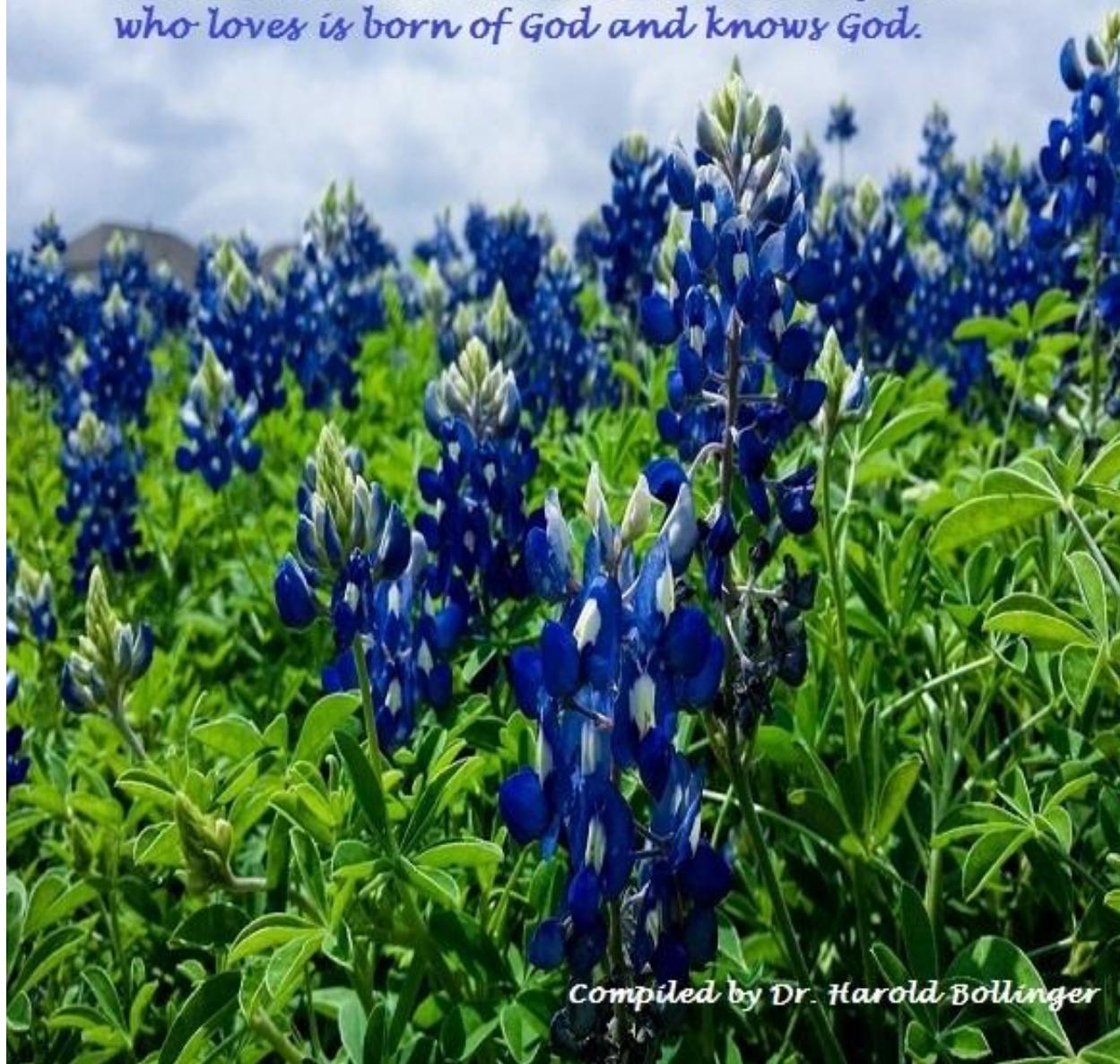


Love

1 John 4:7

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God.



Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger

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Forward

To love others was not a new commandment (see Leviticus 19:18), but to love others as much as Christ loved others was revolutionary.

Now we are to love others based on Jesus' sacrificial love for us.

Such love will not only bring unbelievers to Christ; it will also keep believers strong and united in a world hostile to God.

Jesus was a living example of God's love, as we are to be living examples of Jesus' love.

Jesus says that our Christ like love will show we are his disciples.

Do people see petty bickering, jealousy, and division in your church? Or do they know you are Jesus' followers by your love for one another?

God in his kindness forgives us instead of giving us what we deserve.

Often we want God to show mercy to us, and justice to everyone else.

Never forget that you are greatly loved of God.

Chapter 1



The Importance of Love

Psalm 6:2-4

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am pining away; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed.

This is the first of seven “penitential” psalms, where the writer humbly realizes his predicament (usually the result of sin), expresses sorrow over it, and demonstrates a fresh commitment to remain close to God.

We don’t know the cause of David’s pain, but whatever the cause, he sought God for the remedy.

David accepted God’s punishment, but he begged God not to discipline him in anger. Jeremiah also asked God to correct him gently and not in anger (Jeremiah 10:24). David recognized that if God treated him with justice alone and not with mercy, he would be wiped out by God’s wrath.

God in his kindness forgives us instead of giving us what we deserve. Often we want God to show mercy to us and justice to everyone else.

God demonstrates his love toward us.

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were still sinners—these are amazing words.

God sent Jesus Christ to die for us, not because we were good enough, but because he loved us.

Whenever you feel uncertain about God's love for you, remember that he loved you even before you turned to him.

If God loved you when you were a rebel, he can surely strengthen you, now that you love him in return.

Love is from God.

1 John 4:7

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Everyone believes that love is important, but love is usually thought of as a feeling. In reality, love is a choice and an action, as 1 Cor. 13:4-7 shows. God is the source of our love: he loved us enough to sacrifice his Son for us.

Jesus is our example of what it means to love; everything he did in life and death was supremely loving. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to love; he lives in our hearts and makes us more and more like Christ.

God's love always involves a choice and an action, and our love should be like his. How well do you display your love for God in the choices you make and the actions you take?

Without love, words are meaningless.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good

would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody.

In 1 Cor. 12 Paul gave evidence of the Corinthians' lack of love in the utilization of spiritual gifts; 1 Cor. 13 defines real love; and 1 Cor. 14 shows how love works. Love is more important than all the spiritual gifts exercised in the church body.

Great faith, acts of dedication or sacrifice, and miracle-working power produce very little without love. Love makes our actions and gifts useful. Although people have different gifts, love is available to everyone.

Without love, I would be of no value.

If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud [5] or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged.

Our society confuses love and lust. Unlike lust, God's kind of love is directed outward toward others, not inward toward ourselves. It is utterly unselfish. This kind of love goes against our natural inclinations. It is possible to practice this love only if God helps us set aside our own desires and instincts, so that we can give love while expecting nothing in return.

Thus the more we become like Christ, the more love we will show to others.

Love never gives up.

It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear. Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear.

It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.

Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now.

God gives us spiritual gifts for our lives on earth in order to build up, serve, and strengthen fellow Christians.

The spiritual gifts are for the church. In eternity, we will be made perfect and complete and will be in the very presence of God. We will no longer need the spiritual gifts, so they will come to an end.

Paul offers a glimpse into the future to give us hope that one day we will be complete when we see God face to face. This truth should strengthen our faith—we don't have all the answers now, but one day we will. Someday we will see Christ in person and be able to see with God's perspective.

The greatest of enduring things is love.

There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

In morally corrupt Corinth, love had become a mixed-up term with little meaning. Today people are still confused about love.

Love is the greatest of all human qualities, and it is an attribute of God himself (1 John 4:8).

Love involves unselfish service to others; to show it gives evidence that you care. *Faith* is the foundation and content of God's message; *hope* is the attitude and focus; *love* is the action. When faith and hope are in line, you are free to love completely because you understand how God loves.

Christ loved the church.

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

Some Christians have thought that Paul was negative about marriage because of the counsel he gave in 1 Cor. 7:32-38.

These verses in Ephesians, however, show a high view of marriage. Here marriage is not a practical necessity or a cure for lust, but a picture of the relationship between Christ and his church!

Why the apparent difference? Paul's counsel in 1 Corinthians was designed for a state of emergency during a time of persecution and crisis.

Paul's counsel to the Ephesians is more the Biblical ideal for marriage. Marriage, for Paul, is a holy union, a living symbol, a precious relationship that needs tender, self-sacrificing care.

Paul devotes twice as many words to telling husbands to love their wives as to telling wives to submit to their husbands.

How should a man love his wife?

- (1) He should be willing to sacrifice everything for her.
- (2) He should make her well-being of primary importance.
- (3) He should care for her as he cares for his own body.

No wife needs to fear submitting to a man who treats her in this way.

Chapter 2



The Greatest Love

John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friends.

We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us.

We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, and giving.

Think of someone in particular who needs this kind of love today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more.

Because of Love, we are God's children.

1 John 3:1

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

As believers, our self-worth is based on the fact that God loves us and calls us his children. We are his children *now*, not just sometime in the distant future. Knowing that we are his children should encourage us to live as Jesus did.

1 John 3:1 tells us who we are—members of God’s family (“children of God”). 1 John 3:2 tells us who we are becoming—reflections of God. The rest of the chapter tells us what we have as we grow to resemble God:

- (1) Victory over sin (1 John 3:4-9);
- (2) Love for others (1 John 3:10-18); and
- (3) Confidence before God (1 John 3:19-24).

Love not in word, but in deed.

1 John 3:18

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

These verses give an example of how to lay down our lives for others—to help those in need. This is strikingly similar to James's teaching (James 2:14-17).

How clearly do your actions say you really love others? Are you as generous as you should be with your money, possessions, and time?

Love is the perfect bond of unity.

Colossians 3:14

Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

All the virtues that Paul encourages us to develop are perfectly bound together by love.

As we clothe ourselves with these virtues, the last garment we are to put on is love, which holds all of the others in place.

To practice any list of virtues without practicing love will lead to distortion, fragmentation, and stagnation (1 Cor. 13:3).

Christians should live in peace.

To live in peace does not mean that suddenly all differences in opinion are eliminated, but it does require that loving Christians work together despite their differences.

Such love is not a feeling, but a decision to meet others' needs (see 1 Cor. 13).

To live in love leads to peace between individuals and among the members of the body of believers.

Do problems in your relationships with other Christians cause open conflicts or mutual silence? Consider what you can do to heal those relationships with love.

Love others, as I have loved you.

John 13:34

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

To love others was not a new commandment (see Leviticus 19:18), but to love others as much as Christ loved others was revolutionary.

Now we are to love others based on Jesus' sacrificial love for us. Such love will not only bring unbelievers to Christ; it will also keep believers strong and united in a world hostile to God.

Jesus was a living example of God's love, as we are to be living examples of Jesus' love.

Jesus says that our Christ like love will show we are his disciples. Do people see petty bickering, jealousy, and division in your church? Or do they know you are Jesus' followers by your love for one another?

The love of Christ lives in me.

Galatians 2:20

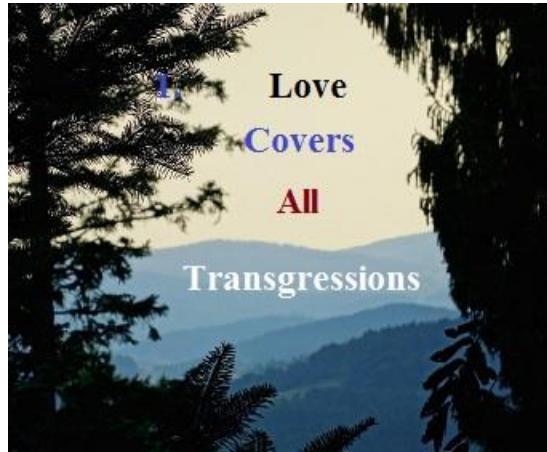
"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

How have we been crucified with Christ? *Legally*, God looks at us as if we had died with Christ. Because our sins died with him, we are no longer condemned (Col. 2:13-15).

Relationally, we have become one with Christ, and his experiences are ours. Our Christian life began when, in unity with him, we died to our old life (see Romans 6:5-11). *In our daily life*, we must regularly crucify sinful desires that keep us from following Christ. This too is a kind of dying with him (Luke 9:23-25).

And yet the focus of Christianity is not dying, but living. Because we have been crucified with Christ, we have also been raised with him (Romans 6:5). *Legally*, we have been reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:19) and are free to grow into Christ's likeness (Romans 8:29). And *in our daily life*, we have Christ's resurrection power as we continue to fight sin (Ephes. 1:19-20). We are no longer alone, for Christ lives in us—he is our power for living and our hope for the future (Col. 1:27).

Chapter 3



Love covers all transgressions.

Proverbs 10:12

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions.

Keep fervent in your love for one another.

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

We should live expectantly because Christ is coming. Getting ready to meet Christ involves continually growing in love for God and for others (see Jesus' summary of the law in Matthew 22:37-40).

It is important to pray regularly, and it is also important to reach out to needy people. Your possessions, status, and power will mean nothing in God's kingdom, but you will spend eternity with other people.

Invest your time and talents where they will make an eternal difference.

There is no fear in love.

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

If we ever are afraid of the future, eternity, or God's judgment, we can remind ourselves of God's love. We know that he loves us perfectly (Romans 8:38-39).

We can resolve our fears first by focusing on his immeasurable love for us, and then by allowing him to love others through us.

His love will quiet your fears and give you confidence.

Love as Christ has loved you.

John 13:34-35

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

To love others was not a new commandment (see Leviticus 19:18), but to love others as much as Christ loved others was revolutionary. Now we are to love others based on Jesus' sacrificial love for us.

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Love keeps commandments.

John 14:15

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Jesus was soon going to leave the disciples, but he would remain with them. How could this be? The Counselor—the Spirit of God himself—would come after Jesus was gone to care for and guide the disciples.

The regenerating power of the Spirit came on the disciples just before Jesus' ascension (John 20:22), and the Spirit was poured out on all the believers at Pentecost (Acts 2), shortly after Jesus ascended to heaven.

The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God within all believers, helping us live as God wants and building Christ's church on earth and us. By faith we can appropriate the Spirit's power each/

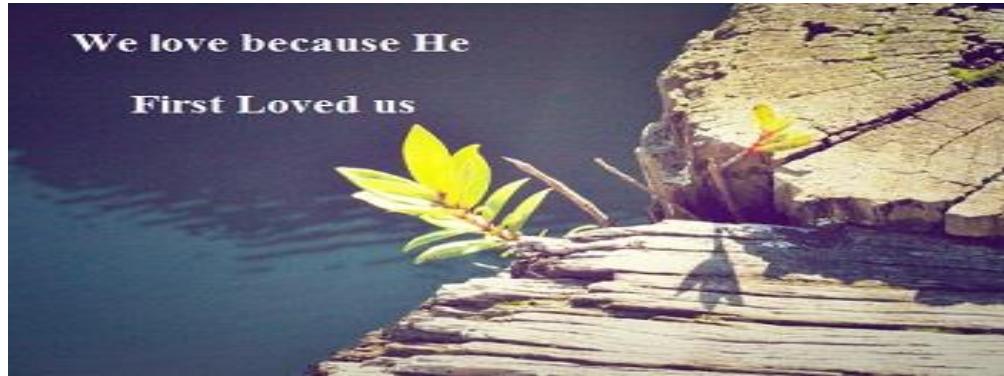
With love, commandments are easily kept.

1 John 5:3

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Jesus never promised that obeying him would be easy. But the hard work and self-discipline of serving Christ is no burden to those who love him. And if our load starts to feel heavy, we can always trust Christ to help us bear it (see Matthew 11:28-30).

Chapter 4



We Love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:19

We love, because He first loved us.

God's love is the source of all human love, and it spreads like fire. In loving his children, God kindles a flame in their hearts. In turn, they love others, who are warmed by God's love through them.

Let love continue.

Hebrews 13:1

Let love of the brethren continue.

Real love for others produces tangible actions:

- (1) Kindness to strangers (Hebrews 13:2);

- (2) Empathy for those who are in prison and those who have been mistreated (Hebrews 13:3);
- 3) Respect for your marriage vows (Hebrews 13:4); and
- (4) Contentment with what you have (Hebrews 13:5).

Make sure that your love runs deep enough to affect your hospitality, empathy, fidelity, and contentment.

Let all things be done in love.

1 Corinthians 16:14

Let all that you do be done in love.

As the Corinthians awaited Paul's next visit, they were directed to

- (1) Be on their guard against spiritual dangers,
- (2) Stand firm in the faith,

(3) Behave courageously,

(3) Be strong, and

(4) Do everything with kindness and in love.

(5) Today, as we wait for the return of Christ, we should follow the same instructions.

Let love be without hypocrisy.

Romans 12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

Most of us have learned how to pretend to love others—how to speak kindly, avoid hurting their feelings, and appear to take an interest in them.

We may even be skilled in pretending to feel moved with compassion when we hear of others' needs, or to become indignant when we learn of injustice. But God calls us to real and sincere love that goes far beyond pretense and politeness.

Sincere love requires concentration and effort. It means helping others become better people. It demands our time, money, and personal involvement. No individual has the capacity to express love to a whole community, but the body of Christ in your town does.

Look for people who need your love, and look for ways you and your fellow believers can love your community for Christ.

To receive Jesus as your savior, please pray this Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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Additional comments and charts are taken from:

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