

or the hedonistic, paganistic, needle-pointed "love" of darkness—not that! But this: The love to which we are called in The Great Commandments. "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind'" (Matthew 22:37).

This, said our King, this is the first and the most important commandment. (See also Deuteronomy 6:5).

And, said our Savior, the Second Commandment is coupled to the first:

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

"If you love Me," Jesus calls, "If you love Me, keep My commandments!"

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word" (John 14:15, 23).

These things we must do. Not just should, but *must* do if we are to obey His Great Commandment as well as His Great Commission.

We know we cannot, and should not, expect Caesar to undertake Christ's Great Commission; we know that we should not allow Caesar to undertake Christ's Great Commandment in our stead. For, to allow

this is to render unto Caesar that which belongs to God.

And, to do that is to violate Christ's law of love. And therefore there would be no true fulfillment of the law.

The Good Samaritan: Then—and Now (?)

It was hot and dusty and miserable, there on that road to Jericho. To make matters worse, the route was a favorite hangout for thieves and a way for rogues and barbarians. On this particular day, a thief accosted the lone traveler who was going about his lawful business. He beat him, robbed him, stripped him and left him there—dead, by the side of the road, for all he cared.

After a while, a priest came by—a man whose professional status obligated him to be an agent of compassion. But he hurried on without stopping. And then there was the Levite who stopped, walked over for a look—not too close—then crossed to the other side of the road and continued on his way.

Finally came a Samaritan, a member of that community towards which Jews had the greatest antipathy. He was something else!

Where the priest and the Levite hardened their hearts against one of their own people, the Samaritan

Some Key Scriptures

- "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).
- "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).
- "We love Him because He first loved us. 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 4:19-21).
- "You who love the LORD, hate evil!" (Psalm 97:10a).
- "Let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. . . No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us" (1 John 4:7, 11, 12).
- "Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also" (Hebrews 13:1-3).
- "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).
- "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Romans 13:8,9).
- "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34).

had compassion on this foreigner—this poor stranger from an unfriendly nation. He stopped. He knelt there in the dirt and dust. He put oil and ointment on the traveler's wounds and bandaged his hurts with his own linen. He lifted the bleeding body to his beast and carried him to the village inn and cared for him. The next day, as he paid the bill, he left some extra coins for the stranger's keep and assured the innkeeper that he would also pay whatever other charges the stranger might incur.

The priest and the Levite may have been under the law of Moses, but the Good Samaritan, who probably did not realize it, was obeying Christ's laws of love! Now there was love in action—obedience to Christ's Second Great Commandment.

What Christ said then, to lawyer in that parable, He is saying now, today, to us. To us who are His:

"Go, and do likewise!"

There was a time when love was the mark of the Christian. It was so in the days of the early church. "See how they love one another." Love was the mark of the first century Christian. Small wonder it was a faith that eventually won the world!

It was also the mark of the Christian in the early days of America. It was the indicia of the Christians of Salem, Massachusetts, in the late 1700s and early 1800s. When that sea town was inundated by immigrants, when over a few short years the population exploded from 2,500 to 45,000, it was the Christians of Salem who built the schools for the immigrant children and taught them to read and write English by learning the Bible. It was the Christians of Salem who built the hospitals and

the rescue missions and county homes for the penniless and elderly and indigent.

It was the law of love in action. The love of Jesus Christ poured out through those who were His! What a witness! Small wonder Alexis de Tocqueville, who chronicled life in the United States in the 1800s, would write that, "There is no country in the world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America."

What would de Tocqueville write about America today? What has happened to that influence over the souls of men in America? What has happened to that law of love.

Caesar has taken over, and Caesar does not love: Caesar coerces; he demands, little children to come unto him and his schools. He turns them away from God. He makes serfs of the poor and the needy, serfs who will serve generation after generation on his federal plantation.

And, we who profess to be Christ's servant, what of us? We must share the blame. We have rendered

unto Caesar that which belongs to God—the care and the love of the sick, the child, the hungry the, the homeless, the lonely, the unlovable, the lost.

Many, if not most, of those who are along today's "road to Jericho" we have left lying there—or have handed over to Caesar. By and large, the church has allowed—indeed, in many instances, invited—Caesar to take over charity. Small wonder Caesar's reach keeps extending and his grasp expands while the Christian witness diminishes.

LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:1-10

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

There are some shining examples and great cases of Christians putting the love of Christ into action; examples of Christ's law at work. Praise God for them! But, by-and-large, Christ's church in America today does not warrant the mark of love awarded to those Christians in the early days of Christ's church and the early day of this nation. We have rendered that which belongs to God—the care of the sick, the hungry, the lonely, the homeless, the waif and the wayfarer (Matthew 25:36-41) unto Caesar. Small wonder he has taken unto himself and unto his nephews those who we should care for and also the resources to do so which belong to God and were in our charge!

When government becomes responsible for charity, the church is displaced, and the impersonal bureaucrat steps in for the loving neighbor. Those funds which Christians should be using to advance the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ (through works of love and charity as He commands) are taxed into coffers and used to expand Caesar's empire (as he demands).

And, sadly, we through sins of omission have been party to the expropriation!

Relating the Principle to an Issue

Because "love" as we know, is the fulfilling of the law

- we will have no other gods before God—no graven images, no icons of flesh or stone
- we will not commit adultery, or fornication or any obscenities or licentiousness
- we will remember The Lord's Day and, indeed strive to make every day a day of and for the Lord
- we will not blaspheme or take The Lord's name in vain in any way
- we will not bear false witness nor carry tales
- we will not steal, we will not covet
- we will not commit murder of any kind including abortion or euthanasia
- we will honor our parents and train our children to do likewise.

Because we are His, we must be faithful ministers of His Word—doers and not just hearers of His Word; we are to be about His work; we are to be carriers of His love. At all times, especially in stressful and trouble times, when so many are hurting, He expects us to fulfill our Christian obligations—to let the light of His love shine through us so that others may see these good works and glorify Him.

It is increasingly important in these perilous days for Christians to be occupied with using God's resources

wisely and as good stewards to reach out to others in works of compassion along with words of salvation. If, indeed, there is a time for comforts and fancies of institutions and facilities, these are not such times.

On a "down to earth" level, Christians cannot expect to have the public ear and influentially protest Caesar's waste, excesses, extortions, and arrogance if we are not "a distinctive people, zealous unto good works: (Titus 2:14). The followers of Christ should be leaders of nations; doing so is very much a part of His Great Commission and definitely a part of His law of love.

Jesus urges us, even now, to "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

There are perhaps 50 or 60 million professing Christians in the United States today. What if 30 million, or 25 million, or even 10 million of Christ's followers and servants were to go forth—in His name and in His love—to alleviate the suffering and the pain, the hunger and the despair in the land. What if we worked and prayed—really worked and prayed? What if we did these things for our King—did them faithfully, efficiently, selflessly?

What a witness! True obedience to Christ's law of love. Then we would see not only that love is, indeed, a basic principle of government—self and civil; we would see what marvels such love would produce!

And, as an added bonus we would cut the ground out from under the ACLU, NOW, PAW, the so-called "politically correct" and that majority in Congress which dare to deny God and press for legislation which openly and purposefully discriminates against Christianity?

*Oh, that heretic, naysayer—lout!
He made a circle and shut us out;
Christ and I had a will to win,
We drew our circle, and drew Him in!*
—Anonymous

All Scripture is from the New King James Version.

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