

# **Make Way For Happiness**

**By CLEON LYLES**

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  - ☆ **GOD KNEW HE NEEDED HER**
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-

## INTRODUCTION

Many books have been written by many authors concerning happiness. We have noticed that much of the material in these books was taken from the Bible.

Jesus knew more about human nature than it is possible for man to know because He was both human and divine.

It is our purpose in this book to look at statements that come from the only God-breathed book in the world—the Bible. It would be impossible to include all statements that have to do with our happiness. Some may wonder why we failed to include other things of equal importance. The only answer we can give is that a book must begin somewhere and end somewhere.

We believe the statements discussed in this book that have to do with our attitudes and dispositions can help us in our search for happiness. It is our prayer that all who read this book will find in it something that will lead to happier living.

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## *Chapter One*

# Make Way For Happiness

A good friend and an outstanding gospel preacher, Jack Wilhelm, preaches a sermon which he calls "Life's Most Elusive Goal." In this sermon he speaks of happiness. Before preaching this sermon he sometimes asks people to list some things that would make them happy if they could be changed. Most of the teenagers will list: "to be prettier," "to have more money," "to be more popular," "to feel closer to God," and the like. Most of the adults will list: "to feel their family is closer," "to have more time with my family," "for my (husband or some other relative) to become a Christian," "to be free of pressures," "to know I could be successful in rearing my children," and the like.

These answers reveal the constant search for happiness by all people. They also reveal what people believe can bring them happiness. Although many of the suggestions are worthy of consideration,

some of them show that our search for happiness is often based on faulty thinking concerning the real and lasting happiness God intended for us to enjoy.

It is pathetic to think that many people live and die without ever knowing real happiness. This is not because it is impossible for people to be happy. Neither is it because the Creator of man did not intend for people to be happy. Actually it was God's plan that man should know happiness here in this life and look for greater happiness in the life to come. Throughout the Bible the inspired writers are constantly pointing to the road to happiness. Our lack of happiness is found in our unwillingness to travel the road to which they point. This may be because of a lack of faith. Or it may be that we are so absorbed with external things that we have forgotten that happiness comes from within.

Happiness is something that comes from the heart and does not depend at all on externals. Neither does it depend on what other people do to us. When Christianity was presented to the world it was presented as a way of happiness. Yet it had little to do with externals. In our modern world, we witness crusades against many things and campaigns and marches to protest things we do not like. We do not read of anything like this in the Bible.

In the days when Christianity was given to the world, they faced the same difficulties we face today. In some cases they were much more severe. The government was about as corrupt as one could be. It is doubtful that the world has ever witnessed a period of time when those in authority were more

corrupt than those who lived and ruled when Christ was on earth.

All countries we read about condoned slavery with all the evils such practice brought to human dignity. They practiced evil against certain races of people that has never been more cruel. Among most of the people, the rights of man and the existence of God were completely ignored. But in spite of this we read nothing from the Lord or the inspired writers that would suggest a march on Rome, a protest meeting, or the destruction of the property of either the guilty or innocent parties. They did not try to force people to do right. They made no physical attack on those who were doing wrong. They taught them the error of their ways and tried to point them to the kind of life that would bring happiness.

Those who lived in the early days of Christianity, and those who wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, directed their attack to the hearts of men. They emphasized that the heart must be right or everything else is wrong. When the heart is right, externals have little or nothing to do with the happiness of people. Through force, one may compel others to do what is right, but this does not change their hearts. Force will not increase the love of one man for another. It does not create respect. Neither does it cause one person to love another. No change in the heart comes about by force or legislation.

When one is forced to do right, he will be like the little boy whose mother had told him several times to sit down. Finally she told him emphatically that he must sit down or take the consequences. The

boy obeyed but replied, "I may be sitting down outside but I am standing up inside." The heart is not changed by force.

The first century saints were completely happy. Never have we read of a happier people. They shouted and sang all over the hard, cruel Roman Empire. They never dreamed of the conveniences we enjoy. Many of them did not have a home in which to live. Most of them had less than people have today who are said to be living in poverty. Yet they were so happy that others sought the happiness they saw in them. Many people found it. In their generation, in the Roman Empire, they converted millions to Christ when they learned what Christianity was all about. In addition to this they took the message of Christ to every nation under heaven in their generation. They revealed that happiness is something that comes from the inside of a person and not from the outside.

Years ago when many people in our country were without the necessities of life various programs were advanced that were supposed to bring happiness. First, there was a slogan, "A chicken in every pot." Circumstances changed and most people had as much food as they needed, but this did not make them happy. It is good to have sufficient food, but it never brings happiness.

After this, some advocated "A car in every garage." As circumstances became better, people were able to own an automobile. Then most families owned two automobiles. To those were added a boat and a much better house in which to live. We live in



the best houses in which people have ever lived, with more conveniences in those homes than people dreamed about a generation ago. We have found more ways to enjoy these things that have been created by the skills of men. We have more money than people have ever had, but our generation is not as happy as others have been, and does not know the happiness of the first century saints.

It is doubtful that the world has ever looked upon a more unhappy and frustrated people than the people of our generation. Never have so many relied on things that are destructive to both mind and body in order to escape reality. Never have there been so many alcoholics. Never has the drug problem been greater. And never have we seen such rebellion among people toward life in general.

Surely when we witness all of this, we must realize that externals do not bring happiness. We do not want these external conveniences to be taken away from us, because the lack of them will not bring happiness either. But a person can have all these and all the money he can ever hope to spend and still be unhappy. We can live in the best homes that man can build and be surrounded by all the conveniences that can be placed in these homes, even the luxuries most of us enjoy, and still not know real happiness.

Happiness is like Christianity: It is something that grows inside a person. In fact, happiness *is* Christianity, because a person who has never learned the way of righteousness has never known what real happiness is. It takes care of externals. Making

the externals better without the heart being right provides no lasting pleasure for anyone.

Christ talked to the Pharisees about this:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matt. 3:23-29).

All of this being true, we will study in the following chapters some statements in the Bible that have to do with attitudes and dispositions—things that really make us happy and that tell us what Christianity is all about. These can bring us the joy for which we yearn in this life and the happiness we want to share with God in eternity.

Many books have been written by many authors concerning the happiness of man and how to find this happiness. We have read some of them and noticed that almost everything in them that was worth considering was taken from the Bible. It is our desire, therefore, to look at the source from

which this valuable information comes—the Bible, which is the Word of God. Some of these statements tell us what to rid ourselves of and some tell us what to add to our lives. Thus they are both *positive* and *negative*. They brought happiness to the first generation of Christians, and they can in the same manner bring happiness to people of all generations.

## Chapter Two

### Digging Pits

The statement is sometimes made that "the chickens come home to roost." This is to suggest that what one gives will come back to him. Jesus said it another way. He said we should not judge others. We should not hastily and harshly condemn others without allowing for circumstances. If we go to the trouble to understand others, we will seldom find ourselves condemning them.

One may easily become suspicious of people he does not know. Also it is very easy to judge others according to what is in *our own hearts* rather than what we know to be *in their hearts*. When the prodigal son came home, his brother said he had spent his money with harlots. This is not a part of the story of what happened. That is what the brother said happened. No doubt he said this because that is what he would have done had he been in the place

of the prodigal. This attitude is so true in life that we must be constantly guarding against it.

Those who have little of this world's goods may think other people are dishonest. Those who have never known what it is to be without the necessities of life may think of the poor as being lazy and shiftless. People without the benefits of scholastic training may find themselves distrusting those who have been fortunate enough to have obtained a certain amount of schooling. And the educated may think they have a corner on the market of good sense. It is easy to get a mental picture of ourselves, or our own race, as being the favored people of God. Some have very piously read that the "poor heard him gladly." By the very tone of the voice they condemn everyone except the poor person. Because of these and other attitudes it is easy to develop the habit of judging others.

People are generally alike when we get to know them, regardless of whether they are wise or otherwise, rich or poor, of one race or another race, live in one part of the world or another part of the world. They have about the same desires, and view life in about the same way others do. Thus people are not generally any more peculiar than we are.

What makes people different? Why is it that a person may act in a certain way one day and in another way another day? We may never find the answer in every case but there are reasons why people are not always the same. If I knew the reason, I would not judge them.

No doubt you have had the experience of meeting a person on one occasion when he was really glad to see you. It is possible that you may meet this same person at another time and, although he is courteous, he does not seem glad to see you at all. You wonder why the change.

There could be many reasons. The first time his heart may have been filled with gladness while the next time his life may have been full of sadness. The first time he may have had no problems, while the next time he may have felt that his world had tumbled in. If we will examine our own lives, we will learn that we do not always feel the same.

Some of us may experience different feelings at different times of the day. Some people awake each morning with a happy, joyous feeling and ready to enjoy a great day. Others are never able to awake feeling that way. They may require some time to get back to their best. Since we know this is true, even in our own lives, we need to learn that others are no different. Realizing this we will allow for circumstances. Instead of hastily and harshly condemning others, we will make allowances for whatever might have brought about the change.

Then there are those things that *advantage* produces and *disadvantage* withholds. If a person has not enjoyed certain advantages that have been ours, we cannot hold him responsible for lacking that which those advantages produce. On the other hand, if others have enjoyed advantages that have not been ours, we should not condemn them for what they have been fortunate enough to gain. If one has

tried and succeeded, I should not condemn him for my own failure. But if one has tried and failed, I should not condemn him because I have enjoyed success. I may not know the reason for his failure.

It is also a human weakness to condemn groups of people in general for things for which only a few are guilty. Entire races of people have been condemned because of the failure of a few. Entire churches have been condemned because of a few members who are not what they should be. One person does wrong and we pass judgment on many. Some of these attitudes we inherit from others. We find ourselves judging without any knowledge or reason for so doing. We allow what former generations have thought and done to control our attitude toward others, and so we judge our neighbor. Many of the coined statements that are made about others are passed from generation to generation with very few people ever taking the time to examine them. And many of the attitudes toward others are passed from one generation to another.

It is easy to become a judge of others by condemning them for judging others. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom. 2:1). Much of the extreme action on the part of people comes from judging those who have been judging. If generations have been wrong, it does not make it right for me to be wrong. Evil must be overcome by good, not by evil. Regardless

of how long or how much people have been wrong, I am not justified in doing wrong.

I cannot judge others without its having some effect on my relationship with God. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art nor a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (Jas. 4:11-12). God lives in His people. Jesus in describing what would happen on the judgment day, said, "Inasmuch as you did it unto [or not unto] them ye did it [not] unto me."

Everything Jesus taught was practical. In this case He said, "With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged." Judging others invites judgment upon ourselves, not only from God but also from our fellowman. We usually get back from others what we give to them. Life has a way of returning to us what we put into it. So when we find others being unkind to us or unthoughtful toward us, we might very easily find the reason by examining our own hearts. What we think of others is not so much a revelation of what *they* are as what *we* are. And the way they treat us may be the way they have been treated by us. The Bible teaches that we reap what we sow. All of this reaping does not wait until life is over. Much of it we experience in this life.

If one person is forever condemning another, he need not be surprised when he is condemned by the



other. If one race of people has been prone through the years to condemn another race, the time will come when their roles will be reversed. Such things have a way of coming back into our lives.

One who hastily and harshly condemns others will soon find himself being avoided by others. He may wonder about his loss of friends. He may try all the remedies that are advertised to make him look better and still find himself without friends because of his disposition to condemn others. The Bible says, "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it."

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:3-5). It is very easy for us to be much more evil than the one whom we condemn. We are prone to determine what is evil by the standards of our society rather than by the standards of the Lord.

One who was serving as one of the pastors of a church once said that he would never talk with another about his lack of liberality. He admitted that he would readily talk with one who had become a drunkard. He would not hesitate to talk with one who was guilty of adultery. He would certainly talk with one who was guilty of stealing. But the Bible condemns covetousness with the same force it condemns these other sins. Our society will uphold a

covetous person and condemn a murderer. Thus, one can feel very self-righteous because he is not guilty of certain sins frowned on by society and condemn others for being guilty of these sins, while at the same time he may be guilty of something equally as bad in the eyes of the Lord. One with a beam in his eye could hardly see to remove a mote from the eye of another. This reveals the evil of judging others.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself; God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Lk. 18:10-15).

## Chapter Three

### “He Started It”

*“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).*

That which is in the heart of an individual produces happiness or unhappiness. When the heart is right everything else will be alright. Since our lives are wrapped up in the lives of others and we are a bundle of life together, our hearts cannot be right without a proper attitude toward others.

Proper consideration of others is essential to health and happiness. “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works,” said the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 10:24).

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4).

There can be no place in a healthy heart for selfishness. Selfishness causes improper consideration of others.

It is very important to all of us that we receive proper consideration. If we do not believe others are being considerate toward us we have difficulty in having a proper feeling toward them. This is true in all relationships of life. If a wife does not feel that her husband is considerate of her, she feels that she is being cheated. This is equally true if the husband does not believe he is receiving the consideration his wife should have for him. In every way that we are related to other people this is true, whether at work or in our homes. This being true, it is easy to see the value of developing an attitude of proper consideration toward others.

If we are not careful, our lives will be based on what *we* want, or what *we* think is best. And we cannot understand why others do not want the same things we do. Any decision of others, or anything done by them, which is contrary to what we want or how we would do it, disturbs us because we are thinking only of ourselves.

Listen to most conversations and you will find that they are filled with little criticisms of the tastes and actions of others. A woman who dyes her hair black may find herself criticizing another who might dye her hair blonde or some other color. She does not stop to consider that if there is anything wrong with dying her hair she stands equal with the other. Or could it be she considers one color more proper than another? Her thinking, though unrecognized, is that dying the hair any color but black is wrong. Nothing else can be becoming to anyone.

Once a man was critical of another for driving a certain automobile. He was driving one of less value. Once a man wrote an article in which he condemned people who owned an automobile except a certain brand, which happened to be the one he was driving. All of this reveals how much our thoughts are turned inward and how inconsiderate we are of other people. But I can never learn to feel as I should toward others, and my heart can never know complete health, until I learn to consider others properly.

This word *consider* contains two ideas that need to be given proper thought. One is "*to strengthen others in their trials.*" How we may go about doing this will depend on the nature and extent of the trials others bear. It is certain that I am not in a position to strengthen another until I can learn to go out of myself and develop a proper feeling toward others. We are not as individualistic as we sometimes think we are. We need the strength others can give us. More than this we need the strength we receive from strengthening others. It is so easy to take life for granted. It is so easy to become so wrapped up in ourselves that we forget how much we need others.

A man once said, "I am worth a half million dollars and am obligated to no man." Yet all the money he had could not have made possible the automobile he was driving without the help of others. The fact that we are able to pay for the services of another in no way takes away the value of the service. And although there may be definite prices that we pay for certain services, they cannot

always be measured in dollars and cents. A physician by his skill saves our life and charges a thousand dollars for his services. Is that all our life is worth? A nurse patiently cares for us during the healing period and receives eighteen or twenty dollars a day for her services. Is that the measure of her value to our lives during this critical period? The fact that we are able to pay money for things or services does not remove all obligations. When this truth finds its way into our hearts, we will learn that others are due considerations that money cannot buy.

We can strengthen others *by helping them when it is possible for us to do so*. After all, our business is helping people. We need to know the right way to help because there is a wrong way. I do not help out of a sense of obligation but because of an opportunity. I need to help others much more than they need my help. That which the act of helping others produces in me is far more important than any relief they may receive from being helped. So I do not help others to place them under obligation to me. Neither do I help them because I feel myself superior to them. I help them because doing so is a natural part of belonging to Christ. Of course, in order to help others it will be necessary for me to know the kind of help they need. Otherwise I might hurt them while trying to help.

Sometimes it is possible to help others and give them strength *by merely listening to them*. I am not sure that it is true that *every* person must have someone to whom he can talk, but with many it is true.

Just having someone who will listen and who can be trusted is all that some people need. Naturally they must feel that we listen as a friend. No one can share his troubles with one he does not trust. He cannot receive any strength from one who is weak enough to use his troubles as a topic of conversation while talking to others. And although we may not be able to sympathize in the fullest sense of the word, we can at least allow the person to know that to the best of our ability our sympathies are with him. In other words, we do not listen in such a way that a person would feel he was talking to a stone. When someone only needs a listener, that is all I should try to be. It is useless to offer advice where advice is not wanted. Not only is it useless but it may do harm. Certainly it will cut off the only channel the other person has open for receiving help. Knowing *what* to do is very important but knowing *when* to do it is of equal importance.

We may strengthen others *by a word of encouragement*. Everyone needs encouragement but many never receive it and few know how to give it. Sometimes those who may need it most do not receive it because we do not feel they need it.

A man once wrote an editorial for a paper which a younger editor read and appreciated. He thought he would find the editor and tell him of his appreciation, but for several reasons he did not do so. Some time later, he met the author of the article and told him that he had intended to write him but knew he would receive so many letters that his would not

matter. He was surprised to learn that the author had not received a single letter.

Some of the greatest ability we all have we seldom use. We are surprised sometimes to learn of the failure of some great person who we believed had everything the heart could crave. But if we could only know that heart we would be surprised to learn that he broke because of a lack of encouragement.

Discouragement is one of the world's biggest killers. It creates more havoc in more lives than we are aware. If we know something good about others, we should tell them so, not only because they need to hear it but also because we need to do it. Barnabas was called "the son of consolation." He encouraged people. No person is more welcome or more needed than one who will encourage others.

There are many other ways we can strengthen others, and grow stronger in doing so, but there is more to proper consideration.

Proper consideration leads to proper consideration. No person is happy who does not believe he is receiving proper consideration from others. Neither can he feel his best or do his best work without it. One who believes he is receiving proper consideration from others will be willing to do much more and will receive more joy from rendering a service than he would without receiving it.

People in the business world learned this long ago. We usually do business with those whom we believe are being fair to us. We avoid those we believe to be unfair. Books have been written, courses



have been given, and business people have insisted on fair treatment. Some even go so far as to say, "The customer must be satisfied." Because we like that kind of treatment, we go back to those places when we need their services. That which is true in business dealings is also true in every relationship of life. We are prone to give back what we get. Therefore, if we would expect to receive proper consideration from others, let us give them the consideration they are due. Following these simple rules can make life pleasant.

A little girl once sat in front of a door-stop that looked like a bulldog, and was doing her best to make her face look like that of the dog. Her mother asked her why she was doing it. She said, "He started it."

Remember, proper consideration will lead to proper consideration.

## *Chapter Four*

# Making Others Happy

*"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another"*  
(Rom. 12:10).

Preferring one another is not only best for those who are preferred but also for the one who develops the attitude of preferring others. It simply means to go before the other or set a proper example for the other person. In so doing we will show each other all respect due in the various relationships of life. This attitude will cause us to seek to promote the happiness of the other person. Many writers tell us, and our own experience proves, that happiness is something that comes as a by-product of something else. People who are seeking happiness never find it. Those who seek to confer honor on others find it without looking for it.

We bring much harm to ourselves when we seek prominence at the expense of someone else. Such an

attitude makes us unwilling to occupy our positions in life with any degree of satisfaction. It creates within us a desire to destroy someone whom we might consider better than ourselves, or who has gained a position we desire. It is possible that we might not even want the position but we do not want others to have it.

The higher a person rises in any profession, the more he will be criticized, not necessarily because he has done wrong but because others will not accept the fact that he is doing that which is right. We find it much easier to believe an evil report about someone who is more successful than we are than we do to believe a similar report regarding one whom we consider less successful. If we are not careful we will find a certain delight in spreading evil reports without any investigation at all. Or if we do not engage in spreading the reports, we will get pleasure from hearing someone else do so. If we find any pleasure in seeing the good name of another destroyed, we certainly have not developed the attitude of preferring one another. If we allow such an attitude to linger long enough in our hearts, we will be hurt and life will lose much of its glow. Keeping such attitudes in our hearts will eventually do us much more harm than those we desire to hurt.

Striving to promote the happiness of others is the way of preferring one another. We cannot allow any exceptions if we are to do right and receive the greatest benefits. We cannot limit this attitude to those who are our relatives. We cannot limit it to

those in certain positions. We cannot limit it to a particular race of people.

If *we prefer* so that we might *be preferred*, we have missed the whole point. Those who strive to promote the happiness of others will find as much satisfaction in making one person happy as another because they have gone out of themselves in their desire for the well-being of another.

We fail to receive the benefit and lose the meaning of this statement when we apply it to preferring one person above another. This advice of Paul has been used to prove that because of certain circumstances or relationships, one business is preferred before another, or one service above another. When used in this way we get back to preferring in order to be preferred or because we have been preferred. We have already discussed the fact that proper consideration leads to proper consideration. This we can understand but no action should be prompted by a selfish motive. Preferring the other person is an attitude and cannot be fenced in by circumstances or selfishness.

Going before another is a part of this attitude. We will discuss this more completely in another chapter but we need to notice here that it refers to the custom of an Eastern Monarch who sent runners before him to smooth the way so that his travelling would be easier. The runner would cut away the brush, bridge the streams, remove the large stones, and in other ways provide for a safe and pleasant journey for the one he served. Thus in preferring one another, we stand before them for the purpose

of making their way smoother and protecting them from harm. Such an attitude never inflicts pain but seeks to prevent it. This attitude never seeks to cause sorrow but tries to promote happiness. It causes one to stand before another to shield and protect. Certainly we can see there is more joy in knowing we have eased the hurt of another than in realizing we have been the cause of it.

## *Chapter Five*

### Giving Others the Right-Of-Way

In the preceding chapter we discussed the value of preferring others. In the same verse we are told to be "kindly affectioned one to another." According to those who are in a position to know, this is the only place in the New Testament that we find this term as it is stated here. It calls for the kind of affection parents have for their children.

This kind of affection does not seek to destroy but to save. It does not seek to hurt but to protect from hurting. It does not seek to be ministered to but to minister. It looks for opportunities to render service.

Parents who love their children do not publicize their weaknesses. They never relate to others anything about their children that would be embarrassing to them. Even if the child has said or done something wrong they do not seek to make it known but rather to cover it up for the sake of the child they love.

Parents who love their children do not gossip about them. If some story is told by others about their children that is designed to do them harm they do not pass this story on to others but seek to defend the good name of their children. They are slow to believe anything of a critical nature about them.

Parents who love their children do not seek to hurt them but to help them. Any pain that might be administered is for the purpose of helping. And the parent gets no satisfaction from witnessing the suffering of a child but tries to find ways of healing whether it be a pain that is imaginary or real.

Parents who love their children do not look for faults in them but look for something they can praise. They are more prone to see the good in their children than the bad. Instead of magnifying trifles they seek to cover up their mistakes. This does not mean they do not try to help them but that they do not use their mistakes to hurt them.

Parents who love their children sacrifice for them. They are constantly looking for something better for their children than they were permitted to enjoy. They are willing to do without so that the child may receive an education they were never permitted to enjoy. If one must do without something so that the other might have it, the parent is the one who gladly does without. The parent does not even permit the child to know he is making a sacrifice so that the child might have something. Parents who love their children are not constantly reminding them of how much they have suffered for the well-being of the child.

Parents who love their children rejoice in the success they experience. From the time the child is able to accomplish something outstanding in school until he becomes a great success in his chosen profession, the parent rejoices and is genuinely proud of the child's development and never envious of what he is able to do.

Parents who love their children never stop trying to help and protect them. This love cannot be destroyed regardless of what the child might do. This is a love that will not let go. It will go with the child through all the experiences of life, good or bad, and never diminish regardless of circumstances.

It is easy to see why there is so much happiness in families when this is true. But, according to the Bible statement, this is the way we should feel about each other. This attitude will not permit us to feel sorry for ourselves because we do not feel equal to another. This attitude will cause us to be very slow in believing an evil report that might come to us about others. And it will cause us to rejoice in every good thing that happens to others. It demands that self stand aside and give another right-of-way and be glad because of the blessings he enjoys.

Such an attitude brings joy into our hearts. It does not entertain such destructive emotions as envy, jealousy, and hatred that take away the strength of living. And when these destructive emotions are absent and happiness exists in our hearts, our health and our outlook on life will be better. Also our association with others will give us pleasure instead of pain.



## Chapter Six

# Rottenness Of The Bones

*"Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another" (Gal. 5: 26).*

Much has been written by those who know what emotions can do to us about many common diseases that come as a result of allowing disturbed emotions to remain in our hearts. Among the most destructive attitudes we develop is envy. Long before men of medical science learned about these things, Solomon wrote, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones" (Prov. 14: 30). In a few words he tells what it took man centuries to discover: We cannot envy others without paying a great price for it. Just because the way we feel seems to be hidden from the view of others does not mean no harm is done. More people destroy

their own physical health by entertaining destructive emotions than any other way.

Paul wrote two letters to the church at Corinth. Reading these letters one can easily discover that they had serious problems and Paul tried to help them. It is very clear that their problems resulted from a carnal heart, and their attitudes revealed this condition. "For ye are carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). Naturally if they were carnal they were not spiritual. Thus one cannot be truly spiritual while being carnal.

It is very easy to think of spirituality finding its end in the doing of things whereas the right things might be done but from a carnal heart. Men have gone to two extremes in their thinking and both of them are destructive. It is wrong to conclude that if we do the right things it does not matter what the motive is for doing them. It is also wrong to think that the motive can be right while proper action is overlooked.

These people were experiencing strife and divisions with all the bitterness and heartaches that accompany such conditions. Happiness is never found where there is strife and division. This condition was allowed to arise because of hearts that were carnal, and hearts that are carnal are filled with envy. There is no way for one person to be envious of another and be right. Neither is there a way for one to entertain envy in his heart and feel right. And there is no way to escape the results of allowing such emotions to remain in our hearts.

To those who believe the Bible the most horrible scenes are connected with the trial and crucifixion of Christ. One cannot help but wonder how it was possible for hearts to become so filled with evil that such crimes against an innocent man could be committed. These crimes were not committed by people who did not believe in God but by those who claimed to be stronger in their faith than anyone else. They boasted of their loyalty and love. They prayed often and gave a tenth of their income to their Lord and were prone to remind Him of how much better they were than others. But they were responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. The most despicable scenes pictured in the Bible were the result of their decisions and actions. How could it be? Because of envy.

Listen to what Pilate thought of these religious people: "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him" (Matt. 27:18). Because they were envious they could lie about the Lord and employ others to do the same. Because of envy they could spit in His face. Because of envy they could blindfold Him and hit Him in the face and ask Him to tell who it was that hit Him. Because of envy they could place a crown of thorns on His head. And because of envy they could cause Him to be crucified and stand there watching Him die, believing they were doing the right thing.

Envy can remove all reason from our hearts. Envy can erase all love from our hearts and replace it with something that seeks to destroy while claiming to love. Envy can cause us to seek to hurt and

destroy one of whom we are envious. Envy can take all the joy out of living. It can take away the beauty of the sunset, erase the melody in the song of a bird, and create a burden in our hearts that will blot out all happiness in living. That which these people did to Christ should reveal how destructive envy is. Realizing its destructive powers, we should seek to rid ourselves of it the moment we find it creeping into our hearts.

The true cure for envy is to realize that our interests are on a common level. Only in our relationship to the Lord is this common level found. There is no way to make people equal socially. In the world there have always been different social levels that were determined by various rules, and the world will no doubt always be like that. We cannot force equality socially.

Also there will always be different levels intellectually. A person is not thinking straight who believes that the minds and abilities of men can ever be equal. Jesus taught that the kingdom is like a man who called unto him his servants and gave them different numbers of talents—to each according to his ability.

Neither is there a way to make people on a common level financially. It has been tried. The idea has filled the dreams of many men for many centuries, but nothing that has been tried has ever worked. We even doubt that such equality would bring about the happiness that some believe it would. But in our relationship to God we operate on a common level.

God does not make a difference between the rich and the poor. Whether men are wise in worldly wisdom or not does not count with God. God expects the best a man can *be* and the best he can *do*. When this is done every man stands equal in the sight of God. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Only there can men be equal. Whether rich or poor, whether wise or ignorant, people of all races will stand there on equal ground.

If one believes in God, his greatest interests are beyond the grave. In the final day the poor will wear as bright a crown as the rich. Why then should one who is soon to wear an incorruptible crown envy one who might be able to wear a crown in this world that will be taken away? Why should one who is soon to wear a robe made white in the blood of the Lamb envy one who might be permitted to wear a little better clothing on this earth? Why should one who will some day possess heaven envy one who might be able to walk over a few acres on this earth which he calls his own? When we get our thinking straight and our values properly placed we will be able to see how foolish it is to envy other people. And when we realize how much harm allowing such attitudes to dwell in our hearts can do to us, we will certainly want to rid ourselves of them. Paul speaks of envying as being one of the works of the flesh which, if we possess, will keep us out of heaven.

## *Chapter Seven*

### **Run Away From Darkness**

Most of us would be quick to defend ourselves if someone should accuse us of having hatred in our hearts. This is one attitude no one wants to admit he has. Yet hatred is a very common thing with many people who are not aware that it exists in their hearts. Only when we witness the results of hatred can we recognize it was there, and even then we usually find something else to blame for the mistakes we make or the crimes we commit.

There are three verses in the Bible we should read before discussing the attitude of hatred:

*"He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now" (1 Jno. 2:9).*

*"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 Jno. 3:15).*

*"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 Jno. 4:20).*

In the first statement we find the idea of *willing* and *doing evil* to another person. Under the law of Moses only the *act* was counted as sin, but when Jesus came He revealed the fact that evil must first exist *in the heart* before it is translated into action.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28).

The *act* is merely the completion of that which had its beginning *in the heart*.

The same is true of hatred. If I desire that some evil happen to another, I have hatred in my heart for him. It has not reached the degree where I could be responsible for doing him harm, but I would be delighted to see the harm done by someone else. If we have ever said when someone was being hurt, "He has been asking for it a long time and I am glad to see him get it," we have been entertaining hatred in our hearts.

Jesus taught us to love our neighbors as ourselves. We know that this is a different kind of love than the love we have for those who are dear to us, so we search for the meaning of the term and discover that it means *active good will*. The opposite of that is hatred. Desiring that some evil befall another

is as much hatred as *looking to lust* is committing adultery. I cannot afford to entertain such an attitude that will eventually destroy myself and do harm to the one I am secretly hating.

The second idea is the same emotion that was in the heart of Cain. He killed his brother—not because his brother had wronged him but because he hated him. He hated him because he envied him. God accepted the offering of his brother, but He rejected the offering of Cain. The reason God gave for rejecting his offering was “sin lieth at the door.” What sin it was the Lord does not say, but whatever it was, it resulted in hatred for his brother. Had someone inquired of Cain at the time this attitude was growing in his heart toward his brother whether he would some day murder him, he would have no doubt laughed at the suggestion. For some reason we are prone to think we can keep thoughts in our hearts without their ever doing us harm or being translated into action. But out of the heart come the issues of life.

If we could know the hearts of all the murderers who now occupy the various penitentiaries, it is doubtful that we would find that any of them intended to commit murder when they began entertaining the thoughts that eventually led to their crimes. Various excuses are often given but the basis of the action is one or more of these wrong attitudes that finally grow into hatred. We can no more make a play-thing out of the heart than we can anything else. When hatred arrives, love is dead.



Sometimes there is such a thin line between hatred and love that hatred is mistaken for love. People have vowed they loved others while seeking to destroy them. In the next chapter we will learn that love does not do this. Jesus taught that a tree is known by its fruits. That which is produced reveals the presence of love or hatred, and all the vows we make cannot change the matter. We are not so much destroyed by others as we destroy ourselves. No real and lasting harm can come to us from external sources. That which destroys is something we keep with us. Something we do not think of as being harmful, such as attitudes and emotions, we allow to remain in our hearts. They eventually destroy every good thing in us, and finally result in our own destruction.

The third idea has to do with the way we feel toward God as being determined by the way we feel toward man. Jesus spoke once of the final judgment in this way:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer

him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink. When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did not it to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:31-46).

Thus the basis of our feelings toward others is rooted in our feeling toward God. God is the creator of all people. Every person is important to God. If one truly loves God, he cannot hate another whom God made in his own image. There is no way to separate our actions toward man from our actions toward God. We cannot hate men and love God. We cannot serve God and refuse to serve man. We do not understand what love is when we vow that we love God but hate our brethren. And we must remember that hatred can exist in the heart before any violent action. When hatred enters, love leaves. Then we begin to destroy our own happiness.

## Chapter Eight

### Without This, I Am Nothing

*“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 Jno. 4:7).*

The cure for hatred is love. Love is the most powerful force that can enter the heart of man. “Love is strong as death” (Solomon’s Songs 8:5). “There is no fear in love but perfect love casteth out fear” (1 Jno. 4:18). To love is to be ever ready to promote the welfare of another. While hatred wills and does *evil*, love wills and does *good*. He who loves most has the most of God in him because God is love.

“I love you” is an often used expression. We know, however, that love is more than an expression from the lips. The Pharisees would have vowed that they loved God, but Jesus proved they did not. No doubt Judas would have said he loved the Lord, but

his actions proved there was no love in his heart. It is easy to determine whether we love by testing ourselves with what Paul said love does and does not do. Although some of the things he mentions will be discussed later, we need to pay some attention to them here.

“Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth” (1 Cor. 13:4-8a).

Love is *longsuffering*. It is patient in dealing with the one loved. There may be recognition of faults and weaknesses, but love is patient in dealing with them. There is no love when this is not true.

Love is *kind*. We cannot be unkind to those we love. A heart that is filled with love is full of kindness. It is not true that, “You always hurt the one you love.”

Love *envieth not*. We have already discussed what harm this attitude can do to us and to others. Unfortunately we do not always recognize envy when it fills our hearts. If we are not happy because of the good fortune that comes to others, or if we would prefer that it would happen to us rather than to them, we cannot truthfully say that we love them.

Love *vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*. Love always places the one loved first. Love does not stand in the way of the one loved. Neither does love take for itself the honor that belongs to the one



loved, but rather seeks to confer honor. Love is not blinded by pride and self-righteousness.

Love has *a certain behavior pattern*. It *does not behave itself unseemly*. Love conducts itself properly under all conditions toward the one loved. Love is not moved by the pressures of a crowd, or even circumstances, to improper behavior. Proper behavior will be seen in all relationships sustained toward one we love whether we are together or separated from each other. Thus we cannot love another and at the same time abuse him. We cannot love him while we mis-use him. We do not love when we are untrue to him. Love behaves itself properly toward the one loved under all conditions. One of the world's greatest immoral acts is to exploit others under the facade of professed love.

Love *seeketh not her own*. Selfishness is one of the most destructive forces in the heart of man. Whether we view selfishness from an individual standpoint or nationally, we cannot see anything but destruction. Anything that is done for purely selfish reasons leads to destruction. When we study the rise and fall of nations, it is easy to see that selfishness played a very prominent part in the destruction of these nations. But every move made by nations is made by individuals because nations are made up of individuals. We know that decisions or actions that are based on selfish motives do not come from hearts that love. Love cannot be selfish. The welfare of the one loved always has right-of-way in the heart of the one who loves.

*Love is not easily provoked.* Although one may possibly like a person without loving him, it is doubtful that he can love without liking. At least Paul tells us we cannot love while being easily provoked. Love, therefore, does not seek to find fault. It does not search for weaknesses or something to criticize. Love is not irritated by the actions of the one loved.

*Love thinketh no evil.* Love thinks and looks for that which is good. Love does not connect evil with the words and actions of another. People have vowed they loved others while at the same time they were spying to see if they could find the one "loved" doing something wrong. Love does not place improper construction on what the one loved does or where he may chance to go. If we love a person, we trust him. If we do not trust him, we do not love him. We believe that whatever happens the motive of the one we love is proper and when we do not understand, we continue to love.

*Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.* We often criticize those who make movies or produce shows for television because of the iniquity involved. They come back with a very plausible answer. They produce what people like to see. Sometimes the greatest critics are the most eager to get a view of the iniquity produced. Love does not rejoice in such things. The joy of love is in the truth.

*Love does not wear out. It beareth all things.* Love does not try to shift its load to the heart of an-

other. When love suffers, it does not seek for someone to bear the suffering. Love does long to share in the sufferings of the one loved, but it does not seek to cause suffering in another because it suffers. Love has enduring quality, enduring all things. The anchor that makes this possible is *hope* because love hopeth all things. There is no end to the enduring power of love. Its strength never fails, therefore love "never faileth." Love holds on when everyone would say turn loose, and because of this love always wins.

We can take these actions of love and compare them with our own and determine whether we love. If we do, we have something in us as strong as death. Something that, in the very midst of fears that have a way of destroying happiness, can still win by casting out fear. Without love we are nothing.

## Chapter Nine

### The Secret Of Kindness

*"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32).*

*"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:8-9).*

Kindness does not allow one to be rough, and crabbed, and sour, and hard. We have observed that love is kind. Where there is no kindness, there is no love.



Kindness *must be genuine, not superficial*. It is not difficult to determine the difference between real kindness and mere outward expressions. All of us have no doubt had the experience of meeting a person who smiles, but the smile is all outward. The face smiles but the eyes express something else. Behind this kind of smile may be many thoughts contrary to what the face is expressing. When this is true, the thought shows through the smile. In the same way we may perform acts of kindness but in such a nature as to make them insults. If we are not genuine in our expressions and actions, we are not really kind. Even if we are capable of covering up our lack of kindness, we still must face ourselves. Unless we can get pleasure from living with ourselves, life will produce no pleasure at all.

Kindness *begins with the way we think*. If we do not think unkind thoughts about others, we will not say unkind things about them. Neither will our actions toward them be unkind for "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

Kindness *does not seek to hurt but to help*. Notice a statement from Luke when Paul and his fellow prisoners were shipwrecked on an island in the middle of the sea: "And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold" (Acts 28:2).

Kindness *does not look for flaws but for virtues*. It is difficult to understand how one could find any real pleasure in finding something wrong with

others. If we do this for the purpose of magnifying our own virtues, we will find no pleasure, for the weakness that caused us to look for flaws in others does not leave us merely because we find them. We cannot cure a fault within ourselves by finding the same fault in someone else. But if we develop the habit of looking for the good in others, we develop within our hearts the virtues we admire in them.

*Kindness is not critical.* A kind person cannot be critical of other people. Many times we have heard of constructive criticism, but it is doubtful that any criticism is constructive. The word "constructive" can be used to cover a fault in our own hearts. Kindness will try to lead others from error to truth. Kindness will point the way to happiness, but kindness does not look for something to criticize. Kindness looks for something to praise. People who indulge in the habit of "cutting others to pieces" will often try to hide behind a cloak of kindness. They think, or at least they say, they are doing the other person a favor, but it is doubtful that the critic really thinks he is helping the one he criticizes.

*Kindness is a life.* It is not something we turn on and off as the occasion demands. It is not so much a rule by which we live as the life we are living. A life that grows out of kindness does not need to be turned on and off. You can't turn it off. No circumstances will change it. Regardless of what happens, kindness will not forsake us when it is a life that we live.

The secret of true kindness is the *desire to make others happy*. If we desire to make others happy we cannot be unkind to them. While we are seeking to make others happy, we find happiness in our own lives. We would not have found happiness if we sought it as an obsessive, primary goal within itself, but while properly conducting ourselves toward others, we find it without seeking it. We do not wonder then that Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and "He that loseth his life shall find it."

## Chapter Ten

### Bearing Patiently With Others

*"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3).*

God is pictured in the Bible as a longsuffering God. He bears patiently with the faults and weaknesses of men.

It is easy to see how necessary it is for us to be longsuffering in our attitudes toward others. In many ways we are all alike, and yet we are different. We have the same desires but we do not grow up in the same environment. The advantages or disadvantages we have experienced in life have left their marks on us. A child who grows up with longsuffering parents, who deal patiently with and gently teach him right from wrong, will develop wholesome attitudes toward life and toward others. This

is a great advantage. But children who grow up without this advantage will not develop the same attitudes. Some children grow up in homes where parents know little, or nothing, about a longsuffering attitude. Instead of being taught right from wrong, the child learns by trial and error. If they do wrong, they are punished without being taught the reason for the punishment. It may even be years before they realize why they were punished. It is easy to see how a different temperament would develop in this child than that of the one who had greater advantages in training.

It is possible for parents unconsciously to try, in dealing with their children, to get even with their parents for what they believed to be unfairness. People of one generation may try to get even with another generation that has long since perished. Naturally we are not aware of the reason we conduct ourselves as we do, but different temperaments are created by different situations. Because of this, we cannot find happiness unless we learn to be longsuffering in our dealings with others.

A husband and wife can make life forever miserable if they are willing to magnify trifles. It is hardly possible that any two people always please one another in everything but love has a way of passing over the small matters that irritate. Love will develop a longsuffering attitude because love is longsuffering.

Some time ago in a regular column where problems of human relationships are answered, a woman wrote the editor of the column complaining about

her husband. It seems that for several years she had cooked him some hot oat meal every morning. This is not all she served him for breakfast, but she believed it was essential for him to have the oat meal each morning. After several years, she discovered one morning that she had no oat meal and apologized to her husband.

He said, "That's alright, I really don't like oat meal."

The woman complained of the fact that he had eaten it so long without telling her he did not like it. The editor responded by saying she should be very thankful for a man who could eat something he did not like for such a long time without complaining.

Many times we may displease someone who loves us but we are never made aware of it. Love covers a multitude of sins. A woman who loves a man will do so in spite of his weaknesses. She does not magnify trifles. She overlooks them. A woman who is constantly complaining about every little fault she can see in her husband does not love him. She knows nothing about a longsuffering attitude. The same would be true in a man's relationship to his wife. When love is in the heart, we learn to live with minor faults. That is what love is all about. We deal patiently with the faults and weaknesses of those we love. We do not make something out of every little fault we see.

Parents can very easily destroy the happiness of their children by magnifying every little defect they see in the child. Surely discipline is essential to contentment and happiness, but if a child must spend

his life hearing constant nagging because of minor trifles he will grow up with a disposition that can bring only unhappiness. There is no better way to make people feel insecure than to be constantly criticizing them for the little things we would have overlooked had we known what it is to be long-suffering. And it is hardly possible to see how one who is constantly finding fault with others can find any happiness in his own life.

## *Chapter Eleven*

# The Abuse Of Power

*“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5:21).*

“Submitting ourselves one to another” means we should maintain due subordination in the various relationships of life. No person can really be happy who does not learn this lesson.

No power should ever be abused. Because the husband is the head of the wife does not mean that he has the right to abuse his position and mistreat her. Because a parent has authority over a child does not allow the parent the right to be abusive in dealing with children. When others are working under our authority we have no right to use our authority to hurt them.

When one is appointed to a position where he serves over others, if he is what the Lord would have him be, he will not use his position in an unholy



manner. Men have been appointed to positions of leadership only to experience a complete personality change which caused them to become dominating and unkind in dealing with others. We refer to this as a personality change, but in reality that is not true. An attitude comes to the surface that has been there all the time but has not been recognized, or has not had the opportunity to reveal itself.

A good leader is a good example. The only reason for anyone being appointed to a position of leadership is because he has earned it by his conduct and demonstrated ability. If the appointment causes him to change in his attitude, those who were responsible for his appointment have made a serious mistake and should remove him from a position of responsibility at once. Otherwise he will do much harm to the cause he represents. Sooner or later it will be necessary to remove him and it is much better to do it sooner than later. But if one has a spirit of submission, he will not abuse his power and will occupy with dignity and humility any position to which he is appointed. He will receive much satisfaction from being able to live up to the expectation of those who appointed him, and those who follow him will do so with gladness and thankfulness, giving him due honor for the good work he does.

Christianity does not break up ordinary relationships of life and produce disorder. In the day when Christianity was introduced to the world, many evils were in evidence. Slavery was practiced by all races of people. Race hatred existed to a

much greater degree than has been known since that time. Human life was often considered very cheap. Those who occupied positions of authority in the various governments of the world had little consideration for the rights of man and knew little or nothing about God.

Even though this condition existed we find no teaching, nor example, from Christ or His followers calling for rebellion. In fact the opposite attitude filled their hearts. They were told to submit to the powers that be. There was no march on Rome or any other capitol city. No petitions were sent to the rulers of the land. No demonstrations were authorized nor participated in by the early Christians. Neither did they make any demands that the government take care of their normal needs. Does this mean that the early Christians endorsed the evils that existed? It does not. They were Christians. Christianity is something that begins in the heart of an individual. If the heart is right, our actions will be right. But no amount of *force* can make the heart right. Christianity does not operate by force.

When Paul was in Rome, a slave who belonged to a friend of his came to see him in prison. The slave had run away from his master. Paul converted him and sent him home. He wrote a letter to the master of the slave in his behalf, but he did not tell the master that it was his obligation to set the slave free. Does that mean Paul endorsed the practice of slavery? No, he endorsed Christianity. He advised, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling. In

singleness of heart, as unto Christ: Not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Eph. 6:5-8). Then he told masters, "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there any respect of persons with him" (Eph. 5:9). Bear in mind, he was not endorsing the arrangement, but neither was he fighting against the establishment. True Christianity does not operate by human force. It begins in the heart and directs all conduct with a spirit of submission.

Christ and the early Christians have been accused of leading a revolution, but the Bible does not indicate this at all. To be sure, there *was* a revolution, but it was in the *hearts* of men. It is unfair to accuse Christ of entertaining any ideas that would disrupt normal relationships by forcing people to do what He taught was right. It is also unfair to accuse Him of endorsing any action on the part of people who would try to destroy others because of smoldering resentment. He never said anything that would lead us to believe that one generation has the right to be evil to another generation because of what others did in years gone by. If any people had a right to be resentful and develop hatred the early Christians had that right because of what people did to their Lord. But, instead of being resentful, their

hearts were filled with love and compassion even for those who had done so much evil. Jesus prayed for those who murdered Him. Stephen followed the Lord's example when he was dying from the stones thrown by those whose hearts were filled with hatred.

These early Christians were happy because they refused to entertain hatred, malice, resentment, or any such emotions in their hearts. If anyone had a right to be bitter, it was Paul; but he said, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:31). There was no place in his heart for bitterness in spite of the fact that he said, "I die daily." He was much happier than those who allowed their hearts to become bitter.

Regardless of how we are treated by others, we have no right to become bitter. Anyone who allows bitterness to fill his heart will suffer much more than those who did him evil. When the heart is allowed to become bitter, we always lose. How much better it is to refuse to allow bitterness to fill our hearts than to finally drown in it! The very fact that the heart becomes bitter means that not enough of Christ is dwelling in it.

Those early Christians were happy because they learned what true submission is. Thus they found something many people are searching for today, and miss, because they look *from the outside in* instead of looking *from the inside out*.

## Chapter Twelve

### No Room For Malice

*"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13).*

Life would be forever miserable without this principle of forgiveness. Any life will always be miserable that has not learned it. Peter once asked the Lord, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say unto thee, Until seven times: but until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:21-22). Jesus is telling Peter that there can be no end to forgiveness. One who has wronged us needs to be forgiven, but more than that I need to learn to forgive. I cannot entertain an unforgiving spirit in my heart and find happiness.

The word *quarrel* means an occasion of complaint. It is not something we imagine. Most of the

wrongs we think people do us we find to be only in our imagination. It is certainly not difficult to forgive someone something he did not do. If I imagine someone has wronged me but later learn that he had no intention of doing me wrong, I find no difficulty in forgiving him. But Paul is here talking about an occasion of complaint. One has wronged me and I know it. He knows it. He has deliberately and intentionally done me wrong. I have an occasion of complaint. When a person who has thus wronged me seeks forgiveness, I must forgive him.

This forgiveness means that I harbor no malice though I have been wronged. It is easy to declare a person forgiven without really forgiving him. If I hold malice in my heart because of the wrong he did, I have not forgiven him. If I say to him, "I am willing to forgive you, but I can never have anything to do with you and never trust you," I have not forgiven him. The fact that I may have been intentionally wronged, that it does not merely exist in my imagination, does not change the matter at all. The presence of malice in my heart is complete proof that I have not really forgiven the one who has wronged me.

Forgiveness here means that I be as ready to do him good as if I had no occasion of complaint. Whatever I would have done before the wrong was committed, I must be willing to do when I have forgiven one for his wrong doing. My heart must be free from any grudge or any ill feeling toward the one who has wronged me.



Forgiveness here also means that I always afterward treat the one who has wronged me as kindly as I would if he had never injured me. The human way of forgiving is to continue to keep ill feelings in my heart. You have wronged me and ask for forgiveness. I say, "I am willing to forgive you, but I don't want to have anything to do with you. You stay away from me and I will stay away from you. I do not want to have any dealings with you." That is not forgiveness. If I harbor such feelings in my heart, I have not forgiven at all.

Notice the statement, "*even as Christ forgave you*, so also do ye." Now suppose Christ forgave as many people do. He would say to me, "I am willing to forgive you, but I don't want to have anything to do with you. You stay away from me and I will stay away from you." Could a person go to heaven if Christ forgave like that? Certainly not. When He forgives us our wrongs, He "remembers them against us no more." He never holds a grudge. He never allows malice to exist in His heart. He never reminds me of the many times I have wronged Him. He keeps no account of any evil actions. When He forgives, He does not hold the wrong I have done against me any more. If He did, none of us could be saved. Now we are told that we should forgive as He forgives us. In the same way we hold no grudge and we remember the wrong against others no more. We may not be able to blot it out of our minds completely, but it does not remain there for the purpose of avoiding or harming those we have declared for-

given. As we are treated by the Lord, we should treat others who have sinned against us.

We need also to learn to forgive ourselves. I believe sometimes we are much harder on ourselves than we are on others. We hold in our hearts a feeling of remorse for wrongs that have long since been forgiven. No doubt many people carry heavy loads that should have been laid aside long ago. If I have wronged someone, it is only right that I seek forgiveness. If I have wronged God, I must seek forgiveness from Him. But when I have sought and obtained forgiveness, I should certainly be as good to *myself* as others are willing to be. No good can come from entertaining feelings of remorse that will take away happiness. Almost anyone who has lived a number of years has done things he wishes he had not done. We naturally regret having done them. But if I keep punishing myself when I have been forgiven, I will make my life miserable and also make those with whom I associate miserable.

Many persons have destroyed their health, lost their friends, and put a cloud in their sky which hovers over them constantly because they will not forgive themselves. The past is over. We should let it remain in the past. If we destroy the happiness of today and of our future by allowing past mistakes to linger in our minds, we cheat ourselves of what happiness today and the future hold for us. Not only that, but we keep ourselves from being at our best because of the frightful fiend that we allow to walk behind us. It is possible that we cannot completely blot from our minds the wrongs we have done, but



we can keep from holding them in our hearts to such an extent that we go on blaming ourselves and buffeting ourselves and belittling ourselves, thus destroying the joy of living in the present.

Peter denied the Lord, and I am sure no person could weep more bitterly than he wept. When he had received forgiveness, we do not find him mentioning his wrong any more. He spoke, and he wrote, but in neither speaking nor writing did he spend valuable time in remorse. He went on to a better life and found happiness in a situation where it would seem impossible for one to be happy. He could not have done this had he refused to forgive himself completely of what he had done. We need to learn this lesson. We can never be happy until we do.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

### When We Disagree

*"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. 15: 7).*

In the chapter preceding this text, Romans 14, Paul pointed out the fact that differences would arise over personal matters. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him" (Rom. 14:1-3). Certainly if God receives him we should also receive him. To fail to do so would place us in the position of being judges over God.

In this illustration we have a reference to a practice of that day concerning animal flesh that had

been offered to an idol god. The question arose as to whether it would be right to eat that meat. An animal was slain and his blood was poured out as a sacrifice to God; the body of the animal was sold in the market. Would the eating of the meat make the eater an idol worshipper? Would he be lending his influence to the propagation of error? Paul went on to say that eating the meat did not offend God. Neither would refusing to eat the meat mean any difference to God. But if a weak brother would be caused to depart from the faith, it would be best not to eat it. In another place Paul said, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8:13).

This advice of Paul can very easily be abused if we read into it something that was not intended. There is a lot of difference in *offending someone* and *causing him to offend*. It was not the intention of the Lord that my life should be ruled by the peculiarities of warped minds.

For illustration, suppose that someone gossips about another. Does the victim of the gossip owe a confession to the one who does the gossiping, or to anyone else? Certainly not. There is much difference in what someone who is prone to gossip says about a person and what that person does. We are not told here that we are to be moved by such action. If anyone owes an apology to another, it would be the gossipier who should make confession to the one about whom he gossiped.

If a person were called upon to make an apology for every occasion of gossip, those who are successful in their work would be forced to spend all their time apologizing for something for which they were not guilty. This statement by Paul was not made in order to give little people a knife with which to cut others down to their size.

What does he mean by the expression "causing a brother to offend"? It simply means if my doing something, which is neither right nor wrong in itself (something that one might do or leave off doing) causes another to offend, or deny Christ and His word, for the sake of the weak brother I should cease to do it. If it is something that Christ has commanded, then we should obey God rather than man. But if it is something, like the eating of this meat offered to idols, which one might or might not do that would cause one to cease to serve Christ, it should not be done. If in this case I wanted meat, it would be easy to find some meat that had not been offered to an idol. By doing this I would not cause a weak brother to stumble.

Notice also that the reference is about a weak brother. Strong people would understand. Right thinking people would understand. Thus he declares the weak brother in this case to be ignorant of right and wrong. However, in the illustration we used concerning one who gossips about another, the gossipier feels that he is the strong one and the other is weak. That being true, the statement would not apply, because Paul is talking about causing weak people to offend. If a person knows enough about a



matter to object, he cannot be classed as a weak brother in this case.

What about differences over personal matters? What would the obligation be of both parties concerned? Each should be interested in learning the truth. Neither should act unless he is sure he knows the truth. The one who knows the truth should make every effort possible to teach the one who does not know. And the one who does not know should make every effort to learn the truth.

If all the energy that has been used in condemning things that had not been investigated had been turned toward learning the truth, the whole world would have heard the truth in each generation. Unfortunately the first reaction of ninety percent of all people is negative when any new idea is presented.

Before men perfected a machine in which to fly, many were heard to say, "If God wanted a man to fly, He would have given him wings." That sounded rather intelligent to some people, but men perfected the machine and they can cross the world in a few hours. Before men went to the moon, it was not difficult to find doubters with closed minds. Many people were sure that the journey would never be made and those who tried to make it would be cursed by Jehovah. But men made the journey and we hear nothing more about it of a doubtful nature. We have learned that it could be done, so we no longer deny it.

Now suppose we apply this to other things. Would it not be best that I know what I am saying before I say it? Would it not be best to know what I

am doing before I do it? Before I condemn another, I should be sure he is wrong. It is not right to act upon what others say about him. Neither is it right to act upon the basis of tradition or personal likes and dislikes. My motives must always be pure. The fact that two people may differ about a small matter does not mean they should reject each other. When two people always agree, you don't need one of them. Of course, we are not speaking of what everyone knows to be right. No one can afford to deny any truth. Neither can we afford to change the truth. To do so would make it a lie. But in personal likes and dislikes we will always differ and should receive one another. It is not best for our own happiness to allow an unnecessary wall to be erected between us and others.

Notice he said, "receive one another, *as Christ also received us* to the glory of God." We were not worthy of any consideration from Christ. Neither were our ideas His ideas. God said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." But in spite of this Christ received us. Anyone who is willing to follow the Lord will be received by Him. Though they may be of different races, different in intellectual abilities, different in personal tastes concerning the ordinary things of life, they can all obey Christ and be received by Him. He does not reject one because he is different from others. He is no respecter of persons. He expects us to be like Him in this matter.

We must follow Him in receiving our brethren. Though we may be of different races and have different personal tastes, if we obey the will of Christ

we belong to Him and we belong to one another. Let no one conclude that we are talking about accepting error and denying truth. We are not talking about condoning error. We are discussing personal matters that are neither truth nor error.

The word *receive* is the same word that was used in verses twelve and seventeen of the one-chapter book, Philemon. "Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels." Paul is writing to a master about a slave who had run away. He had found Paul, been converted by him and served him. He is now being returned to his master from whom he had run away. "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself." He certainly would not have received Paul with any thought of doing him harm. Rather he would have received him with gladness and given him all the comfort necessary for his happiness. So, Paul said, "Receive Onesimus as you would receive me." Using this same word, we are told to receive one another. Can we not see how many walls this will tear down and how much happiness it could bring to all of us?

## Chapter Fourteen

# Confession That Is Good For The Soul

*"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).*

Many statements in the Bible have been abused. This one has received its share of abuse by being used for purposes other than that intended by the Holy Spirit.

We are not told here to confess our *weaknesses* to others. It is not necessary for me to parade the mistakes of my life before those who know nothing about them. There is no virtue in constantly revealing to others that I have moments of weakness. Nor is there any value in their having such knowledge. To be constantly telling others about the mistakes I have made in life could very easily erect a wall between us that would destroy the pleasure of our be-



ing together. If we have made right our mistakes, and received what benefit they have to offer, we should try to forget them. Certainly we should not bore others with detailed explanations concerning them.

We are not told to tell others about our *sorrows* and *troubles*. Few people are interested in the troubles that have come into our lives. Usually they have enough troubles of their own without being concerned with ours. As a rule those who have the fewest troubles are prone to talk about them to others. Those who have known real sorrow do not care to load their troubles on others. One of the best ways to lose friends and not influence people is to fill their ears with our troubles. One who is prone to do this often wonders why his friends avoid him and do not care to be his friends any more.

Neither are we told to tell others about our *accomplishments*. It would be difficult to find a greater bore than one who insists on forever telling others about the great things he has done. Those who practice doing so can be very sly in the manner in which they do it. They can drop a name here and there, or move a conversation in such a way as to be questioned about these things. But in doing so, they are like the man who went through a cemetery and saw on a tomb stone, "He is not dead, but sleepeth." He remarked, "He ain't foolin' nobody but himself."

Nor are we told to confess the *faults of others*. We all have our own faults whether we are ready to admit them or not. Those who practice looking for faults in others usually find what they are looking

for. But only those of a like mind are interested in hearing about the weaknesses of other people. A genuine heart does not enjoy hearing such matters discussed. We do not believe any person can find real happiness in such practice.

Also James is not telling us to tell others *about our diseases*. Those who practice boring others with detailed descriptions of their operations or other physical difficulties would be surprised if they knew what is going on in the mind of the person who has been captured and is being tormented.

"*Confess your faults.*" What does that mean? It means *faults inflicted*. If I have committed a wrong against you, I owe you a confession. If I have committed a wrong against God, I owe Him a confession. I do not owe a confession to any other person or to any group of people. If I have wronged another and make my confession to him, I have fulfilled my obligation. There is no reason for me to continue to confess it. Neither is there any reason to confess it to anyone else.

If I have wronged God, and He and I alone know about it, I do not owe a confession to anyone but God. God does not expect me to confess it to someone else. When I have made my confession and received forgiveness from Him, that should be the end of the matter. It will not make me any more virtuous to tell others about it. It will not add to my holiness, nor will it add to my peace of mind. If I must be forever talking about it, either to God or man, I have not accepted His forgiveness or I was not sincere in my confession. This being true I can

never be happy. Why should I constantly torment myself about something that should have long since been forgotten? Or, is it possible that I get a morbid thrill out of confessing something that has long ago been forgiven? If this is true, I should seek help. Otherwise I can not know happiness.

"They say confession is good for the soul." We have all heard this statement many times. I do not know who "they" are, but I do not agree with the conclusion people usually reach from this statement. If *they* mean that one is to confess the wrong he has done to others, we could all agree. But if *they* mean that one should place a load he should have long ago tossed aside on the heart of someone else, I cannot agree. Much of what is called *confession* consists of no more than *unloading*. But a person who does this never really gets rid of his load.

For example, suppose two people have been happily married for ten years. One of them did something before they ever met of which the other would not approve. Does that one have the responsibility of telling the other about the mistake? Many people believe that to be fair this must be done. Usually people who believe this are not thinking of the harm that can be done. Nor do they realize that the one who feels the urge to confess is merely trying to move a load from one heart to another. If two people cannot accept one another as they are when they meet, and as they are through the years they have lived together, they have never really loved each other from the beginning. Confessing a mistake that was made before they met cannot produce

any happiness. Neither is it a sign of virtue. It is more a revelation of weakness than anything else. Unless we can learn to forgive ourselves and refuse to cumber the lives of others with our past mistakes, we will never know happiness.

"Confess your faults one to another." Confess the wrong you have done *to others*. Then let that end the matter and erase it from your mind.

## Chapter Fifteen

### Fires From Hell

*"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind; But the tongue can no man tame; it*

*is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (Jas. 3:1-10).*

No doubt more of us live with regret and disturbed emotions because of the improper use of the tongue than anything else we do. Unfortunately this is something we must live with most of our lives. If we have hurt someone physically, we may be able to restore the hurt and forget it, but when we destroy the good name of a person by improper use of the tongue, there is no way to call it back.

A lady once went to her preacher and told him how she had hurt another person by gossiping about her and wanted some relief from the torment that existed in her heart because of what she had done. The preacher told her to go to the market and purchase a chicken. After killing the chicken she was to go through the streets pulling out the feathers, one at a time, toss them in the air, and then return to the preacher. She did this and came back to the preacher for further instructions. He then told her to go and gather up the feathers. Of course, that was impossible, but he was getting over to her a lesson we would all be happier if we learned. There is seldom a way to call back the words that have left our lips. To avoid the unhappiness that comes from the regret we experience because of saying the wrong



things, let's look at some statements in the Bible that will help us.

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:9).

The positive is stated in this way: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another" (Eph. 4:25).

It is easy to lie without realizing we are lying. We usually think of lying as making something up that we know to be false and relating it. Not many of us would be guilty of this, but if we are not careful we will find ourselves lying without realizing we are doing so.

Speaking the truth means that we are *truthful in all our dealings*. I cannot be truthful and represent my goods falsely, taking advantage of the ignorance of others. Neither can I in the same way undervalue the goods of another and be truthful.

We can lie *in order to attract attention*. It is not pleasant to talk with another when we can read in his face an expression that says, "I wish he would hurry and finish what he is saying so I could tell a few things." Some people like to be thought of as being in the inner circle of any group of which they are a part. It gives some a thrill to know something others do not know, especially about other people. If one who has this disease does not actually know a secret, he may be found stretching the truth a little in order to attract attention to himself.

We can lie *by giving some coloring to the narratives we relate*. I recall hearing a preacher who was

born and reared in Scotland relate something that illustrates this. He said that in his day most of the people in that country sniffed snuff. They did not dip it or lip it as some do in our country. They sniffed it up their nose. He said it was not uncommon to see a preacher while delivering his sermon pull out his snuff box, tap it on the podium, and sniff a little snuff during his sermon. He said one day one person in the audience went to sleep while the minister was preaching.

The preacher stopped and said, "John, wake up, take a little snuff to wake you up."

John replied, "Preacher, put a little snuff in your sermon."

Some people are prone to put a little snuff in their conversations for the purpose of keeping others listening. Many of us played a game when we were children that was called "Gossip." We would form a circle and one would whisper something in the ear of the one next to him. This was passed around the circle and when it came back to the one who started it, it usually did not sound anything like it did in the beginning. Someone *put a little snuff* in it as it went by.

This is a very common method of lying and more people are guilty of it than are willing to admit it. Still we must face ourselves. Though *others* may not know, *we* know, and since we must live with ourselves, such lying can bring us many hours of regret.

We can lie *while telling the truth*. Two boys were selling lemonade in the same block. One was



selling his for ten cents a glass while the other was only asking five cents a glass. Yet, the boy who was getting ten cents a glass had many customers, while the other had very few. Someone asked the boy who had so many customers, but was getting a higher price, why this was true. He answered, "A cat didn't fall in mine."

Later, when the other boy asked him why he was telling people that a cat fell in his lemonade, he answered, "I did not tell anyone a cat fell in *your* lemonade. I just told them a cat did not fall in mine."

All the time he was telling the truth, but because of what he said, he implied an untruth. In the same way we might make a statement that can be taken to mean two things, naturally expecting those who hear to get the wrong meaning.

Someone once complimented another person to one with whom he happened to be associated. The other person said, "Yes, but I do not know whether he would pay his debts or not."

Why should a statement like that be made in the first place? The only reason would be to cast a shadow over the character of another person.

One of the most common ways of lying is *to catch up a flying rumor and tell it without any regard as to whether it is truth*. People often believe that because they do not start a rumor on another that they are not guilty if they only repeat what they hear. But every principle of righteousness condemns such a practice. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (Lev. 19:16).

In every walk of life, those who rise above their fellows will have rumors started about them. Little people seem to peddle rumors on those whose heights they cannot reach, thinking by so doing they can bring them down to their level. This is as true of institutions as it is of people. The Bible teaches that if we have ought against a brother, we should go to him alone. This is our first duty. This makes it absolutely necessary that we talk to a person before we repeat some rumor about him.

Even after we have talked with him we do not have the right to spread rumor. Rumors would die immediately if they did not have a listening ear, and the person who listens is found guilty before God. "A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue" (Prov. 17:3). A person who peddles a rumor is as guilty as the person who invented it. Just because we did not begin a lie does not mean we have the right to see that it continues to be told. Innocent people have been hurt because of rumors others spread about them, but those who are guilty of spreading the rumors are hurt most. One cannot have such a wicked heart without sometime paying a price for allowing himself to harbor such corruption.

Would you want people to spread some rumor about you? How would you feel if you learned that something you had been telling was not the truth? Jesus said, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Lk. 6:31).

Not only is it wrong to lie about others, or listen to a lie, but our hearts are corrupt when *we speak*

anything to the injury of another. We do not even have the right to tell the truth if it is designed to do injury to another. Of course, we are never right in lying, but we are not forced to tell something just because we know it. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (Jas. 4:11). "An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is a burning fire" (Prov. 16:27).

Suppose I know something evil that you did years ago. You did everything you could to make it right, received forgiveness from those you hurt and from God, and from that day you have lived a life of righteousness. The people with whom you now associate do not know about that which you did a long time ago. They believe in you and have every right to so believe because they know you for what you are now. But I know about this incident in the distant past. I begin telling your friends about it. There is only one purpose for which I would do such a thing and that is to hurt you. Because of what I tell, they become suspicious of you and refuse to trust you any longer. I destroy the feelings your friends have for you. Would that be right? Certainly no person in his right mind could believe it would be right, to say nothing of what the Bible teaches. What good could I receive from doing this? Such action can only come from a corrupt heart. If there is a little righteousness still left in my heart, I will

spend many days of regret for having done harm to you, even though I would be telling the truth.

Murmuring and complaining is a disease that can bring much harm to one who has it and cause friends to shy away from him. No person enjoys being in the presence of one who is constantly murmuring. In describing some evil people, among other things said about them in the book of Jude is, "These are murmurers, complainers." It is amazing how much murmuring we do without realizing it. Our attitude seems to be one of constantly complaining.

Listen to people relate an incident and most of the time they begin with a calamity. Ask someone a question and listen. You will perhaps hear something like this: "Back in 1954 . . . oh, yes, that's the year the rain ruined our crops," and he begins from there.

Or, "Let's see, I had my operation in 1965," and from there we proceed.

Some time ago I was in a meeting in one of our large cities and was on my way to a home for the evening meal. I stopped at a service station to ask for directions and was told, "You go to the third red light and turn left."

Suddenly I realized this is the way people more often give directions than any other way. Then I started listening and found that more than ninety percent of people use this term. Very few said "traffic light," and none said "green light." Most said "red light." Why? Because that is the way we think. It will be red when we get there.



My brother related something to me that happened in an area where he was preaching. It seems they had a great flood and people were brought into town to escape the high waters. They were sleeping in many public buildings, like schools, church buildings, and the like. He said one lady was like the old lady who lived in the shoe—she had a lot of children. She dated their birth from some event. In trying to help, an organization was asking for information. They asked the lady when one child was born. She said he was born during the year of the great train wreck. They looked back into the history of that place and found when the wreck happened, so established the year of his birth. When asked about another, she said, "I don't rightly recollect, but I know he was born in 'tater time,' but I don't know whether we were planting or digging."

I thought how like all of us she was. One day of rain can blot out a hundred days of sunshine. One week of ill health can cause us to forget years of good health. We major on calamities and murmur.

A professor once held before a class a large piece of cardboard. In the center was a black dot no larger than the head of a straight pin. He asked each member of the class what he saw. Everyone answered, "A black dot." Then he asked, "Do not any of you see all the white space around it?"

Nothing can bring us more misery than the attitude in our hearts that causes us to murmur. If we would learn to count our blessings we would forget to complain. We take too many things for granted. Life seems to mean little to us until we believe we

are about to lose it. Health is seldom thought of until we begin to lose it. Why should we wait until blessings are being removed from us before we learn to appreciate them? Think how rich our lives would be if we could learn to appreciate our blessings while we have them! Too often we spend our lives dreaming of the good things we will enjoy tomorrow and never learn to appreciate today. Someone said, "Today is the tomorrow you dreamed about yesterday. What are you doing with it?"

Surely God must be grieved with a spirit of murmuring. He is our Father and in more ways than we can count has bestowed blessings upon us. While we are breathing His air, eating His food and living in His world, He must be grieved to hear so many complaints. A murmuring heart never learns to appreciate life and is never grateful.

It is possible to consume or destroy others with our tongues. "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15). If we knew, we would no doubt be amazed at how many people have lost the glow from their lives because of the improper use of the tongues of others. Some who at one time had much faith in people have lost that faith. Even some who once were strong in their faith toward God have turned their backs on Him. Friends have been separated for all time to come. Homes that once knew much happiness have fallen apart. Hearts that once enjoyed life to the fullest have been broken. All of this because of the biting and devouring nature of some people.

Such a person would not consider doing physical harm to others. People like that would certainly not advocate the breaking up of homes and the destruction of churches. No doubt their voices would be loudest in denouncing such conditions, and yet they do not recognize the responsibility they must share because these things happen. Once they recognize their guilt, there is hardly any way of removing the regret that will haunt them the rest of their lives. One person was heard to say, "I would cut my tongue out if I could take back what I said." With some this might be a good idea, but there is no way of restoring that which has been consumed.

When we think of all the good things we could say, why should we ever want to say anything that would hurt others? We can pray for others. Try saying a short prayer for the person you want to criticize and see what a difference it can make in your heart. People need to be comforted. They need to be encouraged. They need to be exhorted. Certainly we all need praise. Using our tongues in the right way can bring much happiness into the lives of others, and when we have done this we will find the happiness we have sought for ourselves but which has for so long escaped us.



## Chapter Sixteen

### “He’s Not Heavy—He’s My Brother”

*“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first” (Matt. 12:43-45).*

We cannot allow our hearts to become a vacuum. We were meant to serve and when we fail to do so, we cannot find the happiness the Lord intended for us to enjoy. Throughout the entire Bible we find that those who really found happiness found it in the joy of service. Jesus said those who would become the greatest must become the servants of all. About Himself He said He came not to be minister-



ed to but to minister to others. Let's notice some ways in which we can render much needed services to others, relieving them of their misery and bringing happiness to our lives.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). Love is what takes the unpleasantness out of service. It is doubtful that there is any work that a person does merely for the enjoyment of the work itself.

A man works hard and enjoys it, not because of the work but because of those he loves who will receive benefit from his labors.

A woman goes about her home doing work she says she enjoys doing, but the truth is she enjoys the *purpose* for which it is being done. When the family she loves is gone for good, she ceases doing many things she once said she thoroughly enjoyed doing. She received pleasure from what she was doing because of the love she had for her family.

A dedicated teacher goes about his work with a thankful heart because he is helping others to become better educated.

A physician does his work because of the joy of helping others recover from some physical or mental difficulty.

Even a preacher could not enjoy everything he is called upon to do just for the sake of doing it. He is engaged in a higher calling and the services he renders helps people and saves souls for whom Christ died.

Love can make almost any duty pleasant. Love for our country causes men and women to be willing to render services to ensure our freedom. This love is what makes duty pleasant. By the proper manifestation of love we can do any needed service with a heart of joy. Take love away and the smallest task becomes drudgery.

"The proper manifestation of love" means to *stand before others for the purpose of protecting and helping*. This can be illustrated by something that happened several years ago in an Oklahoma town. A cyclone destroyed most of the town and hundreds of people were seriously hurt. They were taken to hospitals in several cities. One hospital that had received about seventy of those who were hurt in the cyclone gave a report about one woman who had been brought there. On her back there were very few places where she was not wounded. Some cuts were very deep. The doctor was concerned for her life. In front she had no wounds at all. He related what happened. When the woman saw the cyclone coming she laid her baby down on the ground, placed her body above that of her baby, and wrapped her arms around a small stump. She allowed the storm to almost take *her* life, but she protected the baby who was not even scratched. In this way she was "standing before" her baby.

"The proper manifestation of love" means to *cleave to another*. Such action never leaves and never forsakes. Years ago a lady called a preacher from a distant city. Her son was in jail in the city where the preacher lived. She said he was guilty of

several crimes and that she had tried to help him but he would not receive her help. She asked the preacher to visit him in jail. He promised to do so and called the jailor for permission.

He said, "You can see him, but I would advise you not to, because he will curse you."

The preacher went to see him because he had promised the mother he would. Everything happened just as the jailor said. The preacher came away wondering how anyone could love a person like that, but he was not the boy's mother. What finally happened to the boy we do not know, but regardless of what happened, the love of his mother never let go. "Love never faileth." In the words of a poet, she had "tied a knot in the end of the rope and was hanging on."

"The proper manifestation of love" means to *minister to others, as Christ who came not to be ministered to but to minister*. Notice a good example from the thirteenth chapter of John:

"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. . . . So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have



done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well: for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

Notice the statement, "knowing . . . that he was come from God, and went to God." He did not do this humble service *in spite of the fact* that He was the Son of God, but *because He was* God's Son. We are prone to think of greatness as occupying some position of authority and power, and of being served. Jesus taught us that this was not true greatness at all. If we would be great in the eyes of God we must become servants of all. The teaching and example of our Lord were so different from the thinking of man that we are startled when we realize what he meant. But those who have tasted happiness have found that it comes through service and not through being served.

Listen to a statement from Peter: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). To find true and lasting happiness we must be ready always to answer the call of those who need our services. Such service cannot be complete merely by being a part of an organization that serves others. Unless we, individually, stand ready to serve we can never enjoy the happiness for which our hearts are longing.

Years ago I remember reading a poem which reveals a lesson we should all learn. It seems a little

girl and her smaller brother were walking down the road when they came to a place where water covered it. She held him in her arms and carried him across the water. Someone standing by asked her, "Isn't he heavy?"

She replied, "No, he's not heavy; he's my brother."

Being a brother, he was no burden at all.

## *Chapter Seventeen*

### Helping Others

*"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).*

Christ was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Not only was He in "all points tempted as we are," but He had great compassion for those who were in need. His compassion went out to the hungry multitude and He fed them. His sympathy reached out to the weeping widow of Nain and He gave her back her son alive. When He stood at the grave of Lazarus, He wept. We can see the kind of burden bearer Christ was, and we are told that we fulfill the law of Christ when we bear the burdens of others.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. 15:1). Not only is this good for those who are weak but more good comes to those who are

strong. It would be difficult to find a more miserable person than one who is self-centered, always receiving but never giving. Such a person has never learned what life is all about. By bearing the burdens of others we develop the strength we need to live a full and happy life.

When we bear the burdens of others we lift them up out of their burdens. Having lifted them up, we then bear them away from their burdens. Then, if possible, we remove the difficulty.

This can be illustrated by a story related by our Lord. He tells us of a man who was beaten and robbed and left by the side of the road. A man came along and ministered to his wounds. He then took him to an inn and stayed with him as long as he could, bringing all the comfort possible to the wounded man. It became necessary for him to leave before the man fully recovered. He paid the innkeeper what he owed him and left some money so that the man might continue to receive care. He told the innkeeper that if what he was leaving was not enough, he would pay him whatsoever was necessary when he came that way again. Jesus told this story to answer a question that one asked concerning who his neighbor was. When the person understood, Jesus said, "Go thou and do likewise."

We do not bear the burdens of others so that others may see us bearing them. Neither do we bear them for the purpose of placing another in debt to us. We bear them because of the joy of serving. We are the real beneficiaries when we bear the burdens of others.



There are many reasons why the first century Christians were so happy, but no doubt one of the greatest reasons was that they were always bearing the burdens of others. Some people see how happy they were and then look at the twentieth century church and fail to find the joy they shared. In looking for this joy, some have been known to try to imitate certain powers that a few early Christians had, without realizing that the happiness they found was not in the powers *they received* but in what *they gave*. We do not read that they had great joy because of the ability to speak in tongues, or work miracles, but we do read about the joy that came from completely surrendering themselves to the new way of life that they had found. They shared this life with others, thereby removing many burdens, and found happiness that caused the world to gaze in wonder at them and marvel at the peace they had found.

When we find people bearing the burdens of sin, we can remove them by teaching them about the Christ who came to take those sins away. When we find those who are bearing burdens of loneliness, we can remove those burdens by providing some companionship and understanding. Mental and physical burdens can be relieved in other ways, and in helping others with their burdens we will soon forget that we have burdens to bear. We will have found the sure way of making our burdens lighter when we learn to bear the burdens of others.



## Chapter Eighteen

### “Prop Us Up On The Leanin’ Side”

*“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19).*

The ability to edify others is a great asset not only to those who are edified but also to the person who edifies others. Our common meaning of the word means *to build up*, as one would build a house. Thus when we edify others we build them up. We all enjoy being with people who build us up. No one receives pleasure from being in the company of one who tears down. Such people are endured, not enjoyed. But we all seek out the person who is able to make us feel better.

I once knew a preacher who did an outstanding work wherever he went. He did not seem to have the ability to preach that many others had who were not so capable of doing the work he did. One day a

friend let me in on his secret. He said, "I am never in the company of that man but that I come away feeling better."

The word also means *to rebuild or reconstruct*. I read a very meaningful, but simply stated, prayer once that spoke of the needs of many people. This group was having a special service which would be attended by a high official in their denomination. They called on their best prayer to pray that morning. Among other requests he asked of the Lord was, "Prop us up on the leanin' side."

This is a service everyone can render and no service is needed more. There are people all around us whose lives are either in the process of tumbling in or have already reached bottom. We may never know the reason for this happening and it is not necessary that we know. But we can bring happiness back into those lives by building them up.

It may only be necessary to listen to them. Many people are helped by having someone listen who cares. It is possible that we can offer a few helpful suggestions that would turn them to a happier way of life. Or it may be possible to render some service that will relieve them of their anxiety. Whatever we can do will be of much more help to us than to them. In building others up we forget our own troubles. There is no easier way to make living pleasant for ourselves than by making life better for others. Happy people are those who engage in strengthening those with whom they come in contact.

To edify also means *to adorn or to polish*. Everyone stands in need of encouragement. Those who make it a practice to adorn others render a much greater service than they realize, and find that in the process of adorning others they find adornment for themselves. We are much happier when we cause others to feel better than when we fail to help them.

Closely connected with edifying others is hospitality. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Pet. 4:9). This simply means to be a "lover of strangers." There are many lonely people who may be standing in a large crowd. In the mad rush of living in our day it is very easy to forget to be hospitable in our relationships with others. If we wait for others to show hospitality to us, we may find that they are also waiting. But if we will show hospitality toward others, regardless of what they do, we will find not only the happiness we bring into other lives, but in the process we will find the happiness we desire.

There are so many ways of showing hospitality. A short visit with a stranger who has moved into our neighborhood, a little service rendered to someone who is ill, or just a few moments visiting someone who is a shut-in are some common ways we can show hospitality. People will never outgrow their need for friendship, but if we want to have friends we must show ourselves to be friendly.

We can comfort others when they have problems. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" is an exhortation that follows a discussion of sorrow (1 Thess. 4:18). There are many ways in

which we can comfort others. They may be filled with sorrow, overcome by loneliness, or discouraged for other reasons. When we are willing to find these people and serve them, we will discover that we receive more happiness than we are able to give.

God intended for you to be happy and we write these lines hoping they will point the way for those who read them. We hope also that they will cause us to desire to study more in depth the real and lasting happiness to be found in following the instructions of our Lord.