Out of a Pure Heart

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."
I Timothy 1:5

IN HIS FIRST LETTER TO Timothy, the Apostle Paul pointed to God's commandment which is love 'out of a pure heart.' This includes having 'a good conscience' and an 'unfeigned' faith. The word here translated commandment means 'charge,' and is so translated by *Rotherham,* as well as in other translations of the Bible. When a man is appointed to an important position, his superiors will frequently give him a charge at the time of his induction into office, a solemn exhortation to carry out his duties and responsibilities faithfully.

All the sons of God on the various planes of being who will enjoy eternal life must become like him. They must become living expressions of love. Light is God's essence, and he dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto" (I Tim.6:16), and love is his character.

GIVEN FOR A PURPOSE

Many opinions have been considered as to why we have been given the Truth, and why we are glad to have this enlightenment. Is it that we might have the benefit and pleasure of the knowledge of the plan of God? Is it in order to have the advantage over others in an argument? Has God favored us with the Truth that we might enjoy rest and peace in the midst of the world's turmoil, doubt, and uncertainty? Are we kept from the delusions of this evil day, or that we might be the Lord's witnesses and spread the message near and far? While all these are among the advantages that present Truth brings to us, Paul shows in our featured text that God has a much more important end in view than any of these. The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and a faith unfeigned.

The Lord's people have been called out from the world, justified and anointed to be the Lord's representatives—his ambassadors—and to be prepared for a place in Christ's future kingdom. To each of these called ones, the Lord gives a charge, or the message contained in his word of Truth that contains a body of doctrine and exhortation to enable us to prove faithful to our calling, "That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished [perfected, *Marginal Translation*] unto all good works."—II Tim. 3:17

The measure of man's ability to understand his Creator depends upon his position in the mental and moral scale, as the psalmist says, "With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward [deceitful] thou wilt shew thyself froward

[deceitful]." (Ps. 18:26) Our knowledge of the Heavenly Father depends upon the measure of our desire to be like him.

UNFEIGNED FAITH

Unfeigned faith means to have a true and sincere belief and trust in the things God has revealed in his Word. This suggests having a desire to the best of our ability that both our words and works may be in accord with his will. Some may accept part of the Truth, and yet continue to support certain misrepresentations of the Divine character and plan.

This is far from having an unfeigned faith—a faith that will earnestly endeavor to bring our whole life into harmony with what we believe. If we believe we have received the Spirit of sonship and have become children of God, we must walk as the apostle explains, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (Eph. 5:1), rather than taking the Lord's name in vain. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."—Col. 3:17

If we believe that Jesus gave himself "a ransom for all" (I Tim. 2:6), we must be ready to explain how and when this blessing will be fulfilled to all mankind. If we believe that we are now living at the end of the Gospel Age, we must live accordingly. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."—II Pet. 3:11

A young man who is an heir to an estate will look forward to his coming of age, and the time

when he will assume its responsibilities. God's people must meditate upon the things promised to them—"An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you [for us, *Marginal Translation*]."—I Pet. 1:4

If we believe that Jesus has set us an example, and that we should follow in his steps, we will earnestly endeavor to so walk and copy him. This is sincere and unfeigned faith. Such a condition is not attained at the beginning of our entrance into the narrow way, but is one of the accomplishments that our Heavenly Father desires in his dealings with us. This will be manifest in the experiences he permits to come to us, and the lessons he wants us to learn. Our faith must become full and complete, and bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."—II Cor. 10:5

A GOOD CONSCIENCE

Conscience expresses the means by which we discern right from wrong; that quality of mind and heart that serves as a guide in our moral conduct. All mankind have some conscience or appreciation of right and wrong, but all do not have a good conscience.

God has given his Word of Truth to us in order to regulate and educate our conscience. By becoming familiar with the Divine standards and examples, our conscience is educated and trained. In time, it will act naturally along more proper lines. By meditating and acting upon the Truth, the mind will gradually become more in tune with righteousness, and our thoughts and acts will begin to run naturally in harmony with the Divine standards.

As the apostle expresses it, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (II Cor. 3:18) "[Ye] have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."—Col. 3:10

Adam, in his perfection, had no need of a written law to guide him, for God's law was written in his very being, and his good conscience told him instinctively what was in accord with the will of God and what was not. But, with the fall, the clear cut outline of the Divine law originally written in man's being became blurred and to some extent effaced.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." (Rom. 7:7,8) Without either the written law or the law of conscience sin would not be recognizable as such, although its effects would be the same—that is, the wages of sin is death.

Again, the apostle says, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." (Rom. 2:14,15) The law of conscience will only tell us that

certain things are wrong. We need the Word of God to educate and train our conscience that we may become alive unto God concerning all the features of his gracious will.

The end of the commandment, of which Paul spoke in our featured text, is the development of a good conscience. The same work of grace will take place in the hearts of the world of mankind under the administration of Christ's future kingdom. Under that arrangement, God will put his law into men's inward parts, and write it in their hearts that a good conscience may be their guide throughout the future ages. Then man will no longer need a written law for his guidance and instruction as symbolically described by the Revelator. "There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."—Rev. 22:5

THE END OF THE COMMANDMENT

In explaining the operation of love, Paul summarized his remarks by saying, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." (I Cor. 13:13) This means a love that acts from, and is governed by, right principles and pure motives. Our Lord said, "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them." (Luke 6:32) The world loves their families, children, and friends and this is right and proper. The followers of Jesus, however, must go much further than this. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8) It is this

unselfish love of God that must be shed abroad in our hearts.

PHILEO AND *AGAPE*

In the New Testament, there are two Greek words that have been translated love. These are *phileo* and *agape*. The first word *phileo* expresses the kind of love that is exercised between persons that are close of kin. This is illustrated in the text, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37) It is the love that is exercised by those who have received the Holy Spirit, and toward others in whom we see the Spirit operating. It is the love that is called forth by that which is naturally lovable in others. From the Greek, we have the word *philadelphia* which means 'love of the brethren.'

The second word translated love is *agape*. This has been defined as disinterested love—a love that will go out to all, including those who are not naturally lovable. It is a love that will operate in spite of things that would tend to hinder its operation. This love is the unselfish love of God. *Agape* love is the perfect expression of unselfishness. It is found in the epistles of John. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." (I John 4:9) John used it again when he wrote, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3:16, *New American Standard Bible*) This is the goal toward which we are taught to strive—love out of a pure heart.

Let us keep the end in view, and that which our loving Heavenly Father has arranged for us—that is, love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith. Christ shall thus be formed in us, and eventually we shall be prepared for his kingdom, and presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. ■