

## THE SPECTRUM OF LOVE

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Love is probably the most misused word in the entire world. It is also the one that is least understood. Love is of such a complex make-up that there has been no perfect definition for it except the Scriptural one in 1 Jn. 4:8 which tells us, "*God is love*".

The dictionary makes its own attempt at defining love. It says, "*love implies intense fondness or deep devotion, the feeling of benevolence, sexual passion, a strong passionate affection for a person of the opposite sex.*" Webster was undoubtedly a brilliant man and did a wonderful work, but he comes far short of defining what scriptural, Godly (Agape) love is.

Love is a **gift** of God to those seeking to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, who are born-again from above and led by the Holy Spirit of God to **allow** their lives to be conformed to Jesus. Our Heavenly Father begins a love in us that can make response back to His infinite love. Love grows as a result of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and as the result of keeping the two greatest commandments given to us in Mt. 22:37-39, not in *letter* but in *spirit*.

In Matt. 22:37-39 Jesus said, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor **as yourself**.*" Did Jesus make some mistake here? Did he really mean that we should lavish love on ourselves before we could love our neighbor? It would be more in harmony with Scripture to say that Jesus meant one is to love others as he/she cares for himself/herself.

Loving our neighbor as we love ourselves is often misunderstood to mean we must have great self-love. But God's Word makes it clear that such love is always equated with pride and selfishness. This is surely not what Jesus meant when he told us we should love others as we love ourselves. Jesus was giving us a standard by which He would have us love others. That standard is the same as the Golden Rule: *do unto others as you would have them do to you*. The love for self of which Jesus speaks is not that unbalanced love that is preoccupied with self. Rather, it is a self-love that wants to be treated kindly and with respect. It wants to be dealt with honestly and with a genuine interest from others in its well being. It wants justice in its business dealings and to be heard when it has a complaint. So too, we must give this same love to others.

Love is the dynamic interaction that gives life its true, vital meaning and purpose. Love is not something passive. Love involves doing for others as you would have them do for you. The more love is active, the more it grows and expands within us.

This short verse of a poem brings out this point well:

Yes, the heart grows rich in giving;  
All its wealth is living grain;  
Seeds that mildew in the garner  
Scattered, fill with gold the plain.  
Is your heart a living power?  
Self-entwined, its strength sinks low;  
It can only live *in loving*,  
And by *serving*, love will grow.

Love is of no value if it is not given away to others. We cannot give what we have not received, learned, and experienced, and taken into our own minds and hearts. What amazing grace -- though we pour out our love upon myriad of others, the capacity to love is never diminished. It is somewhat like knowledge. The wise man can teach others all he knows by sharing it with them, and when he is through, his knowledge hasn't lessened, but rather in giving it forth it becomes deepened in his own mind. Love has another very special feature to it. The more that love is given away and shared, the more joy and fulfillment is experienced by the giver. If love is hoarded selfishly, the result will be a joyless, unfulfilled life of emptiness and discontent. The Apostle Paul, quoting Jesus, makes this point in Acts 20:34-35: *"You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and in everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

*Giving* and *serving* is love in action and always yields its own reward. Godly Love is not just a benevolent *feeling*. Our feelings come and go with varying degrees of intensity. Some are brief and fleeting, while others are deep and longer lasting. Love that comes from the heart is always coupled with strong feelings. It was love and strong feelings of compassion that motivated our Lord to heal and feed the multitudes. It was His love and strong feelings of sadness that caused Jesus to weep over Jerusalem and at the grave of Lazarus, and that eventually carried our Lord through many difficult ordeals leading Him to Calvary's Cross.

Let us now walk through 1 Corinthians 13 and witness the beautiful manifestation of the fruit godly love displays so beautifully, described here by the Apostle Paul. From the Phillips translation:

*"Love is patient and kind... never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud. Never haughty, arrogant or rude. Love never demands its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges, and will hardly ever notice when others do wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone, you will be loyal to him whatever the cost. You will believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him. All the special gifts and powers from God will someday come to an end, but love goes on forever."* Dropping down to verse 13, it says, *"There are three things that remain: Faith, Hope and Love, and the greatest of these is **Love!**"*

This is not a description of human love, but rather of godly love. It can only be ours if the Holy Spirit indwells us. Let us examine each of these manifestations separately so that we might better comprehend Love's fruitage. What we will see is how true love conducts itself in various situations.

### **Love is Patient**

It is worthy of note that *patience* is the first quality the Apostle saw fit to mention. There is good reason for this. We read in Luke 8:15, "Bring forth fruit *with patience*." In Jas. 1:4 we are told *"to let patience have her perfect work that you may be whole, lacking nothing."* These scriptures and others make it obvious that patience is essential to fruit bearing. Just think for a moment of the enormous patience and long-suffering of our Heavenly Father in regard to His creation. Yes, if we really meditate on it, we will realize just how important patience is to the development of love within us. *A lack of patience manifests an over-concern for self.*

On the other hand, patience is the manifestation of concern for others. When we are impatient in some task we are doing, it is because it is not going the way *WE* think it should. Impatience and selfishness walk hand in hand -- they are best friends. We may become impatient with others when we

think they act in ways that we think they should not, or when we are interrupted because we think what we are doing is more important. This often is done even before we find out the reason for the interruption. There is no getting around it, impatience is self-seeking and is the *works* of selfishness.

Patience, as all the fruits of the Spirit, comes from God. These are not manifestations of human effort. This makes it possible to do the impossible as the following story so well illustrates:

"There was a young Christian who was having a terrible time with maintaining his patience. He was so impatient with everything and everyone that even he could see that people were obviously avoiding him. This lay heavily on his heart. Finally, he decided to go see an elderly Christian man whom he considered to be very wise, and for whom he had high regard, and who always was an example of one who walked with Christ. He told the older man his troubling problem. After the young man had stated his problem, the older one suggested that they both kneel down and pray about the matter. The older Christian began to pray, 'Gracious Lord, please give this young man tribulation in the morning, tribulation at mid-day, and...' At this point the young man interrupted by grabbing the other's arm and said to him in franticness, 'I don't think you understood what I said. My problem is with *patience*, not *tribulation*.' The wise old Christian then went on to explain that it is only by adversity and tribulation that one comes to learn patience (Romans 5:3) and by *allowing* God to work in you."

In contrast to impatience, patience learns to reach out and be concerned for the feelings and well-being of others. Patience is flexible, never in a hurry; it is calm and wears the ornament of a *meek and quiet spirit*. Yes, *loving* patience seeks to understand and therefore *quietly waits*. There is a saying worth remembering: "*Blessed are the flexible... for they shall not be bent out of shape.*"

*Patience is...Love enduring!*

### **Love is Kind**

*Kindness* is the expression or act of love towards someone. It is a composite of benevolence, the desire to do good, extend sympathy, generosity, friendliness, and cordiality. Kindness can be said to be a language that is universally understood and is the oil that often reduces the frictions of life. Christian kindness is indeed love in action. Kindness is concerned with "*doing good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith*" (Gal. 6:10). It is emulating the example left for us by our Lord Jesus who the Scriptures tell us "*went about doing good.*" Kindness walks with an open hand rather than a closed fist. It seeks opportunities to be useful as well as helpful. Kindness is the expression of loving understanding, for it realizes that everyone is fighting a hard battle.

*Adversity never sours the milk of true Christian kindness.* Kindness will seek to understand and excuse any act that might be upsetting, deflecting it by kind thoughts. Yes, it is true: "*I shall pass through this world but once. If, therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good that I can do, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.*"

### **Love does not Envy**

To *envy* is to have a feeling of discontent and ill-will because of another's advantage, position, or possessions. It is a desire to have what belongs to another. The one who envies is unhappy with their lot. Envy is the unbalanced thinking which says, "*if I cannot have those things, then no one else should either.*" Envy is very subtle and is often heard in the simple words, "So that is how the other half lives."

Love on the other hand, is never envious or bitter because someone else possesses and enjoys something we do not have. Love is never frustrated or discontented at the success of others. Let us note that part of the thread that makes up envy is *selfishness*. Rather than being envious, true love would rejoice in the good fortune of others. It would always desire the best for others. Godly love would even desire to assist others in bettering themselves and their lot in life at a cost to self.

The seeds of envy grow slowly toward its fruition. Envy's fruitage is never sweet. The Scriptures seem endless in their lessons to help us fight this foe to God-like love. In *Gen. 4:4-8*, Cain's envy of Abel led him to murder his brother. In *Gen. 37:4-20*, Joseph's brethren envied his relationship with his father so much that they too plotted to take his life, but were deterred by Reuben and sold him instead into slavery. In *Num. 12:1-10*, Miriam and Aaron were envious that only Moses was recognized as God's mouthpiece and because of this she was punished temporarily with leprosy. In *Matt. 27:1-18*, we read how the chief priest and elders of the Jews plotted the death of Jesus because they envied His influence and reputation among the people, and feared He would displace them in their seats of honor.

If any of us find ourselves discontented with our position in life, especially in the church, thinking we could give a better sermon, or lead a better Bible study than the one who is doing it, let us look closely as to *why* we feel this way. If we have turned over our lives completely to the Lord, being abandoned to His will alone, there should be no room for envy because through submission and acceptance of God's will for us comes rest, peace, and heart contentment. In *Philippians 4:11* the Apostle Paul says, "*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith **to be content**.*" Contrary to what the world thinks, contentment comes not from great acquisitions, but rather from few wants, and leaving everything in the hands of our All-wise, All-loving Heavenly Father.

### **Love is never Boastful or Proud**

Someone once said, "*You are always in the wrong key, when you sing your own praises!*" The Moffatt translation puts it this way: "*Love makes no parade, gives itself no airs.*" Love does not seek to display itself so that it might be admired and thought well of. It is content with exercising love, knowing that with love God is well pleased. Pride is an unbalanced estimation of oneself. Its effect can be likened to one end of a magnet which always repels instead of attracting. The Apostle in *Rom. 12:3* tells us, "*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*" Also in *1 Cor. 4:7* we read, "*For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as though you did not?*"

There is no better example to be found for us than in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. We would like to contrast His humility with the deadly pride that was Satan's downfall and could be ours. First, we will mention what the world's measure of greatness is and then contrast that with the life of Jesus. We will list the world's view on the left and compare Jesus' life on the right.

*Pride of birth and rank* ..... "Is this not the carpenter's son?"  
*Pride of wealth*..... "The son of Man has no place to lay his head."  
*Pride of respectability*.... "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?"  
*Pride of personal appearance*..... "He hath no form, nor comeliness  
that they should desire him."  
*Pride of reputation*..... "A friend of publicans and sinners."

*Pride of education*....."How does this man know letters, having never been educated?"

*Pride of superiority*..... "I am among you as one who serves."

*Pride of success*....."He was despised and rejected of men."

*Pride of ability*....."I can of myself do nothing."

*Pride of self-will*..... "I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him who sent me."

*Pride of intellect*... .."As the Father has taught me, these are the things I speak."

*Pride of legacy*.... ..He was nailed to a cross and his body was lain in a borrowed tomb.

Jesus surely left us the perfect example of meekness of spirit and humbleness of mind and heart. Which side of the sheet are we more like?

### **Love is not Arrogant or Rude**

Love, on the contrary, is always courteous. Arrogance and rudeness are signs of disrespectfulness generating from selfish pride. One is not arrogant or rude to someone they look up to or consider better than themselves. It is usually directed towards others who are thought to be in some way inferior, be it education, position, talent, etc. To act in an arrogant or rude manner is to be insensitive to the feelings of others. It is striking out without caring what the effect will be. Many do this to express their self-perceived superiority. This can take place in the church, if one looks down on someone *less versed* in the Scriptures than they are, and reacts in a prideful and superior manner during a study or discussion. The results of such action are usually unbecoming to those who behold it.

Let us rather be gentle, courteous and thoughtful towards others. Yes, love does not behave itself unmannerly. Love does not demand its own way, is not selfish. True love will never take advantage of others by seeking its own way. In fact, love will put itself at a disadvantage if it can help others. Love is very cautious that it does not step on the toes of others. Love does not have a stubborn disposition.

Listen to some of the synonyms for the word *stubborn*: unbend-ing, tough, hard, obstinate, unyielding, inflexible, stiff, headstrong, heady, pig-headed. May our lives always be such that none of these words can be attached to our actions. It is very easy for us to get caught up in the spirit of competition which is everywhere about us. Competition is the ground-rule of the world's economy, and its influence filters down to touch life at every level. Trying to outdo, or to be better than others, is seen even in the realm of small children playing together. Almost all competition serves a selfish end.

Contrary to this, love is solicitous. It looks for opportunities to be of assistance even when it might be "*out of season*" to self. True love is not afraid to get involved! It seeks to fulfill the commandment of loving your neighbor as yourself. True love is glad to listen to others and tries to understand the other's point of view. It is quick to acknowledge a better idea from someone else, and even goes further by commending the person for it. A selfish person will never attain true joy. There is no joy in having or in getting, for always more is desired. Joy comes by way of giving. The majority of the world are definitely traveling down the wrong road in their pursuit of this virtue. Jesus said he came to minister and to serve. The secret is found in His words and examples, and this is what gave His life meaning and was a source of satisfaction to Him when He was dealing with His disciples.

### **Love is not Irritable or Touchy, not Provoked**

When we are irritable and touchy, we have allowed self to again put itself in the number one slot. Our good temper will be tested time and again on the daily battlefield of life. When we choose to put love into action during trying circumstances and situations, it will neutralize all of life's acid and render sweet what would have otherwise been a bitter experience.

If we are on the receiving end of insults or tested in some fashion, let us remember that love does not reciprocate in kind, for this would be rendering evil for evil. Love resists being insulted and will rather seek to understand why someone is provoked to act in such a manner towards us. A bad temper is much like a bolt of lightning causing much damage when it comes in contact with an object.

It has been said: "A lack of patience, a lack of kindness, a lack of generosity, a lack of courtesy, a lack of unselfishness are all instantaneously symbolized in one flash of bad temper." Will-power cannot change this disposition in men, nor will time. *Only Christ can do this in our lives, and this will happen as we allow God to perform in us his marvelous work of transforming our minds to that which was also in His Son, Christ Jesus.* The Apostle Paul admonished us in Phil 2:5, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*".

### **Love Thinks No Evil**

Love does not hold grudges, hardly ever notices when others do it wrong. It is not wary or suspicious of others or their motives. Love is without guile. It never seeks revenge. It is never jealous, but rather is normally inclined to trust others. It is willing to be put in a position of vulnerability and is always quick to seek to see the best in others. Love does not look for closet doors to open in search of some old skeleton of wrong doing. It will never drop innuendoes or inferences that would cast a shadow on another. True love will seek to protect and to cover over what might be hurtful to others if it was made known. It isn't burdened with the tendency to feel slighted by others, but will always seek an excuse for their behavior. Love is not blind to the faults of others, but rather it *chooses* to focus on the good that is there. In doing this we are being co-workers with God, the Great Potter so that this fruit of the Spirit will grow. Let us be sure we "***Abide in the Vine!***"

### **Love Is Never Glad Over Injustices**

Love rejoices when Truth wins out. Iniquity is by its very nature opposed to justice, righteousness, and love. As we look around us, we often see dishonesty being used for self-gain. However profitable wrong-doing may be, love would never be a partaker of it. Love has such an affinity for truth and righteousness that it would rather suffer loss, distress, and even persecution, if need be, in its defense. Being true to the standards of justice and righteousness will cost all its adherents in this present life. Love rejoices when justice and truth are exercised around us and praises God for it.

### **Love Bears (Or Covers) All Things, Believes All Things, Endures All Things - Love Never Fails.**

True love will seek to cover, gloss over, ignore, excuse, or hide the faults of others. The Apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 4:8 says that "*Love shall cover a multitude of sins.*" What is so beautiful about Godly love

is that it will endeavor to do all this in respect to others, even when it is the victim of the wrong. Love will always try to look deeper into what prompted the wrong action, so that it might deal more intelligently with the wrong-doer. Love is always inclined to believe well of others, even when appearances might indicate otherwise. It will do this, even when everyone else may have crossed them off their list. True love will always resist the inclination to give up on anyone, and so in so doing *Love never fails*.

This is the kind of love that our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus desire us all to have within us. It is this kind of love that they both have for us. And the marvelous thing is that this is possible if we *allow* the Lord by His Holy Spirit to work in us His good pleasure. Praise God and our Lord Jesus Christ for their great love that they would desire to do this for us.

Let us now consider why Paul said in verse 13, *"There are three things that remain: Faith, Hope and Love, and the greatest of these is Love!"* Faith, according to Hebrews 11:1 is defined as follows: *"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."* Hope is stated in Hebrews 6:19-20 as something we possess as born-again new creatures. *"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters into the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf."* Faith and hope are closely connected. Faith is trusting in the promises of God and steps out in full confidence in the Promissory and the promise. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Hope holds out to us a promise. It is meant to be an incentive, something that will be ours in the future. Hearing produces faith and faith produces hope. Each is essential to the other.

Nevertheless, one is more important than these two. *Faith* and *hope* will come to an end when we are taken up to be with the Lord. They will have done their work and thus their purpose has ended. But this is not so with *Love*. Love continues on as a part of us in our changed spiritual bodies. We will be like our Lord Jesus and Heavenly Father in the very essence of Love, and thus be well able to assist our Lord Jesus Christ in blessing all the families of the earth, as His Bride. Much love and patience will be needed to uplift mankind to the standard of true righteousness. The overcoming Church will have been thoroughly tested in these manifestations of the fruitage of...Love!

The following story brings out the above point. It is called "No Farewell To Love." "As an aged Christian lay dying, a friend called to say farewell. 'I have just had three visitors,' said the dying man, 'and with two of them I parted; but the third I shall keep with me forever.' 'Who are they?' asked the caller. 'The first was Faith and I said, "Goodbye, Faith! I thank God for your company ever since I first trusted in Jesus; but now I am going where faith is no longer.'" Then came Hope. "Farewell, Hope," I said, "You have helped me in many an hour of battle and distress, but now I shall not need you any longer." Last of all came Love. "Love," I said, "you have indeed been my friend; you have linked me with God and with my fellow-men; you have comforted and gladdened my heart in its pilgrimage. But I cannot leave you behind; you must come with me for you, Love, will be my companion and friend for eternity."'" And so it is with us -- love will continue on into eternity with us in our resurrected spirit bodies.

### **Things To Remember**

Love should be the abiding principle in our relationships to one another.

What is Love? The Bible tells us that God is LOVE, and so to know love we must know God and His Son in a personal and intimate way.

Love is a decision!

It is a commitment to God and others that has been well thought out.

It includes a strong determination that absolutely nothing will deter you from your love for God and others.

Your love for others should not be based on expectations of their performance.

True love sets no conditions and has no limits.

This type of love is not one that is commonly found today, but it is one that is attainable by God's grace and with His help.

True love is constant and dependable, ever seeking to better life for others.

*Love is a decision and only you can make it, and with God's help you can keep it.*

*Let it be His love that flows through you to others.*

#### **LOVE IS**

Quick to Appreciate  
Quick to Forbear  
Quick to Give  
Quick to Justify  
Quick to Trust

Quick to Defend  
Quick to Forgive  
Quick to Help  
Quick to Shield

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