

# The Law Of Love

Ask anyone what they want most. Most will say "happiness." Some will say "peace," others "freedom," still others "unity among mankind." We all want to be happy, free and at peace. But are we willing to meet the conditions of happiness, peace and unity?

## **There are only two basic conditions of happiness.**

No true peace or harmony is at all possible until we meet these conditions. If two friends cannot agree, their friendship is in danger; if a husband and wife will not agree, their marriage is threatened, if a nation cannot agree among its citizens, anarchy and riot will stalk the streets; and if some way is not found to make nations agree, we face nuclear annihilation. God says, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) What are these conditions?

The first is *COMMON UNDERSTANDING*. Understanding is essential to agreement. Both parties must have access to true and relevant knowledge. If I am not sure that what you say is true, I cannot agree, unless I intend to lie. Our generation has learned the art of manipulating media, deliberately distorting truth, circulating utter lies as facts for the purposes of ideological or political advantage. No wonder ours is also a cynical generation. People are hard-put to believe in anything. On top of this, we have the added problems of language barriers, communication failures and ignorance. But there is no way around it. Despite these obstacles, if we cannot agree on some basic things to be both true and valuable for our world, we will have no long-term peace, unity, harmony or lasting happiness.

The second is *COMMON UNSELFISHNESS*. Knowledge is not enough. We must also be willing to do that which we honestly see as the best and wisest choice, or our education will only make us more informed hypocrites. Our world is generally known to be rather clever; we say we are educated in many fields. Unfortunately, we are also probably the most confused and frightened generation of all time. This will not get better without solving the problem; knowledge is not wisdom. Will we do what we know is right? *That* is the question. What practical difference does it make if the person who murders you uses a flint ax or an H-bomb? You will die nevertheless, whether it is the savage or the scientist who does not love or care for you. Technologically advanced nations do inhuman things in wars. Every major thinker in history knew it; the problem of selfishness must be eliminated to bring real harmony, unity and peace to mankind.

## Are These Conditions Possible?

Two essential conditions; put them in simple words and they spell "wisdom" and "love." We must have them to survive; are they possible? We must meet them, or die; in an atomic age, disagreement is not only unfortunate; it is the end of mankind.

But take the first condition, how can any finite person agree with another as to what is "true" or "valuable?" How can we know? To be sure, you must see it all; can you say with absolute certainty anything is true, until you compare it with everything else? How can you be sure of the particular unless you see first the universal? Compare childhood values to an adult's; the East's to the West's, the hip and the straight. It is a simple requirement of survival. We all need a source of wisdom utterly trustworthy, infinitely true, wholly dependable, always available, universally accessible and understandable to all. Such a source cannot be human. It demands a level of knowledge and wisdom, of precision and justice beyond our imagining. It cannot be finite.

And the second condition: just as important; just as humanly impossible. Not that we have not tried. Everyone from Buddha to Marx had their ideas of eliminating selfishness, from wiping out the individual ego to altering economic conditions ( by wiping out groups.) Selfishness remains. With one notable exception, all have lived to please themselves. What would it mean to give up selfishness? Dr. Karl Menninger said, "The willful disregard or sacrifice of the welfare of others for the welfare or satisfaction of the self is an essential quality of the concept SIN." Augustine called it the "turning away from the universal whole to the individual part", and pointed out that since there is nothing greater than the whole, to devote ourselves to something we say is greater makes us grow smaller. And if we begin with selfish people, we will always end with selfish societies, no matter what we call ourselves, and despite how much we know.

A source of love and wisdom; we cannot live without it. And if we give up the fiction that men and women are lucky accidents of chance, time and matter, we must come to this conclusion; we were never meant to live life on our own. We are made to need help and power, made to grow forever, and never run out of wonder and joy. There is such a Source in the universe. We have not been left to find and forge our own way. There is an Infinite Love and Absolute Wisdom available to all, capable of breaking every language, racial and educational barrier, strong enough to deliver anyone from the chains of selfishness to a universal compassion. There is One; but only One.

That is why our race needs God. That is why we must give our lives to Him. There is no alternative; we must know Him, find for ourselves His power and wisdom, or die. We were not meant to live alone; we cannot survive without Him. He is no respecter of persons; in every nation, he that fears Him and works righteousness is accepted with Him. (Acts, 10:34:35). Only He has the infinite wisdom capable of revealing "true truth" to anyone with an honest heart; only He can be trusted to reveal reality to anyone without distortion or evasion. He has promised to do so, if we who ask will only use this

knowledge wisely. (Luke 10:21-22; Deut., 29:9; Prov. 1:23; Is. 45:3; Matt, 18:3; John 12:36-40; 14:25-26; 16:13-15; Acts 28:24-28; Rom 1:18-32)

This is also why God has given us a Law. It is the single most important law in the created universe. It is not a suggestion, or advice; it is a command. It will be enforced with all the infinite powers of heaven, because the whole happiness of both heaven and earth depends on it. No one can afford to break it with impunity, and no one who disregards or spurns it will escape cosmic justice. God has taken steps to make sure everyone knows of it, and is capable of obeying it. And all the peace and harmony of the universe hangs on it. We have called it the *Law of Love*. It is the heart-property of every moral member of the universe. And it is based on a value-system written into the moral consciousness of the whole of our race.

## The Universal Concept Of Love

C.S. Lewis points out, in his marvelous book, "Mere Christianity", that we have all heard people quarreling, adults as well as children. They say things like, "How'd you like it if anyone did that to you?"; "Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine"; "That's not fair", etc. He says, "It looks, in fact, very much as if both parties had in mind some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behavior or morality or whatever you like to call it, about which they really agreed." And they have!

All men, everywhere, have basically agreed that selfishness is wrong, no matter how they have defined it, in cases that do not apply to them. People may be wrong about their decisions as to what is selfish, but they do not change that rule. It is something that the whole human race has always known; they cannot get rid of it. And built right in to the idea of rights and wrongs and choices is the underlying idea of VALUE.

We all know without really thinking about it, that anything important must be worth choosing (when we have to choose) above something else which is seen to be not as important. The VALUE of the object IN ITSELF creates the reason for us to choose it. All our choices in life are based on this, a concept of value. Said shortly, the *INTRINSIC VALUE OBLIGATES*. We give preference to what we see as more valuable.

Now in the earthly society, we attach value to people or things that show properties like:

1. **Beauty:** A sense of fitness, loveliness, worthwhileness, attractiveness and form.
2. **Permanence:** We like things to last; all the precious metals and gems show this.
3. **Luminosity:** We are fascinated with the interplay of light and color in things.
4. **Uniqueness:** Something that is only-one-of-a-kind, an original, is worth more.

5. **Rarity:** If something is scarce, uncommon, its worth usually increases, like the one-penny Magenta stamp, the world's rarest stamp, (and most expensive because of it).

These are some of the major things we look for in what we call "treasures" on earth. Think of something so beautiful, utterly lovely, that it takes your breath away to look at it, so that it creates a pain on the border of love to death. Think of something of absolute radiance, shining with unimaginable splendor and brightness; something unchangeably so, only one-of-a-kind, absolutely uncommon. Would we not consider such a treasure of immeasurable value, worth everything to own?

Jesus told His disciples many stories about His Kingdom. Two important ones for our subject are found in Matthew 13:44-46. The first is about a man who found a treasure hid in a field, who sold all he had to buy the field; the second is about a merchant who sold all he had to buy the one "pearl of great price." Why did Jesus tell His disciples these stories? Whatever else they mean, one thing is clear, it was the *value* of the things they found that led them to sell everything they owned "with joy". One look convinced them of the supreme importance of their find. Nothing else in the world was worth as much to them from then on. If they had passed these treasures by, they would have been stupid; it was unthinkable to them not to give up the lesser for the greater. The price to them was not important; all that counted was the value of what they had discovered. It was not hard for them to give up all.

Why did Jesus give us this parable? The world is filled with people who think God is selfish. Satan has always accused Him as such to man. (Gen. 3:1-5) They think "If God wants us to be unselfish, why does He command us to put Him first? Isn't that selfish?" Is God's law arbitrary? Does He just "make up" right and wrong at His Own whim, and out of His Own will? Is all law, even Divine law, ultimately invention? Shouldn't law be fixed, unalterable, unchangeable? And how can God call Himself good, if He just makes up what good is? What standard can we measure His conduct by, if everything He does is by definition right, *because* He does it? Could He not by this definition, do all that Satan and sinners do, and be, by definition, right and holy?

## God Is Not Selfish At All

When we read the Bible carefully, we find a wonderful truth. God is not selfish, and He never has been. He constantly reveals to us His care, concern and goodness to people who were not only running away from Him, but actually His enemies. And in these Bible descriptions of God's character we can see an amazing thing. God Himself has a law to keep. God Himself has a standard to which He conforms His life.

All the Bible descriptions of His moral nature imply a standard of value to which He has always, and will always, conform. He has given us nothing He is not willing to do first Himself; when He commands us to be holy, it is because He Himself is holy. (Lev. 20:7)

What law could possibly apply to the uncreated God, who is before all things and by whom all things hold together? There cannot be a God behind God, a law greater than God, a standard other than God. This would be to deny the Bible. But there is a law nevertheless, a law that is distinct from God's character, as eternal as He is, and yet not separate from Him. It is the basis of all right, it is the standard of value to which all beings in the universe must conform, including the Judge of all the universe, who Himself conforms to that law. It is that which gives stability to His decisions, form to His judgments and pronouncements, absolute virtue to His actions.

This standard is the greatest value in the universe, and beyond it. It has all the qualities that we hold so dear in human treasure; beauty, light, permanence, uniqueness, rarity. It is eternal, changeless; indeed, it is the most fundamental reality of all. *It is God's own uncreated BEING*, distinct from His character, the one thing God Himself did not make up or create or have any say over having. And *God's Being* is the most valuable thing in the universe.

We were made to choose the valuable. God made us like that, because He is like that, and we are made in His image. He has always done what we must always do; choose that which is the most lovely, the most important, the most worthwhile. And this is the law of love. God Himself unselfishly chooses the highest good of His own Being; not just because it is His, but because it is the most valuable. He must; He is obligated to; to choose anything less would be not only unwise, but wrong. And so must we. We must do what He always has done; put Him first, honor with our lives the revealed ultimate loveliness in the universe, give Him the glory for what He is. And this is what we have chosen to call "The Law of Love."

When God commands, "You shall love (unselfishly choose the highest good) of the Lord your God . . . and love your neighbor as yourself", He is saying simply this; "I am valuable for My own sake. You do what I must always do; put first what belongs first." (Matt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28; John 14:21) He deserves first place.

## The Law Of Love

God is the most lovely Person in the universe. His Being is the Source of all life, the Power that upholds all of Creation. Since everyone's happiness depends on it, God has a responsibility to honor it. God *must* choose His own highest good as the only wisest possible act. He is obliged to rule Himself and His creation by informing them of this for everyone's highest good. Just as we are responsible to love and take care of our own

beings, and because we do this, are able to love and care for our neighbors, *God Himself* loves and takes care of His Being, and is responsible for His own highest good, as well as ours.

Why, then should we love God? Because He is the Altogether Lovely. Why should all men and women choose to put God first? Because He is the most valuable One in the universe. And He is not selfish; He chooses only what He sees and knows, in infinite wisdom to be the most valuable object in the universe; the incomparable value of His own uncreated Being, the foundation of all reality. He is not just important because He says so, He actually *is* the most important One there is! When the Bible calls Him good it means something. God is good because He has always done what is best, and always will. His law is founded in His *Being*, not His will; it is not therefore arbitrary. His Being is distinct from His will, and its infinite value obligates His will; therefore God Himself has a law to keep. Love is not just something He made up, invented. It is the way of supreme intelligence, the way God *chooses* to live, and the way He asks us all to choose likewise.

## **A Needed Message For Mankind**

What, then, is needed for men to give up their sin? A revelation of the loveliness of the Bible God. What will induce a man to forsake all and trust Him? A glimpse of His glory. As the song says:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Look full in His wonderful face

And the things of earth

Will grow strangely dim

In the light of His glory and grace

We must learn that the motive for change cannot be bribe or threat, but trust and love; and trust and love can come only from an intelligent understanding of the nature and character of the Bible God. What mankind needs is a vision of Christ; what the Church needs is a God-centered, God-honoring message, and the chief content of our preaching must begin, center and end with God *Himself*. It is the "goodness of God" that leads men to repentance. (Rom 2:4) It is not just the "gospel" we preach, but the gospel of the Kingdom of God that all men must hear before His return. Is this, today, what we are really proclaiming to mankind? (Ex. 33:18-19; 2 Chron. 6:41; Ps. 27:13; 31:19; 33:5; 65:11; 145:7; Jer. 31:12; Luke 2:14)

# The Universal Law Of Morality

The love-law is eternal; it predates, includes and supersedes all other laws ever given to man. It was the law in the garden, the law Abraham knew, the law behind the law given to Moses, the law on which hangs "all the law and the prophets." This is the one fundamental law without which we cannot enter the Kingdom. It applies to all beings in earth and heaven, it is unlimited in its scope, eternal in its application. It can never be abrogated, improved on or reduced. It is the touchstone by which we can measure all religious experience, all claims of spirituality. Do we love God first? Do we put Him and His infinite value first in all our daily acts and thoughts? Is He the star of the show for us? If not, then all our claims of righteousness, all our religious service are but dust and ashes. This is the mark that marks the genuine follower of Jesus: "Does he practically put Christ first?" Does the Lord Jesus mean more to him than anything else in the universe? And does he love those he can touch the way he cares for his own life?" For this, and only this is a Christian.

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