

# Readings

## for the Week of Prayer

To be read from Friday, December 6,  
to Sabbath, December 14, 2019

# Divine Love

1 Corinthians 13:4-7



# Introduction

Who has not been delighted at seeing a beautiful tree full of fruit? Whether it is a peach tree or an apple, pear, or orange tree, the effect is the same. We see the trunk, from which various branches grow, and on them tasty fruit, which in turn is rich in many substances that give life and health to man. This is how it is with true love, which has many virtues that are indispensable for spiritual life and prosperity. The apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians mentions a number of the spiritual characteristics of love, which will be the subject of consideration during this Week of Prayer.

In considering this great reality, the first thing we need to keep in mind is that "love is from God" (1 John 4:7) and "God is love." 1 John 4:8. The holy Scriptures tell "of His great love wherewith He loved us." Ephesians 2:4. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16. His love is so great that "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:45. His love for human beings is not just for a day or a year, but forever. Therefore, He reminds us, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Jeremiah 31:3. What can we say, then, about people who love sincerely and tenderly? "Beloved, let us love one another;... every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." 1 John 4:7.

"All who have been born into the heavenly family are in a special sense the brethren of our Lord. The love of Christ binds together the members of His family, and wherever that love is made manifest there the divine relationship is revealed. 'Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.' 1 John 4:7." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.

"The loveliness of the character of Christ will be seen in His followers. It was His delight to do the will of God. Love to God, zeal for His glory, was the controlling power in our Saviour's life. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions. Love is of God. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. It is found only in the heart where Jesus reigns. 'We love, because He first loved us.' 1 John 4:19, R.V. In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennoble the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around." —*Steps to Christ*, p. 59.

True love in the human being is therefore not a human product, but is of divine origin. The Bible confirms this by stating that "the fruit of the Spirit is love..." (Galatians 5:22) and the Spirit of prophecy calls it "the heavenly plant of love." —*Review and Herald*, October 24, 1893. So, it is both—fruit and plant. True love is thus not a vague, abstract concept; we can identify it as having definite characteristics, including patience, kindness, generosity, humility, honesty, gentleness, mercy, joy, and hope.

"We should manifest courtesy at home, in the church, and in our intercourse with all men. But especially we should manifest compassion and respect for those who are giving their lives to the cause of God. We should exercise that precious love that suffereth long and is kind; that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh

not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.... Where Jesus reigns in the heart, there will be sweet love, and we shall be tender and true to one another...." —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 230.

"Christ's love is deep and earnest, flowing like an irrepressible stream to all who will accept it. There is no selfishness in His love. If this heaven-born love is an abiding principle in the heart, it will make itself known, not only to those we hold most dear in sacred relationship but to all with whom we come in contact. It will lead us to bestow little acts of attention, to make concessions, to perform deeds of kindness, to speak tender, true, encouraging words. It will lead us to sympathize with those whose hearts hunger for sympathy." —(*Manuscript 17*, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1140.

Of the many attributes of the Father that Jesus came to reveal, love is certainly the very first that He wants to be reflected in His children and their behavior. Therefore, He taught: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:43-48. Remember Jesus' request to His Father on the cross when He was wracked by pain and suffering at the hands of those who condemned and crucified Him: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34.

The General Conference brethren have chosen this wonderful, inexhaustible subject for the 2019 Week of Prayer—the unfathomable science that the redeemed will study for all eternity. So, dear brothers and sisters all around the world, let this be the starting point for our study and daily experience.

"The theme of redemption is one that the angels desire to look into; it will be the science and the song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Is it not worthy of careful thought and study now? The infinite love and mercy of Jesus, the sacrifice made in our behalf, calls for the most serious and solemn reflection. We should dwell upon the character of our dear Redeemer and Intercessor. We should meditate upon the mission of Him who came to save His people from their sins. As we thus contemplate heavenly themes, our

faith and love will grow stronger, and our prayers will be more and more acceptable to God, because they will be more and more mixed with faith and love. They will be intelligent and fervent. There will be more constant confidence in Jesus, and a daily, living experience in His power to save to the utmost all that come unto God by Him." —*Christian Education*, p. 57.

"Love must dwell in the heart. A thoroughgoing Christian draws his motives of action from his deep heart-love for his Master. Up through the roots of his affection for Christ springs an unselfish interest in his brethren. Love imparts to its possessor grace, propriety, and comeliness of deportment. It illuminates the countenance and subdues the voice; it refines and elevates the entire being." —*Gospel Workers*, p. 123 (1915).

"If we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the Spirit of God. It is the heavenly adorning that gives true nobility and dignity to the soul and assimilates our lives to that of the Master. No matter how many good qualities we may have, however honorable and refined we may consider ourselves, if the soul is not baptized with the heavenly grace of love to God and one another, we are deficient in true goodness and unfit for heaven, where all is love and unity." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 223, 224 (1876).

As we unite in prayer and meditate on this wonderful theme, let us pray that this fruit will be produced in our lives. Sabbath, December 14, will be dedicated to fasting and consecration of our hearts and lives to the Lord. The annual offerings for the General Conference's international outreach will be gathered in thanksgiving to the Lord.

May the Lord bless richly His people through these Readings for the Week of Prayer, and may everyone grow in love in the new year and represent Him worthily.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

## Readings for the Week of Prayer

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# The Virtue of Patient Love

By E. G. White

*“Love is patient and kind;  
love does not envy or boast;  
it is not arrogant or rude.  
It does not insist on its own way;  
it is not irritable or resentful;  
it does not rejoice at wrongdoing,  
but rejoices with the truth.  
Love bears all things,  
believes all things,  
hopes all things, endures all things”*  
1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Love is power. Intellectual and moral strength are involved in this principle, and cannot be separated from it.... The excellence and value of pure love consist in its efficiency to do good, and to do nothing else than good. Whatsoever is done out of pure love, be it ever so little or contemptible in the sight of men, is wholly fruitful; for God regards more with how much love one worketh, than the amount he doeth. Love is of God. The unconverted heart cannot originate nor produce this plant of heavenly origin, which lives and flourishes only where Christ reigns. —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 311, 312 (1892).

## The grace of patience

One of the chief characteristics of true love is humility. The apostle says: “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” The man who has true zeal for God will be distrustful of self, and little in his own eyes. Love teaches us to be meek as well as lowly. Sanctified love will enable us to exhibit the grace of patience; it will help us to

restrain impetuosity and fretfulness, so that we shall repine at nothing. Love to God and our neighbor will melt away all hatred, bitterness, wrath, malice, prejudice, envy, and evil surmising. —*Signs of the Times*, February 24, 1890.

The purest joy springs from the deepest humiliation. The strongest and noblest characters are built on the foundation of patience, love, and submission to God's will.... This love “never faileth.” It can never lose its value; it is a heavenly attribute. As a precious treasure, it will be carried by its possessor through the portals of the city of God.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 319.

The sunshine of Christ's righteousness stamps His image upon the soul. His love was expressed without partiality and without hypocrisy. It was that healthful, hardy love which “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” This love is a divine love which nothing can quench. Faith and love blended bring all the heavenly graces in their train. In the possession of these, patience, kindness, affection, and perfect trust in God will be seen in the daily life. We shall manifest the meekness and lowliness of Christ, in bearing His cross, in wearing His yoke, in lifting His burdens. —*The Youth's Instructor*, June 17, 1897.

## Enduring mistreatment

The conduct of Christians is like that of their Lord. He erected the standard, and it is left for us to say whether or not we will rally around it. Our Lord and Saviour laid aside His dominion, His riches and glory, and sought after us, that He might save us from misery and make us like Himself. He humbled Himself and took our nature that we might be able to learn of Him and, imitating His life

of benevolence and self-denial, follow Him step by step to heaven. You cannot equal the copy; but you can resemble it and, according to your ability, do likewise. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.” Such love must dwell in your hearts, that you will be ready to give the treasures and honors of this world if thereby you may influence one soul to engage in the service of Christ.... “Love one another,” says our Saviour, “as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Christ has given us an example of pure, disinterested love. You have not as yet seen your deficiency in this respect, and your great need of this heavenly attainment, without which all your good purposes, and your zeal, even if it be of that nature that you could give your goods to feed the poor and your body to be burned, is nothing. You need that charity which suffereth long, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Without the spirit of love, no one can be like Christ. With this living principle in the soul, no one can be like the world. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 169, 170.

The love of God in the heart will lead us to speak gentle words.... Shall we not remember this? If the love of God is in our hearts, we shall not think evil, we shall not be easily disturbed, we shall not give loose rein to passion; but we shall show that we are yoked up with Christ, and that the restraining power of His Spirit leads us to speak words that He can approve. The yoke of Christ is the restraint of His Holy Spirit; and when we become heated by passion, let us say, “No; I have Christ

by my side, and I will not make Him ashamed of me by speaking hot, fiery words." Christ's word to all who are connected with Him is: "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." –*Review and Herald*, January 25, 1898.

You need to be cultivating all the Christian graces, but especially charity.... "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 257.

### Does not think evil of anyone

The person who cultivates the precious plant of love will be self-denying in spirit, and will not yield self-control even under provocation. He will not impute wrong motives and evil intentions to others, but will feel deeply over sin when discovered in any of the disciples of Christ. –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 123.

Christlike love places the most favorable construction on the motives and acts of others. It does not needlessly expose their faults; it does not listen eagerly to unfavorable reports, but seeks rather to bring to mind the good qualities of others. –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 319 (1911).

Let us diligently cultivate the pure principles of the gospel of Christ—the religion, not of self-esteem, but of love, meekness, and lowliness of heart. Then we shall love our brethren, and esteem them better than ourselves. Our minds will not dwell on scandal and flying reports. But "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are

lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," we shall "think on these things." –*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 505.

Wherever there is union with Christ, there is love. This is the crowning grace of the divine attributes. If love is not the abiding principle in the heart, whatever other good qualities we may possess will profit nothing.... "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." –*Signs of the Times*, August 10, 1891.

Only he whose heart is filled with compassion for fallen man, who loves to a purpose, showing his love by Christlike deeds, will be able to endure the seeing of Him who is invisible. He only who loves his fellowmen to a purpose can know God. This is the reason that there is so little genuine vitality in our churches. Theology is valueless unless it is saturated with the love of Christ. God is supreme. His love in the human heart will lead to the doing of works that will bear fruit after the similitude of the character of God. –*The Southern Review*, January 1, 1901.

### Does not judge others

And yet how many there are who place the worst possible construction on the words and acts of others. By these would-be judges every little thing is scrutinized in the light of their own perverted understanding; and instead of considering that they themselves may be in error, as were Aaron and Miriam, they repeat their suspicions to others, who take up the reproach; and thus the very work is wrought that Satan desires to accomplish. This work is what is called "rejoicing in iniquity." Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things,

endureth all things; love never faileth." This is the Christ side of the question. The opposite spirit has already been described. It leads one to dwell on all the faults of others, and overlook their good qualities. When an error is committed, it looks back to gather up all the similar deeds, and treasures up all these, to confirm the darkest suppositions and attribute the worst motives. –*Signs of the Times*, March 14, 1892.

Even under false accusation those who are in the right can afford to be calm and considerate. God is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misinterpreted by men, and we can safely leave our case in His hands. He will as surely vindicate the cause of those who put their trust in Him.... Those who are actuated by the spirit of Christ will possess that charity which suffers long and is kind. –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 520.

It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when self is dead, and our life hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach, and blind to scorn and insult. –*The Watchman*, April 7, 1908.

### Divine influence

God is supreme. His love in the human heart will lead to the doing of work that will bear fruit after the similitude of the character of God.... –*Lift Him Up*, p. 134.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Matthew 7:12. Blessed results would appear as the fruit of such a course. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Verse 2. Here are strong motives which should constrain us to love one another with a pure heart, fervently. Christ is our example. He went about doing good. He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions. We are not commanded to do to ourselves what we wish others to do unto us; we are to do unto others what



we wish them to do to us under like circumstances. The measure we mete is always measured to us again.... A selfish heart may perform generous actions, acknowledge the present truth, and express humility and affection in an outward manner, yet the motives may be deceptive and impure; the actions that flow from such a heart may be destitute of the savor of life and the fruits of true holiness, being destitute of the principles of pure love. Love should be cherished and cultivated, for its influence is divine. –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 136 (1868).

Selfishness is written on the human heart in plain, unmistakable characters. Just as soon as the love of God takes its place, there is the image and superscription of Jesus Christ. His entire life amid a world filled with pride and selfishness was without an exception an embodiment of that charity that suffereth long, and is kind: that envieth not; that “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Here is presented before us the fruits of the grace of God which every follower of Christ will manifest in his life and reveal in his character. –*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, pp. 191, 192.▲



## Reading 2 – Sabbath, December 7, 2019

# “Love Is Kind”

By Elijah Zwane, South Africa / Madagascar

*“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; ...”*

1 Corinthians 13:4.

### What is love?

In the world today many things have been said about love, and much has been done in the name of love. Unfortunately, it has often been mistaken for infatuation among the young, lust among adults, and jealousy among partners.

“Love is a plant of heavenly origin. It is not unreasonable; it is not blind. It is pure and holy. But the passion of the natural heart is another thing altogether. While pure love will take God into all its plans and will be in perfect harmony with the Spirit of God, passion will be headstrong, rash, unreasonable, defiant of all restraint, and will make the object of its choice an idol.” –*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 212.

### Love is kind

According to 1 Corinthians chapter 13, love has many attributes. Let us look at one of them—kindness. As an adjective, “kind” means having or showing a sympathetic, friendly, or generous and considerate nature.

“We love Him, because He first loved us.” 1 John 4:19.

In the Spirit of prophecy, we read how the law of kindness was put into action by God to save fallen men. God could have destroyed the disobedient pair and created new human beings who would be obedient to His law. But because of His sympathy, He revealed a plan that was established before the foundations of the earth were made.

“The whole family of Adam must die. I saw the lovely Jesus and beheld an expression of sympathy and sorrow upon His countenance. Soon I

saw Him approach the exceeding bright light which enshrouded the Father. Said my accompanying angel, He is in close converse with His Father.... Three times He was shut in by the glorious light about the Father, and the third time He came from the Father, His person could be seen.... He then made known to the angelic host that a way of escape had been made for lost man.” –*Early Writings*, p.149.

Only love coming from the heart of God would save fallen man from his helpless condition. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ chose to drink the bitter cup rather than to go back to His Father and leave the sinner in the abyss of sin. On Calvary’s cross, while the soldiers were driving their cruel nails into His hands and feet, it was this love that motivated the Saviour to plead, “Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34.

### Kindness in the family

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Proverbs 4:23.

The heart of society is the family. If we want healthy congregations and sound societies, we must start with the family. How do we deal with each other? Do we show the same spirit of kindness to our families as we do to those with whom we associate outside the family circle? Some people are saints at their work place but fiends at home. If the members of the families thirst for such kindness at home, they will surely find it somewhere. A lack of kindness in families leads to cracks that grow until marriages and family ties are shattered. Is this not also the reason why the church loses many young people to the world? In a quest to find these attributes, they drift away from God and find themselves in dangerous relationships.

After the prodigal son lost everything, he remembered the love and kindness in his father's house. He made the decision to save his life and went back to his father.

"The home is a school where all may learn how they are to act in the church. When all are members of the royal family, there will be true politeness in the home life. Each member of the family will seek to make it pleasant for every other member. The angels of God, who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, will help you to make your family a model of the heavenly family.

"Let there be peace in the home, and there will be peace in the church. This precious experience brought into the church will be the means of creating a kindly affection one for another." —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, pp. 68, 69 (1903).

I remember the story of a young girl who kept saying to her rich, busy mother, "Please, Mom. I need at least an inch of your love and time from your busy schedule." In response to this kind plea, the mother became annoyed and slapped her daughter. To everyone's surprise and amazement, the girl with a smile and tears in her eyes exclaimed, "At least today I got a touch from my mother!"

### Kindness among church members

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." John 13:34.

Besides loving one another as Christ has loved us, we need to treat each other as we would have Christ deal with us. When we are overtaken by a fault, how long does Christ take to pardon us? Is that the same amount of time we take to forgive others? The law of kindness is, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!"

What spirit do we show to people who are under attack by Satan? Do we show them sympathy? Do we show them the spirit of kindness so they may acknowledge their wrong and want to return to the fold? How many souls who were once members of the body of

Christ no longer come to church? Do we welcome them and show them the same spirit of kindness that the father showed to his prodigal son, or do we show them the cold spirit of the elder brother by exhibiting a "holier than thou" attitude?

"A glance, a word, even an intonation of the voice, may be vital with falsehood, sinking like a barbed arrow into some heart, inflicting an incurable wound. Thus a doubt, a reproach, may be cast upon one by whom God would accomplish a good work, and his influence is blighted, his usefulness destroyed. Among some species of animals, if one of their number is wounded and falls, he is at once set upon and torn in pieces by his fellows." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 59. Are we better than they?

"But the difficulty lies with the individual members of the church, and it is here that the cure must be wrought. Jesus bids the accuser first cast the beam out of his own eye, renounce his censorious spirit, confess and forsake his own sin, before trying to correct others....

"Not until you feel that you could sacrifice your own self-dignity, and even lay down your life in order to save an erring brother, have you cast the beam out of your own eye so that you are prepared to help your brother. Then you can approach him and touch his heart. No one has ever been reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many have thus been driven from Christ and led to seal their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins. The revelation of Christ in your own character will have a transforming power upon all with whom you come in contact." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 127-129.

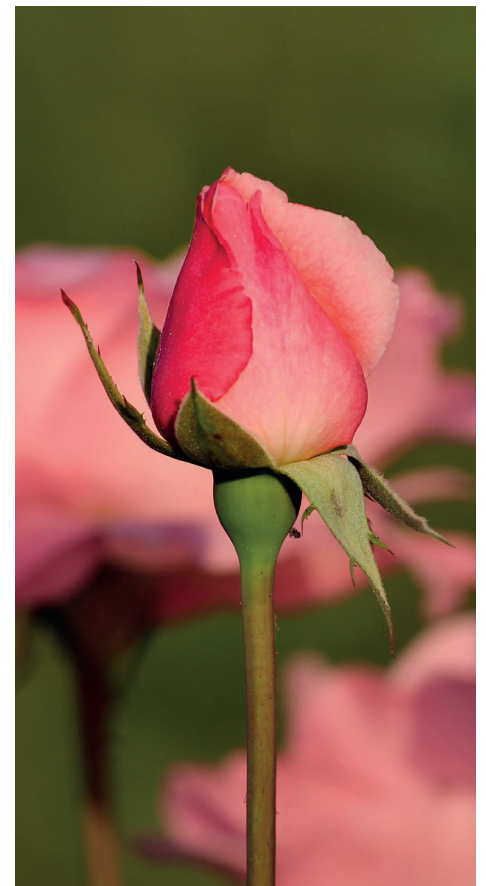
### How is it possible to have such kind love?

"Love is of God.... The unconsecrated heart cannot originate, or produce, this plant of heavenly origin, which, in order to flourish, must be watered constantly with the dew of heaven. It can

flourish only in the heart where Christ reigns. This love cannot live and flourish without action; and it cannot act without increasing in fervency, and extending and diffusing its nature to others." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 551.

This kind of love is from God alone. It is able to dwell only in the heart where Christ reigns. For it to flourish, one needs to be a co-worker with Christ for the salvation of souls. Such a person will find joy in seeing the lost return and walk in the blood-stained path. His love will be unconditional and kind to those for whom Christ died.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us open our hearts for Christ to live in us through his Holy Spirit. The best sermon ever preached is not in the pulpit or through the knowledge of the Scriptures; it is in the lives we live and our attitudes toward others. When people realize that we care, they will be convinced and take a stand on the Lord's side. May God help us in this Week of Prayer to start the New Year with the right attitude of kindness before it is too late. This is my wish and prayer in Jesus' name. Amen! ■



# "Does Not Envy"

By Humberto Avellaneda, Colombia / USA

"... love envieth not"

1 Corinthians 13:4.

Examining the deep meaning of love, one sees that it is joyful and very healing. The apostle Paul described it as the sum of all the spiritual gifts and the most excellent way. Looking at what "love is," it is like a broad road whose destination is heaven. But to determine what "love is not" is complicated and negative, for that reveals everything that is opposed to God's infinite gift.

1 Corinthians 13:4 is a powerful affirmation that "love envieth not." Envy is a feeling or mental state in which one is miserable because he does not have what someone else does, be it goods, superior qualities, or something tangible or intangible. Envy is the exact opposite of love—the inability to enjoy others' happiness. For sure one does not envy what other people suffer but rather their successes, talents, and possessions.

What does the pen of inspiration say about envy? "Envy is one of the most satanic traits that can exist in the human heart, and it is one of the most baleful in its effects....

"Envy is the offspring of pride, and if it is entertained in the heart, it will lead to hatred, and eventually to revenge and murder." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 385, 651.

"Envy is not merely a perverseness of temper, but a distemper, which disorders all the faculties....

"The envious man shuts his eyes to the good qualities and noble deeds of others. He is always ready to disparage and misrepresent that which is excellent....

"The envious man diffuses poison wherever he goes, alienating friends and stirring up hatred and rebellion against God and man." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 56.

This is a terrible defect of satanic or human origin, for it destroys the very soul; and except for the work of the Holy Spirit, it can become an incurable disease.

After considering the above, one might say, "Well, I have never gotten to such an extreme." However, considering four Biblical examples, we can see how close a person can be to this terrible attitude.

## Envy can lead to violence

"And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Genesis 4:4, 5.

"But instead of acknowledging his sin, Cain continued to complain of the injustice of God and to cherish jealousy and hatred of Abel. He angrily reproached his brother, and attempted to draw him into controversy concerning God's dealings with them. In meekness, yet fearlessly and firmly, Abel defended the justice and goodness of God. He pointed out Cain's error, and tried to convince him that the wrong was in himself. He pointed to the compassion of God in sparing the life of their parents when He might have punished them with instant death, and urged that God loved them, or He would not have given His Son, innocent and holy, to suffer the penalty which they had incurred. All this caused Cain's anger to burn the hotter. Reason and conscience told him that Abel was in the right; but he was enraged that one who had been wont to heed his counsel should now presume to disagree with him, and that he could gain no sympathy in his rebellion. In the fury of his passion he slew his brother." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 74.

Another example is in the experience of Isaac, whom God blessed for his obedience and faithfulness, as described in Genesis 26:12-17: "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him. For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

"And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there." Genesis 26:12-17.

The next example is about rivalry between brothers for their parents' love. Sadly, Joseph's brothers were affected by the deadly virus of envy. "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." "And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying." "And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him." Genesis 37:4, 11, 18.

The fourth example occurred in the time of Solomon, when two harlots who lived together were brought before the king. The newborn baby of one of the women died, and she tried to make the other woman believe that the deceased baby was hers. What happened? "And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon



her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.” 1 Kings 3:24-26. In her envy, the woman of the dead child went so far as to agree to the idea of killing a living child.

In three of these four cases, it was envy that led individuals to want to take someone’s life. What arouses such envy in a human being? “I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbor.” Ecclesiastes 4:4, first part. When one lets envy take possession of his heart, it arouses hatred, anger, and revenge. “There is no surer way of weakening ourselves in spiritual things, than to be envious, suspicious of one another, full of fault-finding and evil surmising.” –*Review and Herald*, June 5, 1888.

Now we will examine the context and an example in real life that is very common, even though people have read and heard sermons about 1 Corinthians 13 many times.

The story is of Roman, a Bible teacher and excellent preacher. He was 50 years old and served faithfully in the church after he was baptized at seventeen years of age. He knew a lot about the Bible and had certain skills that qualified him to teach in the church, something that he did for almost eighteen years. However, some of the participants in his classes complained about him, asserting that he was abrupt, while others accused him of accepting people too quickly. Because of these things, the church leadership began to give him fewer opportunities to teach. Having to sit in the congregation as if he were a student caused Roman to be resentful of Horacio, who was chosen to teach in the church. Some people sympathized with Roman, who tried to make the other brother look bad in front of the class, in addition to dominating the dialogue, sometimes with long explanations and the desire to be noticed. Sadly, he did not see that his heart was become more and more envious and hostile, things that are not appropriate for a true Christian and especially for those who claim to be God’s people at the end of time.

Unfortunately, this type of thing is not new; in fact, its origin was in heaven. Lucifer, the glorious angel who was privileged to be one of the covering cherubs next to God’s throne, was overcome by envy and lost his high dignity. “He desired to be first in heaven, and because he could not have all the power and glory he sought, he rebelled against the government of God. He envied our first parents and tempted them to sin and thus ruined them and all the human race.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 56.

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!” Isaiah 14:12. What a fatal outcome! The inevitable result of his rejecting God’s authority was his unrelenting effort to implant the terrible defect of envy in the heart of every human being; and to a large extent, he has been successful!

Dear brothers and sisters, it is time to wake up! Of all human weaknesses, envy is one of the most cruel and despicable. The wise man asked a question: “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?” Proverbs 27:4. Envy is like a hurricane, cyclone, or tornado that nothing can resist when it appears. In fact, Solomon compared it to a cancer that rots the bones. “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.” Proverbs 14:30.

But the biggest problem is that no one can escape this cruel spirit, whether poor or rich, child or adult, “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” James 3:16.

The victim of this terrible scourge, the modern human being, has become part of a system that drives him to acquire possessions and to continue to want more. He is chained to a curse, believing that happiness comes from having more and being above others. He is attached to his supposed treasures, even as he suffers when he sees someone who has more than he does. He actually suffers from a comparison complex without realizing that he is like one who drinks sea water, for he will become thirstier and thirstier.

Thus, it is not difficult to find a farmer who has a very productive farm but asks, “Why does my neighbor

produce more and better crops and have more sheep than I do?” A professor might question, “Why does that professor know more than I do?” A person may want to sell his cell phone so he can buy the new one that just came out. Others are never happy with their clothes and always need to buy the latest fashion. Many say, “I don’t want this car any more, because my neighbor has a newer one.” And, in a business, the typical question may be, “Why was he promoted and I was not? I have been working here longer than he; I believe my rights are being violated!”

“The envious man ... seeks to be thought best and greatest, not by putting forth heroic, self-denying efforts to reach the goal of excellence himself, but by standing where he is and diminishing the merit due to the efforts of others.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 56.

Nevertheless, by the grace of God, the terrible, destructive picture that we have described so far can be changed. God’s work will not end in defeat. Christ won the battle and offers everyone hope and a better way.

### **An example of love that never envied**

If there was ever someone who could have been jealous and envious because of what was happening to him, it was Jonathan, the son of King Saul. In fact, his father warned him: “For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established nor thy kingdom.” 1 Samuel 20:31. Saul and Jonathan knew that David, the son of Jesse, would be the next king of Israel; but it was Saul who cultivated the spirit of jealousy and envy to the point of repeatedly trying to kill David.

However, Jonathan was completely different. His kind soul and his communion with God did not allow Satan to plant an evil spirit in his heart nor encourage the insinuations and evil attitudes of his father. In fact, “when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul,... the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” “Then Jonathan and David made a covenant,



because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.” 1 Samuel 18:1-4. That is the result of having Christ in one’s heart, of being in harmony with the will of heaven’s Supreme Ruler!

As I write these words, my heart is moved to consider this example more deeply, because I can verify that the word of the Lord is alive and effective in converting the soul. I thank the Eternal Father, because He always has a way to block the damage that Satan wants to cause in the human heart. Even though the poisonous seeds of envy were sown in heaven and today produce disastrous results, we can say with certainty that, through the Holy Spirit’s work, it is possible to experience that love that does not envy. His regenerative work can make the heart of the converted man know that, no matter what others have, are, grow, or buy, nothing can harm his soul and he can delight in the joy and success of others.

The Scriptures say that that the souls of David and Jonathan were “knit,” or linked. That is what needs to happen today in the home, in the church, in the workplace, and wherever one is. Jonathan loved David as a brother until death, never considering him a rival or an enemy. There was peace and love between them, because they had agreed to this. This is the experience of the new birth, which must be desired and experienced by all who live at the end of time.

Dear brother, sister, and friend, such an experience is possible only when one is able to do what Jonathan did: “And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.” 1 Samuel 18:4. Think of it this way: We need to take off our own clothing, which symbolizes jealousy, envy, pride, self-righteousness, and love of self. It is necessary to give it to Jesus so He can heal every wound and scar. But that is not all. We must also give Jesus our weapons. Jonathan gave David the weapons he could have used

to kill David; he gave him everything. He gave away his “attachments and treasures” and thus found freedom to love as Christ loves.

Today the Lord also asks you to give Him your clothes so that you can be clothed with the righteousness of heaven. He also asks each person to surrender the weapons of war and violence, the weapons of human defense with which one wants to kill his brother. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus wants to give you a more powerful weapon, one that cannot be found on this earth, one that is able to shield you from every snare of the evil one. With it, you can win all the battles and be victorious, as was Christ. That weapon is love. “Love envieth not.” The love that Christ came to this earth and demonstrated, most of all when He died on the cross of Calvary, gives us hope and new life in Him. The love of God in one’s heart is the only source of love that fulfills the law, because His love is the fulfillment of the law.

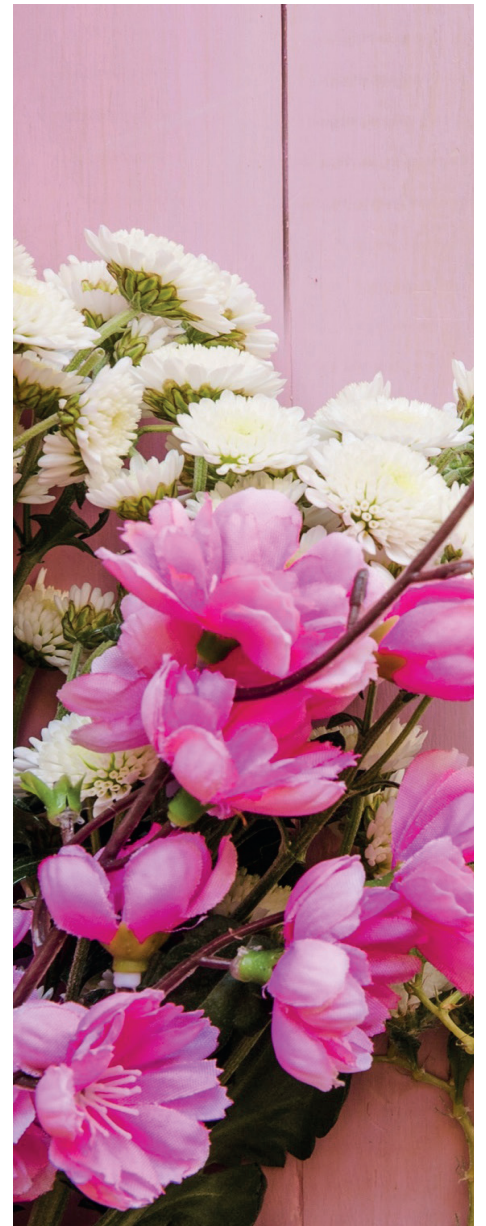
### ***God alone has the solution***

Asaph, a man of God and the composer of Psalm 73, explained how he felt when he was on the verge of taking the wrong path: “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” Psalm 73:2, 3. This experience catches my attention, because, while it presents the true condition of a person, it also gives the solution. If one has fallen into such a temptation, or even if he is in the situation of being “almost” trapped, the psalmist writes: “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” Psalm 73:17.

Dear fellow believers, as we finish this year 2019, it is necessary that we, with a sincere heart and deep humility, enter God’s sanctuary. Only there can we understand the great need of Christ’s righteousness. With deep love, I invite you to enter there, to have a personal, intimate encounter with the Saviour, for through His presence our soul can be freed from the dangerous,

evil, destructive spirit of envy. Then our feet will not slip.

Do not let time pass by, for now is the best time to take care of this. Do not wait for others to do it, but say, as did Asaph: “But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Thy works.” Psalm 73:28. God wants to give you the love that does not envy. Open your heart so He can occupy His rightful place there. Then the new year will be different. It will be full of true love so your life will exert an elevating influence on all who are around you, and they will glorify the Father by seeing your good works. May we each fulfill that mission here on this earth. Maranatha! Amen! ■



# “DOES NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY”

By Roland de la Paz, Philippines

“Doth not behave itself unseemly”

1 Corinthians 13:5.

## Love

“Love” is one of the most misconstrued words in the world. We often hear the words, “I love you,” spoken by people in different languages and places around the world. We may hear this expression from children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly. Couples and lovers express their affection for one another with this phrase. Others use it with their friends.

Generally love is defined in a worldly manner rather than with a spiritual meaning. Consider the three kinds of love in Greek, *eros* (erotic), *phileo* (brotherly) and *agape* (godly love). People tend to focus on the erotic kind of love until they learn of God and are converted. As followers of Christ, we need to possess the love that God requires us to attain to, as it is written: “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Christians are channels of blessings, grace, peace, and love in this world. Each one may have received several talents from God; but if a person does not acquire heavenly love, such talents will be of no value. The Spirit of prophecy describes the kind of love that one needs to develop and possess as Christ’s disciples. “No matter how high the profession, he whose heart is not filled with love for God and his fellow men is not a true

disciple of Christ. Though he should possess great faith and have power even to work miracles, yet without love his faith would be worthless. He might display great liberality; but should he, from some other motive than genuine love, bestow all his goods to feed the poor, the act would not commend him to the favor of God. In his zeal he might even meet a martyr’s death, yet if not actuated by love, he would be regarded by God as a deluded enthusiast or an ambitious hypocrite.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 318, 319. God looks at the heart, and He wants us to be motivated by love and the willingness to serve.

The decalogue is based on love to God and our fellowmen. That law is a revelation of the divine will, a transcript of the divine character, and a reflection of the attributes of heaven. Developing such love in our Christian lives is the most vital element for our salvation, since we need to be like Jesus in our characters. Jesus Christ is obedient to the Father, and we need to be obedient to Him and His commandments, as the Scripture says: “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.” John 15:10. “Christ is our pattern, the perfect and holy example that has been given us to follow. We can never equal the pattern, but we may imitate and resemble it according to our ability.” —*Review and Herald*, February 5, 1895.

## Love in everyday life

The love that springs from the heart will be manifested in our daily lives. It will not become weary in well doing but will continue to work consistently and continually as the daily grace from God is received by the submissive learner of Christ. It is

not a respecter of persons but rather is impartial in loving all men and does not expect any favor in return. It will have compassion on everyone and seek to save the lost. It is not self-centered and self-seeking.

“The word of God is to have a sanctifying effect on our association with every member of the human family. The leaven of truth will not produce the spirit of rivalry, the love of ambition, the desire to be first. True, heaven-born love is not selfish and changeable. It is not dependent on human praise. The heart of him who receives the grace of God overflows with love for God and for those for whom Christ died. Self is not struggling for recognition. He does not love others because they love and please him, because they appreciate his merits, but because they are Christ’s purchased possession. If his motives, words, or actions are misunderstood or misrepresented, he takes no offense, but pursues the even tenor of his way. He is kind and thoughtful, humble in his opinion of himself, yet full of hope, always trusting in the mercy and love of God.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 101.

Love is never passive but rather active in all its dealings. It will function continually until it comes into the full stature in the fulness of Christ. It gushes naturally like a river flows and touches hearts beyond its sphere.

“Love cannot live without action, and every act increases, strengthens, and extends it. Love will gain the victory when argument and authority are powerless. Love works not for profit nor reward; yet God has ordained that great gain shall be the certain result of every labor of love. It is diffusive in its nature and quiet in its operation, yet strong and mighty in its purpose to overcome great evils. It is melting



and transforming in its influence and will take hold of the lives of the sinful and affect their hearts when every other means has proved unsuccessful.” –*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 210.

### Love does not dishonor others

To dishonor someone means to bring disgrace or shame upon him. Love does not mistreat others because of difference of opinion, ideas, origin, faith or religion. Love does not embarrass or humiliate a person. Love does not delight in downing someone or making disparaging remarks about him but instead is sensitive to an individual’s noble qualities. A true Christian will never dishonor a person, regardless of his caste, race, age, gender, education, profession, religious affiliation, poverty, or affluence, for God is no respecter of persons.

A noble Christian will not destroy someone’s reputation to make himself appear better than his fellow and will not dishonor him, for he believes and understands that God is the owner of every person. Character assassination is rampant in the world and has crept into the church. Some professed Christians feast on rumors and gossip. They delight to hear destructive information about the people around them.

“When we listen to a reproach against our brother, we take up that reproach. To the question, ‘Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?’ the psalmist answered, ‘He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor.’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 58.

I remember an example my teacher gave when I was in the fourth grade. If you destroy the reputation of a person and want to be forgiven, it is like taking a pillow, going up to the fourth floor of a building on a busy street, opening the pillow, and shaking all of

its contents out the window. Then you go down to pick up all the contents of the pillow until you have put everything back where it was before. Because the building is on a busy road where buses, cars, and trucks pass and the wind may be strong, it will be extremely hard to pick up all the contents. The same is true in destroying the reputation of a person. It is a grievous sin before the Lord, not just before man. It is virtually irreversible even if we repent. It is a curse both to the speaker and the hearer.

“Charity ‘doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.’ Christ-like love places the most favorable construction on the motives and acts of others. It does not needlessly expose their faults; it does not listen eagerly to unfavorable reports, but seeks rather to bring to mind the good qualities of others.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 319.

A true Christian will not dishonor God by dishonoring others. We must be courteous, kind, and forbearing, showing that the meekness of Jesus and His Spirit are ruling in our everyday lives so that His light will shine upon all men and His name will be glorified.

### Respect, a Christian attribute

Respect is a virtue that professed Christians should cultivate and possess. In the family, in the church, and in the community where we live it should be evident and distinct. We need to respect every person—children, young people, and the elderly. We need to respect our fellow believers and the leaders whom God has anointed.

“Men who have been appointed to different positions of trust are to be respected. We do not expect to find men who are perfect in every respect. They may be seeking for perfection of character, but they are finite and liable to err. Those who are engaged in our institutions should feel it their duty jealously to guard both the work and the workers from unjust criticism. They should not readily accept or speak words of censure against any

who are connected with the work of God, for in thus doing God Himself may be reproached and the work that He is doing through instrumentalities may be greatly hindered. The wheels of progress may be blocked when God says ‘Go forward.’

“It is a great evil, and one which exists among our people to a great extent, to give loose rein to the thoughts, to question and criticize everything another does, making mountains out of molehills, and thinking their own ways are right, whereas, if they were in the same place as their brother, they might not do half as well as he does. It is just as natural for some to find fault with what another does as it is for them to breathe. They have formed the habit of criticizing others, when they themselves are the ones who should be brought severely to task and their wicked speeches and hard feelings be burned out of their souls by the purifying fire of God’s love.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 297.

### Respect fellow workers

Jesus said, “I am the Good Shepherd,” and we are His undershepherds, His co-workers. We are God’s property, and we need to respect Him and everything that He owns. Respect begets respect. The golden rule applies in every aspect of our being as well.

“A person who will allow any degree of suspicion or censure to rest upon his fellow workers, while he neither rebukes the complainers nor faithfully presents the matter before the one condemned, is doing the work of the enemy. He is watering the seeds of discord and of strife, the fruit of which he will have to meet in the day of God.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 297.

“It does not please God to have His servants censure, criticize, and condemn one another. He has given them a special work, that of standing in defense of truth. They are His workmen; all should respect them, and they should respect one another. In the army, officers are required to respect their fellow officers, and the privates

soon learn the lesson. When the leaders of the people in the Christian warfare are kind and forbearing, and manifest a special love and regard for their co-laborers, they teach others to do the same.

“The reputation of a fellow laborer is to be sacredly guarded. If one sees faults in another, he is not to magnify them before others, and make them grievous sins. They may be errors of judgment, that God will give divine grace to overcome. If He had seen that angels, who are perfect, would have done the work for the fallen race better than men, He would have committed it to them. But instead of this He sent the needed assistance by poor, weak, erring mortals, who, having like infirmities as their fellow-men, are best prepared to help them.” —*Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 120.

“A man who wishes to preserve his self-respect and dignity must be careful not to sacrifice the respect and dignity of others.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20, p. 186.

### Courtesy

One attribute that was prominent in Jesus Christ was courtesy. He was courteous even in times of severe tests and trials from childhood to manhood. We need to develop this attribute with the help of the Holy Spirit if we want to be with our Creator in the hereafter.

“Those who profess to be followers of Christ and are at the same time rough, unkind, and uncourteous in words and deportment have not learned of Jesus. A blustering, overbearing, faultfinding man is not a Christian; for to be a Christian is to be Christlike. The conduct of some professed Christians is so lacking in kindness and courtesy that their good is evil spoken of. Their sincerity may not be doubted; their uprightness may not be questioned, but sincerity and uprightness will not atone for a lack of kindness and courtesy....

“The Bible enjoins courtesy; and it presents many illustrations of the unselfish spirit, the gentle grace, the winsome temper, that characterize true

politeness. These are but reflections of the character of Christ....

“Christianity will make a man a gentleman. Christ was courteous, even to His persecutors; and His true followers will manifest the same spirit.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 427, 425.

“We are to learn to be loyal to one another, to be true as steel in the defense of our brethren. Look to your own defects. You had better discover one of your own faults than ten of your brother’s. Remember that Christ has prayed for these, His brethren, that they all might be one as He is one with the Father. Seek to the uttermost of your capabilities to be in harmony with your brethren to the extent of Christ’s measurement, as He is one with the Father.

“‘Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.’ 1 Peter 3:8. True moral worth does not seek to have a place for itself by evil thinking and evil speaking, by demeriting others. All envy, all jealousy, all evil speaking, with all unbelief, must be put away from God’s children.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 178.

### Love one another

God’s remnant church will be composed of loving people. The world will know them because they manifest love in their daily life, and this love will be the most prominent characteristic of the true followers of God. So, we ought to love one another as God commanded us, “that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another,” and “this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” 1 John 3:23, 11. “Christ is our example. He went about doing good. He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1 p. 207.

“Christianity is the revealing of the tenderest affection for one another. Christ is to receive supreme love from the beings He has created. And He requires also that man shall cherish a sacred regard for his fellow beings. Every soul saved will be saved through

love, which begins with God. True conversion is a change from selfishness to sanctified affection for God and for one another.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 114, 115 (1901).

“The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470 (1905).

“Love must dwell in the heart. A thoroughgoing Christian draws his motives of action from his deep heart-love for his Master.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 123 (1915).

“Those who love God cannot harbor hatred or envy. When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 209.

“If we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the Spirit of God. It is the heavenly adorning that gives true nobility and dignity to the soul and assimilates our lives to that of the Master. No matter how many good qualities we may have, however honorable and refined we may consider ourselves, if the soul is not baptized with the heavenly grace of love to God and one another, we are deficient in true goodness and unfit for heaven, where all is love and unity.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 223, 224 (1876).

“Love, lifted out of the realm of passion and impulse, becomes spiritualized and is revealed in words and acts. A Christian must have a sanctified tenderness and love, in which there is no impatience or fretfulness; the rude, harsh manners must be softened by the grace of Christ.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 335 (1885).

“Heaven takes notice of the one who carries about with him an atmosphere of peace and love. Such a one will receive his reward. He will stand in the great day of the Lord.” —*Our High Calling*, p. 234.

### Appeal

“Church membership will not guarantee us heaven. We must abide in Christ, and His love must abide in us.

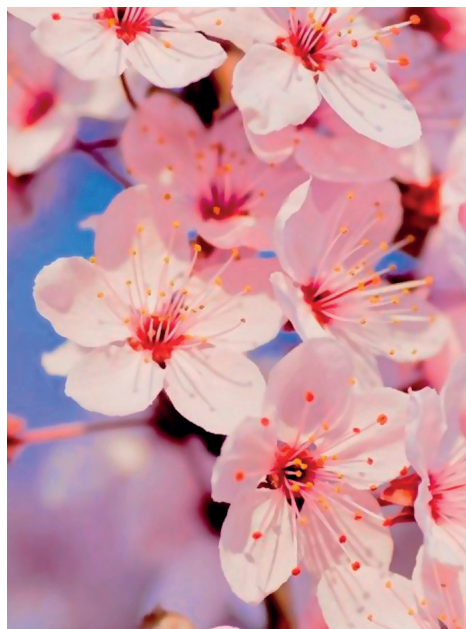


We must every day make advancement in the formation of symmetrical character.... As God is perfect, so are we required to be perfect in ours.” —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 446, 447.

Christ came to this world to reveal God’s love. His followers are to continue the work which He began. Let us strive to help and strengthen one another. Seeking the good of others is the way in which true happiness can be found. Man does not work against his own interest by loving God and his fellowmen.

“The more unselfish his spirit, the happier he is, because he is fulfilling God’s purpose for him. The breath of God is breathed through him, filling him with gladness. To him life is a sacred trust, precious in his sight because given by God to be spent in ministering to others.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 24, 25.

May the Spirit of God enlighten our minds with the true meaning of love, as the Scriptures express it in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, and may we rejoice that charity “doth not behave itself unseemly.” I pray that this Week of Prayer will be a blessing to all the believers around the world. Let us continue in the faith, for we are fast approaching the end of the earth’s history and nearing the home that God has promised to all who are faithful, obedient, and loving. Amen.



## “Seeketh Not Her Own”

By Idel Suarez, Jr., U.S.A.

Love “seeketh not her own...”

1 Corinthians 13:5.

### The problem of selfishness

Robert Diller was a neighbor to Abraham Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois, before the latter became President of the United States. One day Mr. Diller saw Mr. Lincoln walking with his two sons, who were crying and wailing loudly. Mr. Diller inquired, “Why, Mr. Lincoln, what’s the matter with the boys?”

Lincoln replied, “Just what’s the matter with the whole world.” He then added, “I’ve got three walnuts, and each of my boys wants two of them!”<sup>1</sup>

What is wrong with the world? Simply, it is selfishness. Each seeks his own will, irrespective of the need and concern of others.

The great German reformer, Dr. Martin Luther, recognized the danger of selfishness that was engraved in the very fiber of every human being. He said, “I am more afraid of my own heart than of the pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great pope: SELF.”<sup>2</sup>

Is SELF the great pope of your life? Selfishness is part of the sinful human flesh. One of the two first words that children learn highlights their overbearing desire to please self—their ego. The first word is “no,” and the other word is “mine.” If a little girl sees something she likes, she says, “It’s mine.” If she can reach and grab it, she says, “It’s mine.” If she likes it, she says, “It’s mine.” If another child has it, then again she says, “It’s mine.” Sadly, many never grow out of this inclination. They just grow up to fulfill the ego’s creed. Do you know the ego’s creed? Here it is:

- “Think about yourself,
- “Talk about yourself,
- “Use the word ‘I’ as often as possible,
- “Expect to be appreciated and praised,
- “Insist on your own rights,
- “Never forgive criticism,
- “Demand agreement with your own views on everything,
- “Seek your own will always,
- “Do as little as possible for others.

“Simply, be selfish.”<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, the first person learned in the grammar of any language is always “I.” The second person is “you.” The third person is “he.”

Selfishness means to be inconsiderate of others and “concerned with one’s own personal profit or pleasure,” or interest.<sup>4</sup> It is the opposite of being selfless or unselfish, which has as its root the disregard of oneself and interest for the well-being of others.

“The sin which is indulged to the greatest extent, and which separates us from God and produces so many contagious spiritual disorders, is selfishness.”<sup>5</sup> “Selfishness and worldliness” are “not consistent with Christian character.” It is not possible to be selfish and Christlike.<sup>6</sup>

Selfishness is a sin. It is transgression of the tenth commandment. It seeks its own will, without any concern for the well-being of others, and only to satisfy the desires, passions, and instincts prompted by the sinful flesh or the old man. The selfish person walks on the rights of others to uphold his ego’s right at all costs.

I believe that selfishness is also at the root of many mental disorders that afflict our world today, the cause of marital dissatisfaction, and a culprit in interpersonal problems. At least two of the diagnostic criteria used to assess “narcissistic personality disorder” are related to selfishness:

1. “Takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends;”
2. “Lack empathy,” that is, such people are unwilling “to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others.”<sup>7</sup>

Those who are selfish continually, consciously, or unconsciously “seek their own” will, interest, desire, and purpose. Thus, there seem to be two kinds of people on earth—those “who are continually thinking of their own rights, and those who are continually thinking of their duties; those who always insist upon their privileges and those who always remember their responsibilities; those who are always thinking of what life owes them and those who never forget what they owe to life.”<sup>8</sup> Which are you?

### *A new language and credo*

The apostle Paul, in writing to the Gentile converts in Corinth, knew their innate struggles with selfishness. They were suing one another in court. They were committing incest. They were speaking gibberish tongues to show off. They were dividing the church by siding with different cliques as followers of Apollos, Cephas, or Paul. So Paul, in at least three places in his letter, emphasizes that the Christian must not seek his or her own interest at the expense of others.

“Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.” 1 Corinthians 10:24. This was a novel idea to the Greeks. They were taught from childhood to make a profit at any cost, even if it meant dishonesty in commercial dealings. Paul sought to teach them a new, better, “more excellent way.” 1 Corinthians 12:31.

What do we seek? Jesus asked the two disciples who were following Him, “What seek ye?” John 1:38. The

unconverted seek pleasure, friends, convenience, comfort, fame, wealth, and honor. But we, like the Greeks that came to Christ, need to say, “We would see Jesus.” John 12:21. Likewise, the world wants to see Jesus in you. This is what Paul wanted to teach his Corinthian friends and fellow believers. He wanted them to follow the love of Jesus. “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” 1 Corinthians 16:22.

On a practical level, loving, selfless Christians remember others in their prayers. They pray for their needs, conversion, and well-being. Loving, selfless Christians praise God, not self. In church elections, they vote not for themselves, but for others. With their funds, they contribute to others’ needs, not just provide for themselves.

Since repetition is the mother of wisdom, Paul repeated the principle to “not seek your own” and gave a powerful Christian proof for doing so. He cited his own behavior as an example and the reason for it—the salvation of souls.

“Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.” 1 Corinthians 10:33.

Paul, in his language of love, defined love as the greatest of all Christian virtues. 1 Corinthians 13:13. Interestingly, he cited several behaviors in the negative to illustrate what a loving Christian would not do. He would not be selfish, described as “seeketh not her own.” 1 Corinthians 13:5. The New International Version reads, “It is not self-seeking.”<sup>9</sup> Yet the clearest translation for this phrase is perhaps in the Revised Standard Version, which states, “Love does not insist on its own way.”<sup>10</sup>

Does this mean that it is wrong to seek one’s own development? Is it wrong to seek a job, to seek an education, or to develop a business? Is it wrong to seek a companion for marriage? No.

John Calvin, the great French reformer of the sixteenth century, clarified the meaning of “seeketh not her own.” He wrote: “If we think of ourselves so as to neglect others, or if the desire of our own advantage calls

us off from” the concern of others, then, we are guilty of “seeking our own.”<sup>11</sup>

Calvin believed that, left to itself, selfishness springs up naturally. “We are naturally prone to have love and care for ourselves and aim at our own advantage.”<sup>12</sup> It is contrary to human nature not to “seek your own benefit.” But, when God implants His divine love in us, then we “feel concern for our neighbors and their welfare.”<sup>13</sup>

Why is it wrong to just seek your own? It is because God has commanded us to be our brother’s keeper. In fact, He will not pour out the Latter Rain until His people learn to put loving concern for others in the place of selfish concern for oneself and one’s family. Without a Christ-like character, it is impossible to receive the final outpouring of God’s Spirit.

“God cannot pour out His Spirit when selfishness and self-indulgence are so manifest; when a spirit prevails that, if put into words, would express that answer of Cain—‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’”<sup>14</sup>

“The ice that binds about souls that are frozen up with selfishness needs to be melted away, so that every brother shall realize that he is his brother’s keeper.... Then those who profess the name of Christ will aid others in the formation of a Christ-like character.... God’s love in the heart would melt away the barriers of race and caste and would remove the obstacles with which men have barred others away from the truth as it is in Jesus.... It will lead them to help the suffering, and enable them to be faithful shepherds going forth into the wilderness to seek and to save the lost, to lead back the perishing sheep and lambs.”<sup>15</sup>

### *A selfless life*

“True love is always unselfish. How easily said, how hard to attain.”<sup>16</sup> Yet even Plato, a vegetarian Greek philosopher of antiquity, taught that all good virtues are exemplified in God and that these can be imitated by His followers.

“Consider first that God ... offers Himself to all as a pattern of every



excellence, thus rendering human virtue ... accessible to all who can follow God.”<sup>17</sup>

Plato spoke of human virtues, but Paul exalted divine virtues. Love is the greatest of all divine virtues. 1 Corinthians 13:13. It is not naturally part of the human soul but must be implanted by the grace of God and the actions of His Spirit.

The seeds of love are found in the gospel of Jesus, which Paul retold. Those seeds must be planted in the human heart and depend on the sunshine and rain from above.<sup>18</sup> Without divine intervention, true, unselfish love cannot blossom or avoid withering away. The garden needs to be walled in by God’s law, and the weeds of the flesh must be uprooted. The garden needs continual care from below, by us, and from above, by God. Love is not a seed that will blossom, develop, and care for itself. No. As in the beginning with Adam (Genesis 2:15), we too are to be spiritual gardeners of the heart. Jesus, the second Adam, arose as the gardener (John 20:15), not just of the tomb of Joseph but also of every heart that pleads for the seeds of love. It is only when Christ is born in us that the true plant of love can spring up. It requires major upkeep on the part of God and on our part through His grace.

If we believe that Jesus is our Lord and God, we will imitate His example and allow the seed of love to develop in us as we become our brother’s keeper. We will live lives of unselfishness, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and self-control. We will not shun the inconvenience and discomfort that accompany sharing God’s love with others. “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken.”<sup>19</sup> Yet it is better to have loved than never to have loved at all. It is better to be vulnerable in loving, knowing that souls will be touched, Jesus will be glorified, and we will come closer to eternity.

“Our churches are sadly destitute of spirituality. They have a correct theory of truth, and, satisfied with this, they have indulged a spirit of pride and boasting, while they greatly lack the power of godliness.

These churches must be aroused.... Our religion requires self-denial, self-sacrifice, at every step. Jesus came down from heaven to teach us how to live; and while on earth He went about doing good. Those who are really representatives of Christ are working for the good of others. They delight in advancing the cause of God both at home and abroad. They are seen and heard, and their influence is felt, at the prayer meeting. They will try to supply the place of the minister, whose labors they cannot have. They do not seek to exalt self, or to receive credit for doing a great work, but labor humbly, meekly, faithfully, doing small errands or doing a greater work, if necessary, because Christ has done so much for them.”<sup>20</sup>

“We must guard ourselves against a love of self that will lead us to neglect to render obedience to the important instructions Christ has given. These lessons should be so impressed upon our minds that we will consider how our words and actions appear to those who behold them. We should studiously cultivate Christian courtesy at all times, which will keep us from neglecting that which is due to others.... If all who claim to believe the truth would practice the lessons of Jesus to love our neighbor as ourselves, there would be a forward, upward movement all along the line. We are to love souls for whom the Saviour died, with the pure unselfish love He manifested when He became our sacrifice.”<sup>21</sup>

“Let heads of families look into their home life. Is this love exemplified in the family circle? Go farther in your self-examination: in your association with your brethren in church capacity, do you find unkindness, selfishness, or even dishonesty? Be sure that you examine and prove yourselves as Paul has directed: ‘Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves.’ In the light of God’s word, search carefully whether you truly have the love of God in the heart.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Sundar Singh sought not his own**

The story is told of an Indian convert named Sundar Singh. He was traveling with a Tibetan companion on

a bitterly cold day. Snow was falling, and both were nearly frozen and getting sleepy. Suddenly as they neared a precipice, they beheld in the distance a man who had slipped over the edge, fallen, and was almost dead. Sundar suggested that they both help carry the wounded man to safety, but the Tibetan refused, claiming that they needed to save themselves. The Tibetan went on alone. Sundar sought not his own convenience or interest as the Tibetan.

With difficulty, Sundar managed to carry the dying man up a slope and onto his back. He struggled to go on for hours. Surprisingly, he came across another man in the snow who was frozen to death. It was the body of his Tibetan companion. Sundar went on, and as he walked through the snow the body of the man he was carrying became warm and his own body grew warm too through his exertions. At last, they reached a village, where they were taken into a house. They had survived. It was then that Sundar understood the words of Jesus.<sup>23</sup> “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.” Mark 8:35. Sundar sought not his own interest, but the interest of the injured man. Did not Jesus do the same? Will you, too, “seek not your own” in the new year 2020?

In optometry, a vision of 20/20 is considered good eyesight. Therefore, may you see the mission of love that the Lord wants you fulfill in 2020. I pray that you will have that special heavenly, unselfish love that sees by faith and “seeketh not her own.” Amen. ■

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# "REJOICETH IN THE TRUTH"

*By Francesco D. Caputo, Italy*

*"Rejoiceth not in iniquity,  
but rejoiceth in the truth"*

1 Corinthians 13:6.

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends, in this Reading, I am pleased to share an analysis of what the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:6. This chapter emphasizes the importance of love in the life of the believer. This is not the love that is commonly known and exists in this world, but the sublime, celestial love that comes from God. Human love is false and selfish, stimulating emotion and generating a type of happiness as a result of each action. That is, people generally think that everything they do should bring them happiness, wealth, and satisfaction at the expense of others. In His prophetic message, Jesus said: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Matthew 24:12. Throughout the world, one can see this lack of love everywhere, which results as iniquity increases and abounds. Even in the so-called Christian churches, this phenomenon is present; and our community is also not free from problems and difficulties due to the lack of that true, genuine love that is found in Jesus.

Now let us consider the text of this verse: "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Iniquity opposes God and His holy law. But "God is true," and his law is "holy,... just and good." John 3:33; Romans 7:12. When one has pleasure in unrighteousness, it means that he loves sin, enjoys it, and seeks to make unfair plans to harm others. The unconverted person does this, because it is part of his DNA, for "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;..." Isaiah 64:4-6.

We may say, as some do: "I am not unfair, and I do not like or enjoy

iniquity." But is this true? Is it really like that?

We can compare our lives with the light of God's word, particularly 1 John 1:5-10: "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

In accordance with these verses, I believe that each of us must take a spiritual journey on the path of sanctification to overcome our weakness, unrighteousness, and iniquity "by the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 12:11.

## Ham and Noah

God's word presents examples of people who enjoyed the unrighteousness or sin of others. One even laughed at his father's sin, becoming a preacher and divulger of his own parent's transgression. I refer to Ham, Noah's third son.

Moses related an episode in the life of the patriarch Noah: "And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren



without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant." Genesis 9:20-26.

This incident is very sad in Ham's life, because he did not cover his father's nakedness! He also went and reported to his brothers what had transpired. Such actions caused God to put a curse on Ham's son and all of his descendants. There were other things that Ham could have done; he should not have looked upon his father's nakedness. He could have covered him with a coat, as his brothers did later, and he should not have told others about the matter. Noah's sin was serious, but Ham's was even more so, for while his father was intoxicated and under the influence of alcohol, Ham acted in a way that showed that he had pleasure in unrighteousness. The fifth commandment clearly teaches that one is to honor and love his parents, but unfortunately Ham paid no attention to this principle and the promise associated with it and committed an act of iniquity.

The Spirit of prophecy explains the divine precept: "Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. God Himself, who has placed upon them a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge, has ordained that during the earlier years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God to their children. And he who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God. The fifth commandment requires children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age. It also enjoins respect

for ministers and rulers and for all others to whom God has delegated authority.

"This, says the apostle, 'is the first commandment with promise.' Ephesians 6:2. To Israel, expecting soon to enter Canaan, it was a pledge to the obedient, of long life in that good land; but it has a wider meaning, including all the Israel of God, and promising eternal life upon the earth when it shall be freed from the curse of sin." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

Noah committed this wicked act at a time of weakness, and Ham should have hidden it but did not. How many times, my dear brothers and friends, do we commit similar acts of iniquity? How often do we despise and amplify our parents' mistakes and weaknesses? How often do we report and spread the sins of pastors and members? How many times do people criticize the work of ministers? If a deep change and spiritual revival do not take place in us, what curse will fall on our children? Ham caused God to pronounce a terrible curse upon his descendants, and they would be the servants of Shem. Genesis 9:26.

### *The children of Eli*

My dear ones, I wish to draw your attention to two others who are mentioned in the Scriptures as delighting in unrighteousness and iniquity—the sons of Eli, the high priest. These young men were privileged to be born into a tribe that was chosen and blessed by God—the Levites. As the high priest, their father served as the intercessor between God and His people. These chosen men could have had a wonderful future if they had carefully adhered to the divine principles and the rules for the priests.

When their father died, one of the two could have become the high priest—an honest, respected man. Meanwhile, both were priests, served in the temple, and were honored by God and men. However, the sacred Scriptures tell a very sad, terrible story, for Eli's sons were evil, proud, and profane beyond

measure. "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord. And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh, unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." 1 Samuel 2:12-17.

"The sons of Eli, instead of realizing the solemnity of this symbolic service, only thought how they could make it a means of self-indulgence. Not content with the part of the peace offerings allotted them, they demanded an additional portion; and the great number of these sacrifices presented at the annual feasts gave the priests an opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of the people. They not only demanded more than their right, but refused to wait even until the fat had been burned as an offering to God. They persisted in claiming whatever portion pleased them, and, if denied, threatened to take it by violence.

"This irreverence on the part of the priests soon robbed the service of its holy and solemn significance, and the people 'abhorred the offering of the Lord.' The great antitypical sacrifice to which they were to look forward was no longer recognized. 'Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord.'

"These unfaithful priests also transgressed God's law and dishonored their sacred office by their vile and degrading practices; yet they continued to pollute by their presence

the tabernacle of God. Many of the people, filled with indignation at the corrupt course of Hophni and Phinehas, ceased to come up to the appointed place of worship. Thus the service which God had ordained was despised and neglected because associated with the sins of wicked men, while those whose hearts were inclined to evil were emboldened in sin. Ungodliness, profligacy, and even idolatry prevailed to a fearful extent.

“Eli had greatly erred in permitting his sons to minister in holy office. By excusing their course, on one pretext and another, he became blinded to their sins; but at last they reached a pass where he could no longer hide his eyes from the crimes of his sons. The people complained of their violent deeds, and the high priest was grieved and distressed. He dared remain silent no longer. But his sons had been brought up to think of no one but themselves, and now they cared for no one else. They saw the grief of their father, but their hard hearts were not touched. They heard his mild admonitions, but they were not impressed, nor would they change their evil course though warned of the consequences of their sins. Had Eli dealt justly with his wicked sons, they would have been rejected from the priestly office and punished with death. Dreading thus to bring public disgrace and condemnation upon them, he sustained them in the most sacred positions of trust. He still permitted them to mingle their corruption with the holy service of God and to inflict upon the cause of truth an injury which years could not efface. But when the judge of Israel neglected his work, God took the matter in hand....

“God held Eli, as a priest and judge of Israel, accountable for the moral and religious standing of his people, and in a special sense for the character of his sons. He should first have attempted to restrain evil by mild measures; but if these did not avail, he should have subdued the wrong by the severest means. He incurred the Lord’s displeasure by not reproving sin and executing justice upon the sinner. He could not be depended upon to keep

Israel pure. Those who have too little courage to reprove wrong, or who through indolence or lack of interest make no earnest effort to purify the family or the church of God, are held accountable for the evil that may result from their neglect of duty. We are just as responsible for evils that we might have checked in others by exercise of parental or pastoral authority as if the acts had been our own....

“In Eli’s reproof to his sons are words of solemn and fearful import—words that all who minister in sacred things would do well to ponder: ‘If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?’ Had their crimes injured only their fellow men, the judge might have made reconciliation by appointing a penalty and requiring restitution; and thus the offenders might have been pardoned. Or had they not been guilty of a presumptuous sin, a sin offering might have been presented for them. But their sins were so interwoven with their ministration as priests of the Most High, in offering sacrifice for sin, the work of God was so profaned and dishonored before the people, that no expiation could be accepted for them. Their own father, though himself high priest, dared not make intercession in their behalf; he could not shield them from the wrath of a holy God. Of all sinners, those are most guilty who cast contempt upon the means that Heaven has provided for man’s redemption—who ‘crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.’ Hebrews 6:6.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 576, 577, 578, 580.

The end of these young people was terrible and very sad, because they delighted in unrighteousness.

### *Joseph rejoiced in the truth*

The Holy Scriptures also contain very beautiful examples of people who abhorred iniquity and rejoiced in righteousness. Let us briefly examine the life of Joseph, the devout, obedient son of Jacob. For Joseph, his greatest

joy was to live in a fair, godly way and glorify God. One of his greatest aspirations was to see his father happy and his whole family together and full of love for one another.

Joseph was the son of love. He was born to Jacob and Rachel, Laban’s second daughter, whom Jacob loved above all. Rachel was barren and suffered every day because of this situation. She cried, prayed, and asked her husband to intercede for her so that the Lord would grant her the grace of having a child. After several years, the Lord answered their prayers, and Joseph was born. As he grew up, he was outstanding for his sensitivity, obedience, and love for goodness and truth. The young man had innate gifts of administration and had the foresight to recognize cause and effects. As Jacob saw these great gifts, he trusted Joseph’s management of his flock and herds for stability and safety. He gave Joseph a special coat, honoring him as first among all of his sons. This attracted the envy, jealousy, and hatred of Joseph’s brothers.

God gave the young man special dreams. When he related them to his father and the brothers, they understood the dreams to mean that they should bow down to him, so the wrath of the brothers reached a peak and they waited for the moment to avenge and eliminate their brother.

Although his brothers hated him, Joseph continued to look for and help them. He did not enjoy iniquity but only the truth.

“With a joyful heart, Joseph parted from his father, neither the aged man nor the youth dreaming of what would happen before they should meet again. When, after his long and solitary journey, Joseph arrived at Shechem, his brothers and their flocks were not to be found. Upon inquiring for them, he was directed to Dothan. He had already traveled more than fifty miles, and now an additional distance of fifteen lay before him, but he hastened on, forgetting his weariness in the thought of relieving the anxiety of his father, and meeting the brothers, whom, despite their unkindness, he still loved.



“His brothers saw him approaching; but no thought of the long journey he had made to meet them, of his

weariness and hunger, of his claims upon their hospitality and brotherly love, softened the bitterness of their hatred. The sight of the coat, the token of their father’s love, filled them with frenzy. ‘Behold, this dreamer cometh,’ they cried in mockery. Envy and revenge, long secretly cherished, now controlled them. ‘Let us slay him,’ they said, ‘and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams.’

“They would have executed their purpose but for Reuben. He shrank from participating in the murder of his brother, and proposed that Joseph be cast alive into a pit, and left there to perish; secretly intending, however, to rescue him and return him to his father. Having persuaded all to consent to this plan, Reuben left the company, fearing that he might fail to control his feelings, and that his real intentions would be discovered.

“Joseph came on, unsuspecting of danger, and glad that the object of his long search was accomplished; but instead of the expected greeting, he was terrified by the angry and revengeful glances which he met. He was seized and his coat stripped from him. Taunts and threats revealed a deadly purpose. His entreaties were unheeded. He was wholly in the power of those maddened men. Rudely dragging him to a deep pit, they thrust him in, and having made sure that there was no possibility of his escape, they left him there to perish from hunger, while they ‘sat down to eat bread.’

“But some of them were ill at ease; they did not feel the satisfaction they had anticipated from their revenge. Soon a company of travelers was seen approaching. It was a caravan of Ishmaelites from beyond Jordan, on their way to Egypt with spices and other merchandise. Judah now proposed to sell their brother to these heathen traders instead of leaving him to die. While he would be effectually put out of their way, they would remain

clear of his blood; ‘for,’ he urged, ‘he is our brother and our flesh.’ To this proposition all agreed, and Joseph was quickly drawn out of the pit.

“As he saw the merchants the dreadful truth flashed upon him. To become a slave was a fate more to be feared than death. In an agony of terror he appealed to one and another of his brothers, but in vain. Some were moved with pity, but fear of derision kept them silent; all felt that they had now gone too far to retreat. If Joseph were spared, he would doubtless report them to the father, who would not overlook their cruelty toward his favorite son. Steeling their hearts against his entreaties, they delivered him into the hands of the heathen traders. The caravan moved on, and was soon lost to view.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 210-212.

In Egypt, Joseph made wonderful experiences with the Lord. In Potiphar’s house, the latter’s wife tempted him, but to the temptress he replied: “There is none greater in this house than I: neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God.” Genesis 39:9. The woman invented a plan to take revenge on Joseph; she falsely and unjustly accused him, and he was imprisoned. Life in prison was difficult, but over time he earned the trust of everyone, was made chief of administration of the prison, and was a great blessing to the prisoners and others. Although he treated them well, the prisoners did not thank him.

The Lord took care of His faithful servant, who loved righteousness and rejoiced in the truth. God allowed extraordinary events to lead Joseph to become vizier of Egypt. In this position of power and honor, he did not seek revenge; on the contrary, under his administration, the world of that time was saved and God’s love and truth triumphed. The famine required Joseph’s brothers to travel to Egypt for food, and now their roles were reversed. It had been several years since his brothers sold Joseph as a slave, and now in the position he was in, he could take revenge on them, kill them, or

make them slaves forever. However, Joseph was a converted, consecrated man in Christ’s service, a son and a brother who rejoiced in righteousness and truth. He tested his brothers to see if life had changed them, hoping that they now rejoiced not in iniquity but in the truth.

“Joseph was satisfied. He had seen in his brothers the fruits of true repentance. Upon hearing Judah’s noble offer he gave orders that all but these men should withdraw; then, weeping aloud, he cried, ‘I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?’

“His brothers stood motionless, dumb with fear and amazement. The ruler of Egypt their brother Joseph, whom they had envied and would have murdered, and finally sold as a slave! All their ill treatment of him passed before them. They remembered how they had despised his dreams and had labored to prevent their fulfillment. Yet they had acted their part in fulfilling these dreams; and now that they were completely in his power he would, no doubt, avenge the wrong that he had suffered.

“Seeing their confusion, he said kindly, ‘Come near to me, I pray you,’ and as they came near, he continued, ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.’ Feeling that they had already suffered enough for their cruelty toward him, he nobly sought to banish their fears and lessen the bitterness of their self-reproach.

“‘For these two years,’ he continued, ‘hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto

me, tarry not: And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.' 'And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.' They humbly confessed their sin and entreated his forgiveness. They had long suffered anxiety and remorse, and now they rejoiced that he was still alive." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 230, 231.

### *A call to rejoice in the truth*

Our Saviour Jesus Christ said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. John 14:6. Jesus taught us practically what love is, not to have pleasure in iniquity, but to rejoice in the truth. 1 Corinthians 13:6.

"John said, 'He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all.... For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.' John 3:31, 34. Christ could say, 'I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me.' John 5:30. To Him it is declared, 'Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.' Hebrews 1:9. The Father 'giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.'

"So with the followers of Christ. We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We cannot discern the character of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of

Christ. To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given without measure. In Christ 'dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full.' Colossians 2:9, 10, R.V....

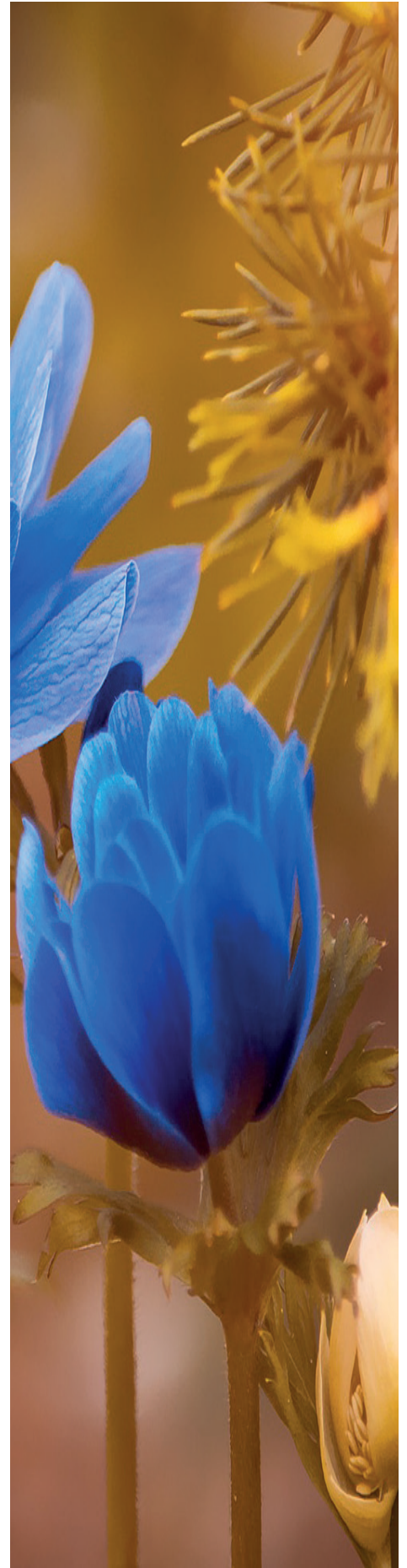
"The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are 'accepted in the Beloved.' Ephesians 1:6. Before the heavenly angels and the representatives of unfallen worlds, they are declared justified. Where He is, there His church shall be. 'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' Psalm 85:10. The Father's arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.' Hebrews 1:6.

"With joy unutterable, rulers and principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The angel host prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.' Revelation 5:12.

"Songs of triumph mingle with the music from angel harps, till heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found. Heaven rings with voices in lofty strains proclaiming, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.' Revelation 5:13.

"From that scene of heavenly joy, there comes back to us on earth the echo of Christ's own wonderful words, 'I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.' John 20:17. The family of heaven and the family of earth are one. For us our Lord ascended, and for us He lives. 'Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Hebrews 7:25." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 180, 181, 834, 835.

Dear brother, sister, and friend, may the Lord fill you with His blessings. Let this Reading be a great encouragement to you as you grow in the Spirit. Amen!■





# “BEARETH, BELIEVETH, HOPETH, ENDURETH ALL THINGS”

By Tzvetan Petkov, Bulgaria / USA

*“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things”*

1 Corinthians 13:7.

Many times, divine love is misunderstood and confused with our human feelings, emotions, and abstract concepts. In addition, the understanding or interpretation of love is generally inherited from different cultures and religions. One of the most impressive parts of the epistles of the apostle Paul is his description of divine love and its indispensable necessity in the character of a Christian follower. In 1 Corinthians 13, he emphasizes that love is the most important quality and gift of the Spirit that the believer should have. Being highly educated, the apostle used an excellent system of instruction, leaving no doubt or room for misinterpretation. In verses 4-6, he describes what love is not. In verse 7, he describes what love is. Thus, we are directed to God Himself, who is truly and completely revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

## All things

In verse 7, the words “all things” are repeated. In Greek, the word for this phrase is *panta*, which means literally “each and every one.” It may be used as an adjective and also as a plural characteristic. Many Bible interpreters have paused at this expression, seeking to understand if its meaning is literal or is only a metaphor for “many.” But, in the Biblical context, we see that this meaning is repeated on several different occasions in reference to the plan of salvation and the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. For example, He

died for everyone. God the Father loves everyone, good and bad. Matthew 5:45.

Christ wants everyone to be saved and no one to be lost. These and many other verses make it plain that the gift of God and His great salvation are offered equally to all, in the plurality of humanity, and to each and every single individual; and there is no exception to God’s grace. John 3:16. If a person fails to receive the saving grace, it is because of his personal choice, not because the hand of God is short. The same principle applies here to the gift of love. The one who receives this special measure of the Holy Spirit becomes Christ-like. The word “all things” is the assurance that all who receive the gift of love are partakers of His divine nature indeed, members of His heavenly family, sons and daughters of God.

## Bears all things

“Bear” in Greek is the word *stego* and means to cover, to protect, to preserve in silence. This quality of divine love is seen in Christ’s life as His perfect dedication to saving the human race. He covers, protects, and preserves sinners by giving Himself as the payment for the race, choosing to suffer and assume the guilt that is not His, for the purpose of saving the sinner and giving him a second chance. Christ was and is sinless-holy. However, He voluntarily took the fallen human nature upon Himself. “But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 117. He became obedient unto death, taking the sins of the world upon Himself.

There is no more exalted expression or demonstration of love than the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. His followers will demonstrate that same quality. Moses was told to get away from the people, rebellious Israel, so that God might destroy all of them and raise up a new generation from the children of Moses. But Moses pleaded with God and interceded for his disobedient fellowmen. In a similar manner, the apostle Paul interceded for his fellow Israelites, saying that he would choose to lose his own salvation if only his fellow Jews could be saved. Romans 9:3. Stephen, the godly deacon chosen by the early Christian church, gave no place to anger or vengeance when he was stoned by his fellow countrymen. In his dying prayer, he pleaded earnestly for God to forgive their sins, because they did not know what they were doing. Acts 7:59, 60. Dear brother, dear sister, you can also have this gift and divine love. Let us pray that the Lord will cleanse our hearts and minds from all hatred, evil thoughts and words, anger, envy, and jealousy, and fill us with the divine perfume, the sweet fragrance of divine love.

At the same time, the protective quality of divine love is demonstrated in the parabolic comparison of believers to watchmen who are commissioned to sound the alarm, to blow the trumpet. Numbers 10:9, 10. The trumpet was sounded on a daily basis in Israel to proclaim the hour for worship and to announce the time for meetings, war, and other religious and civil gatherings. One who receives divine love will not be passive. He will not be indifferent to his neighbor’s suffering. He will not be like Cain, who said,

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9), but will sigh and cry for Israel’s transgressions. “And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” Ezekiel 9:4.

In the time of the gold rush, two friends got lost in the snowy wasteland of Alaska. The temperatures were very low, and one would freeze to death if the proper precautions were not taken. One of the men was strong, but the other was very weak and frail. Often, as they walked, they had to stop, because the weaker man was unable to go on. The stronger man would help him, carry him, massage his frozen legs, look for food, and do everything possible to save his friend. After many days, when the two men finally reached safety, the stronger man confessed that his weak friend was the reason he himself did not freeze to death. By helping him and constantly working with him, he himself was warmed up and survived the bitter cold. Similarly, when we work for the salvation of others, when we preach, teach, warn, and protect our fellow believers, we ourselves are warmed up and thus are able to express Christ’s love to others.

### **Believes all things**

The word “believe” in Greek is *pisteo*. This means to believe things to be true, to trust, and to have confidence. Once again, the greatest example of trust and belief is our Lord Jesus Christ. He believed from the beginning that the plan of salvation would be completed, that the human race would accept God’s merciful hand. Satan and his fallen angels would oppose Him and war against Him, but victory over sin and death would be achieved.

During His life on earth, Jesus used only the power that is available to human beings. By living faith, He received the power to live a holy life, overcome temptation, and be man’s example and substitute. That is why His followers are said to have the characteristics of keeping the

commandments and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14:12. The same faith that Christ has is imparted to His followers. The same strength of the Holy Spirit that sustained Him is entrusted to the believers as they faithfully follow the instructions given in the holy Scriptures.

“A knowledge of the riches of this grace, will ennoble and elevate the human soul, and through connection with Christ, it will become a partaker of the divine nature, and obtain power to resist the advances of Satan.” –*Christian Education*, p. 27.

In the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus described this faith as a small seed that grows, bears fruit, and connects His children with the heavenly kingdom. The apostles received this faith when they were converted and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the early rain. To the believers at the end of time is promised both the early and the latter rain. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, everything is possible. “But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26. This faith moves mountains and enabled the apostles to preach the gospel successfully and perform healing miracles. So also you, sister and brother, are privileged to obtain the same gift of the Spirit, faith for all things, the faith of Jesus, and successfully fight against the power of evil. Do not hesitate to ask, because those who ask will receive.

There is an inspiring story about Angela Yuan. Her son Christopher was a good student and an obedient son. However, after his teenage years, he turned his back on his mother, ran away from home, and wasted his life on drugs, homosexuality, and criminal activities. His mother was so devastated that one day she decided she would take her own life. However, the minister of her church helped her to understand that divine love is unconditional, immense, and forgiving. This changed her life and filled her heart with faith and hope. She started to look for Christopher, fighting spiritually in prayer and perseverance. Many times one becomes desperate and is able to view the future only by faith.

Today, Angela and her son Christopher have overcome their doubts. They are traveling around the globe, sharing their experience of faith and victory. “Never give up” is the conclusion of this suffering mother. Pray and have faith.

The apostle James presented faith and works as inseparable concepts. True faith moves the believer to action and obedience. “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” James 2:18. Faith is the engine of every honest Christian, giving him power to practice the wisdom, love, and obedience found in God’s word. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, in chapter 11, presents a gallery of men and women of faith and their supernatural achievements. And James mentions that prayers will be answered only if they are based on faith and one does not waver like the waves of the sea.

Love and faith are similar, for they are not based on feelings or emotions but are living principles encompassing incredible power to change a person’s way of thinking and speaking and to plant a new character in his heart. Through faith and love, God’s law is imprinted upon one’s heart and becomes part of his soul. “As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength.... And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised. Whatever was given to Christ—the ‘all things’ to supply the need of fallen men—was given to Him as the head and representative of humanity. And ‘whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.’ 1 John 3:22.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

### **Hope**

In Greek, the word “hope” is *elpizo*, meaning confidence, hope. Without hope for the future, it is not possible to survive. So many things



can go wrong. Even the rotation of our planet is subject to divine power, and by faith and hope we assume that it will continue, even though there is no guarantee for it. On March 16, 2011, *National Geographic* published the observation that the axis of the earth has shifted by four meters as a result of the earthquake in Japan. Scientists did not know how to explain this, even though they expected extreme irregularities in nature. Only by hope and confidence in God can we overcome anxiety and navigate a straight course to the harbor, even while not being able to see it. "Mourn not as those who are hopeless and helpless; never, under any circumstances, give way to despair; but from grateful hearts, from lips touched with holy fire, let the glad song ring out, 'Jesus is risen; He lives to make intercession for us.' Grasp this hope, and it will hold the soul like a sure, tried anchor. Believe, and thou shalt 'see the glory of God.' John 11:40." —*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 467.

Believers who cherish hope also have a positive attitude. They do not panic when things go wrong or do not come out according to their expectations. The gift of hope makes it possible not to depend on circumstances for our choices and moral standards but to press forward even when there is no visible sign of success.

Charles Darwin had a daughter, Anne Elizabeth, whom he loved very much for her virtue, energy, and lovely character. One day, when she was around 10 years old, she became very ill, and the medical doctors did not give much hope for her recovery. Charles Darwin prayed earnestly to God, asking for healing and salvation for his lovely daughter. However, day by day the condition of Anne Elizabeth became worse, and she passed away. Charles was so devastated, so disappointed, and so angry with God that he did not attend his daughter's funeral. Years later, the grieving father remembered her and wrote: "Our poor child, Annie, was born in Gower St on March 2d, 1841, & expired at Malvern at Midday on the 23d of April 1851. Her dear face now rises before me, as she used sometimes to come running down stairs

with a stolen pinch of snuff for me, her whole form radiant with the pleasure of giving pleasure."

His faithful, believing wife tried everything she could to help her grieving husband, but not much could be done. Some of those who knew Charles Darwin stated that the theory of evolution was his revenge against God because He did not heal his beloved daughter. When we give up hope, we lose our connection to the light. Our purpose in life dissolves into doubt and becomes disoriented. The suffering of our soul can be incredible. Let us never give up hope, because God is unchangeable yesterday, today, and forever. His love is unconditional; His power, almighty; His knowledge, omniscient. God is omnipresent, and He loves humanity so much "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

### Endurance

In the Greek language, the word "endurance" is *hupomeno*, which means to endure patiently, to abide, to suffer. When endurance and patience are connected with love, faith, and hope, the true character of the divine gift is demonstrated. The gift given by the Spirit is not a temporary emotion but is a continually working power that accompanies the converted soul from the beginning to the end of his life. Endurance and patience are especially necessary and part of the characters of God's people, the 144,000. Revelation 14:12 says: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

Endurance was demonstrated in the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ every single day of His ministry. After His baptism, He was led by the Spirit to the desert, where His spiritual endurance was tested. The Scriptures say that after He faithfully resisted the temptation of the enemy, the devil left Him. If we endure patiently in our battle against the "rulers of the darkness" (Ephesians 6:12), the evil one will flee from us as well.

When we receive the Spirit of God and are refreshed, blessed by the gifts and qualities of His divine nature, we enjoy the presence of His holy angels and His protection. However, if we do not endure and persevere, cooperating with the Lord's gift, He may leave us and stay outside the door, as described in the condition of the Laodicean church, where Christ is portrayed as standing at the door and knocking. Revelation 3:20. In one parable, Jesus warned the believers that if they did not persevere in faith and obedience and if they did not connect themselves to God's saving grace, the evil spirit would return from the desert, bringing with him seven more, and possess the empty heart that was once cleansed and purified by God's Spirit. Matthew 12:43-45. The Spirit of prophecy relates this parable to those who "... rejoiced in the love of God; but, like the stony-ground hearers of the parable, they did not abide in His love. They did not surrender themselves to God daily, that Christ might dwell in the heart; and when the evil spirit returned, with 'seven other spirits more wicked than himself,' they were wholly dominated by the power of evil." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 323. How sad will be the condition of that erring soul when the judgment takes place. We thank God that we are still living in the time of grace. Repentance is available. God is stretching His loving hand toward every erring sinner, offering forgiveness, grace, and salvation.

To be faithful unto death is a basic condition for salvation and participation in the heavenly kingdom. Revelation 2:10. However, patience and endurance are not qualities that come from human nature; rather they are a gift given through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Divine love is demonstrated by patience, hope, faith, and bearing all things. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth

all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling 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, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 8. Divine love is the perfect reflection of God's character. Having the gift of love in our lives means to have God in our hearts, to be a temple of His Holy Spirit, to be daughters and sons of His heavenly family, to be part of His divine kingdom, to be the light of the world!

Let us repeat with the prophet: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17. Amen. ■



*"Love is patient and kind;  
love does not envy or boast;  
it is not arrogant or rude.  
It does not insist on its own way;  
it is not irritable or resentful;  
it does not rejoice at wrongdoing,  
but rejoices with the truth.  
Love bears all things,  
believes all things,  
hopes all things, endures all things."*

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7.*

*Issued by*  
**General Conference  
International Missionary Society  
Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement**

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