Luke

20:46. They were attached to the customs of making them conspicuous at feasts and in public places. When John says (1 John 2:15), "Love not the world," and if you do "the love of the Father is not in you," he uses the true word for love. We ought to befriend and companionate and feel our attachment for those of the world, such as Jesus felt when he ate with publicans and sinners, or else as Paul says, we must needs get out of the world.

If the Authorized Version had followed its custom, it would have translated 2 Pet. 1:7 as follows: "Add to godliness brotherly love, and to brotherly love, love." To avoid that, they changed love to kindness, which was correct, as that would show the distinction, and this they ought always to have done. The first lesson for a convert is personal attachment, fondness, companionship for the brethren. This would lead him to seek their company. The next duty is to grow to that love described in 1 Cor. 13th chapter. Companionships and attachments are easily broken, unless cemented by love. The weaker word is used in John 5:20: "The Father loveth his Son," but the connection shows that companionship was the true idea. In Matt. 10:37 we learn that we must not be so attached to father, mother, daughter, or son. That we could not, if required, break from their companionship to follow or be associated with Christ. That can be done, and yet love them none the less, yea, even more. Hence in 1 Cor. 16:22—"If any one will not companionate with the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed." Such would prefer to be recognized as "of the world," because they love the world, and John 15:19 says the world loves its own. Cursed ought he to be who had rather be identified with sinners than the Saviour of sinners. These two words Christ and Peter threw back and forth at each other most skillfully in John 21:15-17. Christ first put the true word for love in comparison—"Lovest thou me more than these?" Peter once thought so. But he has learned better, so his poor reply was, "Thou knowest that I am fond (Rotherham) of thee." Then Christ dropped the comparison, and asked him if he loved him in the true sense at all. Peter was ashamed to say yes, so he repeated his first answer. The third time Christ took his own word, and

asked if he loved him even in that lower sense. Peter left all to follow him, and said, though all forsook him, he would not, but die with him; but he didn't. So Christ's third question was pertinent. Peter was grieved because in the third question Christ asked him if he was even attached to him, or was fond of him. This intensified Peter's answer, so that he replied with two words for know—"Lord, thou understandest all things, thou dost absolutely know that I love thee a little—enough to leave all, but not enough to die for thee. Thus Christ brought Peter to know his true character, for he had greatly overestimated himself.

Now notice the distinction between friend and brother. Luke 14:10: "Call not thy friends nor thy brethren." 21:16: "Ye shall be betrayed by parents, brethren, kinsfolk and friends, and some of you they shall cause to be put to death." All of these natural ties fall short of *agapee*—love, brought to light in the gospel. But when we can't love, we may befriend, and we may love a dead or absent one, whom we could not befriend.

Now I wish to make a closing application.

I believe John had an ecclesiastical preview through the seven churches of Asia; and a secular preview through the seven seals. I know this is called fanciful, &c., but this is the treatment truth generally receives. I cannot here give my reasons, but with the statement, I haste to the use of this typical and prophetic interpretation to the church at Philadelphia. The ages of fidelity to truth and principle, even unto death from persecution, gave way to a Philadelphian age, in which, not brotherly love, but personal attachment and affiliation are urged against the love of the truth. Instead of "let us be faithful," the cry is, "let us be brethren," and affiliate as brethren, though love of truth (as in Antipas, which is the characteristic name of all martyres) and the love of principle and doctrines be sacrificed thereby. This Philadelphian age has been on us since the Reformation, and has glided naturally into the Laodicean, or prosperous and lukewarm age, in which Philadelphia continues as a substitute for "love of the brethren," and "love of

the truth." Let "unfeigned brotherly attachment continue," but let it not lead to affiliation against the truth "Love the greatest" is first, for Christ and his commandments, even at the sacrifice of Philadelphia. But now abound Philadelphia, philarguria, philantos, phileedonos, philoprotuo, philosophia, &c. but the greatest of these, and greater than all these is Love; that love that "guards Christ's commandments," and "rejoices with the truth." Let us covet the greatest.

THE END