

Godly Love

North Battleford Christadelphian Ecclesial Study Weekend – November 13-14, 2010

I. The Love of the Father

1. Love is the Essence of the Truth—Bro. R. Roberts

"There can be nothing more certain than that the sentiment of love...is at the very bottom of the whole scheme of the truth in which we rejoice; there can be nothing more certain than that the very object of the truth is to manifest God's love to us, and to develop God's love in us. There can be nothing more certain than that the truth in its ultimate and eternal development, as we might say, will present the very highest form of this impulse of love; and there can be nothing more certain, either, than that those who are not carried along by this prevailing impulse—which originates the truth, and which we may also say is the essence of the truth—will be left behind."

"God is love, and it is only in proportion as we remember this that we shall become capable of reflecting this quality. We must remember the whole of the truth, and not a part only. We must not leave out the love. This is our danger. We are not likely to leave out anything else. We see from the Bible that God is angry with the wicked; that corrupt and sinful human nature is nothing in His sight; that Jesus will be manifested to destroy the sinners of mankind, and that there is no salvation except in God's appointed way. We see the necessity of placing ourselves in opposition to the corruption around us, and are forced into a continual attitude of defense and attack. Therefore we are not liable to forget our duty in these things. But we are liable to forget that God is love and that the whole truth is but the exemplification & expression of it." (Christadelphian Magazine, 1867, pg 302)

2. The Love of God does not happen naturally, it must be developed and involves much heartache, it –

- 1) asks a 130 year old father to slay his son whom he loves, as a test of his faith
- 2) asks another father to live with bitter grief for 20 years over the apparent death of his beloved son
- 3) asks a prophet to refrain from mourning over the death of his wife, the desire of his eyes
- 4) strikes family tragedy and bodily affliction into a blameless and upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil
- 5) brings a mother from Bethlehem to a Moabite gravesite on 3 occasions (her husband and 2 sons)
- 6) permits a death warrant to be decreed against the nation after a faithful man refuses to bow before the enemy
- 7) asks a queen to lay down her life for her people
- 8) permits a faithful apostle to be persecuted in city after city while he is trying to preach the gospel
- 9) then leaves him imprisoned for 2 years when he could have been out preaching to more people
- 10) asks the beloved Son to lay down his life and to submit himself to a public crucifixion

3. Godly Love defined; it (is)...

- 1) a 'self-sacrificing' love, an 'others-first, not me-first' love, a 'laying down our life' love (1 Jn 3:16)
- 2) obedience to God's commandments—"if you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15,21,23)
- 3) done by faith, springs from faith, "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6)
- 4) done in hope of a future reward; "as you have shown love, show the same diligence...of hope" (Heb 6:10-11)
- 5) done not because a person *deserves* our love, but because he *needs* our/God's love (Rom 5:8)
- 6) giving to the need, whatever it might be (Deut 15:8 NKJ)
- 7) requires our total involvement—all our heart, strength, mind (1st commandment – Matt 22:37)
- 8) does for our neighbor as we would like to have done for us (2nd commandment – Matt 22:39; 7:12)
- 9) done as a servant, not a master (Gal 5:13)
- 10) restrains us from wrong conduct (Gal 5:15) and compels us to right conduct (2 Cor 5:14)
- 11) provides a balance between insisting upon right doctrine/conduct (2 Jn 1:6-11) while not offending in matters of conscience, causing some to fall away, for whom Christ died (3 Jn, 1 Cor 8:3-13)
- 12) does good to all, it is careful not to show partiality (James 2:8-9)

4. The Preeminence of Godly Love

- a) it's comprehensive, connected to all facets of our discipleship, all that we do is to be done in love (1 Cor 16:13)
- b) it holds a preeminent position in the Word, as Jesus emphasized in his final hours with the disciples (Jn 13-17) and as Paul and Peter urged above all else, that we put on love (Col 3:14; 1 Pet 4:7-8)
- c) it forms a three-fold foundation with faith and hope, but the greatest of these is love (1 Cor 13:13)
- d) it was the intended outcome of the Law of Moses and the prophets (Matt 22:38-40; Rom 13:10; Gal 5:14)
- e) it is both *phileo* & *agape* as God had both for His Son (Jn 5:20; 3:35); as Christ had for Lazarus (Jn 11:3; 11:5); as God has for us (Jn 16:27; 14:23); as we should have for one another (1 Pet 1:22)
- f) can only arise from a proper understanding of God's truth (Phil 1:9)
- g) it should not be confused with human love or with love defined by Christendom; latter day prophecy warns of human love prevailing in society (2 Tim 3:1-5); *Godly love will always lead a person to righteousness*
- h) it has no limits regarding what we should be willing to do for one other, but all must be done within the boundaries of God's commandments, to keep a person from sin or to return a sinner to righteousness

5. Godly Love and Obedience are inseparable—to Love God is to Obey God

Ex 20:6—And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Deut 7:9—he is God...keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments.

Josh 22:5—to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments.

Neh 1:5—that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments.

Dan 9:4—keeping the covenant & mercy to them that love him, and keep his commandments.

Jn 14:15—If ye love me, keep my commandments. 21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him. 23 If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, & make our abode with him.

Jn 15:10—If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.

1 Jn 2:5—But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.

1 Jn 5:3—For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

2 Jn 1:6—And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.

- *God measures our love for Him by our obedience to His Word*

- *the works of the Law, done by the flesh and valued by religious leaders (Pharisees, Judaizers), were worthless*

- *works done by love and arising from faith are what God seeks to develop within us, they are how we glorify God*

6. Faith and Love share a special relationship—Faith proves our Love is Godly love and not human love

Gal 5:6—in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

Eph 1:15—Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.

1 Thes 1:3—remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope.

1 Thes 3:6—Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love.

1 Thes 5:8—be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

2 Thes 1:3—your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.

1 Tim 1:5—purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith.

1 Tim 2:15—she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

2 Tim 1:13—Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love.

Phile 1:5—hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints.

1 Pet 1:7-8—the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, & glory at the revelation of Christ, whom having not seen, you love.

Luke 7:36-50—the sinful woman came in faith (v50) by love (v47) wanting to break Sin's hold over her; she left with an even greater love, having been forgiven (v42)

7. God's love is the basis for ours; we are to love as He loves; His love is our model and motivation

Dt 10:18-19—I He executes judgment for the fatherless & widow & loves the stranger; love ye therefore the stranger

Lk 6:35—love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

Eph 4:32—And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. 5:1 Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us.

1 Jn 3:16—hereby we perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our life for the brethren.

1 Jn 4:7-8—let us love one another: for love is of God; & every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love... 11 if God so loved us, we ought to love one another.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us (cp. Jn 1:18; 14:8-10 – as God's character could be seen in Christ, so too should it be seen in us, by our love)

God manifestation isn't a theory, it's an expectation – "if you have seen my love you have seen God's love"

8. Eph. 2:4 – God's Plan of Redemption: The purpose of His love for us is to lead us to our loving Him

1) vv1-3: we begin with a **sinful nature**, living in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of our body/mind

2) v4: God's great love to us is shown in the **giving of His Son** (1 Jn 4:9)

3) v5: in response to His love (death of Christ) we **repent/baptized** ("quickened together with Christ")

4) God extends His **grace** to us—our redemption is a free gift, not something we can earn

5) v8: we live by **faith**, trusting God will forgive us & save us if we commit ourselves to Him

6) because it is of faith there is no room for boasting (the 'works' of v9 are the works of the flesh)

7) v10: the outcome is our **good works** (our love! done in faith); being God's workmanship, the glory is all to Him

We are not saved because of our love, but without our love there is no salvation

All the pieces are necessary; all are needed for the redemption process to achieve its intended outcome

The eternal outcome of the redemptive process is our salvation; the interim outcome is our walking in good works

Redemption begins with God loving us (v4) and is completed by our loving Him (v10)

9. Godly Love is not an emotionless love, it will bring us to tears

Joseph, upon hearing Judah's confession and his willingness to take Benjamin's place in prison
Ruth, Naomi, and Orpah wept over the prospect of their parting
Jonathon and David wept upon each other, David more so when they had to depart
Elisha wept, having being shown all the evil that Hazael would do to Israel as king of Syria
Nehemiah wept and mourned for days upon hearing the evil report of the poor spiritual conditions in Israel
The Jews in Nehemiah's day wept upon hearing Ezra read the Law, realizing how far they had strayed
Job's 3 friends lifted up their voices and wept upon first seeing Job in his dreadful condition
Good figs of the first captivity sat down and wept for Zion by the waters of Babylon
Esther wept before the king over the prospect of her people being slain under Haman's decree
The Lord wept upon seeing Mary and others weeping over death of Lazarus
He wept again over Jerusalem's destruction due to the hardness of Israel's heart
Paul served the Lord with humility and many tears at Ephesus, warning them night and day with tears
Paul wrote to the Corinthians "out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears"
Paul and the Ephesian elders wept on the beach over the prospect of not seeing one another again

II. The Love of the Son

1. God's love for us is seen in the giving of His "only begotten Son"

"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

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 1 John 4:9

- "only begotten" describes Christ's character not just his paternity (John 1:14); he perfectly manifested the Father
- it wasn't human love the Father had for the Son, He loved him because he was "full of grace and truth"
- the Father loved the Son & the world; one had no sin, the other was steeped in it, though all had the same nature
- the solution was for the sinless Son, out of love for his Father to provide a covering for Sin by laying down his life
- the Father took that which He highly valued and out of His love for us, asked the Son to offer himself
- the Father and Son did not do it all, we still have a part; "whosoever believeth" and "we might live through him"
- our love is added to the love of the Father and Son

2. Substitution supposes the Cross was a result of God's anger, not His love; it teaches –

False Teaching {
a) because of Sin, God was angry with man and
b) therefore man deserves to be punished and to die for his guilt;
c) but instead of slaying man, God substituted Jesus, placing upon him the sins/punishment due man;
d) therefore, Jesus died to appease an angry God, the innocent victim suffering in place of the guilty

- in Truth, there was no anger, punishment or guilt associated with the Son's sacrifice on the cross
- the Father was at work in the Son, helping to destroy Sin's power over him (2 Cor 5:18-19)
- the Son wasn't suffering for the guilty, he needed the cross to perfect his faith (Heb 5:7-9)
- God does not ask us to endure trials which have no spiritual benefit for ourselves
- the Son wasn't a victim, he was the first to benefit from his victory over sin
- but his motivation was selfless, he died "for us" because he loved us & gave himself for us (Gal. 2:20; Eph 5:25)
- God wasn't angry with the world (Jn 3:17), He didn't send the Son to condemn it, but to save it
- the Son was sent into the world to condemn Sin (Rom 8:3) and to save people; so too are we

3. The love the Son had is intended to become our love, to fill us with the fullness of God – Eph 3:14-19

- to be filled with the fullness of God (v19) is to take on His will, purpose, mind and character; make them our own
 - to achieve this requires that we be strengthened in the inner man with might/power by His Spirit (v16)
 - this power is not a supernatural gift, it is the power of love at work in our life; achieved by understanding and faith
 - the inner man strengthening process begins with being rooted (soil) + grounded (foundation) in God's love (v17)
 - the process is advanced when we learn to live Christ's love ('passcth all understanding' = to live the love learned)
- "As (our) appreciation deepens we will come to share the very attitude and thoughts of Christ himself...our great appreciation of the love of God and of Christ is to be the foundation of the growth of the 'inward man' (F Pearce, 1992)*

4. Love is the key to our spiritual growth – John 5:19-24; 14:12-21

- because of the Son's love (v19), the Father loved him (v20) & revealed Himself on an ever increasing basis
- the same correlation of love and growth exists between the Son & his disciples (Jn 14:12-21)
- our growth hinges upon our love (v15); as our love grows the Son manifests himself (in greater levels) to us (v21)
- Judas' challenge (v22) revealed the warning that when love is lacking, Christ will not grant greater understanding

5. Jesus stressed the need for love in the final hours with the 12 disciples – John 13-17

- 13:1 – he loved them “to the end” (to the uttermost); he loved them to the ultimate
- he was going away and his departure would create a massive void in the group, none could fill his shoes
- he stressed the need for them to love one another during his absence, as he had loved them (13:34-35; 15:12,17)
- though he would send the Comforter, it wouldn't replace his love, it wouldn't settle disputes and stop the bickering
- only by their learning to love each other would the void be filled; washes their feet to highlight the need for love
- he loves his enemy, using the others' bewilderment over the betrayal, to appeal to Judas without revealing him

6. The Parable of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep – John 10

- the highest form of love is a man laying down his life for his friends (Jn 15:13)
- why do this? It was a command he received from the Father (John 10:18)
- the Father's reaction to his obedience? He loved the Son (v17)
- the Good Shepherd puts the needs of the flock first, before his own needs, even at the cost of his life
- he does so to “bring life for the sheep” (v10)
- the hireling by contrast, flees in the face of danger, putting his own needs first, unwilling to show Godly love (v12)
- the religion of the day did not encourage this Godly love, the religious leaders only served for personal gain

7. Three principles define Godly love: and the need to lay down one's life

- 1) a death occurs, 2) the death is offered willingly, 3) so others benefit
- this is Godly love; it is how God defines love and it's what He loves!
- Godly love involves a self-sacrificial death: a) the needs of others are put first and b) it is a willing sacrifice
- the temptation related to Godly love is to flee (the death), putting one's own needs ahead of the needs of others

8. Laying down our life for others is the love God seeks to develop in each of us – 1 Jn 3:16-17

- this highest form of love, shown by the Son, is what God expects ALL His children to develop in their life
- we love our brethren by laying down our life for them
- there is: 1) a death each of us must die; 2) willingly; 3) so others benefit from my sacrificial love
- it is not a literal, physical death; it's a spiritual death, a death to Sin; we die to Sin by putting others' needs first
- the lesson of the cross was that Sin must be put to death, not just in Jesus, but in all who seek to follow him
- my natural desires, my lusts, my flesh, must be crucified before I can live unto righteousness
- the cross (crucifying the flesh) is what must be done to Sin & Godly love is how we do it!
- v17 – I lay down my life when I do for others, giving to their needs, not my own
- this is what Godly love looks like when it is practiced – if we fail to do it, God's love is not in us
- the death we die to Sin must be linked to a benefit to others
- if our doing for others does not involve a death to Sin taking place, we are not laying down our life
- if we take care of others after we take care of ourselves, this is human love, not Godly love
- divine warning: it's easy to know and speak of Godly love; but it must be lived (v18)

9. Christ set this expectation for all his disciples in his final moments with the 11 – Jn 15

- stresses 4 times their need to love him by keeping his commandments; 5 times their need to love one another
- there was no outer limit to the love they should have for one another (v13)
- in these final hours he is not merely drawing attention to himself and how great his love had been for them
- his principle focus is showing them the extent to which they ought to be willing to love each other
- after his departure they will face great challenges, the world will hate them (v18, cp early chapters in Acts)
- the only way to survive such challenges, with their leader absent, will be for them to learn to love one another
- v12 is the command to follow his example; v13 is a reminder of his unlimited love; v14 is the expectation he sets
- we are Jesus' friends only if we do what he commands, and he commands us to love one another as he loved
- the Father (1 Jn 4:11) and Son's expectations are identical – their love for us should be our love for one another
- Godly love is not a burden, it's a joy (v11) as it helps to save those who are overcome by Sin

10. The Love of Ruth for Naomi – Ruth 1:16-17

- her decision to remain with Naomi was foolish by the world's standard, but Godly love oftentimes is
- she united herself to Naomi's hardships and trials, she freely chose this way of life
- her love for Naomi was unlimited, a person couldn't love Naomi any more than Ruth did
- like the Good Shepherd, she willingly laid down her life to spiritually benefit Naomi in a self-sacrificing love
- she loved both in deed and in truth (1 Jn 3:18)
- Ruth understood the lesson of the cross – to put the flesh to death and become a servant of others
- Ruth's love was shown in the midst of her own personal trials (widowhood, poverty, isolation from family)
- she developed Godly love in Moab, before ever setting foot in Israel; she brought her love with her
- her commitment to love and serve Naomi was bound up in her commitment to love and serve God

III. The Wisdom of Godly Love

1. The Love of Jonathan for David, for Saul, and David's love for Saul

- Jonathan was next in line to the throne, his natural inclinations would have been to be king, was groomed for this
- he declared his allegiance to David giving him his weapons, garments and the throne; because he loved he gave
- it was a covenant of love Jonathan made with David (18:3; 20:16)
- he laid down his life, dying to sin, putting to death his natural desire for the throne, for David's/nation's benefit
- he loved his neighbor (15:28) as himself; picturing himself in David's position and then giving to that need
- he freely chose to become David's servant; while Saul told David, "you're mine," Jonathan's view was, "I'm yours"
- Saul, by contrast, rejected Godly love, refusing to lay down his life; he repeatedly sought to take David's life
- Jonathan's love for David was Godly love, not human love; there was no reciprocating expectation
- his love for David was without limits, he was prepared to do for David whatever was needed (20:4)
- Jonathan also had Godly love for Saul, never abandoning his father and literally laying down his life for him
- David spent 10+ years as a fugitive, loving Saul; fleeing from him while trying to win him back to righteousness
- David willingly laid down his life for Saul, putting his own life at risk, as a servant, for Saul's spiritual benefit
- Jonathan and David both loved Saul with Godly love, though Saul ultimately was unresponsive to their pleas

2. Godly Love unites 2 key principles of discipleship: 1) crucifying the flesh + 2) serving others (Mk 10:45)

- this is how God saves us, not based upon our own merit, but by transforming our character
- He knows that to break Sin's power over us we must be willing to learn to lay down our life for the sake of others; to live for *their* spiritual well being, putting *their* needs before our own, doing for *them*, not for ourselves

3. The Power of Godly Love is Greater than the Power of Sin – Jn 14:30-31

- Sin (prince of this world – Jn 12:31; 16:11; Eph 2:2) had no power over Christ even though present in his nature
- he too struggled with powerful temptations, both from within and without
- but there was another power at work in his life, a power stronger than sin – his love for his Father
- his witness to the world, "my love for my Father has rendered Sin powerless in my life" (Jn 14:30-31)
- his victory over the prince of this world by love, calls all his disciples to the same battle (Jn 12:32)
- if I want to be helpful to my brothers/sisters, Sin must first be put to death in my life, I can't let it dominate me
- personal experience teaches us that when Godly love is missing in a relationship, Sin wins and Sin reigns
- when a spiritual relationship is broken it is critical that Godly love be inserted

4. Sin is overcome by Godly Love – 1 John 3

- the love of the Father is intended to purify us now, since we will be made like Christ when he comes (v1-3)
- the Son appeared to take away our sins (v5), to destroy the works of the devil (i.e. the practice of sin) (v8)
- we are either children of God or children of the devil, the determining factor is our love! (v10)
- the children of God practice righteousness (1st commandment) and love their brother (2nd commandment)
- our love for one another enables us to pass from death (Sin's domination) to life (practicing righteousness) (v14)
- Jesus destroyed the works of the devil (v8) by love (v16), the same victory he declared in Jn 14:30-31
- the danger of the Antichrist teaching (i.e. Jesus didn't come in the flesh) was that it nullified the need for Christ destroying the devil by love; and in so doing undermined/eliminated the need for brethren to love one another

5. The Power of Godly Love at work in the life of the apostle Paul – 2 Cor 4 and 5

- v10 – his hardships and suffering were all part of dying to sin in order to be able to live unto righteousness
- v11 – he willingly gave himself up to a (spiritual) death to Sin, by submitting to his hardships
- v12 – his suffering and death to Sin enabled others to benefit, to have life (recall Jn 10:10)
- v16 – while the trials were painful, Paul was being saved, his inner man was being renewed (in righteousness)
- 5:13 – Paul wasn't crazy, this wasn't extreme Christianity, all he did was for the sake of others
- 5:14 – it was the love of Christ that motivated Paul, which compelled him to right conduct

6. The Unconquerable Power of the Love of the Father + the Love of the Son + our Love – Rom 8

- v28 – the "good" that all things work together for is our eternal good – sharing God's Holiness (Heb 12:10)
- to love God in the midst of trial is to remain faithful to Him and to obey Him, regardless of what befalls us
- v29 – God selected us in advance to be part of the redeemed host who are to be glorified with Christ
- v32 – God's love in not sparing His Son but giving him up (to death) for us
- v34 – Christ's love in laying down his life, now having been raised to join his Father in heaven, to intercede for us
- v35 – our love is added to the love of the Father and the love of the Son by remaining obedient under trial
- v37-39 – When God's love + Christ's love + our love unite together there is great power for good over Sin
- nothing can conquer the power of Godly love, Sin will not prevail over us so long as we continue in Godly love

IV. The Power of Godly Love

1. Abigail's Godly Love saves a brother overcome by Sin – 1 Samuel 25

- when Nabal spurns David's request for help, David explodes and is on the verge of great sin (v13,21-22)
- David is about to act foolishly – he will have slaughtered the very shepherds he and his men had been protecting
- Sin can quickly reverse all the good we may have been devoting ourselves to
- Abigail's response to the situation is to lay down her life, willingly, so others (David) may benefit (v24)
- he is likely a stranger, but this does not prevent Abigail from doing what she can, for his sake
- she had nothing personally to gain from her loving offer, all is done to help save David from sin
- she shows love to David because he needs it, not because he deserves it
- the power of Sin at work in David is immense, but her Godly love became a power greater than sin
- David is momentarily overcome by sin; it is the Godly love shown by Abigail that returns him to righteousness
- her quiet, gentle spirit is precisely what David needed, a model for all wives in dealing with headstrong husbands
- husbands should do all they can to encourage this spirit in their wives – David thanked God for Abigail (v32-33)

2. Joseph reveals the power of Godly Love to overcome the hatred of one's own brethren

- Godly love was THE motivation for his interactions with his brethren and he grasped its importance by age 17
 - his actions reveal how Godly love responds in a situation of intense hatred by those overcome by sin
 - he continually returned good for evil because the power of his Godly love was greater than the evil
 - he continually loved his neighbors as himself, even when they could not speak peaceably to him; he rightfully identified what they needed (for him to remain loving) and gave to their need
 - 22 years later, it was his love for them in ch37 that helped win them back to righteousness & to forsake their sin
 - he never saw them as anything other than lost sheep, he did not view them as false brethren, rather, lost brethren
- His example shows we should never cease to love a lost brother, regardless of his animosity toward us*

3. The power of Godly Love transformed Judah, his was the love of Christ

- he willingly laid down his life, putting the needs of others before his own, so that they might spiritually benefit
- he loved Benjamin in deed and in truth, not in word or in tongue
- his love sprang from his faith, he obeyed God in the midst of severe trial, trusting God would work things out
- he loved his neighbor as himself, and did for his brother what he would have needed, had he been imprisoned
- he wasn't born with Godly love, it had to be learned over a long time, but he came to embrace it as the way to life
- Godly love transformed Judah's character, making him into a new person with a new heart
- the power of Godly love in his life was greater than the power of Sin
- his love was the love of Christ – "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend"
- his love united the two key principles of discipleship: 1) crucifying the flesh and 2) serving others
- his Godly love became an unconquerable power in his life, he was a super-conqueror in God's strength

The 7 Principles of Godly Giving in Deut 15:7-11

1. Be **generous**, "*open thine hand wide*" (v8); don't harden your heart or shut your hand (v7); cp 1Jn 3:17
 2. Give based upon the **person's need**, not from surplus, "*lend him sufficient for his need*" (v8)
 - giving from surplus, our leftovers, *after* we have taken care of our own needs, is human love
 3. **Don't qualify the need**, avoid scrutinizing it, give "*whatever it may be*" (v8: NKJ,RSV)
 - give based upon what the person needs, which may not be what he *thinks* he needs (cp 1 Tim 5:14)
 - don't rationalize away the need and give nothing: i.e. "it's his own fault; others have greater needs"
 4. **Beware of evil thoughts** that prevent giving, "*that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart*" (v9)
 - don't let the nearness of the 7th year, when all debts are forgiven, diminish the giving
 - Godly giving is rooted in Godly love; the flesh is crucified and others benefit
 5. It is a **sin to fail to give** to a person in need; "*and it be sin unto thee*" (v9); to fail to show Godly love is a sin!
 - to fail to do the right thing in giving/helping those in need is just as much a sin as doing wrong against them
 6. We are to give **freely and ungrudgingly**; "*thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him*" (v10)
 - Heb for "grieving" is 'to spoil, break into pieces'; it shouldn't break our heart to give (cp. 2 Cor 9:7)
 7. Give **by faith**, trusting God will care of us; "*because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works*" (v10); faith is a pre-requisite to our giving/loving; our giving should spring from faith, not surplus
- V11 – Heb for 'thy poor' different than in vv4,7,9 (v11: 'thy needy') and means "to be depressed in mind or circumstance" (Strong's) and identifies the mental depression that oftentimes accompany those in need.
- Ruth's Godly love for Naomi (Ruth 1) and Jonathan's for David (1 Sam 20) brought helpful encouragement

VI. A More Excellent Way

1. Esther shows Godly Love does not happen naturally – Esther 4

- at the outset she is not prepared to risk her life for her people, and is thinking only of herself & family
- Haman's (Sin's) decree caused Esther to respond in a very natural, self-centered, me-first manner
- she refuses Mordecai's initial request to go to the king, fearing for her life
- Mordecai responds by exposing her selfish thinking and her faith in the walls of the palace, not in God
- he reminds her that God will accomplish His Will, and encourages her to be a part of it
- Mordecai had already laid down his life for his people (ch3), now he is asking Esther to do the same
- he doesn't force her, Godly love can't be forced, but done willingly; she must choose between Godly + human love
- by the end of the chapter she is ready to go to the cross, displaying the highest form of Godly love
- she lays down her life by crucifying the flesh and becoming a servant of her people, to save them
- in so doing Haman (Sin) is ultimately rendered powerless over her, the prince of the world is cast out
- What changed between v11 and v16? Only one aspect – her human love was replaced by Godly love!
- the power of her Godly love was greater than the power of Sin present in her life

2. Misguided Love: Eli, Jehoshaphat, and the Elect Lady of 2 John

Eli loved and honored his sons above God (1 Sam 2:29); human love puts family before God

- by winking at sin and tolerating their ungodly behavior (3:13); he left his family without a covering for sin (3:14)
- human love does not lead a person away from Sin, instead it leads them to destruction
- parents cannot raise children on human love and expect them to embrace Godly love as adults
- while Godly love does not turn a blind eye to our children's sin, neither does it rule them with a rod of iron; it asks us to lay down our life for them and do whatever it takes to save them

Jehoshaphat's misguided love caused him to love them that hate the LORD (2 Chron 19:2)

- he had good intentions, but they were not consistent with God's Word & would not return Ahab to righteousness
- we only show Godly love if our actions help others to stay within (or return) to the boundaries of righteousness

The **elect lady** was confused about Godly love, causing her to welcome false brethren into fellowship

- John has to remind her of what true love is (v6) & warn her that tolerating error would bring condemnation (v11)
- a wrong understanding of love leaves an ecclesia vulnerable to false brethren and their reward (v8)

3. The Value of Godly Love far surpassed that of the spirit gifts

- spirit gifts were being misused, causing division instead of the edification they were intended for (Eph 4:12)
- Corinthians wrongly viewed spirit gifts as the pinnacle of discipleship; Paul reveals the pinnacle is Godly love
- Paul shows how Godly love is the answer to ecclesial disharmony or to a dysfunctional ecclesia
- Paul, being a possessor of spirit gifts could give personal testimony to the surpassing value of Godly love

4. What Godly Love looks like when put into practice – 1 Cor. 13

- v1: Paul to the Corinthians – if you don't first have love, don't try to use your spirit gift, it is better to remain silent
- v2: the danger of gaining knowledge without having love – we are of no value to God
- v3: the danger of doing for others, even to an extreme, without having love – it is without profit
- Paul's warning: we can spend a lifetime in the Truth, working in the ecclesia, and it can all be done without love
- how do we know if we have Godly love or are simply being self-deceived by our knowledge & actions? The answer is in vv4-7 – this is what Godly love is and what it does
- these are the same positive and negative aspects of love reflected in Christ's life (insert Christ for love)
- these attributes harmonize with the character of God (Ex. 34:6); this is what love looks like & what God looks like

5. Godly Love (is) –

suffereth long – is patient (RSV); willing to wait upon the Lord; not in a hurry, knows spiritual matters take time

kind – Gk: useful to others; linked with forgiveness (Eph 4:32); covers sins (Prov 10:12; Jms 5:20; 1 Pet 4:8)

not envious – only wants what's spiritually best for others

not vaunt itself – (parade-NKJ; boastful-RSV); doesn't look for recognition, it isn't motivated by others' praise

not puffed up – Gk: to inflate; associated with pride/arrogance; Paul addressing pride within the ecclesia

not behave itself unseemly – (rudely-NKJ); not act in a way that will cause others to sin or be disgraced (7:36)

seeketh not her own – doesn't insist on its own way, sincerely concerned for others (Phil 2:19-21)

not easily provoked – (irritable-RSV); Gk: to sharpen, fig. to exasperate; remains calm under stress (Jm 1:19-20)

thinketh no evil – (resentful-RSV) Gk: take an inventory; doesn't keep score of evil done against it; no revenge

rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth – hates iniquity and loves righteousness (Heb 1:9)

bears all things – Gk: to cover with a roof; fig: to protect by covering with silence; knows when to remain silent

endures all things – for the sake of the elect, in order to save them (2 Tim 2:10; Heb 12:2)

bears/believes/hopes/endures all things – it's not naïve or easily fooled, but perseveres under every circumstance

6. The Danger of Knowledge Unaccompanied by Godly Love – 1 Corinthians 8

- the issue is meat offered to idols; strong brother knows idols have no existence (v4), feels free to eat such meat
- but his eating leads to a defiled conscience in a weak brother (v7)
- Paul's counsel: don't let your 'right' knowledge cause your brother to stumble
- a good conscience is critical to discipleship; if it becomes seared, our hope is lost (1 Tim 1:19; 4:2; Titus 1:15)
- the stumblingblock created is no small matter, it causes a weak brother to perish (v11 – same word as Jn 3:16)
- "offend" (v13) – Gk: skandalizo (scandal) – to entrap, trip up, entice to sin, apostatize (Strong's)
- Paul warns the strong brother that his knowledge, applied without Godly love, can cause his brother to be lost!

7. How did eating meat offered to an idol result in a brother losing his salvation?

- paganism combined eating and prostitution in temple worship; temples doubled as restaurants for social outings
- the meat offered was not the problem, it was what accompanied the meat that resulted in a defiled conscience
- meat offered to idols and leading to immorality posed a similar danger in Pergamos & Thyatira (Rev 2); the defiled conscience it creates in the believer's mind was well understood and exploited by Balaam (Num 25)
- in Corinth a strong brother might visit a temple, have dinner, and leave; while a weak brother, witnessing this example would visit and become entrapped, leading him to apostasy and ultimately to perish
- the saving work and love of the Father and the Son would be undone in the weak brother's life, all because the strong brother failed to add Godly love to the knowledge he had acquired
- in such a case the strong brother with knowledge but without love is condemned (1 Cor 8:12)
- Godly love looks to edify, not just to be right; it asks two questions: 1) do I have the right understanding? and 2) will my actions edify others
- Godly love always leads others to salvation; knowledge without Godly love leads others to destruction

VII. Godly Love in the Family

1. Wives submitting to husbands is a Divine Principle, reflects Divine Wisdom, established in Creation

- 1 Tim 2:13-14 – Adam was assigned the responsibility for the family before the first sin, man created as the head
- when Eve deviated from the Divine Principle, sin resulted
- submission is not unique to wives, all disciples are commanded to submit (to authorities, elders, each other)
- there is a natural resentment towards submission of any kind, but it teaches us how to become a servant by faith
- a wife naturally has contempt for her husband when he fails in his responsibilities

2. God asks wives to develop Godly love for their husbands, not human love

- Godly love enables a wife to continue to love her husband even in the midst of his weaknesses
- submission is done out of love for God, not because a husband deserves it
- the husband's spirituality (or lack thereof) is not the basis of her submission, it is her faith in and love for God
- if a wife only submits to and loves her husband when he is a 'good man', this is human love, not Godly love
- a wife whose love is conditional upon her husband's actions will deceitfully free herself from God's command
- this Divine command, like all others, does not hinge on the obedience of another person

3. Christ's love for his bride sets the responsibilities for husbands in loving their wives– Eph. 5:21-33

- at the Judgment Seat Christ may ask each husband, "did you love her with Godly love – sanctifying, cleansing, nourishing and cherishing her? Did you do all you could to save her, even to the laying down of your life?"
- husbands must first sanctify themselves from the world's influence before they can sanctify their wives (Jn 17:19)
- if a husband's love for his wife is conditional upon her behavior, this is human love, not Godly love
- a husband's responsibility to love his wife does not depend upon her behavior, it is a command from God

4. A More Excellent way to Build up the Ecclesia – Ephesians 4:11-16

- vv11-12 – the spirit gifts, similar to 1 Cor 12, were given for the perfecting of the saints and to edify the ecclesia
- v13 – through the unity of faith and knowledge of Christ we grow up into the fullness of Christ
- v14 – our maturity from spiritual children to adults prevents us from being led astray by false doctrine or brethren
- v15 – our ability to mature into Christ is dependent upon our ability to speak the truth in love
 - Godly love must be added to knowledge for spiritual growth to occur
- v16 – the growth of the ecclesial body, its ability to learn how to work in harmony, is wholly dependent upon love

5. It is Godly Love that enables an ecclesia to:

- 1) work together properly, each part making its own unique contribution and encouraging others to do their part
- 2) stand fitly joined together as one, under Christ the head
- 3) prevent self-imposed isolation by a single member since each recognizes the need to help all others
- 4) avoid ecclesial imposed exclusion since the body recognizes it needs all the parts to be able to grow
- 5) rally around a member who suffers, since love understands that when one suffers, all suffer
- 6) accept a wide diversity of members, from all backgrounds, while maintaining unity
- 7) function as one, grow as one, to be edified together as one

6. Christ has a special warning to the last generation – the Godly Love of many shall wax cold

- there is to be an explosion of evil – all the evil of Noah's day and of Lot's day will converge in a single generation
- we can learn much from how Noah & Lot endured the evil of their day: Noah saved his family by condemning the world (Heb 11:7); Lot's righteous soul maintained a daily vexation against the evil (2 Pet 2:8)
- the warning of love growing cold is not directed to the world – human love is not deterred by iniquity and willingly accommodates it – but to the household of believers, as Godly love wanes in the presence of evil
- this latter day warning is echoed in the sixth vial (Rev 16:15), at the very moment of Christ's return believers are in danger of losing their garments of righteousness, due not to persecution, but to the frog-like spirits of humanistic philosophy which is built upon the foundation of human love

Bro. Ken Styles

Evidence of Godly Love in the lives of Faithful Old Testament Characters

Characteristic of Godly Love	Abigail	Joseph	Judah	Esther
1. Self sacrificing; laying down our life; a death occurs; done willingly; so others benefit				
2. It's fundamental purpose is to keep a person in the way of righteousness or return him to it				
3. Obedience to God's commandments				
4. Done by faith, springs from faith				
5. Done in hope of a future reward				
6. Done not because a person <i>deserves</i> the love, but because they <i>need</i> the love				
7. Gives to the need, whatever it might be				
8. Requires our total involvement; all our heart/strength/soul (1 st great commandment)				
9. Loves our neighbour as ourself (2 nd great commandment)				
10. Done as a servant, not as a master				
11. Restrains wrong conduct, compels right conduct				
12. Provides a balance between right doctrine & matters of conscience				
13. Does good to all, careful not to show partiality				
14. Within the boundaries of righteousness, it has no limits (limitless)				
15. Is separate and distinct from human love				
16. The power of Godly love is greater than the power of Sin				
17. Not inherent at birth, it must be learned				
18. Unites two key principles: crucifying the flesh and serving others				
19. When the Father's love + Son's love + our love unite, an unconquerable power is created				
20. When missing from a relationship, sin wins; it must be reinserted into the relationship				
21. Must be done in deed and in truth, not in word or in tongue				
22. The Father and Son share an expectation that we learn to love one another as they love us				