



Knowing God

Berean Series
Bible Studies

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KNOWING GOD

(Contributed Article)

SOMEONE has said, "to know God is to love Him", and experience teaches us that the more we love God, the more we come to know and appreciate His gracious character. God's love is boundless; He is a God "full of compassion." "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy"—Psa. 145:8.

No man can find out God by searching. Of course there is a kind of knowledge of God that can be gained by observing His wonderful works of creation — Rom. 1:19,20. But to know God in that deep, intimate sense of understanding and appreciating His love and mercy, and sharing in it—this is possible only to those to whom God unveils or reveals Himself.

Jesus said—"No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him"—Matt. 11:27. Jesus, then, is the Revealer of God to man. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"—said Jesus—John 14:6. If we would know God, we must come to

Him through faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour from sin and death. We must come with reverence; we must come with obedience of heart. We must receive His Word with child-like simplicity, acknowledging our unworthiness and need of instruction. The wise man urges us to "trust in the Lord with all our heart, and lean not to our own understanding." He tells us not to feel wise in our own eyes—Prov. 3:5-7. In John 14:23 Jesus said—"If a man love me, he will keep my words." Yes, obedience is the sure test of our love for God. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"—see John 14:21. Also in John 17:3, our Lord said—"This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Jesus also declared—"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"—John 13:34, 35.

The Apostle Paul, in a like admonition, says—"But as touching brotherly (philadelphia) love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another"—1 Thes. 4:9. The context of this admonition has to

do with our daily walk, the conduct of our lives, particularly in our relation one with another. Paul shows that sanctification includes what we do with these earthen vessels in which we tabernacle, and that we should abstain from unholy lusts of the flesh. "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. Therefore, he that disregards these admonitions, disregards not man, but God, who hath also given us his holy spirit"—1 Thes. 4:7,8.

Paul does not state how they had been taught of God, but having known the commandments of the Law, and having heard the instructions that came from our Lord, Paul's own ministry and example of untiring devotion and watch-care over them, as he led them from the worship of idols to the worship of the living God, had given them a wonderful lesson in brotherly-love. He had indeed been an example to the flock.

Measured by Love.

John's argument shows that it would be difficult to over-estimate the importance of brotherly-love. He says—"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light. . . . But he that hateth his brother is in dark-

ness"—1 John 2:10,11. In John's use of the word "light", he evidently refers to God-like principle and conduct, rather than to the understanding of doctrine. Though one possessed all knowledge, he would still be nothing (darkness) without love. See 1 Cor. 13:2. Then he further says—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death"—1 John 3:14.

Love for our brethren is therefore the evidence that we see and live; otherwise we abide in darkness and death. John also declares that love for the brethren means that we know God and have been adopted into His family. He says—"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God"—1 John 4:7.

Then, to further emphasize the great importance of brotherly-love, he says—"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also"—1 John 4:20,21.

Love for our brethren, therefore, indicates the measure of our love for God. We should note this carefully and ponder the vital significance of John's argument. For to profess to love God, and then not to obey His command to love our brother also, is to show the hypocrisy of our profession, for if we love God, we will keep His commandments.

Then, too, it matters not how much head knowledge we may possess, or how Biblically sound we may be in our beliefs; if we lack brotherly-love, we dwell in darkness, and in separation from God, for God dwells in light. Neither do we know God or partake of life, for love, particularly in its manifestation toward our brethren, is the evidence of knowing God, and of having passed from death unto life.

Who is My Brother?

It would be easy to imagine someone, thinking to justify his disapproval of those whose soundness of beliefs he questioned, as saying—Who is my brother? Manifestly, no one has any authority to pick or choose the ones who will occupy this position, for God does the choosing,

and expects us to heed His command to love them. Theoretically, any one who lays claim to God's mercy through Christ, repents of his sins, and in token of conversion turns from sin to the pursuit of righteousness, and devotes himself to the doing of God's will, is our brother regardless of his idiosyncrasies or beliefs or infantile conduct.

But the questioner might further argue : Should we not expect some evidence in support of such a claim? Does God expect us to welcome to our fellowship any and all despite their actions and variances in belief? It is here that we, as Christians, need to take care that we follow closely the Lord's guidance and do not set up unauthorized standards and tests which will cause divisions, contrary to the spirit of love, and prove hurtful to all concerned.

Obviously, sooner or later, there will be indications of the genuineness of sonship claims; for if begotten and led of the spirit, there will be manifest a striving toward holiness of life, a desire for fellowship with saints, and an eagerness to understand the Word and will of God, that the daily life may be conformed

thereto. Such signs identify a true brother in Christ at all periods of his Christian development.

It is manifest, however, that many who exhibit these signs, do not agree in their conclusions respecting some of the items of truth that have been revealed by the Lord in these latter days. This has proved to be quite a test of brotherly relationship and co-operation with some; and seemingly is being overruled by God to manifest the degree of our development in brotherly-love, and the spirit of tolerance. We need to watch well our own hearts, that we do not permit such differences to estrange us from brethren who may prefer association with groups more in harmony with their own doctrinal convictions.

Whereas we hold fully with the "Studies in the Scriptures" in their presentation of the Covenants, the Sin-Offering, the Lord's invisible presence, etc., yet we find no evidence in the Word to indicate that a misapprehension of these operational doctrines is to be a basis for severance of relationship with Christ. We do find much evidence, however, to show that a failure to have and exercise God-

like love, which is an evidence of a lack of His spirit within, will preclude our acceptance into the glorified Body of Christ.

Some who manifest a true, heart love for the Lord, and are diligently striving to be found ready and watching when their call comes to meet Him in the air, are not able to differentiate His secret, unseen presence from that which has operated down through the age in accordance with His promise when He said—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." To designate such as scoffers, would do violence to Peter's words—2 Pet. 3:3,4,—for they love the thoughts of their Lord's coming, and are striving to be found in His image. All Gospel Age saints have realised the providential leadings of their Lord's presence with them just the same as now—the difference being the foretold evidence which we see all about us, relative to the overthrow of this present order in preparation for the incoming Kingdom.

Peter—2 Pet. 1:5-8—like John, places love at the top of the list of essentials to an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord. He shows faith to be the basis upon which we build, and then pro-

gresses upward to **agape** love—love in its superlative degree. This is the principle of love that actuates God, and is not dependant upon being reciprocated or pleased with its object. It is this Greek word “agape” that John uses in all the texts we have used, in which He enjoins love for our brethren.

This is a lofty ideal to which we must attain; and it behoves us to take heed that our Adversary does not cause us to make issues of points that have no particular bearing on this ideal. Satan is adept in the misuse of Scripture to turn us aside, as was evidenced by his attempt to over-reach our Lord in this manner.

Those teachings that pertain to God’s operation in bringing to pass His will and purpose; namely, the time prophecies, the secret unseen presence of Christ, etc., are important, and are being used in this harvest period by our Lord in His work of gathering or separating His elect from the four quarters of Christendom. The whole grand system of beautiful truths contained in the “Scripture Studies” are intensely interesting and instructive to us, for they give us glimpses of Divine wisdom, justice, love and power in a de-

tailed manner. It is by feeding our minds upon the truths of God's Word that the consecrated believer grows in knowledge and in appreciation of God and His glorious character. It is God's will and pleasure that we should be sanctified by the truth. In 2 Pet. 1:2,3, we find these words—"Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue"—R. Ver. Yes, the knowledge of the truth of God's Word in its various aspects is vitally important, and we must "hold it fast"; we must "buy the truth, and sell it not."

At the same time we do well to keep in mind that the knowledge of the various aspects of the truth of God's Word is not an end in itself. It is possible for us to have much head-knowledge of God and the Bible, and still be deficient in the true knowledge of God—still fail to understand and appreciate deeply His gracious character. Those of us who have been blessed with a knowledge of God's wonderful Plan of the Ages have much for which to be thankful, and we should pray

earnestly that God would help us to be filled with the spirit of love, and deep humility, ever remembering that at best we are unprofitable servants, and need continually the Lord's mercy and grace to help us each step of the way.

Some seem to get the false impression that head-knowledge is the basis of brotherhood. While encouraging Bible study and growth in knowledge, we must still recognise heart-salvation as the aim and object of all our studies, as well as of our proclamations of the Gospel. Head-knowledge is a means to an end; it is the lamp which guides the way toward heart-salvation — "sanctification of the spirit through the belief of the truth." Let us beware lest our head-knowledge cause us to become "puffed up" with self-importance. The true knowledge of God which our Lord prayed we may have, will not cause us to become harsh judges of our brethren, and general fault-finders; rather, it will cause us to be very humble before God; it will make our hearts more thankful to Him and enable us to have proper reverence for Him, and for our Lord and Head. It will bring us more peace and joy and love for the brethren, enabling us to have proper respect for the

rights and interests of fellow-members of the Body. It will make us kinder and more thoughtful and considerate toward all men.

Sometimes we find that earnest and fully consecrated brethren reach different conclusions in respect of the understanding and interpretation of various Scriptures, parables etc., and this will call for the exercise of patience and brotherly-kindness one toward another. We must endeavour "to preserve the unity of the spirit" in the bonds of peace and joy and loving fellowship. Paul urges the strong—those who are strong in faith, strong in the Lord—to bear with the infirmities of the weaker members; to uphold and encourage them, and assist them to become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

The great reward is given to those who overcome—those who prove faithful in keeping the conduct of their lives in full accord with their covenant of sacrifice, and with the admonitions laid down in the Word. In doing this, we become holy in Christ, and we learn more and more to know Him, whom to know is life eternal.

Love Appropriate to Its Object.

Divine love always operates in accord with wisdom and justice, and in a manner appropriate to its object; therefore our love should conform to this same rule. It would not do at all for us to love God with the same manifestations of love that we exhibit toward our enemies. Love for God consists primarily in keeping His commandments; in rendering the honor and praise that will hallow His name; in showing our appreciation for His goodness by the worship and adoration we manifest in imitation of that goodness. But such manifestations would be wholly inappropriate if exercised toward any being other than God or Christ.

Love for mankind, and also for the brethren, will be shown by manifestations of kindness, compassion, sympathy, mercy, forgiveness, pity, and other like graces. But obviously, such manifestations would be wholly out of place in the exercise of love for God. He does not need our compassion, mercy, pity or forgiveness, but He does look upon the exercise of those graces toward our brethren as being love unto Himself. The one predetermined, and indispensable qualification

necessary to an abundant entrance with our Lord into His Kingdom, is that we be conformed to His character-likeness. Such excellence can be attained only through complete trust, obedience and faithfulness in the doing of God's will.

In the process of being drawn — John 6:44 — and invited to dedicate ourselves to the doing of the Father's will, there must have existed a measure of honesty and humility in our hearts, for God does not deal with those void of these qualities. Nevertheless, the unholy things of the old nature possessed us, and our affections were centred more or less on the things of this world — the things pleasing to the flesh. Therefore we had to be emptied of the things of self-will and sin; we needed to be cleansed of the unrighteousness inherited from our forefathers, which we had increased by our own mode of life prior to conversion. Theoretically, this was done when we dedicated ourselves to the doing of God's will, and we were begotten of His spirit. But in actuality, it takes time for the holy spirit to be shed abroad in our hearts, and for the fleshly traits to be eradicated and replaced by the graces of the spirit.

The Church Called to Holiness.

“As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”—1 Pet. 1:15,16.

Believers are the called according to His purpose. In the call God reveals to us what His thoughts and His will are concerning us. In His call He makes clear to us what is the hope of our calling. As we spiritually apprehend and enter into this, our life on earth will be the reflection of His purpose in eternity. Holy Scripture uses more than one word to indicate the object or aim of our calling, but none more frequently than what the Apostle Peter speaks of here. God hath called us to be holy, as He is holy.

The Apostle Paul, in Eph. 1:4, has the same thought when he says—“He hath chosen us in him, that we should be holy and without blame.” It needs no proof that it is of infinite importance to know aright to what God has called us. No wonder that Paul, in the chapter in which he had spoken to the Ephesians of their being chosen to be holy, prays for the spirit

of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God, to be given to the saints, that they might know the hope of their calling — Eph. 1:17,18.

Let all of us who feel that we have too little realised that we are called to holiness pray this prayer! It is just what we need; let us ask God to show us how, as He who hath called us is holy, we are to be holy too. Our calling is a holy calling, a calling before and above everything, to holiness. Let us ask Him to show us what holiness is, His holiness first, and then our holiness; to show us how He has set His heart upon it as the one thing He wants to see in us. As being His own image and likeness, to show us, too, the unutterable blessedness and glory of sharing with Christ in His holiness. Oh, that God, by His spirit, would teach us what it means, that we are called to be holy as He is holy. What a mighty influence this would exert. It is as if God said — Holiness is My glory; I invite you to share with Me in it; I invite you to be holy, for I am holy. Oh, how this call draws us to be true to our consecration; shall we not cry earnestly to God to show us the glory of His holiness, that our souls may be made willing to give everything in full

and hearty response to this wondrous call. To be holy is to be Godlike, to have a disposition, a will, a character like God. The thought almost seems like blasphemy, until we listen again. He hath chosen us in Christ to be holy. To be Christlike is to be Godlike; to be Christlike is to be holy as God is holy.

In 1 Cor. 1:2, we find these words — “To those that are made holy in Christ Jesus, called to be holy.” Again in Phil. 1:1 — “To all the holy ones in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi.” “Salute every holy one in Christ Jesus” — Phil. 4:21.

Holy in Christ! In these two expressions we have perhaps the most wonderful words in all the Bible. Holy, the word of unfathomable meaning. Holy is the word in which all God’s perfections centre; the word which reveals the purpose with which God, from eternity, thought of His called ones, and tells what the saints highest glory is to be in the coming eternity — “partakers of His holiness in Christ.” We find that all the wisdom and love of God are unveiled. The Father giving His Son to be one with us; the Son dying on the cross to make us one with Himself; the holy spirit of the

Father dwelling in us to establish and maintain that union. "In Christ." What a summary of what redemption has done, and of the inconceivably blessed life in which the child of God is permitted to dwell. God's one answer to all our needs and prayers. "In Christ" is the guarantee and the foretaste of eternal glory. What wealth of meaning and blessing in the two words combined — "Holy in Christ."

Here is God's provision for our holiness, God's response to our question, How to be holy. Often and often as we hear the call — "Be ye holy, even as I am holy" — it is as if there is and ever must be a great gulf between the holiness of God and man. "In Christ" is the bridge that crosses the gulf; nay, rather, His fulness has filled it up. "In Christ" God and man meet, "In Christ" the holiness of God has found us and made us its own.

**"Jesus, Thy life is mine!
Dwell evermore in me;
And let me see
That nothing can untwine
My life from Thine.**

**Thy life in me be shown!
Lord, I would henceforth seek
To think and speak
Thy thoughts, Thy words alone,
No more my own."**

As we set ourselves to study these wondrous words — Holy in Christ — let us remember that it is God Himself only who can reveal to us true holiness. Let us fear our own thoughts, our own wisdom. Let us give ourselves up to receive, in the power of the life of God Himself, working in us by the holy spirit, that which is deeper and truer than human thought. Christ Himself as our holiness. In this dependence upon the teaching of the spirit of holiness, let us seek simply to accept what the Scriptures set before us. Let us be content patiently to follow step by step the path of the shining light through the Word; it will shine more and more unto the perfect day.

We must first study the word “holy” in the Old Testament. In the law we see how “holy” is the great key-word of the redemption for which it was meant to serve and prepare. In the prophets we shall hear how the holiness of God is revealed as the source whence the coming redemption should spring. It is not so much **holiness** as the **Holy One** of whom they speak, who would, in redeeming love and saving righteousness, make Himself as the God of His people.

When the meaning of the word has been somewhat opened up, and the deep need of the blessing made manifest in the Old Testament, we come to the New to find how that need was fulfilled — in Christ, the Holy One of God. Holiness will be found in a truly human will being made perfect, and growing up through obedience into complete union with all the holy will of God. In the sacrifice of Himself on the cross, that holy nature gave itself up to death; that, like the seed corn, it might through death live again, and reproduce itself in us. In the gift from the Throne of the spirit of God's holiness, representing and revealing and communicating the unseen Christ, the holy life of Christ descends and takes possession of His people, and they become one with Him. So we find the Old Testament has no higher word than "Holy." The New has none deeper than this — "In Christ" — the abiding in Him, the being rooted in Him, and growing up in Him, and unto Him in all things, are the Divine expressions in which the wonderful and complete oneness between Christ and the Church is brought as near as human language can bring it.

The Old and New Testaments having given their message, the one in teaching us what "holy" means, the other what "in Christ" means, we have, in the Word of God, that which unites the two, the most complete summary of the great redemption that God's love has provided. The everlasting certainty, the wonderful sufficiency, the infinite efficacy of the holiness that God has prepared for us in His Son, are all revealed in this blessed — "Holy in Christ."

The "holy ones in Christ Jesus" is the name, beloved brethren, which we bear in Holy Scripture, in the language of the holy spirit. It is no mere statement of doctrine that we are holy in Christ. It is no deep theological discussion to which we are invited; but out of the depths of God's loving heart there comes a voice thus addressing His beloved children. It is the name by which the Father calls His children.

That name tells us of God's provision for our being holy. It is the revelation of what God has given us, and what we already are; of what God waits to develop more in us, and what can be ours in its fulness in personal, practical possession. That name, gratefully accepted,

joyfully confessed, trustfully pleaded, will be the pledge and the power of our attainment of the holiness to which we have been called.

So we shall find that as we go along, all our study and all God's teaching will be comprised in three great lessons. The first a revelation — "I am holy" — the second a command — "Be ye holy" — the third a gift, the link between the two — "Ye are holy in Christ." And as we begin to know God in His infinite righteousness, in His fiery burning zeal against all that is sin, and His infinite self-sacrificing love to free us from sin, and to bring us to His own perfection, then we shall learn to wonder at and worship this glorious God, to feel and deplore our terrible unlikeness to Him, to long and cry for some share in the Divine beauty and blessedness of this holiness.

Then will come with new meaning the command — "Be ye holy, as I am holy." Oh, my brethren, we who profess to obey the commands of our God, let us give this all-surpassing and all-including command the first place in our hearts and lives. And if we find that the more we meditate and study, the less we can grasp this infinite holiness; that the more we at

moments grasp of it, the more we despair of a holiness so great, remember that such breaking down and such despair is just what the command was meant to work.

Learn to cease from our own wisdom, as well as our own goodness; draw near in poverty of spirit, to let the Holy One show us how utterly above human knowledge or human power is the holiness He demands. To the soul that ceases from self, and has no confidence in the flesh, He will show and give the holiness to which He calls us. Christ brings the holiness of God nigh by showing it in human conduct and intercourse. He brings it nigh, because He makes us one with Himself. In Christ we see what is God's holiness, and what is our holiness.

The more we study the Scriptures in the light of the holy spirit, or practise the Christian life in the power and strength of the Lord, the deeper becomes our conviction of the important place Faith has in God's plan of salvation. Faith grasps that we shall really be able to live the life to which God calls us, the life of holy ones in Christ Jesus. We shall then be in the right position to progress in sanctification.

From this point of view, it is evident that faith has a two-fold operation. Faith is the evidence of things not seen, though now actually existing, the substance of things hoped for, but not yet present. It deals with the present, as well as the unseen future. As the evidence of things not seen it rejoices in Christ our complete sanctification, as a present possession. By faith in Him we have been sanctified.

This is the first aspect of Consecration. It looks to what is a complete and finished thing, an absolute reality. As the substance of things hoped for, this faith reaches out in the assurance of hope to the future, to things we do not see or experience, and claims day by day in Christ our sanctification as a present possession. "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us sanctification." Under its first aspect, Faith says — I know I am in Him, and all His holiness is mine. In its second aspect, it speaks — I trust in Him for the grace and strength I need each moment to live a holy life. Faith is the secret of a holy consecrated life.

We know how Faith acts, and what are its hindrances. Faith in God stands opposed to trust in self. Faith looks to God working, and yields itself to His strength, as revealed in Christ through the spirit. It allows God to work both to will and to do. Faith must also work; without works it is dead; by works alone it cannot be perfected. As Paul says — In Jesus Christ nothing avails but Faith working by Love.

The true life of the consecrated in Christ has its root and its strength in an abiding sense of utter impotence, in the deep restfulness which trusts to the working of a Divine power and life, in the entire personal surrender to God in that faith which consents to be nothing, that God may be all in all.

It should greatly encourage us if, more and more, by the Lord's grace, we are enabled to appreciate the length, breadth, height, and depth of God's glorious character, and sense within ourselves a growing desire and determination to acquire and manifest His holiness in our lives. It is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts that enlarges our hearts, that broadens our minds, and enables us to rid

ourselves of the narrow, mean, petty things that once possessed us. And it is the possession of God's spirit, operative through the Word of Truth, that causes the growth we can see taking place in His children.

Paul says—"All scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for teaching, for conviction, for that discipline which is in righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work"—2 Tim. 3:16, 17. If, therefore, we are making good use of our opportunity, we are sure to grow, provided the object of our study is the knowledge of God's will concerning us, and we have a sincere desire to become like Him. If we are not growing, either we do not partake with the right motive in mind, or else we fail to digest and assimilate the lessons that are given there for us. Proper study will no doubt make us aware of the great disparity that exists between us and God; but this should encourage rather than discourage us, for it is an indication that we are growing in appreciation of God.

Satan is constantly recalling to our minds the sins and failures of our past, and using discouragement to rob us of our faith in God's promise of forgiveness through Christ. Consequently, we need to remember daily that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"—1 John 1:9. This promise, if believed and acted upon, will leave Satan no opportunity to attack us through our past sins; for if God has forgiven and cleansed, there is no higher authority, and we need never condemn ourselves, but may press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Whether or not we triumph in the race set before us, will depend upon the condition of the heart, which must be sound (pure) to endure the tests that will be put upon it. The heart's condition will be revealed by the way we strive to conform our lives to the will of God; and the index to the heart is the mouth—that is, the various means by which we express our thoughts. For Jesus says—"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"—Matt: 12:34.

“As I Have Loved You.”

Early in His ministry, Jesus cited love as being the evidence of Godlikeness, saying—“Ye have heard that it was said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven”—Matt. 5:44, 45. When love is developed to this degree, all mankind will be truly blessed and happy. But is a love of one's enemies sufficient to guarantee us the privilege of becoming a member of the glorified Body of Christ?

We must not forget that in perfecting His little flock, God is fashioning a new creation which He intends shall occupy His own plane of existence—“Far above angels, principalities, powers, and every name that is named”—Eph. 1:21. And as all of creation is expected to reflect the divine glory in proportion to its scale of being, is it not evident that God will require of this class a greater measure of His likeness than is possible to any lesser form of creation? Paul prays that we may be “filled with all the fulness of God”—Eph. 3:19. Consequently, we may expect to be subjected to experiences and

tests more crucial in character (not necessarily in physical suffering) than will be the tests to mankind, or to any orders of beings less than the divine.

In harmony with this thought, toward the close of His ministry, Jesus gave us what He called a new commandment—"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"—John 13:34. But the commandment to love one another had been given many times before this, so why call it new? What is there about this commandment that makes it different? Clearly, it is the higher standard it sets in the requirement of the additional clause—"Even as I have loved you."

This is a love that goes beyond the doing of good to one's enemies, for it requires the sacrifice of self in the service of others, especially of the brethren, and so constitutes a more crucial test of likeness to the Heavenly Father. In fact, it is so unmistakable, that in the next verse Jesus says—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have this (measure of) love one to another." The exercise of Christ-like love for our brethren is an advanced test of our worthiness to receive the reward of the overcomer.

When first we come into association with the Lord's people, we are apt to feel that loving them is just a matter of course; for, possessing the spirit of sonship, and having like thoughts and hopes, we find them very congenial. But sooner or later, the individual traits, likes and dislikes, will begin to manifest themselves, and we will find that some are not as angelic as we had thought they were. Their natural dispositions and ways of doing things, will tend to irritate and antagonize us; and their conclusions with regard to certain teachings of the Word will make the Class studies sometimes very difficult.

If our love is to become like God's love, we will have to overcome our natural feelings; not only to the extent of doing good unto all, but even to the extent of sacrificing our preferences and conveniences, our time and strength when there is opportunity to render service. We recall that Jesus said—"If ye love them only which love you, what reward can you expect? Even the unregenerate do this"—Matt. 5:46, Diaglott.

Love, in the way that God exercises it, and in the way in which He expects us to exercise it, is not dependent upon being pleased with its object; nor of appreciating

and approving what its object says and does. God does not expect us to approve our enemies, but He does expect us to love them, even though they should be brethren from whom we would expect loving consideration.

It must be evident to all, that Godlike love goes far beyond the scope of natural affection; or of that degree of appreciation and liking that most people would define as love. And since divine love constitutes the standard to which we must attain, it follows that all who hope to be of the divine nature, must be tested along this line, in order to demonstrate their fitness to be associated with God and all who will be like Him.

Put Off the Old Man.

It will be in tests of this nature that Satan will surely seek to take advantage of our fleshly weaknesses, tempting us to turn from spiritual warfare to the use of carnal weapons. Regardless of how much we strive to keep our natural tendencies under control, they still abide in our fleshly minds, and unless constantly watched and forcibly suppressed, they will rise to the surface to defile us, and to beget roots of bitterness that others may become defiled.

It was the Apostle's realisation of this danger that caused him to refer to the "old man" as a garment which must be put off. If you had a garment which you knew was infected with dangerous germs of disease, would you harbor it—would you bring it into your home and wear it? Certainly not! You would either destroy it, or else subject it to a cleansing process that would eradicate the foul germs.

To fester the unholy things of the flesh is far more foolish than to harbor disease germs, for in so doing we endanger the life of the New Creature—we threaten our eternal existence. Loving a brother as Jesus loves us, requires that we consider his interests ahead of our own. And so whatever we say and do must be motivated with this thought in mind.

Although we have received the spirit of a sound mind, still our faculties of reason, knowledge and judgment are very imperfect. As Paul puts it—"Now we see through a glass dimly"—1 Cor. 13:12—and so are very apt to err. Therefore, if we understand the spirit of the Word and the commandments of the Lord aright, it is far better to err in being too tolerant—too kindly—than to err on the side of intolerance and fault-finding.

This does not mean that we may compromise with truth or with conscience when right and wrong are clearly marked, or even when we think they are so indicated. But we may at times misconstrue our own concepts as being principle, and so become dogmatic and unsympathetic toward others. The Lord's people should realise that they are imperfect, and so should exercise meekness, gentleness and patience toward those who differ with them.

To "grow strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" means growth in the exercise of the graces of the spirit, for it is these graces that constitute the power of His might. It requires much more power to be kindly than to be rude; to be meek rather than assertive; to be patient rather than impatient, as we are disposed to become. God has not planned our education with the thought of giving us something easy to do, but sends things that will test our loyalty to Him and to the principles which His Word inculcates. Our fitness to receive the reward of the overcomer must be proved, and that largely by the way we exercise love for our brethren in manifesting the graces of the spirit.

Brotherly Kindness.

The exercise of love toward our brethren! Does it not seem strange that both Paul and John should pass by all other relationships and mention only the brethren in this connection? Why is it? One would naturally think that this would be easy as compared to love for our enemies, but it is not. Experience has shown that love for the brethren (and this means all the brethren, not just those that suit us) as exhibited by Jesus, is one of the most difficult things required of us; for God has not chosen people that are congenial to one another according to the flesh. We doubtless would have chosen the friendly, the by-nature happy dispositioned folk. but God did not do so.

God is gathering jewels, living stones that will stand up under the shaping and polishing that is necessary to make them shine in the setting that has been prepared for them. Diamonds, as originally found in the clay and gravel pits, are unattractive. The chances are that we would toss them aside, and select stones pleasing to the eye because of shape or color. The intrinsic value of the diamond is wrought through tremendous heat and pressure;

but its beauty is due to the skill of the lapidary who cuts and polishes it to reflect the colors of light.

Likewise, the Lord's jewels may be found in queer and unexpected places and be very unattractive from the outward appearance; but if He sees in them a quality that He can use, and inducts them into the Body of Christ, we will have to trust His judgment and learn to love and treat them as brothers in God's family. No doubt their natural bumps and disfigurements, coming in contact with our imperfections, will irritate, offend and hurt; and there will be times when much of the oil of the holy spirit will be needed. But let us reflect that if we ourselves were without bumps and imperfections, their bumps and shortcomings would cause us no irritation.

The statement of John that—"We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren"—leaves no room for any qualifying proviso that would weaken its forcefulness and significance. We must love and cherish all the brethren, whether they please us or not, for all are of one body, one spirit, and one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.

We cannot help appreciating some more than others; even Jesus manifested a preference for Peter, James and John, in that He often made them His special companions. It is more than likely that it was traits of character that formed the basis for this preference, and their subsequent activities and prominence in His service verified the perceptions of Jesus. Our perceptions are not so keen, and we are apt to appeal to one another largely because of our natural traits; whereas, the thing that should really gauge our appreciation of a brother, is the measure of the Lord's spirit that he manifests. This will eventually be the determining factor with each one of us.

The kind of love we are to manifest for one another, while not devoid of sentiment or feeling, is primarily a principle of action, the same as it is with God. Such love is not to be confused with natural affection. Natural affection and conjugal love are necessary and good in so far as they go, but they are limited in scope, and tend to be evanescent. Agape love is a principle that is not evanescent or limited in scope, for it is not dependent upon another's attractiveness or acts, but will operate wherever there is need.

It is this principle that must constitute the basis of our love for the brethren, if that love is to endure the tests put upon it. But additionally, being of one family, members one of another, there should be developed within us a tender-hearted affection for each other. We must follow Paul's admonition to the brethren at Rome—"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another, in honor preferring one another"—Rom. 12:9, 10.

For this to be true and operate toward all the brethren, there must be a large measure of the Lord's spirit in our hearts, for naturally we find it difficult to refrain from judging and estimating one another by what we see in the flesh. It should rejoice us to know that we have right within our hands, so to speak, the means of keeping ourselves in the love of God, for love of the brethren, according to John, is the measure by which we are judged. If we can say we love all the brethren, and say it truly, we can be sure that we have the Lord's approval. It is a positive evidence that we have passed from death

unto life; that we are abiding in the light; that we know God and love Him. See Phil. 1:9, 10.

In the 11th chapter of Revelation, it is recorded that John was given a golden rod, and was told to measure the Temple, the Altar and those that worship therein. Whether or not we rightly interpret this symbol, we do know that the Church is the Temple of God, and that we, as individuals in this Temple, are being measured by the **rule of divine love**. The 1st Epistle of John, chapters 3 and 4 particularly, is indisputable evidence that John was obedient and faithful in the use of this rod. Here we are given to know whether we are of the right dimensions to occupy a place in the Temple, and are truly in harmony with the will of God concerning us. See 1 John 4:7-21.

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