

TRANSFORMING POWER OF LOVE

(Discourse by R. H. Hirsh, starting on page 244 of the 1912 Convention Report.)

After saying that no chapter in the Bible had furnished so much assistance to him in character development as 1 Corinthians 13, and that since its keynote is love, he thought nothing would be so appropriate for him to use as a basis for his discourse on this day —“Praise Day”—Brother Hirsh proceeded, saying:

This is one of the chapters of Holy Writ that one hesitates to expound. It is like a fragrant flower whose delicacy and bloom are injured from the mere handling, which is meant to exhibit its fineness of texture. But although this eulogium of Love is its own best interpreter there are, perhaps, points in it which will permit both of explanation and emphasis.

Before leaving His followers, Jesus said to them, “A New Commandment give I unto you, that ye Love one another *even* as I have loved you.” In this way they, also, could come into relationship with Jehovah under the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Covenant of Sacrifice; in this way they, also, could serve the New Covenant—become “able ministers of the New Covenant.” If they would “be planted together in the likeness of His death,” they should be “raised in the likeness of His resurrection.”—Rom. 6:5.

God calls the ones who, together with His Son Jesus, shall be given such an exceptional honor, a New Creation, and since this New Creation shall be given inherent life, it is plainly the greatest creation that God has undertaken. It is no wonder, therefore, that God requires such development of character, such love for righteousness and such hatred of iniquity in this class as He never required of any human beings before. The Ancient Worthies “obtained a good report through faith,” but the New Creation must obtain not only a good report by the exercise of faith but they must exercise

“Love Divine, All Love Excelling”

The early Church at first knew little about Love. In order to promote the establishment of the early Church speedily God bestowed certain miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

The Gift of Tongues or Foreign Languages

Among these gifts was the ability to speak in tongues, or languages, unknown to the individuals; upon others was miraculously bestowed the power of interpreting these languages; others were endued with a masterly gift of prophecy (to publicly expound); others had granted to them the ability to understand mysteries, while others received a special dispensation along lines of knowledge not so widely possessed by others. And

then there were miraculous powers of faith conferred upon some; while still others received a bestowment of courage sufficient to give their bodies to be burned in defense of Christ. While all these gifts of the Spirit were very desirable, and the Apostle encouraged the seeking of the chiefest of the gifts that it might be employed to edify the Body of Christ, nevertheless, said He, I shall show you a still more excellent way to promote the interests of the New Creation, the only way, in fact, that it can be developed; without it the individual amounts to absolutely nothing.

And so, says the Apostle, even though I should speak in the tongues (all languages) of men and of angels (whatever kind that may be), and have not Love, I am as undesirable for a place in the New Creation as if I had no gift at all—I am as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, which, played alone, makes about as undesirable noise as can be made.

The Gift of Prophecy (To Publicly Expound)

“And even though I should have the Gift of Prophecy [gift to speak well in public], and have not Love, I am nothing.” Paul knew the power of a silver tongue, that it was not to be despised. He, above all men, knew that such a talent could be employed in more ways than one to promote the interests of the cause of the Master, to “show forth the praises of Him who had called the possessor from darkness into most marvelous light.”

The gift was considered the most useful of all the gifts. (1 Cor. 14:1) Reinforced with the ability to understand mysteries hidden from many, and coupled with knowledge made known to but few, the gift to present one’s thoughts well in public places the individual in a position that is unique to say the least. And yet, says St. Paul, there would still be lacking something without which the individual would be in great straits so far as the Kingdom of Heaven is concerned; his prospects would be nil.

Faith – Philanthropy — Martyrdom

“And even though I should have all Faith, so that I could remove mountains, what would it profit me if I lack Love?” If by a miraculous bestowment of Faith I should be able to employ power Divine to such an extent as to remove mountains—to raise the Rocky mountains from their resting place of ages, and carry them overland, to the amazement and consternation of the world, and plunge them with a mighty splash into the Atlantic, producing a tidal wave the like of which the world has never experienced—what would it profit me if I lacked Love? Nothing!

“And even though I should give all my goods to feed the poor”—even though by Power and Wisdom Divine I should be assisted in accumulating millions, yea, hundreds of millions of dollars, and even though I should bestow all my wealth in such channels as to

confer the greatest benefit upon my fellow-countrymen, what would this profit me if I lacked Love? The answer is, Nothing!

Philanthropy is one of the most commendable of qualities. Everybody admires Mr. Andrew Carnegie's magnificent gifts to the public, but it is a self-evident fact that unless the heart be consecrated to the Lord and unreservedly submitted to His Word and His providences, the individual will not come in for joint-heirship with Christ in the Throne of the Messianic Kingdom.

“And even though I should give my body to be burned” even though for Christ's sake I should suffer martyrdom, should even go courageously to the stake to be burned, and have not acquired Fortitude, Knowledge, Self-Control, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Love and perfect Love also, I am not fit for Heaven's Kingdom; I am not prepared to be placed in that class upon whom shall be conferred the authority and power for a thousand years to reign in righteousness, in the world to come, over 20,000,000,000 of humanity—all who have ever breathed the breath of life upon this earth

Giving one's body to be burned is not in every case a guarantee of a heart transformed from selfishness to “love Divine, all love excelling.” At one time martyrdom became fashionable and Christian teachers were obliged to remonstrate with those who fanatically rushed to the stake—just as suicide one time became fashionable at Rome and evoked prohibitory legislation.

Love and How It Acts

St. Paul now having illustrated the supremacy of Love by showing that without it all other gifts are profitless, proceeds to celebrate its own positive excellence. His description of love is drawn in view of the discords existing among the Corinthians, and as a contrast to their unseemly and unbrotherly conduct.

Love has been described as the ligament which securely binds together the members of the Body of Christ. And again: Love is the cement which keeps the living stones of the spiritual Temple together. And again: Love is Godlikeness in the thoughts, in the words and in all the conduct of life.

It is a proverb that “Where Love is thin, faults are very thick.” That Love—Perfect Love, which is the price of the Kingdom—was sadly lacking among the Corinthians was very apparent. Instead of Love, there were marked manifestations of unkindness; instead of purity of thought, there were exhibitions of envy, etc.

“Love Suffereth Long—And Is Kind”

How long will Love suffer? Very long! Will it suffer a year or longer? Yes, Some say, Well, if one suffers wrong for six months, surely it would be time then to be unkind.

This class usually say, “You know Love is something like Patience: There comes a time when Patience ceases to be a virtue.” Not so. They have it wrong. “Patience never ceases to be a virtue.” Patience *is* a virtue. Those who say that Patience ceases at times to be a virtue have not very much Patience. When one ceases to show patience, patience does not cease to be a virtue. It simply means that the virtue patience is lacking in the individual and needs to be more assiduously cultivated.

Some say, “Well, do not the Scriptures say, Be angry and sin not?” Yes. Emphasis should be placed on the latter part—“and sin not.” If one loses self-control, he sins. He needs to go to the Throne of Grace and have the spot removed. He needs to pray, “Forgive me my trespasses, even as I forgive those who trespass against me.”

It is proper under provocation to show displeasure; it is proper to manifest displeasure with all forms of unrighteousness. “Love rejoices not in iniquity, but Love rejoices in the Truth.” With the child of God the Godlike qualities are not to be mere outward adornments; they are to be deeply engraven upon the heart and exhibited upon every suitable occasion.

When knowledge of the Great Plan of the Ages is called for it should not be held back; it should be advanced. When self-control is demanded it should be exercised. When Patience is needed it should stand out for the admiration of all. When Piety is required, it too, should be on display. When Brotherly Love is needed—and even when it is not needed—it, too, should be a very conspicuous adornment. When the exigencies of the case call for Love—perfect Love—it should not be lacking; it should be ready to pour its precious box of sweet ointment to make fragrant the atmosphere all around us.

“Love Envieth Not”

Have I the Love that envieth not; that does not grudge others their advancement in either spiritual things or in temporal things? Have I the generous spirit—that generosity of heart which takes unfeigned pleasure in the advancement of every good interest of anyone enlisted in the Lord’s cause?

Envy does not grow upon the root of Love. Out of Love grows Joy, Peace, Meekness, Gentleness, Patience, Brotherly-Kindness. Envy is a shoot of selfishness. Selfishness is one of the perverted qualities of the human heart. Selfishness belongs to self—all for self. Its world is not very large. It does not extend its boundaries very far, except to gather for self. Envy is self-centered. It is not inclined to delight in the promotion of the

interests of others. The Church of Corinth was suffering greatly as a result of envy, whose fruit is bitterness, hatred, malice, murder.

“Love Vaunteth Not Itself—Is Not Puffed Up”

While Love does not grudge others their gifts, neither is it eager to show off its own. While Love looks not with envious eyes upon others or their things, it vaunteth not itself; that is, it is not boastful; it is not lifted up. Love always tends to modesty. It never gets a swelled head.

Love is very wise. It is the wisest thing in the world. Its disposition is to first pray for Heavenly guidance, remembering that “The meek will He guide in judgment; the meek will He teach His way.” Its disposition then, is to be very circumspect, to look on all sides of a question and, before acting, to weigh matters very carefully, trying to do just as the Lord would do.

There is a proverb to the effect that “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” This is not Love’s disposition. Its motto is, “In honor preferring one another”—pushing one another forward, rather than self. Remembering, also, that “it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

I know some of the Lord’s people who, while they may have gotten rid of some boastfulness, still retain a spiritual pride—parading their spiritual attainments before others. In fact, I have known some who boast before babes in the Truth of their spiritual development and length of time in the Truth, and intimating that they have forgotten more than some others knew. Our constant attitude should be:

“Oh, for a heart more like my God,
From imperfection free.”

“Love Doth Not Behave Itself Unseemly,” or Unbecomingly

Love saves a man from making a fool of himself by thrusting himself into positions that betray his incompetence. Love is so wise that, in the perfect man, it will always do the right thing at the right time. In the imperfect man it will aid greatly. Its effect is illuminating in all the avenues of life.

We are told, “Quench not the Spirit” (of Love). Those who keep supplying those elements which will keep burning that sacred flame of Love, will be loved of the Father; and those who strive, with increasing zeal, to have it burn still more brightly will be crowned in God’s Kingdom.

Love, therefore, balances a man's mind and imparts to him a common sense such as he never before possessed. I remember well how fearful I was to make a consecration of myself to the Lord. The wisdom which I then possessed led me to believe that my business would soon go to smash if I presented my body a living sacrifice. After several months' consideration I concluded to take the risk. My mind became tranquil, the peace of God began to rule in my heart and soon I learned that I was in possession of wisdom never before enjoyed. I could easily see my way out of difficulties which previously baffled me and made me fearful. I could now see a way to surmount every difficulty that stood before me.

“Love Seeketh Not Her Own” (Interests Exclusively)

Love is willing, yea glad, to let many of her own rights be sacrificed in the interests of others. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Love is not self-centered. Ours is a Covenant of sacrifice. We are to “Love one another, even as He [Jesus] loved us.” He laid down His life for us. We are to lay down our lives for the brethren. “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

Love is always on the lookout to do good to others. While required to make a decent living in the sight of all men, and even advised to lay up a little that we might have to give to those in need, we are not to do this in a way that will work injury to others; we are at the same time to observe opportunities to “do good to all men, especially to the household of faith.”

Proper love for the opposite sex would take into consideration every item of interest. It would, first of all, reflect “It is good to get married; but better not to do so”—especially now, in full view of the shortness of the time. Those who have not been married have difficulty in seeing matters just this way, the right way. They become blind to all that stands in the way; and it is not until contract has been made and is in process of execution that it is seen that almost everything was made to bend toward the accomplishment of the end in view. We are to bear in mind, also, that “it is better to marry than to burn.” And so the Apostle has pointed out conditions under which it would be better to marry than to live apart.

“Love Is Not Easily Provoked”

The Greek does not contain the word easily. With it left out the thought is “Love is not provoked.” Love's disposition, therefore, is not to lose its balance, its poise. It is not fired to resentment at every slight. I received a great deal of help one time from a man who stated that it was his habit of thought, in dealing with others, to try to see the point at issue from the other person's viewpoint. He had become so accustomed to it, he said, that he could now, almost invariably, take the other person's position and see clearly the

reasons which actuated him. And so Love is not disposed to think only of her own side of the question, but is inclined to look on the opposite side also—to look, as nearly as possible, with the other person's eyes. And then Love will be generous, and sacrifice much in the interest of those who are not, by one reason or another, so completely planted in the likeness of our dear Redeemer's death, to the end that they may be raised in the likeness of His resurrection.

If we can become big-hearted enough and stop advancing the interests of ourselves in one form or another, we will get along very much better and thus save ourselves and others many of the provoking experiences of life. Those who are easily provoked do much injury, not only to others, but also to their own hearts and lives.

To be easily provoked is to have a bad temper, to be fretful, touchy, quick to take offense. It is one of the besetting sins of our day. It is wholly contrary to the Spirit of Love, and whoever is on the Lord's side and seeking to be pleasing to Him and to attain an overcomer's position, should guard himself against this general besetment of our day. To whatever extent this disposition is fostered, or not fought against, it becomes an evidence of deficiency in our development of the Holy Spirit. Few lacks in Love receive as much kindness and as many excuses for their continuance as this one.

“Love Thinketh No Evil”

What a wonderful thing Love is! It is the most wonderful thing in the world. “Love never ceaseth.” It has always existed, it always will exist. “God is Love.” Since God has no beginning, Love had no beginning. Love, therefore, is eternal. “He that Loves is begotten of God.”

Have I the kind of Love that does not even think evil? If I have, what a good Spirit it is. It is the Love that is guileless; it is the Love that is not suspicious; it is the Love that does not look for faults in others; it is the Love that does not attribute to them evil motives.

Have I the Love that seeks to interpret the conduct of others charitably? Have I the Love that makes all possible allowances for errors in judgment? Have I the Love that does not impugn the motives of the heart? Perfect Love views the words and conduct of others as being good-intentioned. It does not treasure up animosities and suspicions; it does not manufacture a chain of circumstantial proofs of evil intentions out of trivial affairs.

“Love Rejoiceth Not in iniquity; But Love Rejoiceth in the Truth”

Love never takes pleasure in anything of an unrighteous character. The principles of righteousness are so firmly established that it takes pleasure in the prosperity of right under all circumstances. Love would rather see right triumph and the stronghold of error

fall, than to gain the whole world. The Spirit of Love has such an affinity for the Truth that it rejoices to share loss, persecution, distress, or whatever may come against the Truth or its servants.

“Love Beareth [Covereth] All Things”

The thought here is that instead of covering the faults of one another, the Corinthian brethren were rather inclined to pick flaws. “Where Love is thin faults are thick.” We are so inclined to pick the mote out of our brother’s eye and forget all the time about the big beam in our own eye. This is a fruitful cause of evil, and it is no wonder there was so much discord in that early Church.

Our heavenly Father has set such a grand example in this respect that the wonder is more do not emulate it. He sent Jesus into the world as the means of supplying a robe for the covering of all our unwilling blemishes. “Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered.” What a blessing would come into our lives if all were to try to cover each other with the mantle of charity rather than to seek to uncover faults! We have so many faults of our own that we haven’t time enough to correct all of them before 1915. Let us resolve that we shall seek to find fault with ourselves rather than with anyone else. “If we judge ourselves we will not need to be judged by the Lord.”

“Love Believeth All Things”

Love is disposed to have confidence in the brethren and not to be suspicious. It will not impute evil. When a brother or sister is overtaken in a fault, it will be ready to extend its good offices, and to remember that the time may come when we, too, may be similarly overtaken and in need of some comfort. Love acts on the principle that it is better to be deceived a hundred times than to go through life soured by a suspicious mind. It acts on the principle that it is far better to believe what it is told than to accuse or suspicion even one person unjustly. Love is very merciful. Of it the Master said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” The merciless, evil thinking mind is father to unmerciful conduct toward others.

“Love Hopeth All Things”

No matter how dark the clouds may be all around; no matter how threatening the surroundings, Love ever remains hopeful. Love’s hopefulness enters into that which is within the veil, where it is securely fastened to the Rock of Ages. Love is the most hopeful quality in all the world. It has implicit faith in God, and since His assurance has been given that He is able to take of that which has been committed to Him, that no evil will befall us, it rests confident that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

And no matter how fallen a brother or sister may be, Love will cling to the hope that some time, soon, perhaps, the erring one may return to the fold. “He who converteth a sinner from the error of his way has saved a soul from death and covered a multitude of sins.” Perfect Love is not easily discouraged, as we see. It is very persevering. The secret of its perseverance is that it has learned of God, and hopes undismayed for the fulfillment of all His gracious promises.

“Love Endureth All Things”

Love endures hardness as a good soldier of the cross of Christ. Its hopeful qualities hinder it from being easily offended or easily stopped in the work of the Lord. Where others would be discouraged or put to flight, the Spirit of Love gives endurance. Love always wages a good warfare to please the Captain of our Salvation. Love’s hopefulness, Love’s endurance, knows no despair.

When St. Paul had reached the end of his course in life, when he was about to be beheaded by Nero, owing to his untiring devotion to the cause he had so long and faithfully represented, he said: “I am now ready to be offered up; I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will give to me, and not to me only, but also to all those who love His appearing.”

In the four succeeding verses Paul illustrated our present knowledge of Divine things by that possessed by a child. As a child’s knowledge is naturally very meager compared with that of persons of mature age and education, so our knowledge of heavenly things is necessarily limited as compared with the knowledge which we will possess on the other side of the veil. “*Now* we know in part,” says Paul, “but *then* we shall know even as we are now known.”

“Now Abideth Faith, Hope, Love”

Paul’s crowning testimony to the worth of Love is given in the 13th verse—“But now abideth Faith, Hope, Love, these three; and the greatest of these is LOVE.” While Faith and Hope and Love apply to the present time, nevertheless there will come a time, if faithful, when our Hopes will be realized and when there will be no necessity for the exercise of Faith such as we exercise it today. But “LOVE never faileth.” Greater, therefore, than any or all of the spiritual gifts is Love; greater than Faith is Love; greater than Hope is Love. While the spiritual gifts were present with the early Church, they ceased with their decease, but there has continued throughout the Age, Faith, Hope and Love.

When the Grand Assembly of the Church of the Firstborn shall take place there will be no need for the exercise of Faith in the exceeding great and precious promises, because they will have been realized; there will then be no need to lay hold upon the “Hope now set before us,” because our Hope will have passed into the actuality: We shall be like our Lord and see Him as He is. Different, therefore, from these will be Love. Love is imperishable. It will never cease. “Love never faileth.” It is the grandest, most sublime, most amazing and far-reaching quality, either in this world, or in that which is to come. It is so because God is Love.

The one whose heart is now filled with Love toward God and toward his fellow-creatures reminds us of one of the sweetest verses ever penned by man:

“As some rare perfume in a vase of clay
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own,
So when Christ dwells in the human soul
All heaven’s own sweetness seems round it thrown.”