

A MOTIVE TO LOVE

By

Curtis Dickinson

The finality of God's purpose is the basis of LOVE

Writing in the Saturday Evening Post on "The American Minister" Harold Martin claims that the modern churchgoer wants therapeutic sermons, a hearty handshake and an assurance that "God loves you, and so do I ..."

For decades the meaning of Christianity has been hidden in the mystical expression of "God's love". Of new phrases and illustrations to communicate the idea of God-is-love there is no end. In spite of this deluge of love, the churches have grown more mechanical and less committed to Christ and even less concerned about what God really reveals about His purpose for the world.

In writing to a friend about the more obvious weaknesses of the church in our day (especially the Christian Church) I suggested that there is something missing in the very root and sap of the church so that the motivation is lacking. My friend, a Bible College professor, replied that what was missing is love. In a conference of ministers a few years ago at Milligan College a speaker told the seminar that our task as preachers and leaders is to convince men that "they are to accept God, as God in His love has already accepted them." Over and over again we have been told that the solution to all our problems is found in that little four-letter word, love.

Now, no one who understands the Bible would deny that God has an immeasurable amount of love for humanity and that the death of Jesus is an expression beyond words of the depth of that love. Furthermore, one who attends church or knows church people is aware that Christians are in need of a greater manifestation of love than is generally evident. But the gap between the actual love of God and man's love is a gap created by the absence of some other things. One does not merely leap across this gap by determining that he is going to love, love, love.

In the heart of the church, in the nucleus of firm believers who have something to believe and who are cemented together in this unity of faith and purpose, there is no lack of love. The love of such for God and for one another flows so freely and naturally that they never even think of it. To tell them to love would be like telling a healthy person to breathe. They need not reassure each other; the love is manifest and understood in their relation and in their common concern for the things of God. It bursts forth in warmth that requires no words and in deeds which ask no reward.

Such love exists. The sermons on love, the preacher will say, are not for such as these, but for the majority of the group who haven't yet joined this inner circle. But, the preacher needs to stop and answer one question. How is it that these have such love and depth of commitment? Was it from preaching on love? Obviously not. It was from preaching on the Gospel, the issues that give man an understanding of the mind and purpose of God. Love is the product of the relationship between man and God. It is the

result of the understanding desire of the two parties. Of course God already understands man, and manifests His desire for man's return to His fellowship. This is a one-sided kind of love – “God so loved the world” – but by itself does not produce a relationship with man nor generate man's love. What is lacking? The one ingredient necessary is man's understanding of and acceptance of God's purpose. This can never be produced by merely repeating that “God is love”.

Love must be postulated upon a rational fact. It is only as man is made to see and understand the purpose of God, and as he comes to see that God's purpose is not only the best purpose but is, finally, the ONLY purpose, and only means of his having life, that he begins to appreciate what God (in His love) has done for him. Man is not saved by love alone.

In other words, the gap between God and man is not crossed by love, but by the reality of hard facts which must be accepted in reality. These facts have to do with the position of God and the position and condition of man - God on one side of the chasm and man on the other. The bridge that spans the chasm is not that “God so loved ...” but that “He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”. Here are the absolutes: Perish, or live. God understands this, but men for decades have been removing the absolutes from the universe. Men refuse to acknowledge finalities.

Love must be grounded upon some basis other than itself. When a boy cannot name a few reasons why he loves that certain girl, except that he “just loves her”, he would do well to back off and begin over. Mere blind sentiment is often something else in disguise and may result in tragedy for both parties. God has purpose in His love. He created with purpose, sent Christ to the cross with purpose, and even today sustains His children with a purpose. There are no revealed thoughts or acts of God without purpose. Purpose must lead somewhere, and God is indeed leading His children to a final goal, life in a new creation “Wherein dwells righteousness”. There is purpose and finality.

But to demonstrate the ripeness of God's love, one must also demonstrate the ripeness of sin and its tragic end. To see love from God's view, one must consider God's view of man; as God intended him, as he exists today, and the ultimate end of such existence. From this view, according to the Bible's revelation, one sees humanity created with marvelous and incredible powers in the image of the glorious and eternal God. But he also sees that as man exists he grovels in the darkness and filth of sin and languishes in the shadows of false starts and false goals. The marring of the image is obvious, and its doom is certain. God will have nothing in the final finished product of His sovereignty that is short of His creative purpose.

“And there was found no place for them” (Revelation 20:11). In the end He must “be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).

“And the sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death” (James 1:15).

This, too, is finality, that all rebels who reject God's purpose are to perish in the fiery destruction of the world (2 Peter 3:7). It is when we see this finality and realize the

absolute necessity of God's intervention for man in order to save our lives – it is then we begin to get a view of love. We then see, entering this chaotic and grotesque nightmare which God's Paradise has become the very son of God Himself. We see His coming into man's existence as man and revealing what a man is supposed to be. We see him suffering the death for sin, the sum total of man's destiny if he continues in his course. By His resurrection from the grave He demonstrates what man CAN and WILL be if he allows God to justify him from sin. All the absolutes are clearly drawn for us: Man – what he should be and Man – what he actually is: Sin – and its doom; and Man – as he will be, immortal, once free from sin's guilt.

Love therefore has its foundation upon the absolute finalities decreed by the Creator. From God's view it is the expression of His total purpose for me, executed FOR me through Jesus, who took the fact of my existence (as sinner), and the just punishment for sin to Himself, that I might live. From the human view it is the expression of response, or acceptance of God's purpose. It is when we see the truth about ourselves, about God's purpose, and about what God has done about it, that our response is kindled to form the bridge for love to flow back from the creature to the Creator. It is love with fact and substance. Such love is the product of our true relation to God, just as it is the product, and not the cause, of a child's relation to his parent.

You build love, therefore, not by preaching love, but by preaching the Gospel. You get love not by pep-talks on love, but by teaching what the Scripture says about God's eternal purpose – the absolute finalities! But this purpose is the very thing which religion of our day wants to discard. Theology is taboo in the conventions, in the religious publications and in the pulpits. Theology is out, love is in. Only, without a true theology — understanding of the purpose of God — there is nothing to motivate love. It is like telling the child he should grow, but failing to provide him with the meat and potatoes.

Many times it is needful and highly beneficial to simply remind a person that God does love them. But unless the basis of His love is known, and unless a reasonable purpose and basis for returning that love is found, the patient is going to say to himself, "Yes, perhaps - but so what?" The harshness, the cruelty, the pain and suffering of life cannot be salvaged over by the platitudes and clichés fashioned to put the love God into clever slogans and smart talk from the pulpit. Life is real. Death is certain. The agnostic existentialists, the beatnik, the fatalist, and the sophisticated college student of experimentation looks for "meaning", and chokes on the mess of pottage of mystical expressions. What he needs is an understanding of finalities, the beginning, the present, the end, and the means of reaching the Creator's goal. When he sees this, believes it and accepts it as his own, then will he say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are." "For the love of Christ constrains us ..." (1 John 3:1, 2 Cor.5:14). And with the apostle John he will know "that this is love, that we should walk after His commandments" (2 John 6).

.....
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute
Curtis' articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article
for permission to be valid. Vol. V. Number 9.
.....