

The Greatest Of These Is Love

By Dee Bowman

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails... And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1Cor. 13:1-8, 13).

Love is the divine energy. Love is the supreme motive. Love is the instigator of grace, the reason for mercy, the essence of God Himself. In this great chapter on love Paul tells us its abiding attributes and thus shows us its necessity.

Even miraculous deeds, if not done in the spirit of love, have an empty, clanging sound. They are not melodious if they aren't motivated by love.

The worthlessness of benevolent deeds done without love is much the same. They have no real value unless prompted by love. He says no matter what or how much you do, if it is not properly motivated, it is worthless and vain. Even if a man gives his life for some cause, if it is not done of love, he wasted himself, for without love such is little more than a prideful effort.

He then tells how love, if it were a person, would act. He says love suffers long, that it is kind. Love, he says, doesn't have envious feelings and has no desire to parade itself; and love is not inflated with its own worth. Love, he says, will not behave rudely, and does not seek its own, but the good of others. It is not easily disturbed, thinks only good, bears, believes, hopes and endures all things.

Look again at that list of attributes. Look carefully. Do you not see that you have just described Jesus Christ? He is the personification of Love.

Does Prayer Work?

A man sat next to a minister during a baseball game and talked religion. A fellow came to bat, bowed his head in prayer, and hit the ball out of the park. His next time at bat, he uttered a prayer and hit a homer.

Amazed, the man asked the preacher, "Does prayer always work out there like that?"

"It does," he answered, "if you can hit."

Prayer isn't a substitute for work or practicing. But prayer is a support for these things. It was Augustine who said, "Pray as though everything depended on God, and work as though every- thing depended on you."

On Complaining...

Have you stopped to consider how arrogant and foolish murmuring is? Think of it. If you went into the laboratory of a nuclear scientist, would you find fault with his equipment? Or more incredibly, would you find fault with his methods of working? If you are like I am, you know so little about nuclear science that you would simply be in awe of the scientist, his equipment and his work. And even if you should observe him over the course of several days, you would not find cause to murmur or criticize him in his laboratory. Even though you might observe him doing things that did not make sense to you and perhaps even seemed wrong to you, yet you would hold your tongue in humble realization and self-confession of your ignorance of such matters. Now think of criticizing God while we are temporary observers and participants in the universe He has made. Do we know more than He? Who are we who live a few decades to murmur against the Eternal Omniscient God? Our hubris is unspeakable! (Oscar Miles)

On Boasting...

"But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (James 4:16). There is an old fable that says two geese were about to start southward on their annual autumn migration, when they were entreated by a frog to take him with them. The geese expressed their willingness to do so if a means of conveyance could be devised. The frog produced a long stalk of grass, got the geese to take it by each end in their beaks, while he clung to it by his mouth in the middle. In this manner the three were making their journey when they were noticed by some men. The men loudly expressed their admiration for the device and wondered who had been clever enough to discover it. Whereupon, the vainglorious frog opened his mouth to say, "It was I," lost his hold, fell to the earth, and was dashed to pieces. "Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips" (Prov. 27:2).

Out of the Mouths of Babes

My grandson was visiting one day when he asked, "Grandma, do you know how you and God are alike?" I mentally polished my halo while I asked, "No, how are we alike?" "You're both old," he replied.

A mother was telling her little girl what her own childhood was like: "We used to skate outside on a pond. I had a swing made from a tire; it hung from a tree in our front yard. We rode our pony. We picked wild raspberries in the woods." The little girl was wide-eyed, taking this in. At last she said, "I sure wish I'd gotten to know you sooner!"

On Living Together Before Marriage...

"According to surveys, most young people say it is a good idea to live with a person before marrying. However, a careful review of the available social science evidence suggests that living together is not a good way to prepare for marriage or to avoid divorce... Specifically, the research indicates that: Living together before marriage increases the risk of breaking up after marriage... Unmarried couples have lower levels of happiness and well-being than married couples" ("Should We Live Together": What Young Adults Need to Know about Cohabitation before Marriage," Rutgers University, David Popenoe & Barbara Dafoe Whitehead).

On Modern Golden Calves...

Worship is "in." Moderns worship worship! Excitement, feelings, "give them what they want." Bad theology makes for bad worship. A careless concept of God results in childish worship. Trying to please men rather than God results in blasphemy and idolatry.

Read Exodus 32 & Deuteronomy 9 about the golden calf. God through Moses was giving Israel the Law. God gave specific regulations concerning worship. Moses was on the mountain with God, while the Israelites were down below with Satan. Aaron, the high priest, failed the test. Taking the gold they gave, he made a calf and worship began. Israel never quite got over their sin; God reminded them of it time and again.

1. Crowds do not make it right. The biggest crowd is not necessarily the right crowd.
2. Giving people what they want will fail. Notice that Aaron did not preach to the people telling them of their sinful choice.
3. Wonderful worship experiences may not be. They "felt" God, but did not know Him.
4. Fun must not be confused with worship. They danced and became immoral. While God spoke on Sinai, they departed for idols, performances, concerts, fun.
5. Meeting people's needs may not be worship. They got what they wanted, but sold their souls to get it. They made fools of themselves, embarrassed Moses, and angered God. Compromise is not the answer. (Adapted from an article by Charles Hodge)

On a Tombstone in Falkirk, Scotland:

Here under this sod and under these trees
Is buried the body of Solomon Pease.
But here in his hole lies only his pod;
His soul is shelled out and gone back to God.

A Moments Wisdom

- Procrastination is the fertilizer that makes difficulties grow.
- Follow Christ and you will lead others to Him.
- Do you know the three times that most people are in church? When they are hatched, matched and dispatched.
- We were called to be witnesses, not lawyers.
- Self control is the ability to let your light shine even after your fuse has blown.