

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – A Portrait of Love – 8-14 August 2026

Christ would have us be motivated by love. Thus, Paul says, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Not all motives that prompt the performance of religious deeds are acceptable in the sight of God. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6); and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” But much that passes for faith is not true faith. We are told what is the characteristic of true faith in Galatians 5:6: “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” This is the motive which God approves, and which makes a deed acceptable to Him. Faith which worketh by love is that which avails in the service of God. All effort which proceeds from any other motive is thrown away. Without love it is equally “impossible to please God,” for love is greater than faith.

Sunday: The Essentialness of Love – Read 1 Corinthians 13; summarise what he is telling us about love. In the opening words of this thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, the effect of trying to serve God without charity (or love) and the possibility of deception upon this point, are strikingly set forth. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (verses 1-3). Can a man, then, bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and give his body to be burned, and yet not have charity? Evidently, he can; or Paul would not have stated it as he did. The misguided fanatic or the deluded enthusiastic may outwardly go to the very extreme of self-denying labour for God, and yet be without that motive of love which would render his service acceptable. That love is the love of God, the love that comes from and has its origin in Him, and contains no human element in its composition. It is a love in which self is entirely lost. “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-24). These have not been wanting in zeal, and outwardly they have made a very good showing in all respects, having “many wonderful works” to their credit, which have no doubt brought them great admiration and reverence from their fellow-men. But there was something wrong with their hearts. The right motive was not there, -the faith working by love, which takes no account of self. Their plea gave evidence of this fact. “Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name?” have we not cast out devils? have we not done many wonderful works? “We” is not the password into the gates of heaven; and “our wonderful works” are not good currency at the bank of Heaven, but only the basest counterfeit.

In that day, the righteous will base no claim upon themselves or anything they have done, or upon the great things accomplished by the religious organisations with which they have been connected. One thing alone will avail the candidate for a position at the right hand of God, – Jesus Christ and His righteousness, received and held by the faith which worketh by love. “Charity never faileth.” It will continue as long as God continues; for God Himself is love. When this love is in the heart God is in the heart, and eternal life can never be separated from Him. This is the one acceptable motive in all work that is done for His name.

Monday: What Love Does – Compare 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to Galatians 5:22-23; what ideas in common do you see between the two passages; how can we manifest this kind of love in our own lives? We here on patience. Patience is a much rarer virtue among men than is generally supposed. Very few, comparatively, know what real patience is; and no one can know it save by the revelation of God. Patience is not the starting point of the Christian experience. It cannot be summoned n at a moment by an effort of the will whenever the situation may demand it. It must be developed. “Tribulation worketh patience” (Romans 5:3). People who have not patience easily deceive themselves into thinking that they are, or can be, very patient. But there is only one kind of patience, and that is “the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation

14:12). Those who have this patience are those who keep the commandments and have the faith of Jesus Christ. In the epistle to the Hebrews we read, "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, Ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36). Having done the will of God, we may yet need patience to wait the fulfilment of His word. If we have not done His will we are not in a position to receive the reward of patience, and if we have, it is not conclusive evidence that this heavenly grace is sufficiently developed within us.

Tuesday: What Love Does Not Do – Read again 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; why does Paul mention negative rather than only positive characteristics of love? So that we may know the true love. Love is unselfishness. It follows, since love means service, and service means the doing of something for others, it is evident that love takes no thought of itself, and that he who loves has no thought but of how he may bless others. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil" (verses 4-5). Without doubt the most of that which is called love in this world is to a greater or less extent a desire to receive some benefit or pleasure for self. The one who loves, or thinks that he loves, another, is fully as much taken up with the thought of pleasure that he is to derive, as he is with the thought of giving pleasure to the other. The love that gives everything, and asks for nothing for itself, except the privilege of loving, is rare. It is found among men only to the extent that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. Nevertheless that is what real love is. To love in deed and in truth is to give self for and to the object of affection. Therefore when we read that the law of God demands that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind, it means nothing less than that every faculty and fibre of our being is to be given up to the Lord: He gave Himself to us, without any reserve; and that was simply a manifestation of love; therefore when we love Him, we shall do the same thing. Our soul, body, and spirit will be yielded to Him, for Him to use absolutely as He will. His Spirit will then be given entire possession of our bodies, so that we shall have no mind but the mind of Christ. If anybody thinks that this is a great thing, it can only be replied that we are talking about "the great commandment."

Wednesday: A Portrait of Jesus – Read John 13:1, 34; John 15:9, 12; 1 Timothy 1:14; 2 Timothy 1:7, 13; 1 John 3:16; and 1 John 4:7-12, 19-21; what can we learn about love from these passages? God is love, and that love is seen not only in God giving us Jesus but also in the life of Jesus. In the whole Bible, at the core of the messages therein, is love. Jesus Christ, the embodiment of the love of God, fills the whole Bible. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

Thursday: Faith, Hope, and Love – Read 1 John 4:8; dwell on the statement "God is love;" how are we supposed to understand exactly what that means? It is unfortunate that the Lesson writer says: "And, most of all, love will endure as an emblem of the character of our triune God." We are this quarter studying the books to the Corinthians, written by Paul; the truth is, Paul never believed in a triune god. Paul says, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6). Paul teaches there is One Spirit (Ephesians 4:4), the Lord is that Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17), for Christ was made a quickening Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45) and sent into our hearts (Galatians 4:6). Paul says that "we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14) and then he interchangeably says "the promise of Jesus Christ was given to them that believe by faith" (Galatians 3:22). The Spirit is also "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9). "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (the family of God), That He would grant you...to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph 3:14-17). The Spirit of God in the inner man is Christ dwelling in our heart. When we turn to 1 John 4:7-12, there is no triune God. John defines the love of God in the giving of His Son to die for us. At the end of verse 8 John defines God as love and then expands this definition into the manifestation of God sending His Son. Consistency of usage in this text point to the fact that the God mentioned in verse 8 is the same God in verses 9-12. This suggests that the God in verse 8 is the Father and that His love is revealed in the giving of His Son to save humanity.