

Bedford Bulletin

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The Excellent Way of Love – Part 1

I can't even begin to imagine how much ink and paper the Poets have used over the past centuries in an attempt to describe this thing called love. I know poets have put many twists and many have said some beautiful things on the matter. But, truth is, when we speak of love in reference to the scriptures, we must let them define love as it comes from God.

A proper understanding of the subject is only possible to those who have drunk deep of the wonderful water of life: Revelation 22:17 *"And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."* And those who have eaten their fill of the bread of life: John 6:34-35 *"Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always. 35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."* As Jesus said it, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled"* (Matt. 5:6).

One thing is for certain. Everyone who fits the latter image of godliness, will know that the description the world often gives is wrong! Why is it almost always wrong? Because most people's understanding of love comes via, TV commercials and motion pictures which depict incredibly misleading and inaccurate pictures of love. More often than not what they are presenting to the world fits the definition of lust.

Much misunderstanding comes when society bulks all the different Greek definitions for different kinds of love into one word, love. Therefore, we must turn to a Greek-English dictionary, called a Lexicon, look up the various words that are interpreted "love" to see which word is being translated love in the verse you're reading. This serves us, in that it makes it easier to understand what God is saying in a more precise measure. I'm not implying that one cannot know the truth that sets us free (John 8:32) if one doesn't know Greek, for that is just not true. God in His infinite wisdom has provided the world with thousands of translations in hundreds of languages. Though I have seen a couple of English translations I wouldn't recommend, I could preach the gospel of Christ out of any of them.

Knowing & Doing God's Will

Proverbs 11:14

As for “love” and its use in the New Testament consider what Jesus said, “*love your enemies*” (Matt. 5:44) and Paul in Romans 12:17-21 describes some ways to make application. Now as you read these two texts you must reason that the kind of love Jesus is talking about is not extreme affection. If you truly have an enemy, it isn't possible to “feel” affection in your heart for this that enemy. When we let scripture, via the definitions from the Greek, guide us, the difficulty is removed as one comes to understand that the love commanded by Jesus doesn't require us to feel loving, good or tenderhearted toward an enemy, but rather to crucify self, and seek no harm for them but rather be concerned for their welfare, their soul. This love one can do for another, without really liking them emotionally speaking. People's misunderstanding of biblical love has caused many to come to wrong conclusions. For example, if one rebukes someone for sin, or teaching religious error, he himself is often rebuked for rebuking the error. Some would say, “You are not showing the Spirit of Christ; You should show more love.” But the fact is, seeking to correct error, whether sins, or false teaching, demonstrates true understanding of godly love which seeks good for the one in error, and seeks to protect their soul. Biblical love often requires that members, or individuals must take unpleasant actions. Example: I love my children—I will not withhold correction—for their good. Solomon wrote, “*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him*” (Prov. 22:15), and, “*Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction*” (Prov. 19:18). An angel of the Lord told John to write, “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent*” (Rev. 3:19). Scripture is clear—love requires us to attempt to correct those in error (see also Heb. 12:9-11; 2 Tim. 4:1-5). Listen, and answer this question: How can I possibly love someone, knowing they are hell bound because of their sin, actions, and lifestyle, and withhold saving truth. How can I say, “I love them too much to take the chance of making them angry!” My friend, that isn't love.

So, what does the scripture say about the character of True Love? Read it for yourself: “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails...*” (1 Cor. 13:1-8).

John wrote, “*20 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also*” (1 Jn. 4:20-21). I cannot love God if I do not love sincerely all my brethren. (Read Gal. 5:13-23)

In 1 Cor. 13:4 “love” is characterized by kindness and longsuffering. Love is not characterized by “meanness, or short fuses”. It's no wonder sometimes that a congregation has trouble finding a man who can qualify to be a Bishop: “*For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered...*” (Tit. 1:7). Paul used the word, “*patient*” as a qualification of an elder (1 Tim. 3:3).

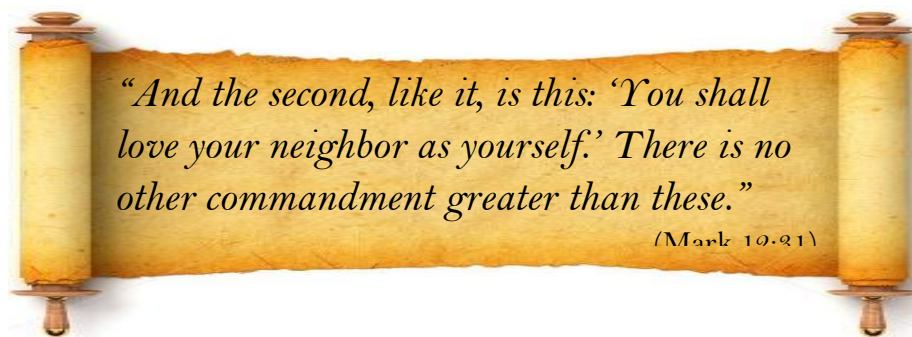
This quality Elders must possess applies to every Christian.



“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”

As we conclude this first part of this issue, let us close with some scriptures that will further our understanding of longsuffering and kindness. Rom. 2:4, “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and **longsuffering**, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” Rom. 9:22, “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much **longsuffering** the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.” 2 Cor. 6:6, “by purity, by knowledge, by **longsuffering**, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love.” Gal. 5:22, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **longsuffering**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.” Eph. 4:2, “with all lowliness and gentleness, with **longsuffering**, bearing with one another in love.” Col. 3:12, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, **longsuffering**.” 1 Pet. 3:20, “who formerly were disobedient, when once the **Divine longsuffering** waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” 2 Pet. 3:15, “and consider that the **longsuffering of our Lord is salvation**—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you.”

As always, in Love
Dave Scarpino



Times of Our Services	
Sunday Morning Bible Study	9:00 AM
Sunday Morning Worship	9:50 AM
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 PM
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:30 PM

What Must I Do to Be Saved?	
1. Hear the gospel -----	John 6:45; Romans 10:17
2. Believe the gospel -----	John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6
3. Repent of sins -----	Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30
4. Confess Christ -----	Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized -----	Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38
6. Remain faithful unto and until death -----	Revelation 2:10; Matthew 10:22

Our faithful Creator is worthy to be praised in this assembly. All praise to Him who reigns above in majesty supreme! He gave His Son to die, for all mankind, that He might redeem all. Our blessed Redeemer suffered and died for our sins and is now risen and sitting at the right hand of God as Head of the church. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, knowing that He is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. (Hebrews 5:8-9) “**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!**” (Isaiah 6:3)