

Foundation of Faith

TOO LATE TO LOVE
SAVED BY THE VOICE OF LOVE
PULLED FROM THE FIRE
PARENTAL LOVE

*Do You
Love Me?*

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

At first glance, the question “Do you love Me?” may not seem remarkable enough to warrant an entire issue. It is something a mother might ask her child, or a child its parents, or any person to another. In that context, it is about human love.

However, there is another context in which the very same question becomes far more significant. After Peter had denied his Lord and Master three times, Jesus asked him, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” (John 21:16). If the Almighty were to pose this question to you and me personally, could we answer with Peter, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You”? (John 21:15–16). Despite his earlier actions, Peter was able to answer this way because he had sincerely repented, and the Lord had forgiven him for everything.

Like Peter, we have all denied God and disobeyed Him at some point in our lives. Lost in sin and guilt, we are on our way to being eternally lost unless we heed the call of the Son of God. If we accept His love and His sacrifice on Calvary, we can walk in obedience to God and join King David in saying, “I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer” (Psalm 18:1–2).

Dear Child of God, do you know the eternal, wonderful love of God? We, too, can ask the Lord, “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it” (Song of Solomon 8:6–7). If we do, nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.

H. D. Nimz

Too Late to Love

*Oh, love while you may.
Oh, as long as you like.
The hour may come, the hour will come,
When you'll stand at the grave and lament.*

Will it lighten the burden on her heart, will it lessen the sting of constant accusations, when she transforms the grave of that elderly woman, who lived across from her for many years, into a mound of beautiful blossoms? She carries out the first spring flowers, the last autumn asters. And yet, her heart does not find peace and rest. The wound she has inflicted on herself has not yet healed. I don't think it ever will.

It was around Pentecost when Mother Jordan sat in her armchair by the window and nodded in a friendly manner to the young woman who was just passing by. But the greeting was not returned. "Why not, I wonder?" Mother Jordan, with her kind, soft heart thought about it. What could have happened? She was not aware of anything. But that did not reassure her, because she loved the young lady who had just passed by without greeting. She had known her as a child, and since she had been orphaned, she had been like a mother to her on her wedding day. She was "grandmother" to her young children growing up. And now?

Mother Jordan rose from her chair with difficulty, took her cane in her hand, and walked over to the young woman's home. Walking was quite difficult for her because her old limbs had become stiff. But she reached her destination. She had to wait a long time at the door before it was opened. Of course, she had no idea that the woman inside was debating whether or not to answer the door. Finally, she came.

Mother Jordan entered and held out her hand to the person who opened the door. "Martha, I have come, my child, to ask if I have done you any harm. You passed by without greeting me."

"You need to ask?" She did not even invite the elderly woman to come in. "Is the discipline of my children your business or mine?"

Mother Jordan was perplexed by this question. "Martha! Have I ever interfered in your parenting?"

"Not openly to my face, but . . ."

Then Mother Jordan became incredibly sad. "Nor behind your back, Martha. That would be slander."

"The person who told me doesn't lie!" Martha was almost taken aback herself by her own bold statement, for she knew this other woman had caused much hurt and strife from gossiping. Now, however, Martha continued in her defiance. She had been greatly annoyed and did not have the inner courage and will to get to the bottom of the matter, because she suspected she might be in the wrong. Her pride made it difficult for her to admit that she might have made a mistake.

Martha already had the door handle in hand again, and Mother Jordan understood the sign.

"Goodbye, Martha!" She looked at her once more, full of deep sadness, and then, with a heavy heart, went home again.

Three hours later, Mother Jordan was helping her daughter prepare dinner. There may have been something slippery on the floor because suddenly, Mother Jordan slipped and fell.

"Mother, dear Mother!" The daughter tried to carry her mother into the bedroom, exerting all her strength. Her father came to her aid. Mother Jordan had her eyes closed.

"Does anything hurt you, Mother?"

"No, I'm not in pain; I'm just startled and need to rest." She breathed heavily. "Lay me on the bed."

Gently, they carried Mother into the bedroom.



“Should we get the doctor?”

“It’s not necessary; I’m not in pain.”

She lay there for probably an hour with her eyes closed. Then, suddenly, she straightened up and raised her arm. “Pray!” she cried and sank back again. While her husband and daughter prayed at her bedside, her soul departed to be with God.

The news quickly spread from house to house that Mother Jordan was dead. Martha heard it too. She didn’t want to believe it and rushed over. She threw herself on the ground and wrung her hands and screamed so that they had to remove her from the room.

“She is not dead! Please say she is not dead!”

With confused, furious eyes, she looked around her. Again, she screamed and wrung her hands. But it was in vain. Mother Jordan had departed from this life.

Agonizing hours began for the young woman. She would always go to the garden gate with the elderly woman and cut one of the beautiful roses for her. But today, she had closed the door on her back. And today she had to die.

As if her heart was bleeding from a thousand wounds, as if her head was no longer capable of clear thought, she wandered from one room to another, wandered back and forth through the night and found no peace. Too late.

That terrible moment of truth left its mark on her life: she was depressed and reclusive, no longer able to laugh or joke. The faithful visits and flowers at the grave in the cemetery are a silent apology, and still the wound does not want to heal. I don’t think it will ever heal.

Oh, love while you can love! ■

Do You Love Me?

In John 21:15–19, Jesus asked Peter this question, and He asks the same question of all of His children. He asks you and me, “Do you love Me?”

The reason for this question was that Peter had earlier denied his Lord, but regretted what he had done and wept bitterly. Jesus forgave him. Now the Lord gave Peter an important commission: “Tend My sheep.” Yet Peter could only fulfill this commission in the right manner if he truly loved the Lord Jesus. Therefore, the question for Peter and for all of us must be, “Do you love Me?”

“Do you love me?”—Then you will also love My sheep and tend them.

“Do you love Me?”—Then you will love those who are lost and seek them.

“Do you love Me?”—Then what grieves Me will grieve you.

“Do you love Me?”—Then you will have a heart for the lost and see their great need.

“Do you love Me?”—Then you will see that the harvest is so great, and it will trouble you that there are so few workers.

“Do you love Me?”—Then your life, your actions, your thinking and speaking will be so different.

To love the Lord means to be on fire for Him. To love Him means to desire to work for Him and find joy in serving Him. To love Him is to

say, “His work is my work. His desire is my desire. My heart longs to know what He has to tell me and to eagerly follow His wishes.” Knowing this, Jesus asked Peter, and He asks us, “Do you love Me?”

“Do you love Me more than these?” That is the next question Jesus asked Peter. Many people say they love the Lord, but when they are asked to do something for the Lord, they hesitate and find it difficult.

The rich young ruler had a desire for the things of God, yet he loved his wealth more than being close to the Lord. “Do you love Me more than those whose deeds do not measure up with their profession? Do you love Me more than these who know souls are dying without salvation and yet they are not troubled by that?”

“Do you love Me more than the nominal Christian who says, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but does not follow My commandments?”

“Do you love Me more than your money, your possessions, and other things that may be front and center in your life?” Jesus wants His people to love Him, which involves so much more than just listening to sermons and having devotions. Already back in the Old Testament times, God desired to be loved by His people. “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and

with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5). This command was repeated by Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 22:37).

“Do you love Me?” That is the decisive question. Love is the root that produces the fruit of the Spirit. Without love, whatever we do is worthless in the eyes of God. Without love, we cannot be continuously active for the kingdom. Without love, faithfulness, generosity, kindness, hope, forgiveness, and petitions for others, will cease, along with patience, when things do not go the way we want them to. But “love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:8). Even when we are wronged and treated maliciously, love does not cease. Our best example in this regard is Jesus Himself.

Those who love the Lord can surrender and sacrifice for Him. Jesus illustrates His love in the metaphor of a hen that covers her chicks with her wing. He said to Jerusalem, “How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (Matthew 23:37). He wanted to save people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) and was willing to give His life for that purpose. He died to save, but despite His great love, many were unwilling to accept it. He did not allow Himself to become embittered as those without love, but rather, prayed for those who wronged

Saved by the Voice of Love

Him and loved us all, “while we were still sinners.” This shows us how great a sacrifice true love can bring.

This love was passed on to His disciples and to the early church. They took the commission Jesus gave them seriously. Because they loved, they were able to give themselves completely. Today, it seems some find it difficult to contribute to spreading the gospel, even though the early Christians willingly gave all they had.

“Do you love Me?” If so, you can give with a willing heart. History tells us of many martyrs who gave their lives, even to death, for the cause of Christ. Only their love for Jesus could make them so strong that they chose death rather than be untrue to their Lord. If we wish to spend eternity in heaven with these faithful martyrs, how will we be able to demonstrate that we also love the Lord? Will our deeds on earth witness for or against us? Is Jesus and the kingdom of God our top priority? (Matthew 6:33). Is it more important for us to see to our own matters than to the things of the Lord?

All those who have been a blessing for others and cared for the welfare of their souls were able to do so because of their love for Jesus. Therefore, Jesus asks us this most important question, “Do you love Me?” ■

A lady was passing an inn just as the innkeeper was throwing a young man out the door. The man’s face bore witness to the vice he was indulging in. With clenched fists and wild curses, he threatened to take revenge on the innkeeper.

The lady, a Christian, approached the man, put her hand on his arm, and asked what had happened. At first, the young man stood there as if struck by a blow. Trembling all over, he turned to face the lady. Somewhat relieved, it seemed, but with a sigh, he said, “I thought I heard my mother’s voice. Yours sounded so similar. But she’s been dead for a long time.”

“So, you had a mother who loved you?” the lady asked.

“Yes, I had a mother who was like an angel,” the young man replied, bursting into tears. “She loved me. But now no one wants anything to do with me.”

With a gentle voice, the Christian pointed the young man to the One who never ceases to love us. Her words awakened memories in the young man’s heart that had long been buried under the filth of a sinful life. As the lady walked on, the young man followed her and made note of where she lived.

Years passed. The lady had long forgotten the incident. One day, a stranger appeared at her door. A respectably dressed gentleman greeted her and said he had traveled from far away to thank her for the great service she had rendered long ago. “I must have changed a lot since you no longer recognize me. But I will always recognize you, because your voice is so much like my mother’s.”

Then the lady remembered the encounter with the young man who had been on the road to ruin because he thought no one loved him anymore, and who had been saved by the memory of his mother’s voice.

Do you also have a voice of love that can help lead someone to salvation? ■

Remain in My Love

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

All the commandments Jesus ever spoke of can be summed up by a single one: love. Called the “new commandment,” love is the fulfillment of the law and serves as proof of the new covenant. It is evidence of a life lived with Jesus, as Jesus Himself said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

We know God is love and that Jesus came to earth to reveal this love to us through His teachings and His life. Jesus embodied the love that lives in the heart of God, leading a humble life of service and even giving His life for us. Jesus lived and died to show us the Father’s love.

In the same way, God’s children are called to continually show Jesus’ love to the world, proving to the people around them that Jesus loves them, and that He fills His children with a love that is not of this earth. Love shone so brightly through Jesus’ life that even the Jews in Bethany, at the resurrection of Lazarus, called out, “See how He loved him!” (John 11:36).

Our lives as His followers should move others to say, “Look how the Christians love each other!” With God, the angels, and people observing our daily lives, we must prove whose children we are by loving each other. Despite all differences of personality, language, and lifestyle, our lives must show that love has united us into members of one body and taught us to give up personal benefit and to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others. In this way, our lives become evidence that Christianity is true, as we demonstrate to the world that God sent Jesus down to earth and poured out His love through the hearts of His children.

This love between us as followers of Jesus is apparent in our deeds. Jesus says that God judges our actions as though they had been done for Him (see Matthew 25:31–46). When we cultivate love towards God in our hearts and let it take root, it bears the fruit of love towards our spiritual brothers and sisters, which ultimately yields the seed of love towards all people. By loving each other, we learn to love people far from God with the love of God. This love is not based on what we gain in return, but instead enables us to have patience with people who are just as undeserving of God’s grace as we are.

We see an example of true Christian love in the way Jesus dealt with His disciples, forgiving them and teaching them to forgive others, if need be seventy times seven times. Let us draw on His inexhaustible patience, His endless humility, and His enduring kindness to joyfully obey His commandment to “do as I have done to you” (John 13:15).

Following His example, we can put others ahead of ourselves, living in kindness and love as we are commanded. Love does not let a single unkind word fall from its lips. It refuses to speak ill of others, or to hear or even think such things. Love is more concerned about other people’s reputations than our own. My own reputation is safe in the Father’s hands, but He has placed my brothers’ and sisters’ reputations in mine. Humility, kindness, true courtesy, and self-sacrifice allow God’s love to unfold in its full beauty, radiating from our hearts like it did from the life of Jesus.

How do you feel about the calling to live like Jesus? Are you filled with joy to have the privilege of sharing

His eternal love with others, or are you more inclined to despair about the seemingly unachievable standard of perfection required? If despair threatens to set in, keep in mind that it is only out of the greatest love that the Father calls us to love like Jesus. If we remain in Jesus like the branch on the vine, we can become anchored in Him and learn to truly love. “[T]hat Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love . . .” (Ephesians 3:17). When Christ has made His home in our hearts, the Holy Spirit fills our hearts with the love of God, enabling us by His power, to love even the people who cause us the most grief.

Let us surrender ourselves to the love of Jesus. He can shape and guide our character, making us kind and patient. Through His power, we can resolve not to allow an unkind word about others to cross our lips. By remaining in Jesus, we can grow to exemplify the kind of love that does not seek its own, and instead serves others, even at the cost of our own lives. It is our privilege to lead lives of self-sacrifice, always striving to do good for others and to be a blessing.

Let us be obedient students, following the Holy Spirit’s guidance in all things. Through His grace, a normal life can be transformed to shine with heavenly beauty as God’s infinite love shines radiantly through our weak, human nature. We are called to love like Jesus.

“Remain in My love and love as I loved you.” This is Jesus’ command, and praise be to God, we can fulfill it! As we remain in Jesus, the Vine, our new nature grows stronger and stronger, and we can learn to love like He did. ■

I’ll Never Stop Loving My Savior

*I’ll never stop loving my Savior,
My Jesus, my wonderful Lord!
With strong arms of love He has lifted
And carried me, true to His Word.*

*I’ll never stop thanking my Savior
For all of His mercy for me.
He died to forgive my transgressions;
Salvation is mine, full and free.*

*I’ll never stop trusting my Savior,
Wherever I am, come what may.
Should friends turn foes, I’ll still trust Him,
for I know that Christ’s love will stay.*

*I’ll never stop praising my Savior!
Yes, even in sorrow and need
I want to proclaim His sweet praises,
For He is a helper indeed.*

*I’ll never stop praising my Savior
For health of the body and soul.
I thank Him for food, drink, and clothing.
I praise Him that heaven’s my goal.*

*I’ll never stop loving my Savior,
As long as my God gives me breath.
I’ll never stop praising my Savior,
Who loved despite anguish and death.*

Wilhelm Ebel

Take Heed of the Flame

Returning from a business trip early Monday morning, an entrepreneur found his twenty-two-year-old daughter lifeless in the gas-filled kitchen. Sadly, resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. Apparently, the young woman had not noticed that the water boiling over had extinguished the gas flame. Eventually, the escaping gas put her to sleep. It appeared she had still tried to open the kitchen door but collapsed on the way.”

This terse newspaper account relates a not-so-common accident that tragically claimed a budding young life. It was indeed a tragic end for this young woman. Our hearts ache for the unfortunate father and empathize with him for the horror of so abruptly finding his daughter taken from this life. Yes, how quickly and unexpectedly death often comes!

Dear Reader, in this case, it was only a little water that extinguished

the flame and cost a human life. An immortal soul went from time into eternity. Water is hostile to fire. It is the same with sin. It was only one sin that extinguished man’s relationship with God, the intimate walk with the loving Father, the Creator of heaven and earth. Oh, how terribly sad!

Sin, no matter what form it takes, is a foreign, even hostile aspect of life with God and of spiritual conviction. It results in spiritual death. If a person is not saved from sin, it results in eternal death (Romans 8:5–7).

We were created to love. God’s most important commandments to us are about love. “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37–39).

In the Old Testament, the priest was allowed to offer his incense

only with the fire that came from the altar of God. In the same manner, God can be loved only with the love He has poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). The Spirit of God is a fire. Its flames warm and enlighten all who come in contact with it. They ignite in such a way as to cause hearts to burn. But the impurity of sin is nothing other than selfishness, which manifests itself in many ways in people’s lives. When it enters the heart, it extinguishes the wonderful flame of God.

In his explanation of the first commandment, Luther writes that we should fear God “above all things,” love Him “above all things,” and trust “Him alone.” The person who is not born again cannot fulfill this commandment. Even if he knows he should, and even if he makes the attempt, he will soon find he cannot succeed. He must



exclaim, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24). Without God’s fire in the heart, no one will succeed. My friend, test whether this fire from God’s altar burns within you.

The Lord is not unjust. He has no expectation you cannot meet. He tells us in His Word, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Please notice that the Lord wants to do this. “[F]or it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). He gives His Spirit, the fire from the altar of God, and makes you a new person.

What kind of people have the Spirit of God in their hearts, walk

in His commandments, keep His statutes, and act according to them? “[A]s His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3a). Dear Reader, have you had this experience? If so, then you must watch the flame, lest some of that foreign element extinguish it. Be on your guard and continue tending the fire. The Lord Jesus speaks of the signs happening before His return: “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. . . . And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:10–12). Injustice cannot have fellowship with love. It is a foreign element and extinguishes the flame.

The apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 3:5, speaks of certain individuals who have the appearance of godliness but deny its power. The fact that religious appearances are maintained clearly indicates these

are people who have not intentionally turned their backs on religion. Perhaps they had a spiritual experience at some point. However, because they were not sufficiently watchful, part of that foreign element entered their heart and smothered the flame before they realized it. Although they still have the designation of being alive, they are spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1).

Just like the young woman who died, only a little water was required to extinguish the flame. In the same manner, only a little greed, a little self-importance, a little inordinate ambition, a little gossip, hatred, envy, pride, unkindness, or the like, is sufficient to drive the Spirit of God out of the heart and extinguish the flame. This often happens quite unnoticed. Take heed of the flame lest it be extinguished. ■

W. Berle



Loving Jesus More

*“If you love Me, keep My commandments,”
Jesus said in John 14:15.*

If you love Me, keep My commandments,” Jesus said in John 14:15. The greatest longing Jesus has is for hearts to love Him. He wants obedience, but obedience that is evoked by love for Him. He knows we love Him if we obey Him. In John 14:21, He says again, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.”

Jesus is capable of loving, and it pleases Him to be loved. If a person didn't love Jesus in life and in death, he would be placed to the left on the Day of Judgment, even if he had never committed another sin. “If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed” (1 Corinthians 16:22). A horrible curse will be put on those who do not love Jesus. Not loving the Lord is a greater sin than disobeying Him, for a lack of love is at the heart of disobedience. Paul implores the grace of God on all who sincerely love the Lord Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 6:24). All who love Him will keep His Word with joy.

God loves His Son and delights in Him. “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights!” (Isaiah 42:1). The heavenly Father speaks here of the Son. He takes pleasure in the Son because the Son loves Him. A voice from heaven spoke, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). For the sake of the love that the Father has for Jesus, He gave Him the greatest trust. His love for Jesus was the reason why the heavenly Father entrusted the salvation of the world to Him.

He loves the Son so much that when we love the Son, He loves us. Jesus says, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him” (John 14:23).

The angels love Jesus. It was the Father's will to have angels serve and worship His Son when He came to earth. In Hebrews 1:6, we read, “But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’” God did not force these angels to worship His Son, but they did it out of love.

We see this on the night of His birth. A great multitude of angels, the heavenly hosts, praised God for His Son. When Christ later walked and worked on this earth, angels served Him. If at the time of His betrayal and arrest they would have been summoned to vindicate Him, more than twelve legions would have come. When He ascended to heaven, two angels came and told His disciples that He would come again. When He comes again, all the angels of heaven will come with Him.

Through the fall of man, love and the bond between humanity and God broke. Jesus came to this earth to restore this bond of love, which was destroyed by sin, and to bring humanity into fellowship with God again. Jesus came to earth in the flesh, and now all who respond to His love by loving Him in return are restored into a relationship with God.

This is where the secret is found. Our love for Jesus connects us to God. If we love Jesus, then we will be accepted by the heavenly Father. But all who do not love Jesus will be eternally lost. Jesus is the unifying link. He is the object of love from heaven. That is why there exists a perfect unity in heaven. If He is the object of our love, we too are brought into the same oneness through that love. The more we love Jesus, the deeper our connection with heaven will be.

This love that connects us with heaven and Christ also connects us with children of God. The more we love Jesus, the deeper our connection with children of God will be. Here is another secret: Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead, the fullness of godly love. In Him, everything on earth and in heaven is united. Oneness with Christ and His love is this bond of unity and perfection. If you want to have a deep fellowship and connection with God, with heaven, and with the children of God on earth, then love Jesus with all your heart. He will secure the bond of love and fellowship. ■

C. E. Orr

The Greatest Commandment

With great care and precision, the scribes had searched through the five books of Moses and counted 613 commands of God in them: 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions. Of course, these commandments had varied significance and importance. Now it was disputed among the scribes which of the 613 commandments of God was the greatest and most important commandment. One said this, the other that.

A scribe at the time of Jesus may also have been concerned with this question. He was present when other wise people asked the Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth a difficult question. Impressed by His wise answer, he dared to also question Him about what was bothering him: "Which is the greatest commandment above all?" He received a wonderful answer: "You shall love." Yes, love was the greatest commandment.

Our natural inclination is to be selfish; we are only concerned for ourselves. "If only I were recognized; if only I were rich." But even if our heart's desire comes true, we will never be satisfied, for in such striving we compare ourselves to others. With every bit of recognition and attention someone else receives, we feel degraded. The saying is true: "The more he has, the more he wants; his wishes never cease."

Yes, selfishness makes us unhappy. Just as in earlier years the horse turned the mill to grind the grain, always moving in circles, so our natural inclination is to always be revolving around ourselves. This is a form of slavery.

Now God says to us, as depraved, self-centered people, "You may choose love. You don't always have to run around in circles. You don't always have to drag around the chain of your ego." Salvation is liberating, and enriches our lives.

We have the privilege of loving God. Loving God? That was unheard of in paganism. When would you ever have heard that the Greeks loved their Zeus, the Romans their Jupiter, the Teutons their Odin! The gods were feared but not loved. Sacrifices were offered to attempt to make the gods merciful, to appease their anger. But there was no talk of love for the gods. This was something quite new and unheard of.

This permission was something so extraordinary that people would not have dared to make use of it. Therefore, God clothed this permission in a commandment and said, "You shall love." Now it was no longer

up to the will of the individual, whether he wanted to or not; it was now a duty that could not be evaded.

Was it Law? No, it was the Gospel. Yes, it is gospel! See, I have tested it. If we still hold something back, if our heart is divided, then we will be unhappy. But if we give ourselves completely, then we will be happy. A poet rightly said, "There is no divided heart here. He who wants to give only half of himself to the Lord brings only toil and pain on himself."

I would like to compare the heart to a house. The main level is given to the Lord Jesus. That is where He lives. But above, on the top floor, the sign above the door says, "Me." In the basement is where our desires live. Now when the Lord Jesus gives any instruction, "Me" does not agree. It knows better. And the desires do not want to submit to the will of the Lord. So there is no peace in the house.

Peace comes only when the two parties below and above are thrown out, and no one dwells in the house but Jesus alone. Peace comes only when we give ourselves to the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength.

When we do that, He will fill our hearts with peace and joy through His Spirit and reveal His glory in our lives. Then our service to God will not consist of "have to," but it will be a blessed privilege.

Why did God demand one sacrifice after another from Abraham? First, he had to leave his homeland; then he had to bury his father Terah. Then he had to separate from Lot, cast out his son Ishmael, and, finally, he was to sacrifice his son Isaac [testing him, but not allowing it]. Why do you think God led Abraham down such a difficult path? Because all these people occupied the place in Abraham's heart that God claimed. The extent to which Abraham's heart became empty is the extent to which God filled his heart with His presence of grace.

It is our privilege to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. This whole and complete devotion to the Lord our God is life and blessedness; it is peace and joy.

God help us to surrender completely to Him and speak in truth,

"Henceforth I myself resign,
Love, to be forever thine." ■

Love— the Greatest

*“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love”
(1 Corinthians 13:13).*

The thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is probably the most soul-searching and heart-revealing chapter in the entire Bible. Every child of God should read this chapter at least once a month to personally benefit from it.

This chapter tells us that if we had the gift of speaking like the most accomplished scholars, or even like angels, and did not have love, everything would be empty and meaningless. Love is more important than the gift of prophecy, than unshakable faith capable of moving mountains, or than the gift of deciphering great mysteries. Without love, all this would be nothing.

Love moved God to devise a plan to save the world and send Jesus to earth to carry out His design for salvation. It was Jesus’ love that caused Him to lay down His life for all on the cross.

Love is also a characteristic or trait of God’s children. “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20–21). “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Love is long-suffering: It does not give up until complete victory is achieved. No matter how difficult the test may be, love will faithfully persevere, because love never stops.

Love is kind: Kindness is proof of Christian strength. It requires true strength of character to be kind at all times and in all circumstances. The whole world is craving true human kindness. We may never be great or rich, but we can be kind. Kindness is a language that even the mute can “speak” and the deaf can “hear” and understand.

Love does not envy: Love envies no one and never begrudges others for what they have. Also, love does not boast. Love will not act in self-importance and show off in front of others. Love will never behave in an unseemly manner. Love is not selfish and does not seek its own advantage. Love is not inconsiderate and will not take advantage at the expense of others. Nor is love bitter when others oppose us.

Love does not presume, nor is it suspicious. Instead of always suspecting the worst motives in others, it believes only the best of them. It does not rejoice in the injustice of others, but helps set the record straight. Love rejoices in truth. Love is always ready to excuse the weaknesses of others and to overlook their shortcomings. Love always believes and assumes the best of others and is patient with all.

As believers, when love dwells in our hearts, we love God with all our heart and also have the best interest of our neighbor in mind. We love our neighbor as ourselves. Yes, true love makes it possible for us to love even our enemies. Love makes life worth living, brings true joy, and turns night into day.



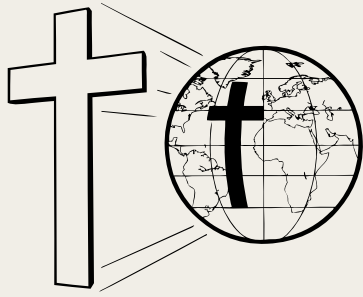
Love also seeks a way to express itself. Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, poured out the precious anointing oil on Jesus' head (see Matthew 26:7 and John 12:3). She was rebuked by the disciples, but Jesus praised her. He acknowledged that she did it out of love for Him. Where love is the motivation for action, no transgressions are made. Jesus not only acknowledged Mary's action, but He also said, "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Matthew 26:13). Mary did not know she was anointing Jesus for His burial. She did not do it to gain anything for herself or to be praised by others. She simply did because she loved Jesus, which is why He valued it so much.

Love unites hearts. Paul writes, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).

The love of God binds the individual members of the body of Christ and causes them to hold firmly together. Love is the bond that binds them together. Where love is lost, true unity is also lost.

Love keeps us faithful and true until the end. Love enables us to weep with the weeping and rejoice with the joyful. In all circumstances of life, love strives to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace and true love. ■

A. P. Gregory



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Closer to God through Genuine Love

We may sometimes wonder why we are making so little progress in our spiritual life or are not growing closer to God. We need to look at our “love thermometer”: what is the temperature of our love for God?

Love is the greatest theme of the Bible. Love is the reason for the whole work of salvation and the indescribable work of redemption God accomplished through Christ. Without love, God would never have come down to us to save us. John confirms this: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! . . . In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 3:1 and 4:10). Through the incarnation of His Son, God approached us due to love.

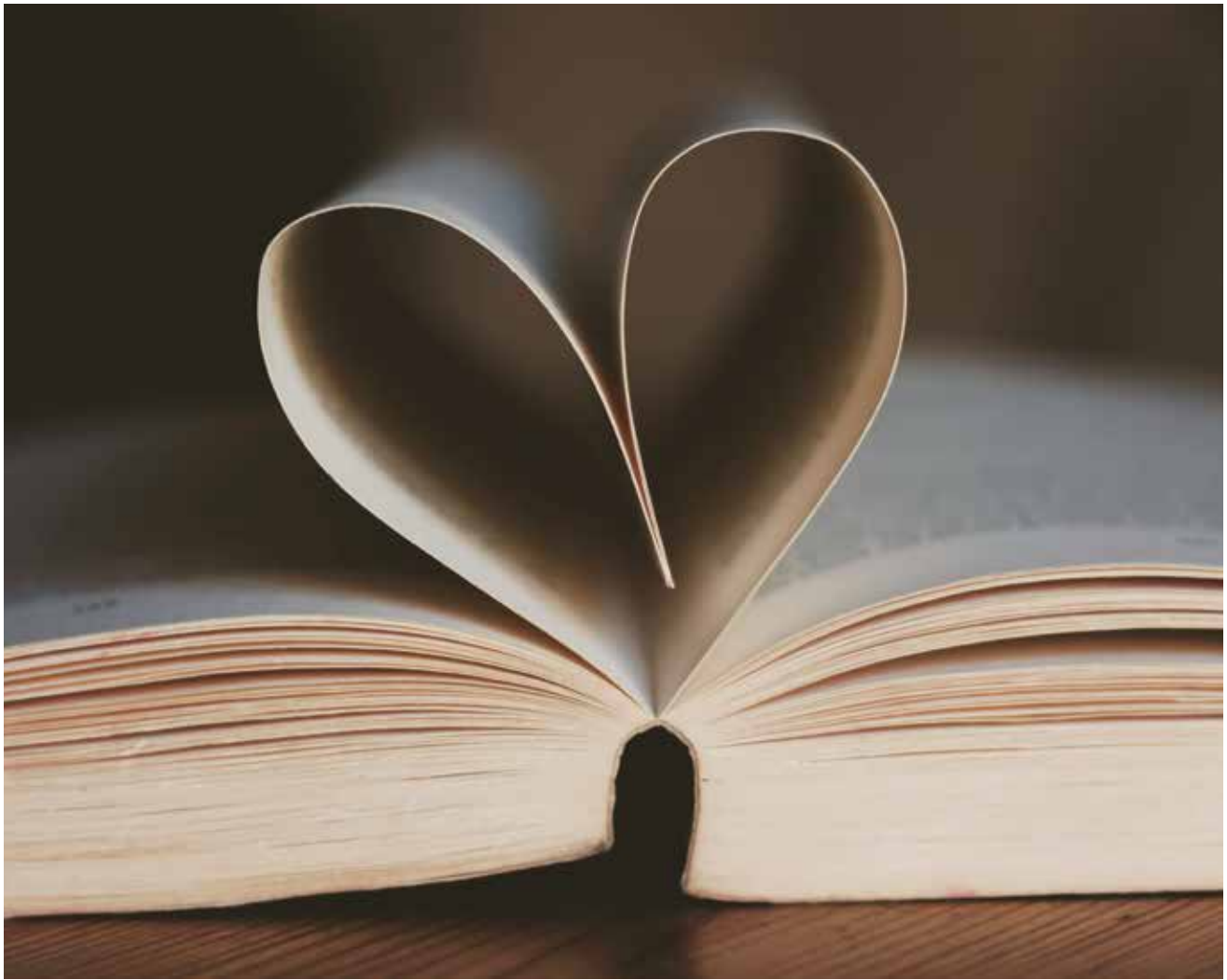
Likewise, if we want a close relationship with God, it can only happen through love. Love is the means for deep bonds. It is also the strongest element that unites two individuals into one. In Scripture, we read that the love of God is the inner compulsion of the Almighty Creator towards His creation. Genuine love seeks an object with which it can communicate and offer itself. Love seeks a bond and communion.

The bond between heaven and earth came about through God’s love, and similarly, the deep connection that occurs through pure human love is possible only because it mirrors God’s love. People who love each other deepen their relationship and their closeness. In the same way, we develop intimacy with God when love connects us on a deeper level with Him.

Jesus earnestly admonished His disciples: “Abide in my love” (John 15:9). He clearly showed that our preservation and security exist because of God’s love. He also explains what “abiding in His love” entails in verse ten: “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

Love shows itself through voluntary obedience. There is no other way. Jesus says, “I must be about my Father’s business” (Lk 2:49b). What the Father did and loved, Jesus also did and loved. This is how He demonstrated His love for the Father, a simple but valuable guideline for every Christian. People, especially young people, often ask, “What am I allowed to do as a Christian, and what am I not allowed to do?” Do what God wants and what He loves, and you will never go wrong, because this path leads us closer to God.

The love that brings us closer to God is shown in Matthew 22:37: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” Much is said about this love, but little is actually seen. Love for God is shown in our attitude toward God and in what we do for Him. Of Jesus, it is written, “Behold, I have come . . . to do Your will, O God” (Hebrews 10:7). Again, He affirmed, “not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38). Here we see two particular things: Jesus did not seek His will, but did the Father’s will. Therein



lies the proof of love. Love is ready for the greatest sacrifices. When Peter affirmed three times that he loved the Lord, Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” In other words, prove your love by what you do.

All of God’s children should be filled with the love of truth, for it will keep our hearts open, ensure we walk in the light, and bring us closer to God. Where the love for truth diminishes, hardships will increase, and we will lose the way of nearing to God.

Jesus said, “The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32), and it keeps us free. Spiritual gain and progress is only conceivable on the path of truth. One of the greatest decisions man has to make is the decision for or against the truth. This decision will set one’s life on the right or wrong course.

Often, people just lean toward the truth, but they never make it a solid foundation. It is not enough to hear the truth; we must embrace it. It is not enough to have the truth; it must be the most integral part of who

we are. In His high priestly prayer (John 17), Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth.” The disciples were to be filled with the truth, immersed in the truth, set apart by the truth, and dedicated to sharing it with others. Without question, such a stance entails nearness to God.

The love of truth naturally includes God’s Word. Whoever has a Bible does not necessarily have the truth. But if someone pursues truth, they will certainly find it in the Bible. Love for the Bible does not begin and end with reading it, but in willingly and joyfully living out the Word.

People who live close to God live close to the Bible, and from life immersed in God’s Word comes a life that abides in Christ. People laid down their lives, even unto death, for the significance and truth of the Bible.

How deep is our love for God and His truth? Consider this carefully, for your intimacy with God depends on it. ■

Testimony: *“Pulled from the Fire”*

I want to share about my salvation with praise and thanks and join in with the Psalmist David to “bless the Lord . . . who forgives all [my] iniquities” (Psalm 103).

As the oldest son in a Christian family—my oldest brother passed away as a baby—I was most likely my parents’ pride and joy. However, that changed after a certain period of time, and I caused my parents much heartache and pain. As children, we attended church with our parents. I felt like a bystander and could not really identify with the church in my town. I was searching for the “freedom” that was so enticing. This freedom lured me to “do what you want, without rules.” Even as a child, that is how I started to go down a path I would not recommend to anyone. I remember being trapped in the addiction of tobacco at the age of thirteen. At fourteen or fifteen, I started to experiment with alcohol and went to different dances, movies, etc. And so my fall began

Our move to Germany, which my parents hoped would bring about a change in me, turned out to be even more detrimental. Sin was enticing, and my tobacco addiction did not go away through the move. Shortly after moving to Germany, I was caught stealing cigarettes. I wish I could suppress this memory, but, unfortunately, worse deeds followed. The boundary between good and evil faded.

At eighteen, I received my driver’s license. Around this time, I was already known to the police because of numerous small thefts. My integration into German

society was very difficult, and the friends I had up to this point mostly shared my fate.

It did not take long for me to have my driver’s license suspended for drunk driving. Other criminal offences followed, and that is how I received my first sentence with probation at the age of twenty.

I viewed my service in the military to be an escape from alcohol and the “soft” drugs I had already tried and consumed. However, escaping from reality usually does not work for drug addicts, and they cannot quit their addiction.

Difficult years of addiction and consumption of hard drugs followed, as well as pain and heartache for my whole family. Attending dance clubs and parties with many friends turned into a lonely life of addiction and drugs that completely controlled me. The consumption of drugs cost an insane amount of money. In order to finance this lifestyle, I had to commit more crimes. I was known by the police for owning, selling, and importing narcotics.

On New Year’s Day, 2002, when the Euro was introduced in Germany, I found myself in prison surrounded by some familiar faces I knew from the scene. After the first imprisonment, my first nine-month long-term therapy began. According to statistics, such therapy cannot help 97-98% of addicts. Therefore, I saw drug addicts who were there for the third time. I chose a good attitude towards the therapy, fulfilled everything they wanted from me, worked out a lot, and was very confident that everything would be fine. But the “back door” in my mind remained open,



and I was missing the commitment that only God can grant.

After this therapy, it did not take long until I was back to my old habits again. After another imprisonment, I was released from prison, attended and completed therapy, and then yet another arrest followed Praise God! At this point, I physically felt like a wreck and also looked like one. Additionally, I infected myself with a disease. At twenty-nine years of age, I was sick, addicted, and broken.

Before my imprisonment, I often ran out of my apartment onto a field with a “monkey on my back”—that’s what a physical withdrawal is called—or with the fear of having taken too high of a dose and dying. In this fear, I cried out to God, “Help me, God, don’t let me die!” God answered my prayer.

After a few months in prison, when my head started feeling “normal” again, I was reunited with one of my old acquaintances from my first imprisonment. Every day, we were allowed to go for a one-and- ▶

a-half-hour walk in the courtyard, work out, and almost freely walk around in the entire prison. So we started talking. He told me about God, Jesus, and gave me little tracts and small Bible passages. I approached him with a lot of skeptical thoughts and said, “Look, I am a realist. What God! My parents believe something like that, but I don’t.” His answer kind of overwhelmed me: “You say you’re a realist? Then look at these trees, this grass, all of nature. Listen to the sound of the birds and the wind. All of this is real; everything is created by God, but your theories contradict it. And you say you’re a realist!” This answer fascinated me. Our acquaintance developed into friendship, and we talked about Jesus, God, and the world. He gave me a Bible and cassettes with testimonies. I started reading the Bible and listening to the testimonies. At this point, I was alone in a cell and had enough time for that. I attended various Christian groups as well that were run by brothers from various churches.

Through the testimonies, I heard various stories of criminals experiencing salvation. I had the impression that they were unique experiences—lightning, a light, or a particular dream. I felt, and was, in a repeating cycle, totally lost. By reading the Bible and tracts, I realized my lost state and prayed in my cell. I cried out and prayed, but nothing happened. There was no lightning, no light, no dream through which I heard God’s voice. There were no special effects. As a drug addict, I had high hopes to experience the “special moment,” but nothing happened.

After a visit from the group “Peace and Joy” I spoke briefly with the brother. “What is wrong with my prayers? I pray and pray and believe, but nothing happens.” He said, “Turn your eyes toward Jesus on the cross and look at Him, how He suffered for you. Look at the blood He shed, and thank Him in faith.” That night, I recognized that I was saved. I praised God, and in the morning I gave Him thanks because I had the assurance of salvation. I told several inmates in the following days. The majority looked at me with shock and disdain, as if asking, “Everything okay with him?” Then I stopped smoking and have not regretted it since that moment. In fact, I have developed a strong aversion to it.

In this prison cell at JVA-HN, God granted me the “decision” towards freedom from addiction and sin.

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

With God’s help, I was able to complete the remainder of my prison term and the subsequent therapies, even though it wasn’t always easy. I constantly had resolve in my mind, which came as a gift from God.

Emotionally, I often had many problems that resulted in temptations I am dealing with to this day.

At the age of 30, a new chapter in my life began, which I received free of charge from the Lord Jesus Christ, thanks to the many prayers that went up for me.

On September 17, 2006, I was baptized according to the Bible’s mandate at the congregation of the church of God in Massenbach (now in Eppingen). The verse I received on that day was “then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name” (Deuteronomy 6:12-13).

This is also my prayer today: “God, let me never forget how You brought me out of this land of sin and addiction. Please give me the strength to hold onto Your cross and Your love, that I would not stand among my enemies without a cross.”

I am thankful to God for all of His blessings which resulted from this change in my life. God blessed me with a wife and two good, healthy boys. I was able to study a career which I still work in today.

In the years following my conversion, I have often endured setbacks, and my path was not always easy. For example, in 2012, I suffered a stroke, which thankfully did not leave me with any serious damage. I thank God in a special way for this.

I am so thankful for the many prayers of my parents, grandparents, and the congregation. Please continue to pray for us. ■

Artur G.
Eppingen, Germany

The New Hinge

Old Joe went slowly to answer the knock at his cottage door. He opened it two or three inches and looked out. He saw the bright happy faces of two boys and one girl.

Joe grunted: "Well, what do you want?"

The little girl spoke. She said: "We have come to invite you to our Sunday School. Next Sunday we are going to have a special Sunday School rally. Will you come to the chapel?"

Old Joe shouted: "Be off with you! I don't go to the chapel. No fear of that." Then Old Joe banged the door shut.

Years ago Old Joe had gone to the chapel with Mary, his wife. Then Mary had died and he had stopped going. As he grew older, he began to condemn the people who went to the chapel. That was his excuse for not going himself. As Joe grew older, he also grew meaner. He hated everything and everybody.

Now Old Joe crept to the window. He peeped out to see if those children were hurting anything.

When the three children reached the gate, the taller boy closed it. As he did so, one of the hinges on the gate gave way. Joe could see the frightened look on the children's faces. He kept watching. He said, "If they are up to any tricks, I will say something to their parents."

The smaller boy ran away while the other two waited at the gate. In a few moments, he returned with a hammer, a screw driver, a new hinge, and some screws. The older boy began to work on the gate. Ten minutes later a new hinge was in place. The children

were now smiling. The smaller boy said, "That's a good job, Tom!" Then Joe heard Tom, the big boy say, "Mary, let me wipe my hands on your handkerchief." Old Joe's heart was touched. He said to himself, "So, her name is Mary. That was the name of my wife. She is a nice child."

All day long Joe kept going to the window to look at the new hinge on the gate. When it grew dark he could still see it. It was shining in the light of the moon. The next morning, when Old Joe woke up, he had a happy feeling. He wondered why. Then he remembered, "Oh, yes, the new hinge!" He hurried to the window to look at it again.

When Sunday came, the chapel was filled with people. Mary had to sing a solo. When she stood up she saw an old man just entering the chapel. It was Old Joe!

Mary sang the song from her heart. She sang, "Will you love the Savior, too?"

Old Joe got up from his seat and slipped out as soon as the service ended. He went home. He knelt down by an old chair. He prayed and asked God to forgive him for his sin and hardness of heart.

From that time on, Old Joe went to the chapel every Sunday. He and the three children became the best of friends. The new hinge on the old gate was the beginning of a new life for Old Joe! ■

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The Beautiful Way*

The Glory of the Creature



“[A]nd cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.’”

Revelation 4:10b-11

When God created the universe, it was with the one object of making the creature partaker of His perfection and blessedness, and so showing forth in it the glory of His love and wisdom and power. God wished to reveal Himself in and through created beings by communicating to them as much of His own goodness and glory as they were capable of receiving. But this communication was not a giving to the creature something which it could possess in itself, a certain life or goodness, of which it had the charge and disposal. By no means. But as God is the ever-living, ever-present, ever-acting One, who upholds all things by the word of His power, and in whom all things exist, the relation of the creature to God could only be one of unceasing, absolute, universal dependence. As truly as God by His power once created, so truly by that same power must God every moment maintain. The creature has not only to look back to the origin and first beginning of existence, and acknowledge that it there owes everything to God; its chief care, its highest virtue, its only happiness, now and through all eternity, is to present itself an empty vessel, in which God can dwell and manifest His power and goodness. . . .

Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is, from the very nature of things, the first duty and the highest virtue of the creature, and the root of every virtue.

And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is [among] the root of every sin and evil. It was when the now fallen angels began to look upon themselves with self-complacency that they were led to disobedience, and were cast down from the light of heaven into outer darkness. Even so it was, when the serpent breathed the poison of his pride, the desire to be as God, into the hearts of our first parents, that they, too, fell from their high estate into all the wretchedness in which man is now sunk. In heaven and earth, pride,

self-exaltation, is the gate and the birth, and the curse, of hell.

Hence, it follows that nothing can be our redemption, but the restoration of the lost humility, the original and only true relation of the creature to its God. And so Jesus came to bring humility back to earth, to make us partakers of it, and by it to save us. In heaven He humbled Himself to become man. The humility we see in Him possessed Him in heaven; it brought Him, He brought it, from there. Here on earth “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death”; His humility gave His death its value, and so became our redemption. And now the salvation He imparts is nothing less and nothing else than a communication of His own life and death, His own disposition and spirit, His own humility, as the ground and root of His relation to God and His redeeming work. Jesus Christ took the place and fulfilled the destiny of man, as a creature, by His life of perfect humility. His humility is our salvation. His salvation is our humility.

And so the life of the saved ones, of the saints, must needs bear this stamp of deliverance from sin, and full restoration to their original state; their whole relation to God and man marked by an all pervading humility. Without this there can be no true abiding in God’s presence, or experience of His favor and the power of His Spirit; without this no abiding faith, or love or joy or strength. Humility is the only soil in which the graces root; the lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure. Humility is not so much a grace or virtue along with others; it is the root of all, because it alone takes the right attitude before God, and allows Him as God to do all.

God has so constituted us as reasonable beings, that the truer the insight into the real nature or the absolute need of a command, the readier and fuller will be our obedience to it. The call to humility has been too little regarded in the church, because its true nature and importance has been too little apprehended. It is not a something which we bring to God, or He bestows; it is simply the sense of entire nothingness, which comes when we see how truly God is all, and in which we make way for God to be all. When the creature realizes that this is the true nobility, and consents

to be with his will, his mind, and his affections, the form, the vessel in which the life and glory of God are to work and manifest themselves, he sees that humility is simply acknowledging the truth of his position as creature, and yielding to God His place.

In the life of earnest Christians, of those who pursue and profess holiness, humility ought to be the chief mark of their uprightness. It is often said that it is not so. May not one reason be that in the teaching and example of the church, it has never had that place of supreme importance which belongs to it? And that this, again, is owing to the neglect of this truth, that strong as sin is as a motive to humility, there is one of still wider and mightier influence, that which makes the angels, that which made Jesus, that which makes the holiest of saints in heaven, so humble; that the first and chief mark of the relation of the creature, the secret of his blessedness, is the humility and nothingness which leaves God free to be all?

I am sure there are many Christians who will confess that their experience has been very much like my own in this, that we had long known the Lord without realizing that meekness and lowliness of heart are to be the distinguishing feature of the disciple as they were of the Master. And further, that this humility is not a thing that will come of itself, but that it must be made the object of special desire and prayer and faith and practice. As we study the word, we shall see what very distinct and oft-repeated instructions Jesus gave His disciples on this point, and how slow they were in understanding Him. Let us, at the very commencement of our meditations, admit that there is nothing so natural to man, nothing so insidious and hidden from our sight, nothing so difficult and dangerous, as pride. Let us feel that nothing but a very determined and persevering waiting on God and Christ will discover how lacking we are in the grace of humility, and how impotent to obtain what we seek. Let us study the character of Christ until our souls are filled with the love and admiration of His lowliness. And let us believe that, when we are broken down under a sense of our pride, and our impotence to cast it out, Jesus Christ Himself will come in to impart this grace, too, as a part of His wondrous life within us. ■

Parental Love

| *“But the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13).*

A mother’s love is a wonderful mystery. Although I already have grandchildren myself, the thought of my mother’s love touches me in a very special way. From the very beginning, her love carried me and accompanied me through the turbulence of childhood and adolescence. Her comfort healed many wounds.

Proper parental love is fed by God’s love. When God perfectly created human beings, He gave them a core element of divine nature: to love and to be loved. Unfortunately, however, even this moral quality was degraded, weakened, and defiled by the Fall. Regrettably, love in the different spheres of life today is steeped in base motives and selfishness. But when man turns to God, everything becomes new. The mind of Christ also refines parental love. It unselfishly seeks the best for the child in view of his present, future, and eternal welfare.

But unfortunately, today we so often encounter a false parental love. In many cases, it already begins in the desire for a child. Some want a child so they will have someone who loves them. Others want a child to meet social norms or to fulfill the expectations of others. More and more often, a child is

supposed to be the crown of a successful life. Such people care only about their own fulfillment; their own advantage far outweighs the need of the child’s soul. These are spiritually neglected children.

The Newborn

Luke 1 tells of Zacharias and Elizabeth, who joyfully awaited the arrival of their promised son. Elizabeth’s song of praise gives an idea of the atmosphere in which the unborn child could mature. The development of the child, his or her nature and character, begins in the womb. Love for the child will cause the expectant mother to adjust her life to the child.

And then the parents are able to hold the newborn in their arms, full of the most tender feelings, but also with an inkling of great responsibility. What message do young parents convey when they celebrate the birth of their child on social media? Are they showing their love for their child, or are they revealing entirely different motives?

True parental love gives the child everything he or she requires for healthy, normal, and, at the same time, individual development. But what does this mean in concrete terms? It is not unusual

for young parents to feel completely helpless and at a loss some nights and days. But as children of God, they have direct access at all times to the best family Counselor, the source of all wisdom and strength. Therefore, they do not need to run after every trend, every new parenting method. If they bring their child into the presence of God every day, if they ask for strength, divine guidance, and protection for each day, they can confidently go step by step into unknown territory. Yes, mistakes will happen. But if God guides their family vessel, it will be brought safely through these stormy times.

The Toddler

Parental love refined by God guarantees a healthy upbringing. What a gift it is when parents have studied the biblical principle of education in the Word of God and the practical application in their own lives! What elements prevail in God’s upbringing? Is it discipline, punishment, and pain? Or do we not experience multiples of goodness, mercy, patience, gentleness, love, and encouragement from God? It seems to me that one experience of discipline is accompanied by ten experiences of God’s patience and love. Shouldn’t our



parenting also first and foremost be patient and gentle?

We can also learn from God that He is very clear in His commandments and teachings. His Spirit and Word will not leave us in the dark in different situations. We have learned that God and His Word are not only clear, but also constant, reliable, and faithful. This is exactly what characterizes good parenting: clear, unambiguous, and consistent instruction. Parents must know whether the child has understood everything correctly

and then act reliably through and through.

God's love is omnipresent. We know we are never alone, no matter what situation, state, or place we are in. Only when we run away from God's presence do we lose Him from our lives. Your child needs that too. He or she needs the closeness, the tenderness, the protection, and the helping hand, because fear, helplessness, and loneliness break their little hearts. Don't many children in our time grow up as orphans, although they still have

both biological parents? This is not without consequence for the soul of the child.

What is proclaimed everywhere today has been taught to us in the Bible for thousands of years: The time up to the sixth or seventh year of life is the most formative period in a person's life. During these years, our value system and many motives are firmly imprinted into the innermost layers of our lives. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov- ►

erbs 22:6). During this time, parents engrave their influence, and who they are on the child's heart. Their words have a subordinate role in this. Their example, the value system they live out, gives the basic direction to the child's vessel of life.

The School Child

Year after year, the small, helpless person becomes more and more a small, alert, curious, and individual personality. Isn't it a miracle how from one set of parents, from one house, such completely different personalities can emerge? This is how God created us, and this is how we as parents may and should care for our children.

We will notice how love adapts our behavior to the child's development. Love no longer holds the sweet baby, but rather sees the future champion in the storms of life. Love knows when to take the training wheels off the bike, and will do so as early as possible, because love wants to see children grow and mature. It can distinguish where a weak child needs more help and where another learns better from his or her own mistakes. It is often more important to learn through the process of solving a problem rather than to receive a quick answer to the question. Parental love sacrifices patience and time, convenience and independence. This is because it sees the responsibility for a person with an immortal soul.

What is the relationship between love and obedience in a Christian upbringing? If a mother loves her child with all her heart, can she even expect consistent obedience? Humanly, we would perhaps associate great love with

much leniency and indulgence. But, here again, the alignment with the nature of God helps us. Nowhere is love more perfect than in God. God loved the world so much that He even gave His Son for it. And at the same time, God expects our complete obedience. Obedience keeps our lives on a path of blessing and assures us of God's grace. Disobedience is an element from hell, rebellion against divine order. Therefore, parents who truly carry their children with a divinely-refined love will familiarize their children with obedience early on. Before they can walk the first steps, they will have already learned joyful and contented obedience. Children and parents can harmoniously enjoy family life and appreciate mutual trust.

The love of parents makes growing children experience more and more that they trust them, even when this trust is disappointed; love trusts anew. To become strong, courageous, and sensitive personalities, our children need a lot of love and entrusted responsibility. Love will make the children feel that mistakes are there to learn from, not for punishment, but for courage. Enduring shortcomings and mistakes together while trying something new will take away the child's fear and timidity. In fact, the master has already made many more mistakes than his apprentice!

The Adolescent

Parents observe how their child grows, and over the years, how he or she can talk to parents on equal terms. The eyes of love see how their son or daughter would also like to speak on equal terms. They want so much to be valued

for their view, opinions, and decisions, to be recognized for their own achievements. During these adolescent years, it is so important for us to model genuine love, which does not allow itself to be clouded by our own feelings, or by discouraging trifles. True, it is often very difficult to be an understanding father and loving mother of pubescent young adults! Sometimes, life seems to be nothing but a chain of unsolvable catastrophes. We want to do everything right but see only our own mistakes and lack of wisdom. And here, on our knees in the presence of God, it helps to realize that we are first secure in God's love and grace. His goodness, mercy, and patience have not abandoned us thus far. He will make a way for us now too. And if our private love tank is filled up properly, we will also have enough wisdom, grace, and humility in every-day parenting.

Finally, let us look at the love of Jesus, Who sacrificed Himself for us. The intimate love of parents will also find time, place, and opportunity to spend with the children. Nothing can replace the time a father spends alone with his son or daughter, regardless of age. During this time, minutes seem like hours for the child. The shared experiences, adventures, and feelings embed deeply into their memories. They often create a foundation for readiness to be prepared to resolve what may come about in stormy times.

Thanks be to God that He loved us so much. His teaching and example can give us guidance every day. ■

Hermann Vogt

The Secret of His Life: *Love*

The secret of his blessed life was this: Samuel Hebich was firmly planted in the household of God. The deep roots of his strength originated from a source beyond the temporal and obtained their nourishment from the sovereign fountain of all life. He was born of God and lived in God, spending his days in the counsel of God, continually bringing forth fruit. As a tree, he was planted by the waters of eternal life, and therefore, he could spread his branches so that people from all regions of the earth could find refuge with Him. They, in turn, were able to partake of the fruits in its shade, which had become sweet and ripe in the sun of God's love.

Samuel Hebich had given himself completely to his God. He had made a clean sweep right from the start, renouncing the world entirely in order to live solely for his God and the gospel.

"My time is entirely dedicated to the work of the Lord," he once said. "I see no one, visit no one, eat with no one, but preach three times a week to the British, where they then have the opportunity, as many as want, to see and hear me. In this way, I gain time, which I urgently need."

His associates gave the following description of his daily schedule, which he followed while in his place of deployment:

At 5 o'clock in the morning, at the firing of the cannon, he arose and took his walk. During this time, he liked to address this or that officer or otherwise make an acquaintance. Returning, he checked out every angle of his narrow homestead and assured himself of the state of affairs of both young and old. Then he drank his coffee and sat down on the veranda with his English Bible. He would devote about an hour to prayer and meditation on the Word. Then either catechists or Christians came with their business, or there were candidates for baptism to be taught, or he had a worship service or school to observe.

If a situation required him to go out, the horse was ready; for the hottest hours of the day, there was also an ox cart, following the custom of the natives. The simple lunch had no fixed hour. When he came home, he ate what his attendant, Peter, told him to, rested for a few minutes, and then got up, fresh for any new assignment. On the three evenings when there was an English worship service, one or another of the officers

who had attended would stay with him for tea. Then, after vigorous and serious conversation, he would conclude the evening with prayer.

Conceivably, not one day was like another. But whatever the day put forth, he was always in contact with his God and therefore always keen to be able to be a blessing. At the same time, he was tirelessly active, taking advantage of every time slot and seizing the opportunity to make his life as rich as possible in the service of God.

In order to understand this man and his work, we must speak of the love he had for people—a great, strong love that was ignited at the altar of God's love at Calvary.

Yes, how dear the souls were to him, and what patience he exercised! He was never in a hurry. He waited for God, and he also waited for people. He gave them time to reflect. But when he was sure that God had given him a soul, he did not rest until the soul had surrendered to God.

A dear lady often told her visitors how in Coimbatore, India, Mr. Hebich won an officer for the Lord. This fine gentleman thought himself very much harassed by the simple-minded German's "curious intrusiveness." He had given his servants strict orders never to let the old man into the house. One day, Hebich spied the officer going into his yard and hurried after him to intercept him. But he was too late; the master of the house slammed the door in his face and locked it. However, that could not yet drive the old warrior of God away. He went around the house to the back, but there, too, the doors were locked. But wasn't there perhaps an open window? He took the not-so-common path this time and climbed through the window. He soon stood before the officer with a face that reflected merciful love and said to him, "My son, why do you flee from your father? I love you! Come, let me pray with you!"

The gentleness and patience of this strange man of God overpowered the officer's heart. Soon, the man broke down in tears, confessing his sins and crying out to God for mercy. Hebich's persistent love and great patience won this man to Christ, who then became a humble follower of the Lord. Who could ultimately resist such glowing, ardent love for human souls as this fisher of men possessed? ■

Do You Love Me?

John 21:15-19

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."

This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."