

October 23, 2022

Viewpoint from the **Valley Grove Church Of Christ**

Biblical love ...

By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. 1 John 4:16

The love most spoken of in the Bible is not the kind of love that most folks speak of today. It is not a feeling or passion that one falls into and out of at a whim. It is not a love that one initiates and cultivates by being closely and immediately associated with its object. It is far different from romantic love. It is even different from fraternal love that just kind of grows on one from close relationships with others. It is not that warm and fuzzy feeling associated with most “loves” that we speak of today. All of these “loves” may be fine in their proper place, but they are complicated feelings hard to control by reason and explain rationally.

For the most part, the love spoken of in the Bible can be commanded and taught. It is a far more rational, deeper and lasting love. The love of God and one’s neighbor are great commandments to be obeyed (Matthew 22:36-40). Older women are told to teach younger women to love their husbands and children (Titus 2:4). It is a love commanded of husbands toward their wives (Ephesians 5:28). So, it is a love that can be taught and learned. It involves both intellect and will. It is the kind of love that we are commanded to have for our enemies (Matthew 5:44) and folks that we may not even know (1 Peter 2:17). It is a conscious commitment to do what is in the best interest of its object and the will to stick with that commitment. This kind of love has little to do with feelings, warm, fuzzy or otherwise. It is a choice that we make. Feelings of emotional love of various kinds and degrees may follow this love. But, this love is far deeper than fleeting feelings and emotions. Not the kind of love associated with warm fuzzy feelings. It is a deep love of principle, of commitment, and of the will to see the commitment through. To put it another way, it is always doing the right thing toward its object. It is the kind of love

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***Visitors — We pray that you benefit spiritually from our
worship together and hope to see you again.***

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that will cause a Christian to go half way around the world to take the gospel (and maybe other things) to one that he has never seen nor heard.

The failure to understand this about love can cause one to miss out on loving God because he is expecting a conversion that will produce a highly emotional “warm fuzzy feeling” in his heart toward God. The same kind of feeling he has toward his best friend or family member. He needs to be taught what real love for God is all about. It is a thoughtful commitment to please, worship, and serve God in obedience to Him. One may indeed develop a “warm feeling,” but that feeling is not evidence that he loves God in the Biblical sense; that love is evidenced by his intelligent commitment to love God by keeping his commandments because He first loved him (1 John 4:19). In similar fashion, the love of our neighbor (brother or otherwise) that is commanded is not a “warm fuzzy — hand holding — neck hugging” type of love; it is a conscious commitment to doing him good and what is best for him. That emotionally expressive type of love may indeed accompany the love of commitment in many cases, but it is a different love than is commanded.

Again, the kind of love mostly spoken of in the Bible is a firm decision that one makes with the will to carry out that decision. When the song says, “I have decided to follow Jesus,” it is just saying, in another way, “I have decided to love Jesus.”

Material Prosperity

By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

The Scriptures teach us that the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). At the same time, we are taught that we must work in order to have money to buy the things we need and to have to give to those less fortunate than ourselves (Eph. 4:28; Acts 20:33-35; 2 Thess. 3:10). It is also clear from the Scriptures that there have been godly rich people. The rich among Christians are addressed and warned against the pitfalls of wealth with no indication that their prosperity was wrong of itself (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Instead they are told that God has richly given them their wealth to be enjoyed (v. 17). John wished for Gaius, “that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 Jn. 2). Local churches depend on the prosperity of their members’ in order to do their work (1 Cor. 16:2). With all of this, why would Jesus say that it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God (Mt. 19:24)?

The reason it is difficult to the point of near impossible is that “. . . *they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*” (1 Tim. 6:9). Very few can handle the pressure. The danger is not so much that they will become like the miser sitting in his vault room

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running his fingers through his piles of money. The danger is in the things that having money, or the perception of having it, can bring them, i.e., Pride, Popularity, Prestige, and Power.

These tend to blend together in the minds of many who desire wealth. While we cannot read the hearts and minds of such people, over time we can see enough to reasonably discern their motives by their demeanor. At any rate, God knows.

We see people, even in the church, who are like Hezekiah — very proud of their wealth and willing to show it off (2 Kgs. 20:12-18). It is obvious they want you to know what they are worth materially. Though some of these may be very generous with their money, they do it in a way to make sure that folks take note of it — thus increasing their popularity. They understand that “the rich has many friends” (Prov. 14:20). They love being known as “pillars of the community,” not so much because of their character, but because of what they mean to the community financially. Because of their wealth, or perception of it, they may hold prestigious positions in various secular institutions and unfortunately at times leadership roles in the church. All woven into this is the desire to have power over people. No one denies that money is power. It often makes folks become obligated to the one who has it. Also the prestige and popularity that money has brought (or bought) results in more power.

On the other hand, we have seen people who are obviously well off, who seem to be completely unaffected by the “big four.” They are humble, and show no signs of desiring popularity, prestige or power, but rather doing what the rich are told to do: “ . . . *that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*” (1 Tim. 6:17-19). To such persons we can truly wish for them to prosper even as their soul prospers.

Brother or sister in Christ, if you have been blessed with prosperity, whatever the amount, please be aware of the temptations and snares it can bring and determine to avoid them. Thank God for blessing you with it and manage it in a way that will glorify Him and serve others.

Be aware also that the love of money is not limited to the well-to-do. The warning against the love of money was first addressed to poor slaves (1 Tim. 6:1) before it was expanded to charging the rich. In Proverbs 30, Agur the son of Jakeh recognized both the dangers of being rich and being poor when he prayed, “*Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches;*

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feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Prov. 30:7-9). The inordinate love of money affects people all across the entire spectrum of the economic scale.

You don’t have to be listed in Who’s Who in order to know What’s What!

There is nothing that will enlighten us as truth will! Only truth will lead us out of darkness!

“**S**oft Soap” will not clean up error and other evils.

You cannot travel the road with “*the many*” and end up in the destination with “*the few*.”

You can help stiffen the spine of others when you have enough courage to stand for the truth!

TRUST

in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

— Proverbs 3:5-6

October Birthdays: The 20th Joan Blue; The 23rd Doug Threadgill; The 24th Diana Hinds.

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Valley Grove Church Of Christ
2110 East Stateline Road
P. O. Box 461
Southaven, MS 38671

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Sunday

Bible Study . . . 9:30 A.M.

Worship 10:30 A.M.

Worship 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study . . . 7:00 P.M.

Phone: 662-342-1132

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