

Thou Shalt Love

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"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22: 37-40).

Consider this supreme characteristic of our most holy faith—"Thou Shalt Love."

There can be no Christian experience without it. One can no more be a Christian without love than he can be a scholar without knowledge, an artist without perception, a genius without insight, or a tradesman without craft. It is the Christian's supreme characteristic.

It is not by any means the only characteristic nor the only demand, yet once this is given central place within the life, all else naturally falls into line. Seek to substitute other things for it, even the best things, and note the difference.

That for instance—Thou shalt work. It is immediately apparent that this is not sufficient. Anyone could work without loving—as did the prodigal's brother as recorded in Luke 15. He had put in many years of service which to his poor, limited mind nobody seemed to appreciate. Yet although for years one could work without loving, none could ever love without working, for love must serve. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14).

"God so loved the world that He gave . . ." (John 3:16). "The Son of God, who loved . . . and gave . . ." (Gal. 2:20). "Christ also loved . . . and gave . . ." (Eph. 5:25).

"Love ever gives—forgives—outlives,
And ever stands with open hands
And while it lives, it gives;
For this is Love's prerogative
To give—and give—and give."

We cannot substitute—Thou shalt pray, because even that would not be sufficient; men have prayed without loving—the Pharisees did it; standing in the synagogues and in public places, wherever they could attract human attention, they raised their voices in prayer, but did they love the God to whom their prayers were professedly directed? Hear the word of the Master concerning it. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are" (Matt. 6:5). It is possible to pray without loving, but whoever could love the Lord without praying?

Whatever then may be of value in Christian experience is comprehended within that expression, "Thou shalt love."

A love-centered life has no need of a perpetual rule book to keep it straight, the inner motives being actuated by a spirit which delights to keep the law. The rule book is not rejected, but rather the life is spontaneously actuated by a love which delights to obey.

It will manifest itself in a twofold way:

Reaching upward—it touches God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." That love for God is to dominate the entire being.

It is emotional—dominating the affections. Regulating the realm of feeling, it brings all earth-love and all creaturely enticement into subjection to Him whom it honors as Lord. "With all thy heart."

It is dynamical—dominating the life. Taking possession as a driving force, it makes service a joy and sacrifice a delight. "With all thy soul."

It is intellectual—dominating the mind. The deep things of God are worthy of the attention

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of the finest intellects. Full salvation rightly understood, is not a mental repressive, dwarfing the intellect; it is the crown of all mental culture. It is not a sin to think and to think hard, provided we learn to think with God. "With all thy mind."

Here then is an all-pervading, all-permeating love taking possession of the entire man.

Reaching outward—it contacts "thy neighbor." "And thy neighbor as thyself."

This is often glibly quoted, but do we realize what it involves—and what it implies? As thyself! Then in all circumstances, dealing with my fellowman, I am to put myself in his place. How different would be conditions if that really happened today. Socially! Nationally! Internationally! Individually! You can never rightly appraise another's conduct until you have gotten close enough to him to gauge his conditions and even then you cannot read his heart.

"Thou shalt love . . . thy neighbor as thyself." What does it mean? It means I must be as careful about his reputation as I am about my own. It means I must be as considerate of his feelings as I want him to be about mine. It means I must be as honorable in my dealings with him as I would desire him to be with me. It means—and please do take this to heart—I must be as concerned about his salvation as I am about my own. If I am to meet God without fear of censure at the judgment, I dare not nurse myself and neglect my neighbor.

By nature we do not possess that love—and the lack is not merely one of quantity; it is that of quality; it is not that we do not have much—but rather that we do not have any. Until the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost we are utterly without it.

In human nature unchanged by grace there is more than a lack; there is a perversion. Not only is man destitute of the love quality—he is possessed by an opposite tendency. His governing principle is "the carnal mind" which "is enmity against God." This mind "is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Within man is a nature which makes him a fighting rebel. He fights God and fights his neighbor. When he wants to manifest a better disposition he has a struggle on hand, even the new life divinely given in regeneration being contested by remaining carnality. Thus until sanctified wholly, the fight goes on.

What God demands of us He waits to impart to us. At our disposal is a new life, a new love in overwhelming fullness. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not merely a baptism for power, nor even for purity, true, of course, though it be that by its operation both these things are accomplished. The baptism of the Holy Spirit floods the soul with perfect love, and that is "Christian Perfection."

"Jesus comes, He fills my soul;
Perfected in love I am;
I am every whit made whole;
Glory, glory to the Lamb."

"The greatest acquisition of any preacher is his own personal testimony to the saving, sanctifying, and keeping power of Jesus Christ."

—J. D. Drysdale.

CALLING MEN BACK TO THE OLD PATHS

By the Late Commissioner,
Samuel L. Brengle

God's prophets of old have kindled in me some of their flaming zeal for righteousness, their scorn of meanness, pride and worldliness, their jealousy for the living God; their fear of those who forget God and live as though He were not, their courage in denouncing sin, and calling men back to the old paths of righteousness.

I stand in awe as I note their intrepidity, their forgetfulness of self in denouncing sin and facing the contempt, the scorn, and then the wrath of princes, priests and kings. Tradition tells us Isaiah was finally thrust into a hollow log and "sawn asunder."

They counted not their lives dear unto themselves. They were "moved by the Holy Ghost." They yielded themselves up for service, suffering or sacrifice as His instruments. They were surrendered men, selfless men, devoted as soldiers unto death, if needs be, that they might save the nation, and if not the nation, then a remnant who clung to the old paths, who would not bow the knee to Baal, who would not yield to the seductions of fashion and the spirit of the times.

They were men of the age, but they lived and wrought mightily for the Ages. They were men of the times, and their message was meant for their times; but it had timeless value because they lived in God and wrought for God and spoke only "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

They were diffident men by nature. They shrank from the prophetic office. They did not seek it. It was thrust upon them. God called them, and they went forward under divine constraint.

Listen to Jeremiah's story of his call: "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." But he shrank from the great task and its fearful responsibility and pleaded: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." "Say not, I am a child," said the Lord in reply, "for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee."

But God did not send him forth at his own charges and in his own strength. He never does so send forth His prophets. He equips them. He humbles them until there is no conceit or strength left in them, like Daniel in Babylon and John on Patmos, and they cry out, as did Isaiah: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . . Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts," and then He empowers them.

And as the Lord touched the lips of Isaiah with living fire, so He touched Jeremiah: "The Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth." That was his equipment for his great and dangerous office. And, under God, it is ours also.

Then the vastness of this man's mission was unfolded to him: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms"—this lad, who never left the land of his birth,

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