

PARCHMENT

AND HE SAID UNTO ME, WRITE: FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUE AND FAITHFUL.

REVELATION 21:5



And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

2 John 1:6

THE LAW IN THE LOVE CHAPTER

1 Corinthians 13 - famously known as the Bible's love chapter - is recalled by many who claim that love is the Christians' only requirement. Of course, this is true, so long as one harbours the right kind of love.

Throughout this chapter, Paul uses contrast to reveal two forms of love; one feigned and the other unfeigned. By expressly defining what love is not, Paul seeks to show what love truly is. In verses 4-5 specifically, Paul uses this method to align love with the fulfilment of the commandments. He writes: "charity envieth not", which is to implement the 10th commandment "thou shalt not covet". He adds: "charity vaunteth not itself... seeketh not her own", which is to say - in line with the first commandment - love puts "no other gods before me". Exodus 20:17,3.

Indeed, 1 Corinthians 13 reveals the perfect balance and harmony that must always exist between love and obedience. Righteousness cannot be gained by works alone, as it was sought for by the Jews. Though neither can it be gained by a mere profession of Christian love. Jesus states: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21.

While the love chapter teaches that the only profitable or acceptable service is that actuated by love, it by no means implies that service is not required. Conversely, this chapter is centred upon the proactive power of

unfeigned love. At its literal centre, verse 7 portrays love as a force which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

To bear, believe, hope, and endure are all verbs. They are actions necessary to withstand trials. Jesus tells us that "in the world ye shall have tribulation". John 16:33. For "if [we are his] children", then "we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Romans 8:17. Indeed, as the life of Paul and the apostles testify, obedience to the commandments will often bring tribulation. That's why we're told that "if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf". 1 Peter 4:16. The fact that we are "partakers of Christ's sufferings", means that we are following Christ in both word and deed. 1 Peter 4:13. Therefore, the love which will "bear, believe, hope, and endure" tribulation is the love of one who is keeping all the commandments of God! 1 Corinthians 13 is not simply a theoretical expression of love, but one based on the lived experiences of its writer.

With this in mind, Paul concludes his chapter with the salient affirmation: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." 1 Corinthians 13:13. While in another letter Paul declares that "by grace are ye saved through faith", he here claims that love is greater than faith. Ephesians 2:8. Although he elsewhere writes: "for in this hope we were saved",



here he asserts that love is greater than hope. The reason is this: love prompts both faith and hope. It is your unfeigned love for God which brings you faith. It is recognising God's love for you that brings you hope. Ultimately, love is the only prompt that will lead you to salvation.

Nevertheless, love must express itself in obedience, or else it is not true love. The beloved proclaims: "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." 1 John 2:6. And how did He walk? Christ declares: "I have kept my Father's commandments". Today, we too are implored to "put on Christ" and to "be followers of God".

God is love. And His law is a reflection of His divine character. Thus, Ellen White poses the question: "is it possible for men to be holy, in accord with the will and character of God, without coming into harmony with the principles which are an expression of His nature and will, and which show what is well pleasing to Him?" {GC 471}

Surely, such a state cannot exist. From Christ Himself, the call is made: "My son, give me thine heart". Yet the same verse continues by saying: "and let thine eyes observe my ways." Proverbs 23:26. As highlighted by the median verse of 1 Corinthians 13, love is an action, and it by no means negates the law. On the contrary, love 'lifts the yoke'. We read: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3.

The love chapter proves that commandment-keeping driven by love is the only acceptable form of Christian service. The Bible also reveals that such service is the only means of attaining real peace. In the gospel of John, Jesus promises us: "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. In order to retain "the joy of thy salvation", one must be keeping the commandments in all their fulness.

Jesus expands upon this in the next verse by saying: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15:11. Genuine joy and peace - qualities which originate with God, and therefore cannot be found outside of God - are available only when abiding in Jesus' love. That is, when we are keeping

His commandments. And in 1 John, we find this sentiment repeated: "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him". 1 John 3:24. The joy of abiding in God's love rests upon our obedience to His law - not out of works, but from love.

It's for this reason that the prophet Isaiah declares: "there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked". Isaiah 48:22. We know that "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear". Yet the verse continues: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear". Isaiah 58:1-2.

Our lives are to be marked by a moment-by-moment surrender to God, that through the merits and power of Christ, sin will no longer separate us from our Saviour. In *Steps to Christ*, Ellen White offers practical strategies for maintaining this goal. She states:

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee." This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ." {SC 70}

It is my prayer that our hearts will hold firm to this great law of love; that we might bear, believe, hope and endure through every tribulation. Amen.

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