

Love Is Kind

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind.” **THE WORD ‘CHARITY’ IN**
our text is a translation of the Greek word *agape*, a more comprehensive translation of which would be ‘love.’ Pure charity is the act of giving, or bestowing benefits upon those who are in no position to return the favor, or in any way compensate the giver. Charity, therefore, is one of the very important elements of the Divine quality of love. It was an outstanding act of charity on the part of God when he “gave” his beloved Son to be man’s Redeemer. That gift was for the benefit of those who were in no position to repay the giver. This gift was an act of love—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

Love is one of the great principles of God; however, it embodies all the qualities of unselfishness, and not alone that of charity. Love, therefore, as a controlling principle in the Christian’s life, will always manifest itself in ways calculated to result in the greatest possible blessing to all concerned. The Christian’s life should operate in harmony with the principle of Divine love, as set forth in

God's Word. This is not a matter of denying one's self only, but a positive doing of the Divine will.

One might set aside his self-seeking ambitions and activities but, instead of accepting the Divine will instead of his own, become motivated by the desire to do the will of another. Thus one may devote himself to forwarding the cause of an earthly leader, or some particular organization. Or, he might seek to please his father or mother, or some particularly dear friend. A husband might give up his own will for that of his wife's, or vice versa. Thus an individual might be quite unselfish, yet, if any other will except the Divine will has supplanted his own, he is not putting himself under the influence of Divine love.

Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," and the doing of this is the supreme test of true love. (John 14:15) Some of the cruelest events in history have been perpetrated in the name of love. But, upon analysis, it will be found that it was not for God that such offences were committed, but for friends, or church, or group, and, sometimes, merely to carry out their own ideas. But true Divine love is never cruel, abusive, rash, or sarcastic. It never supports friends against the Divine will, as revealed through the truth of God's Word. Where the necessity of the Divine will demands, it will take a firm stand for the right, and may be stern in its opposition to wrong, even though the wrong may be sponsored by one's dearest friends; but it will always be kind.

HUMAN LOVE SOMETIMES UNKIND

It is quite easy to confuse sentimental love with the great principle of Divine love. When this is

done, important issues of the Christian life are lost sight of. Thus, it is entirely possible for one to suppose that he is living in a very high state of Christian attainment along the lines of love, yet actually be dwelling in a sort of 'fool's paradise.' Each individual Christian must determine for himself whether or not this is true in his own case by applying a few simple tests.

Sentimental love will manifest itself in friendly, kindly ways towards one's friends; but frequently in unfriendly, hateful ways towards one's enemies. Thus monks living back in the Dark Ages could write eloquent phrases about the love of Jesus, and at the same time join in persecuting to the death those who did not agree with them. Human nature has not changed, and we all need to be on guard lest, while indulging in beautiful platitudes of love, we might not be secretly harboring resentment and hatred in our hearts; or possibly sarcastically expressing sentiments of ill will toward those who may not be believing, or doing, what we might prefer.

True love is kind; hence, if we discover that the spirit within us is not one of kindness, even toward our enemies, we can be sure that it is not the spirit of love. That it is possible to be deceived along this line is indicated by James, who says, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing [for our friends, and praise to God] and cursing [for our enemies]. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."—James 3:10

John says, "This is love, that we walk after his commandments." (II John 6) To ignore, or seek to sidestep any of the LORD's commandments, no matter how trivial the points involved may seem to us,

would mean that we would be failing just that much in fully exemplifying Divine love in our lives. All of the Divine commandments are designed to guide us in becoming godlike, and one of the outstanding elements of godlikeness is resoluteness against any degree of compromise with unrighteousness.

God's commands are exacting and far-reaching, and if love is to be fully expressed in our lives, we must be close and obedient students of his will. These commandments cover personal conduct as well as doctrinal matters. They deal with our own personal doctrinal standing, and also govern our attitude toward others who transgress along these lines. John informs us that if we bid Godspeed to one whose doctrines we consider to be erroneous, it is tantamount to accepting and promoting those doctrines ourselves.—II John 10,11

The particular doctrinal point here mentioned by the apostle is not a specially disputed one in the church today; but the principle he enunciates applies just the same. To many of us this might be construed to be a very narrow viewpoint, devoid of liberty and tolerance; but it is the inspired expression of how God weighs matters of this kind.

The same principles hold true with respect to the personal conduct of those with whom we are associated. All of us are imperfect; and Divine mercy and love demand that we look upon each other charitably. God has provided, through the merit of Christ, a covering robe, and is viewing us as being under that robe. Just so should we view each other.

Thus seen, love does not countenance wrong, doctrinally or otherwise; but love, when erected as a bulwark against wrong must, nevertheless, continue

to be kind. One might feel truly righteously indignant against obvious efforts to foster erroneous doctrines among the LORD's people, yet this would be no excuse for unkindness in calling the brethren's attention to the lurking dangers.

Unkindness in word or in deed is never a manifestation of love. Unkindness in word may be revealed by sarcasm, harshness, exaggerations, ridicule, untrue accusations, innuendoes, discounting what is good in that which we believe to be partially wrong. The apostle gives us this same general picture, saying, "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself [is not rash, *Marginal Translation*], is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth [literally, 'covereth'] all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."—I Cor. 13:4-7

KINDNESS MUCH NEEDED TODAY

We are living in a world that is increasingly being brought under the domination of unkindness and hate. The spirit of hate seems, at times, to almost permeate the air. There seems no limit to what human and satanic selfishness will stoop to do to further its own ends. Wholesale suffering and woe is inflicted—usually upon the innocent—in order to carry out the designs of selfishness. Bitter words of hatred, and death-dealing missiles of literal destruction, are alike the implements by which the attempt is made to push forward the battle of human selfishness to an inglorious victory.

But how refreshing, in contrast to all this, is the spirit of kindness, as that spirit is—or should be—manifested in the lives of the consecrated people of God! We, too, are engaged in a battle. It is the “good fight of faith.” (I Tim. 6:12) But, the “weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” (II Cor. 10:4) Our armor is the Truth, and our sword, the Word of God. (Eph. 6:17) This sword, in order to be effective, must be wielded in love. Its blows must fall in kindness and in mercy and in sympathy. It must never be used to injure another, but always to help and bless.

In II Corinthians 6, the apostle outlines the necessary scriptural background for Christian conduct to safeguard the “ministry” against blame. (vs. 3) Among the many important things mentioned in this lesson, is that our service of the Truth should be “by kindness.” (vs. 6) How much unnecessary blame has been heaped upon the ministry through failure of the LORD’s people to heed this admonition! In a misguided zeal we are often prone, in defending the Truth, to do it unkindly. This should not be!

Let us speak the Truth, and speak it with conviction and with clarity; but let us speak it kindly. The mighty power of the Truth itself will accomplish the Divine will in the lives of the truly consecrated; and it is not necessary for us to resort to worldly methods of handling the Truth in order, supposedly, to make it more powerful. Let us have full confidence in the LORD’s methods, believing that, if we adhere to them, the Divine ministry in that part of the ministry committed to us, will be fully carried out. Love is obedience, and if we fully obey its dictates, we will be kind.

The kindness of love should ever be operative in our lives: in the home, the office, the factory. It should influence our home life, and our associations with the brethren. At no time does love grant us the privilege of being unkind. Herein, therefore, is one of the vital tests of true love. Our fallen flesh might often wish to be unkind; and as long as we are in the flesh, we will never be able to be as kind as we should be. But we should never cease battling against the unkind tendencies of the flesh, and, as far as possible, endeavor to establish kindness as one of our habits of Christian living.

In the business and social world, kindness is often practiced as a policy; in which case it is very likely to be merely a veneer underneath which rankles the spirit of ill will and hatred. But Christian kindness is more than a veneer. It should become a deep-rooted rule of action in which we delight. Our delight in kindness should be based on the fact that we recognize it to be a part of that godlikeness which we are endeavoring to have worked out in our lives. David said, “[My] delight is in the law of the LORD.” (Ps. 1:2) It is a part of God’s law for us that we should be kind, hence we should delight in being kind, because love is kind. ■