

Perfect Love

Introduction:

There is no doubt, that which we call love, is the most misunderstood phenomenon known to man. This conclusion is inescapable when we consider how many competing interests clash with one another, all in the name of love. We kill in the name of love, and we save in the name of love. We invoke love in the cause of unity and division. It's enough to make one thoroughly dizzy. Well fear not dear reader. I am about to explain this deepest of mysteries to you. When you are done with this essay, you will have a complete understanding of both what love is, and how it operates. You will know of your responsibility to it, as well as, its benefits to you. A word of caution is necessary here. As with all of my teachings, you will be far better served if you suspend all of your previously held notions about this subject, and examine all of the evidence that I give you without bias. I have found that one of the great hindrances to obtaining knowledge is people's propensity to resist throwing out long held ideas that have been proven to be false. They will not receive any truth unless it can be reconciled with their previously held error. This is, of course, impossible. Therefore, the poor soul will continue to labor under error, and as such, miss out on the blessing of having and walking in the whole truth. So then, forget about what you think you know of love and allow me to instruct you in the knowledge of the Holy One, who has appointed me to this very task. Amen.

Chapter 1: What is Love?

This question certainly seems to be the most logical place to start in our quest for understanding. If we don't actually know what love is, we certainly won't know if our love has been perfected. By the end of this chapter, I will have given you the definition of love according to the dictionary of the Spirit. But before that, I want to lay a foundation that illustrates how we arrived at said definition. As is my custom, let me start off by telling you what love is not. In considering the concept of love, we can make this our first observation. *Love is not a feeling, nor is it an emotion.* Making this error is the biggest cause for the widespread misunderstanding as to what love is. When we have "feelings" toward someone, we are emotionally invested in them. In the course of our relationship with them, we are subject to all of the emotional vagaries that accompany the struggle of two people trying to coexist. We are happy, sad, angry, frustrated, elated and any number of other emotional descriptors. Yet in all of this, we have yet to demonstrate love. I cannot stress this point enough, because, unless one can separate themselves from the notion that love has anything to do with emotions, they will never truly understand it, nor effectively operate within it. So, when it comes to discussions about love, we should recognize that love is something that we *have*, and not something that we *feel*, or fall into. The application of love is dispassionate and our feelings toward someone, do not at all factor in the consideration of doing acts of love on their behalf.

All right then, if you are still with me, and have accepted the fact, that love is not an emotion, what exactly is it? Not so fast, we still have a little work to do on that foundation.

Before we discuss what love is, let us consider its source. In other words, where does love come from? The Bible tells us in the 1st epistle of John 4:8, that “**God is love.**” What does this mean? It means that whatever love is, the source of it comes from God, for it is one of His attributes. It is a phenomenon that originates with God, is given to us, and can be shared with others. The capacity to love is universal, meaning that everyone can love, even if they are deficient in knowledge of the One who is love. For that attribute of His that we call love, He has made integral to our being, because it is part of our spirits, which came from God.

The next observation that can be made concerning this mysterious substance is that it is quantitative, meaning that it can be meted out by degree. So, it is possible to love more or less. Consider the following discussion between the Lord Jesus and Peter. (John 21:15) He was eating breakfast with His disciples shortly after His resurrection, and He said to Simon Peter; “**Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?**” Notice the introduction of the concept of quantity in the discussion about love. Now if love had only one set value, it would have been erroneous to use the quantitative descriptor **more than**, and the question would have to have been phrased “Do you love me, in addition to loving these” For if love can be **more than**, then it can also be **less than**. This attribute of love will become important later in our discussion, so keep it in mind. There is an interesting simile that can help you to understand what I have discussed so far. There are two other quantities that are mentioned in the Bible that are indeed similar to love. They are faith and hope. We find that love is a quantity of substance in much the same manner as these two. They all also share the same source; namely God. In the same way that every man is given the measure of faith, and by diligence to the things of God, that faith may grow, so too, are we given a measure of love by that same God. And when we attend to the word our love will grow, and eventually come to full maturity, or perfection.

So, let’s sum up what we have discovered so far:

1. Love is not a feeling or an emotion
2. God is the source of all love
3. Everyone has the capacity to love, even if they don’t have knowledge of Him who is love.

Now, I will pass on to you that which has been sought for since the beginnings of man’s sojourn on the earth. Let us define with specificity that elusive quantity known as love.

Love is: **The innate capacity to do good, especially on behalf of others, when given the opportunity, and without expectation of recompense.**

Once you fully understand this, you will be able to walk in all of the benefits of love and fulfill your calling to be the light of the world. Consider that every word of this definition has been carefully chosen by the Holy Spirit, and taken together they convey the heart of God on how we should walk toward each other. Let us now examine each of the individual elements of this definition.

Innate: This means that whatever love is, it is in us from birth. It is not a learned behavior (although its increase may result from observation of its application by others of greater spiritual maturity).

Capacity: The ability to store a certain amount of something. It is unaffected by the presence or absence of the substance being stored. In other words your car may have a 16-gallon gas tank, but still be empty, in which case the lack of fuel cannot be blamed on the lack of a place to store it, but on the failure to fill it.

To do: Love does, it does not merely think. It always expresses itself in actions, or deeds. The most classic example of this concept is found in the following Scripture. “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whomsoever believes on Him, would not perish, but have eternal life.*” (John 3:16) Notice the connection between the love and the action of giving. If His love consisted merely of thinking good thoughts towards us, we would all still be in our sins.

Another example of this is found in this Scripture. “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.*”(John 15:13) Observe again how the application of love involved an action. In this case it was the laying down of one’s life for his friends.

Good: Actions that ultimately cause benefit to accrue to the recipient. Deeds and attitudes that are approved by God.

Especially on behalf of others: Believe it or not, love is not selfless, but it is self-centered. In other words it is logical to understand that we can and should love ourselves. As a matter of fact it is our self-love that serves as the ruler by which we measure our love for others. Consider the following Scripture. “*You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself.*” (Matt. 19:19) Now if we do not first love ourselves, we have no way of discerning whether or not we love someone else. Having established a working model in ourselves, love reaches its full glory when we are able to demonstrate it on behalf of another.

When given the opportunity: We find that love is opportunistic, meaning that it cannot automatically be applied. But the situation must present itself in such a way, that the deeds that evidence love can be worked. For example, suppose there are some soldiers in a foxhole and the enemy throws in a grenade. Let’s say that one of the soldiers has the capacity to lay down his life for his friends by throwing himself on the grenade (a tremendous act of love by any measure), but five minutes before, he happened to step out of the foxhole to go relieve himself. So, although he had the capacity to do this marvelous good on behalf of his fellow soldiers, he lacked the opportunity, therefore all of those unfortunate soldiers died.

Without expectation of recompense: I have previously stated that love expresses itself in actions, but it is not at all limited to the mere performance of said actions. Love is found not in the performance of the action, but in the motivation behind the action. Even though the deed itself may be a good thing, if the motive behind it is not pure, then it is not counted as an act of love on behalf of the doer of the deed. In 1st Corinthians 13:4, we find a beautiful example of this principle. The Lord says that though one may bestow all of their goods to feed the poor, and they may give their bodies to be burned, but if they

do not have love, it profits them nothing. No one can argue that these are not good deeds in and of themselves, but we see that they can be performed in the absence of love. This means that the motivation was something other than a desire to do good, especially on behalf of others. It is evident that love consists of two parts. First is the motivation to do good without regards to being paid back, and second is the actual performance of the good deed. In the doing good on behalf of others, love does not consider the worthiness of the recipient, or whether the good deed will be appreciated or repaid. It is not a loan that we make, but it is a gift that we give. It moves because it is there and the opportunity has presented itself. It seeks neither notoriety nor reward.

There you have it, a complete and accurate, no-frills definition of love. I would advise you to ponder upon, and carefully consider the previous paragraphs. This knowledge will serve as a foundation for all of the things that we will discuss during the rest of this essay.

Chapter 2: The More Excellent Way

Now that we have discussed the more technical or “scientific” aspects of love, let us consult the Scriptures to explore some of the more practical aspects of this attribute that we call love. In the book of 1st Corinthians (12:28-13:13) the Lord instructs us in the application of the way of Spiritual gifts, but then He says, though these things may be desirable, and profitable, there is nonetheless a more excellent way. This is the way of love. The person who has love will exhibit certain characteristics, which testify to the presence of this capacity to do good. Beginning in chapter 13 verse 4, we find that:

Love:

Is patient: This means that the one who has love endures the foibles of the weak. They are willing to wait for the opportunity to do their good, even if it is inconvenient. Love will put up with the bad while it is waiting for it to turn into the good. Love endures less than ideal circumstances, and it does so without murmuring or frustration.

Is kind: This term is synonymous with the term “doing good”. We have already discussed how the capacity and desire to do this good is the very essence of love. When this good is performed, and is not part of recompense, it is considered an act of kindness.

Does not envy: To be envious is the desire to obtain that, which is not lawful for you to have, as well as having antipathy for the one who lawfully possesses the object of your desire. This is obviously not the way of love, for it can find no “good” in this state of mind. Remember that love does only good, never bad. The seed that gives rise to envy is discontentment. True contentment is the state of being at peace in all situations in which one finds themselves.

Does not parade itself: The acts of love are never done for public consumption, or to draw attention to oneself. For then the accolades would be considered recompense, and this would violate the definition of love.

Remember how Jesus said:

“When you do your good deeds; don’t do them before men, to be seen by them. But do them in secret, not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing. And then, the Father who sees in secret, will reward you openly.” (Matt. 6:1-4)

This principle demonstrates an important attribute of love, which is that the mere doing of a good deed is not necessarily an act of love, but the foundation for love is found in the motivation behind the good deed.

Is not proud: The sin of pride is a dual faceted entity. It is a perception error in ones estimation of oneself. Its more readily recognizable face is the act of considering oneself more highly than you should. There is however, a subtler alter ego to the usual manifestation of pride, and that is false humility. This is defined as the act of considering oneself not as highly as you should. The way it works is this. God has declared where we are, which is to say, that we are seated together with Christ Jesus, in the heavenly realm. This is where we should see ourselves. To see ourselves anywhere other than this, either higher or lower, makes Him out to be a liar. A particularly onerous effect of pride is its refusal to yield to correction, for this would be perceived as a diminution of station. Armed with this knowledge of pride, it is easy to see how love has no use for it.

Does not behave rudely: Rudeness speaks to the reckless disregard of ones soul realm (emotions) when dealing with others. It is to inflict emotional pain where it is not indicated. Now love is not necessarily above wounding both emotionally, and physically (i.e. spanking) in the pursuit of its desire to ultimately bring forth a harvest of good. It’s just that it carefully considers the matter, and does not needlessly bring harshness.

Does not seek its own: True love is never motivated by selfishness. It is always more interested in the other person’s well being than its own.

Is not easily provoked: Provocation speaks to the act of striking back against an adversary when the limits of your patience have been reached, and the cause is just. Love knows that it is very hard to find the “good” in this setting; therefore it is resistant to being placed in the position of having to yield to judgment.

Thinks no evil: This is perhaps the most spectacular attribute of love. It has the ability to not keep a record of wrongs, or to make an accounting of evil deeds. Not only does it only “do” good, but also only, “sees good.” It is this attribute of love that allows us to do good unto our enemies. We may remember whatever wrong was done to us that made them our enemy in the first place, but our love will not, and therefore it will not at all be impeded from acting on their behalf.

By the way, here’s a tasty little tidbit. I will be covering this most extensively in a future essay, but to those of you who are astute, I will reward you with this revelation. It is the inability of love to keep account of wrongs that necessitates the existence of its antithesis, known as hate. For if we didn’t have hate then it would be impossible to execute judgment, and then creation could never be purged of wrongdoers.

Does not rejoice in iniquity; Love takes no pleasure in sin. It does not have joy when unrighteousness abounds, and it is never glad at the wrongdoings of others. This is perhaps due to its knowledge that the presence of these things will make a case for the appearance of hate. Now since love and hate cannot function in a state of circumstantial co-existence, it seems logical that love would not relish the presence of things that would render it ineffective.

Rejoices in the truth; Surely, this is a true statement, but are there not certain truths that are not at all rejoice-worthy? For example, it may certainly be true that someone is a murderer, but love would hardly rejoice in this fact. Well then, in what context does love rejoice in the truth? We should probably start with an understanding of what truth is in the first place. Truth is defined as the declaration of the way things are. And, in and of itself, the accurate illustration of the way things are is never evil. The truth, simply serves as a foundation upon which assessments may be made, conclusions drawn, and sides taken. The truth serves as the main delineator of what is considered right and wrong. Therefore, it is an ally of love. The presence of the truth is how love knows what constitutes a good deed. So then, love always sides in with the truth, albeit, only that aspect of truth that allows it to continue to do good deeds. Those facets of the truth that would tend to hinder love from functioning (for example, the knowledge of the presence of evil), it chooses to ignore. In other words, if love cannot do good unto you, it will not do anything at all. Now, all of this may seem somewhat esoteric, but if you would carefully ponder on these things, I think that you will be rewarded with greater insight.

Bears all things; This means that love does not expose, it is discreet, and it is willing to face any obstacle.

Believes all things; Love sees the best in everything, and receives only testimony that is beneficial. It is trusting and does not question the motives of others. It is the fruit from which comes the seed of faith.

Hopes all things; Hope is the anticipation of some good thing, which is accompanied by a reasonable expectation of actually receiving it. So it's easy to see why love would be strong in hope since they are complementary. Love is always eager to give some good, and hope is always willing to deliver that good.

Endures all things; To endure means to resist an opposing force. Love is therefore ready to stand against anything that would limit its ability to manifest itself.

Never fails; If there is a failure of the demonstration of love you can be sure that it is not due to its having given up, but to the lack of opportunity. Love does not wave the white flag of surrender. It does not back off, and it does not know retreat.

Chapter 3: Now Abide These Three

In our exposition on the form and function of love, there is one more layer to peel back. Continuing on in 1st Corinthians chapter 13, we are told that there will be a fundamental change in the order of our universe, and that things that we trust in now, will not be there for us in the future. We find that the voices that speak to us now for edification and comfort will be silent. The things that we think we know now will be found to be insufficient. But we are told, that through all of this, there are three things that will endure. These three are faith, hope, and love. We are also told that of these three, the greatest is love. These three are abiding principles within the fabric of creation. They form a triad of complementary fundamental building blocks, upon which God has erected an edifice that reflects His glory and majesty. They are the anchors that bind us to the heart of God, so that we may understand His ways. They are synergistic in their operation but love is the guiding force that directs the functioning of the other two. It is the one that exists and operates in a manner that is preeminent over the other two. Let me see if I can explain this a little better. We are told that love is greater than faith. How is this demonstrated? The demand of love may require you to face a situation that your faith may not be able to deliver you from. For love is not constrained by the limits of our faith.

Remember, that faith also is demonstrated by deeds, and not mere words. Now suppose that there is a gap between our faith, and what it is that love is calling us to do. If love were bound by the limitations of faith, there would be places it would not go, or battles it would not face. But love does not consult our faith before it acts because it has it's own reservoir of faith that it can rely on, and that source is always up to the task. Recall from the previous chapter that love believes all things. So then, love has it's own faith, and doesn't have to rely solely on the contribution from the vessel. Nevertheless, love is not independent of faith, for in order to operate at the highest level of love, one requires faith in God. Now God is the source of love so then, the more we know of Him the greater is our belief in Him. The greater our belief in Him, the more of His attributes we exhibit, especially love. Therefore, great faith sets the stage for the demonstration of the greatest love.

We also find that love is greater than hope. This is demonstrated by the fact that love may demand that we enter into a hopeless situation. It is willing to do this for the same reasons that we previously discussed regarding faith. Love not only believes all things, but it also hopes all things. So in the same manner as faith, love will provide it's own hope if need be. We can readily see that love is self-sufficient and is ready to provide whatever is needed to get the job done. At this time you might be saying, " Gee pastor it seems to me that love is pretty gullible." No, not at all, to be gullible means that one is easily deceived, which is to say that they hold fast to things as truth, that are known to be lies. This is not the case with love for it readily discerns the truth of the situation. It just does not factor in shortcomings, and worthiness into its equation.

So there you have it, between these first three chapters, you should have a first rate understanding of the nature, and the application of love. You would do well to contemplate the previous material extensively so that you may be fully furnished to be found faithful, and that you may give the correct answer when you are questioned on love.

Chapter 4: How do you Know if Your Love is Perfected

Welcome to one of the scariest words in the English language, *perfect*. Did you just feel that chill go down your spine? The concept of perfection has been accepted by the church to be an unobtainable goal therefore; it is only looked at in abstract terms. This is flawed thinking. Having already made the case for the feasibility of obtaining perfection in volume one of my essays, I will not belabor it here. Suffice it to say that the Bible clearly presents perfection not only as obtainable, but also as necessary for the complete development of the Christian. So then, what does it mean to have our love perfected? Before we discuss that, let me remind you that perfection does not imply flawlessness, but it speaks to being mature, or complete. In other words, perfection is always ready to respond appropriately to any situation. The following are some of the observations that can be made concerning perfect love.

Perfect love is steadfast and unwavering: In much the same way as strong faith, perfect love refuses to give up. It will not fail. It waits as long as necessary in order to win. It is always ready to apply itself to any situation at anytime, or anywhere, and for anyone.

Perfect love is dispassionate: Remember that emotions are of the soul realm, and love is of the Spirit realm. Therefore, the application of love is governed only by the dictates of the situation, and not at all by how we might feel about the one who is about to be on the receiving end of the benevolence of love. This is the reason that the Lord Jesus could tell us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). It's a pretty safe bet that you are not going to feel very kindly disposed toward someone who you consider to be an enemy. But since love operates independently of your feelings, you are well able to do good on their behalf despite the protestations of your flesh. Whether or not we like someone, is totally irrelevant in the consideration of performing acts of love.

Perfect love is not without reservation: In other words it does not act blindly or in a rash manner. Perfect love considers the dissenting voices of the soul and the flesh, but it acts nonetheless. Perfect love is aware that its application may have unpleasant consequences in the emotional, or fleshly realm, but it does not allow these things to hinder it from performing its duty. A perfect example of this attribute of love is what happened in the garden of Gethsemane. When the time came for the Lord Jesus to actually deliver on his greatest act of love, He was in anguish of soul. He cried out to His Father that if there were any other way to accomplish their goal let it be so. I'll give you one guess as to which way His soon to be severely assaulted flesh was voting. Despite

these dissensions His love demanded that He pay the price in order to do this act of good on our behalf. Why, because He felt like it? No, because the opportunity was there, and He was the only one who could fulfill what was necessary for our redemption. In like manner to this, your love may make a demand on you that may have unpleasant results, like telling someone a truth that may make them angry or upset. If your love is perfect, you will not let this hinder you from speaking words of truth and life. Truth may wound one in the soul realm, but its reception always brings healing in the spirit. Perfect love would never let the possibility of hurting one's feelings stand in the way of speaking the truth, which is good indeed.

Perfect love does not keep a record of wrongs: In order to always be ready to do "good," it is necessary for love to not remain mindful of transgressions. This is its secret to being able to function despite the unworthiness of the recipient of its acts of benevolence. Perfect love has no storehouse for acts of transgression; therefore, it is not hampered by making judgments as to the worthiness of him who would receive. It is motivated only by the necessity of an act of kindness, and the opportunity to deliver it. It was this aspect of perfect love that allowed the Father to send us Christ Jesus to bring reconciliation while we were yet enemies.

Perfect love does not execute judgment: By definition, executing judgment on someone is doing "bad" unto them and not "good." Therefore, to engage in this activity would be a violation of the definition of love, which is to do good. Now, this is not to say that some folks don't have bad coming, it's just that this is not the purview of love. Remember that love is only allowed to do good. If doing bad is called for, there is another quantity waiting in the wings to fulfill this duty; namely hate, an entity that I will teach on extensively in another essay. Suffice it to say here, that without the presence of hate, it would be impossible to execute judgment, and in that case, the universe could never be rid of evildoers.

Perfect Love is Without Partiality: Remember that love considers only need and the opportunity. It does not weigh out who may be more deserving, or more highly favored. In teaching this to my congregation, we engaged in a very interesting thought experiment. It helped us to understand both the quantitative nature of love, as well as the requirement for it to be administered without partiality. Consider the following. Suppose that you are a mother or a father who is driving your two children somewhere. And suddenly your tire blows out and your car careens out of control. It comes to rest teetering over the edge of a cliff. You manage to pull yourself out, but your kids are stuck in their seatbelts. Now, the balance of the car over the cliff is such that if one child is removed from the car, it will tumble over the edge and crash to the bottom many hundreds of feet below. So then, the question is, since you can only save one child, which one do you choose? There is only one correct answer to this question, and it is not, to let them both die. That is the cowardly way out, and actually demonstrates hatred toward them and not love. So don't try to pass that off as an answer. The correct answer is that you will save the one that you love the most, and make no mistake about it, you do love one more than the other. Now, of course, no self-respecting parent would admit to loving one of their children more than the other one. Moreover, when questioned under oath, they would emphatically claim,

with complete conviction, that they loved both of them the same. However, when faced with this most difficult of choices, saving one child at the sacrifice of the other one, the choice is going to be made completely on the basis of which child is the one who is greater loved. Think about this and you will see that what I have described here is the truth. With the scenario presented in the way that it was, where the act of “good” could physically only be performed on behalf of one, clearly the one who was chosen to receive this benevolence was by definition the one greater loved. Remember, that love expresses itself in deeds not feelings. Surely, one would “feel” great empathy and compassion toward both children, however, under the limits of this test, your love can only be demonstrated on behalf of one child. The child that you love more will be evidenced by being the one that you chose to help. If you are a parent, pray that you never have to make such a choice, but also pray that if you do ever have to make it, that you have the strength to do so. I submit to you that if your love is perfect, then you do indeed have what it takes to rise to this challenge.

At this point one might ask, “But pastor, isn’t this showing partiality?” It seems rather unfair that one child had to die in order for the other to be saved. Not at all; remember one of the characteristics of love is that it is opportunistic. Even though love is always willing, it may not always have the opportunity to manifest itself. The preceding scenario was deliberately designed to illustrate this fact. Partiality would be in evidence when you have the choice to treat both parties equally, and you choose one over the other.

Here is another way to explore this concept of partiality. Suppose that you are the pastor of a church and two visitors come one Sunday. One of them is a rich man, and the other, a poor man. It just so happens that you have exactly two seats left in the congregation, one in the front and one in the back. Which visitor would you assign to which seat? Note that it is accepted that the seat in the front is considered to be the one more desirable. Now the logical answer to anyone who has even a passing acquaintance with Christianity is to seat the poor man up front. But, would this not be showing partiality, in this case esteeming the poor man over the rich man? The answer according to the letter is yes. But, according to the perfect counsel of the spirit of wisdom, choosing to honor the poor man over the rich one, is using this opportunity to esteem the poor man as though he were rich, thus demonstrating the heart of God, which declares that His kingdom is open to all regardless of stature. Though God is high and lifted up, He sent One down to be meek and lowly, so that we could be high and lifted up with Him. It is the wise pastor who has this same heart. For it is God’s way to bestow the greater honor upon the lesser parts. It is serving the cause of the kingdom to be mindful of the fact that the kingdom is given to the base. The kingdom is for the lesser, so we honor that by treating the lesser as though they were the greater. This action should cause no ill effects to the rich man if he understands the way of righteousness. And if he doesn’t, he has far more to worry about than his seating arrangements at the church.

Summing this up then, we can say, that perfect love is certainly not partial, however, it may be limited in its application, by a lack of opportunity to be equally expressed. So, now that we have discussed some of the attributes of perfect love we can finally answer the initial question, which was, how do you know if your love is perfected?

Love is perfect, when it is evidenced at every opportunity to be so.

Pretty simple isn't it. Basically it means that the mature Christian who has mastered his flesh, and has had his mind renewed by the word, will evidence this by operating in the law of perfect love. Such a one walks in the spirit. And, as such, there are no hindrances to the free application of love, so that at every opportunity it may be in manifestation. This is also known as unconditional love. This means that in perfect love there is no equivocation.

Chapter 5: Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

We find in the book of 1st John 4:18 that, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." Now the enormous power of this verse is lost on most Christians. How do I know this you ask? Because most Christians live in a state of near constant fear. This means then that the love of God has not yet been perfected in them, so they remain subject to bondage through fear. I am here to tell you that it is entirely possible to walk through life without any fear at all. How is this possible? Well the way that it works is as follows. God has first loved us. By this we know of love and are likewise able to love. By receiving the love of God, are we not also receiving fellowship with God? Now if you know that you are in tight with the biggest and the baddest Guy on the block, of what should you be afraid? Should you not rather walk with full confidence that in every situation He is your shield, and your strong right arm? Under those circumstances it seems rather silly to walk around being afraid, doesn't it? Remember that love operates by faith, and fear and faith are mutually exclusive. So then, if you are full of perfect love, you are also operating at a high level of faith. And, if your faith is high, then no place is found in you for fear.

It is our love that demonstrates our faith in God, and in particular, our love for the brethren. For we say that we love God, but we have not seen Him. He then says, "If you would love Me whom you cannot see, how can you not also love your brother, whom you can see?" So we find that in loving our brother, we demonstrate our love for God. And it is our faith that allows us to believe in Him even though He is invisible, and to receive from Him that most precious gift, which is love. And when that love has become perfected, there no longer remains a place in us for fear.

Chapter 6: Love vs. Sexuality

It is in the realm of sexuality and emotions that the word love is most misunderstood, and therefore, frequently abused. As previously stated, love is not at all based on feelings, or emotions, but it is something that is potentially present in every human creature as a consequence of our nature that comes from our Creator. When a man and woman (hopefully husband and wife) are engaging in sexual intercourse, they are not, as frequently erroneously stated, "making love." They are however expressing in this most intimate of physical ways the deep emotional bond that they share. You see the marriage bond is the most unique type of relationship that humans can enter into. Within the

context of the earth realm, the marriage bond is the act of being joined with a member of the opposite gender across all three planes on which we exist namely, spirit, soul, and body. Within the affairs of man, the only place where this kind of union is lawful is between a husband and wife. With all other types of interactions, we are free to be joined spiritually, and emotionally (soul), but the physical coming together is confined to the marriage covenant, and may only be lawfully engaged in, within those bounds. The reason that this is so important is that marriage on Earth is much more than merely a convention or a social exercise. It is a symbol of a higher Spiritual union in which those of us who believe in Christ Jesus are joined to Him, not only spiritually and emotionally, but also we are called to share in Him physically as His body on the Earth. Now here is the compelling part. Every time a married couple engages in sexual intercourse, they are celebrating a communion in which they are portraying a larger heavenly model where we are joined to Christ Jesus, as a bride is to her husband. (And here you thought that the only reason for sex was to procreate) So, the sex act serves as a shadow on the Earth of the relationship of substance in Heaven, which is not readily manifested, to the senses.

Now you should readily understand, why the expression of our sexual proclivities are so tightly regulated, such that any expression thereof outside of marriage, is considered by God to be a condemnatory offense. He calls these fornication, and adultery. The practice of either of these will certainly earn you enough frequent flyer miles to have a first class ticket on “Hell-bound Airways.” So you see, Gods strong condemnation of these things is not a matter of Him being the cloud of doom to rain on your parade, but He is jealous for those things that He considers precious. In other words, God has ordained the marriage of the shadow on Earth, to be conformed to the image of the marriage of substance in Heaven. In this way, all can be knowledgeable of His desire to save to the uttermost through matrimonial union with His Son, the great Bridegroom. To cohabitately physically in any way, other than that which proclaims the shadow of marriage on Earth, profanes the great work of the Lord Jesus in offering Himself as husband through the substance of marriage in Heaven. Now, according to the Spiritual law of unions, you become one with whom you are joined physically. Since God sees us as joined together with Jesus physically, as bone of His bones, and flesh of His flesh, He therefore, also sees us as one with Him spiritually. Herein lies the power of the Gospel, for if we cannot be separated from Him physically, neither can we be separated from Him spiritually. So, as He is seen by God as the Bridegroom, so too are we, as His bride. By the way, this explains why God takes such a dim view of divorce, since destroying the shadow, makes it more difficult to see the substance.

Lest you think that I have lost my mind, let me “prove” these things by the Scriptures. Consider the following verses.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies, he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and His bones.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ”This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 5:25-33.

Notice how the Lord spectacularly makes the connection between husbands and wives, and our covenant with Christ Jesus. In this context, Christ is in the role of the husband, and the church plays the part of the wife. The marriage of shadow is clearly seen, and serves to illustrate the marriage of substance, which although not readily perceived, is even more real. Notice also that in the same way that Adam testified concerning his wife, that she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; The Lord Jesus makes an identical proclamation. Herein lies the great mystery; to speak of the husband and his wife, is to speak of Christ Jesus and His bride, namely the church. Now, since the shadow cannot have any independent image, and must conform in every way to the substance it represents, even so, the earthly marriage must be administered in such a way as to accurately portray the heavenly union of which it serves as a model.

The Holy Scriptures also proclaim the following:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he, who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside of the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s (1st Corinthians 6:15-20).

These Scriptures inform us that we should be very careful with whom we share our bodies. For whether we know it or not, we become one with whom we lie sexually. This is a spiritual law that God has used to our advantage so that we may share in Christ Jesus. However, if we profane this law by unsanctioned joining, then it will work contrary to us by constraining us to share in the evil that results from unlawful contact. So then, we glorify God in our bodies by sharing them with our wives alone, and in so doing; we preserve the glory of the covenant, which is established forever in Heaven.

Finally the Lords view on divorce can be found succinctly expressed in the following verse.

“For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence,” says the Lord of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”(Malachi 2:16)

I think it is certainly wise to avoid being guilty of those things that God has proclaimed that He hates. It seems as though He did not leave any room for ambiguity regarding how He feels about divorce.

Consider His use of the word treason with reference to the marriage covenant. This word means to exhibit disloyalty to something, but also to act in a way that causes harm to come to the object of your covenant. It is interesting to note, that in all of this discussion of marriage and sex, love was not at all an overriding issue. This tells us that love exists independently of these things, and finds its expression on a much larger stage. So to sum up this section, we can say that marriage consists of a union between a man and a woman, in which they share symbiosis in all three planes of their existence: spirit, soul, and body. This is a unique relationship on Earth, but it does have a heavenly analogue, namely the marriage of the Lamb. Too often, emotions are confused for love in this context, leading to such erroneous statements as “I fell out of love,” or, “I’m no longer in love with you.” Remember, love is something that we have; it is not something that we are in. Emotions on the other hand, are the souls response to external stimuli received from the natural realm. Moreover, they function in concert with the senses or the physical, since this is usually the way that said stimuli are delivered to the soul. For example, you may “see” something that makes you happy or sad. Or you may “hear” something that may provoke an emotional response, and so on.

Chapter 7: Loves Achilles Heel

Up to this point we have discussed a great many things concerning love. We have seen what a beautiful gift from God it is, and how much of a powerful effect it can have. There is one thing however, that can render love powerless. That thing is the antithesis of love, the phenomenon known as hate. From an attribute point of view, hate is exactly opposite to that of love. So for example, while love seeks an opportunity to do good on someone’s behalf, hate seeks to do bad. I will only introduce this concept in this essay, since I intend on doing a complete study on hate in the next essay. At this juncture it is sufficient to know that it is impossible to exhibit both love and hate toward the same object at the same time. Since they are trying to achieve exactly opposite goals, the more toward one you move the further from the other you get. When you have arrived at the perfection of one state, you are completely removed from operation in the other. In much the same way as it is not possible to have both hot and cold water coming from the same pipe at the same time. If you try it, you will find that they will tend to cancel each other out. The end result is something that we call lukewarm; it is a condition that is not suitable for either hot or cold water applications. In a similar manner to this, the state that is found half way between love and hate we call indifference. Now this is an equally unproductive state to be in, since no beneficial outcome can be obtained from there. So, if you find yourself hating someone, it is impossible to simultaneously love that same individual. Well if hate renders love void, what use is it, you might ask? Believe it or not, hate is a very necessary commodity, albeit a very dangerous one. For example, without hate it would be impossible to ever execute judgment, since love would not allow you to keep a record of wrongs. Suffice it to say, that as long as evil remains under creation, t a place must be found for hate. Again, I will have much more to say on this subject in the next essay, so I will not dive any deeper into it at this time.

Conclusion

At this point you should be in a much better position to understand the inner workings of love. The careful student should now be skilled in telling the difference between emotions and true love. It is strongly advisable for you to commit to memory the definition of love that I have given you. You will find that it will serve you well, as you are called upon to judge a great many things. Inasmuch as the Bible spends quite a bit of time dealing with matters on love, it is prudent for us to have an intimate knowledge of it, so that we can be sure that we are not falling short in it. It is my hope that those who read this essay will allow it to form a firm foundation upon which they can build a good understanding of the heart of our God. For He has exhibited such love on our behalf, and has indeed shown it by the most extraordinary of deeds. We can now understand how He can demand that we go and do likewise, and in this we demonstrate our faith in Him, and thus make ourselves worthy of the awesome gift that He offers to those whose hearts are faithful.

Surely the day will come, when we will all be questioned on love, and shame on those who do not have an answer. May the Lord God bless these teachings and breathe the Spirit of life into them that they may be edifying to those who can receive them. Amen.