

R5883 THE PRINCIPLES OF LOVE AND JUSTICE CONTRASTED

NOTHING is more necessary to the peace and prosperity of the Church of God than that its members should have a clear *understanding* and *appreciation* of moral principles, with a full determination to be *controlled* by them. Even among Christians there are often differences of opinion with reference to principles of action, which greatly interfere with spiritual growth and prosperity. Such difficulties most frequently arise through failure to distinguish between the relative claims of Love and Justice. Therefore we consider it profitable to examine these principles and their operation among the children of God.

Justice is sometimes represented by a pair of evenly poised balances, and sometimes by a square and compass, both of which are fitting emblems of its character. *Justice* knows no compromise and no deviation from its fixed rule of action. It is mathematically precise. It gives nothing over for "good weight" or "good measure." There is no grace in it, no heart, no sympathy, no *favor* of any kind. It is a calculating, exact measure of truth and righteousness. When justice is done, there are no thanks due to the one who metes it out. Such a one has merely done a *duty*, the neglect of which would have been *culpable*, and the doing of which merits no favor or praise. And yet, firm and relentless as this principle is, it is declared to be the very foundation of God's Throne. It is the principle which underlies all His dealings with His creatures. It is His unchangeable business principle; and how firmly He adheres to it is manifest to every one who understands the Plan of Salvation, the basis of which is the satisfaction of Justice against our race. Though the arrangement for the satisfaction of Justice cost the life of His Only-begotten and well-beloved Son, so important was this principle of Divine Justice that God freely gave Him up for us all.

JUSTICE, BEFORE GENEROSITY

The principle of *Love*, unlike that of *Justice*, overflows with tenderness, and longs to bless. It is full of grace, and delights in the bestowment of favor. It is manifest, however, that no action can be regarded as a *favor* or a manifestation of *love* which has not underneath it the substantial foundation of *justice*. Thus, for instance, if one comes to you with a gift, and at the same time disregards a just debt to you, the gift falls far short of appreciation as an expression of love; and you say, "We should be *just* before we attempt to be *generous*."

And this is right; if Justice is the foundation principle in all of God's dealings, it should be the same in all of our dealings; and none the less so among brethren in Christ than among those in the world. As brethren in Christ, we have no right to presume upon the favor of one another. All to which we have a *right* is simple justice, though we may *waive* those things that are really our *rights*. But in our own dealings, we should strive always to render justice—justice in the payment of our honest debts to each other, justice in our judgment one of another (which must make due allowance for frailties, etc., because we recognize in ourselves some measure of similar imperfection), and justice in fair and friendly treatment one of another.

As we have just said, there is no obligation to demand justice for ourselves, and we may, if we choose, even suffer injustice uncomplainingly. We *must*, however, if we are Christ's, render justice so far as we are enabled to recognize it. In other words, we are not responsible for the actions of *others* in this respect, but are responsible for *our own*. Therefore we are to endeavor earnestly that all our actions, our words and our thoughts may be squared by the exact rule of justice, before we offer even one single act as an expression of love.

JUSTICE, EQUITY, A CHRISTIAN QUALITY

It would appear that many Christian people spend years of their experience without making any great progress. One difficulty leading up to this condition is a failure to recognize the basic principles underlying the Divine Laws, which apply to us from the moment we are adopted into the Lord's family. The first of these basic principles is justice. We need to learn more and more clearly what are our own rights and the rights of our fellow creatures in the Church and out of the Church. We need to learn how to measure the affairs of ourselves and of others with the plummet of justice, and to recognize that we must not under any circumstances or conditions infract the rights, interests or liberties of others—that to do so would be wrong, sinful, contrary to the Divine will, and a serious hindrance to our growth in grace. Secondly, we must learn to esteem love next to justice in importance in the Divine Code. By *love* we mean, not amateness nor soft sentimentality, but that principle of kindness, sympathy, consideration and benevolence which we see manifested in our Heavenly Father and in our Lord Jesus.

In proportion as we grow up in the Lord, strong in Him, it must be along the lines of these elements of His character. More and more we must appreciate and sympathize with others in their trials and difficulties and afflictions; more and more we must become gentle, patient, kind toward all, but especially toward the Household of Faith. All the graces of the Spirit are elements of love. God is love; and whoever receives of His Spirit receives the spirit of love.

These two basic principles must cover all of our conduct in life. Justice tells us that we must cease to do evil—that we must not speak a word nor do an act that would work injustice to another, nor even by look imply such injustice; that we must be as careful of his or her interests and welfare as of our own. Justice must govern all of our dealings with others. *Love* may permit us to give them *more* than justice could require, but *justice* demands that we must *never give them less* than due. No matter if they do not require justice at our hands, no matter if they are willing to take less than justice, no matter if they would say nothing if we should take advantage of them, no matter if they would not appreciate our degree of justice, still our course is the same. We have received of the Lord's Spirit, and must act from this standpoint and not from the standpoint of others who have not His Spirit or who are more or less blinded and disabled from dealing justly.

LOVE AND JUSTICE BOTH CONTROL

If justice must mark our conduct toward others, so love must be used by us in measuring the conduct of others toward us. We may not apply to others the strict rules of justice which we acknowledge as our responsibility to them. Love, generosity, demands that we accept from others less than justice, because we realize that they are fallen, imperfect, not only in their flesh, but also in their judgments. Furthermore, we see that the great mass of the world has not received the Spirit of the Lord at all, and therefore cannot appreciate these basic principles of justice and love as we appreciate them. We must in love look sympathetically upon their condition, as we would upon the condition of a sick neighbor, friend, parent or child. We must make allowance for their disordered condition, and think as charitably as possible of their words, conduct, etc.

This does not mean that we are to be blind or oblivious to true conditions, and permit ourselves to be deprived of all that we possess or earn; but it does mean that we should take a kind, sympathetic view of the unrighteousness and injustice of those with whom we have dealings. We should remember that they are fallen, and that they have not received the grace of God as we have received it; and that they are not, therefore, to be measured by the line of strict justice, but rather that their imperfections are to be allowed for reasonably by the elastic cord of love. It is our own conduct that we are to measure by the law of justice, the Golden Rule.

HOW LOVE MAY OVERFLOW THE MEASURE

How clearly the Master sets forth these conditions, urging upon us the Golden Rule as the measure for our conduct toward others, and that in measuring their conduct toward us we shall be as generous as we shall wish our Lord to be in His judgment of ourselves, in harmony with His statement, "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged"! A right appreciation of these basic principles, justice and love, by the Lord's people, and worked out in the daily affairs of life, would lift them above the world. It would save many an altercation, many a law suit, many a quarrel, and would make of the Lord's people shining examples of kindness, generosity, love, and at the same time examples of justice, right living, sterling honesty, etc.

Love is not, like justice, an exact principle to be measured and weighed. It is three-fold in its character: it is pitiful; it is sympathetic, in the sense of kinship of soul—affectionate; it is reverential. These different forms of love are exercised according to the object upon which love is centered. Pity-love is the lowest form of love; it takes cognizance of even the vile and degraded, and is active in measures of relief. Sympathetic love rises higher, and proffers fellowship, comradeship. But the reverential love rises above all these, and delights in the contemplation of the good, the pure and the beautiful. In this latter form we may indeed love God supremely, as the personification of all that is truly worthy of admiration and reverence; and love our fellow men in proportion as they bear His likeness. The Divine Law demands love, both to God and to man.

Although we owe to every man, as a duty, love in one of these senses, we may not demand it one of another; but love *overflows* justice. Love shakes the measure, presses it down, heaps it up. The lack of love is not to be complained of by the Christian,

however, but when bestowed it is to be appreciated gratefully and reciprocated generously. Every one who craves love should crave it in its highest sense—in the sense of admiration and reverence. But this form of love is the most costly; and the only way to secure it is to manifest that nobility of character which calls it forth from others who are truly noble, truly like our Lord Jesus.

The love begotten of sympathy and fellowship is also very precious. But any sentiment that comes merely in response to a demand, is deprived of love's choicest aroma. Therefore never demand love, but rather by manifestation of it toward others court its reciprocation. The love of pity is not called out by the nobility of the subject, but rather by the nobility of the bestower, whose heart is so full of love that it overflows in generous impulses toward even the unworthy. All of the objects of pity, however, are not unworthy of love in the higher senses; and some such often draw upon our love in every sense.

A SELFISH, ONE-SIDED VIEW

To demand Love's overflow of blessing—which is beyond the claim of justice—is only an exhibition of covetousness. We may act on this principle of love ourselves, but we may not claim it from others. If we do, we manifest a lack of love and the possession of a considerable measure of selfishness. Some seem to see clearly where brotherly love should be extended to themselves, but are slow to see their own obligations in this respect.

For instance, two brethren were once rooming together, and through a failure to consider the relative claims of love and justice, one presumed upon the brotherly love of the other to the extent of expecting him to pay the entire rent of the room. When the other urged the claim of justice, the first urged the claim of brotherly-love, and the former reluctantly yielded, not knowing how to refute the claim, yet feeling that somehow some Christians had less principle than many worldly people. How strange that any of God's children should take so narrow, so one-sided, so selfish a view! Cannot all see that love and justice should work both ways; that it is the duty of each not to oversee others in these respects, but to look well to his own course, to see that *he* manifests brotherly love; and that if he would teach others, it should be rather by example than by precept?

LET LOVE REIGN SUPREME

Let us beware of a disposition toward covetousness. Let us each remember that he is steward over the Lord's goods entrusted to *him*, and not over those entrusted to his brother; that each is accountable to the Lord, and not to others, for the right use of that which the Master has placed in his hands. There is nothing much more unbecoming and unlovely in the children of God than a disposition to petty criticism of the individual affairs of one another. It is a business too small for the saints, and manifests a sad lack of that brotherly love which should be especially manifest in broad and generous consideration, which would rather cover a multitude of sins than to magnify one.

The Christian is to have the loving, generous disposition of heart—a copy of the Heavenly Father's disposition. In trivial affairs he is to have so much sympathy and love that he will take no notice, just as God for Christ's sake deals with us and does not impute sin to us, except as it represents knowledge and wilfulness. With such a rule operating amongst Christians, a determination not to recognize as an offense anything that is not *purposely* done, or *intended* as an offense, would be a great blessing to all, and the proper, God-like course. The transgressions to which our Lord refers in [Matthew 18:15-17](#), are not the trivial affairs of no consequence, are not evil surmisings and imaginings, are not rumors, are not fancied insults, but positive wrongs done us, and on account of which it is our duty, kindly and lovingly and wisely, to give some proper rebuke—some intimation that we recognize the wrong and that it has grieved us and hurt us and needs correction.

The *disposition* to forgive should be with us always, and should be manifested by us at all times. Our loving generosity, our kindness and our desire to think no evil or as little evil as possible, should be manifested by all the words and acts of life. This is God-like. God had a kind, benevolent, generous sentiment toward us even while we were yet sinners. Nor did He wait for the sinners to ask forgiveness, but promptly manifested His desire for harmony and His readiness to forgive. The, whole Gospel Message is to this effect: "Be ye reconciled to God." Our hearts should be so full of this disposition toward forgiveness that our faces would not have a hard look, nor our words of reproof a bitter sting. We should *manifest* the loving forgiveness that we should have in our hearts at all times.

May love and justice find their proper, relative places in the hearts of all of God's people, that so the enemy may have no occasion to glory! The Psalmist said, "O how love I Thy Law [the Law of Love whose foundation is justice]! It is my meditation all the day." ([Psalm 119:97](#).) Surely, if God's Law were the constant meditation of all, there would be fewer and less glaring mistakes than we often see! Let us watch and be sober, that the Adversary and our fallen flesh may not gain an advantage over us as New Creatures. Let SELF be more and more eliminated and LOVE reign supreme.