

IV

IMAGE OF LOVE

CHILDREN—TO LOVE CHRIST IS TO
FOLLOW HIM—TO ABIDE IN HIS
LOVE IS TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

God is love. And as we know God, we shall know His love as well. As we have the Spirit of God dwelling within us, we shall in the same way have the heart of God, that is love, mercy, and compassion. As children of God, we will be imitators of Christ. If we truly know Him as our Lord, we will be obedient to His will, and consecrated to His purpose for our life.

And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

—I John 2:3-6 NASV

All who have given their heart to Jesus, and have consecrated their life to the Lord, have the flame of passion within them to please God. For the Holy Spirit works within us to conform us to Christ Jesus our Lord. We are being changed daily into His very nature by the power of the Spirit, and obedience to His word. Our life becomes a reflection of His life as we walk in His Spirit, and obey His commandments.

The foremost is, Hear O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

—Mark 12:29-31 NASV

This is the essence of God's law. These two commandments are the basis of a righteous life. And although we who are in Christ are not under the law, it has not passed away. As Christ is the fulfillment of the law, we who are in Him are not subject to its penalty.

However, we are commanded to first love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And we are commanded to love our fellow man as well! The depth of our spiritual walk and the measure of all that we do in the Lord is the outgrowth of our love for our Lord. The fulfillment of the second commandment will simply be an outpouring of the love and Spirit of God.

To love God is to desire to draw near to Him, to live in Him, and become like Him. The greater our love for the Lord, the more we will desire to be one with Him. And to be one with God is to be of the same heart and mind, united in spirit and purpose.

We who Love God, and abide in Him by His Spirit, will want to please Him. The more we grow in Christ, the more our desire will grow to do God's will. As we daily surrender our heart and life to His purpose for us, we shall see the truth of His way.

Let all that you do be done in love.

—I Corinthians 16:14 NASV

Whatsoever we do is to be done in love! This is the way of Christ! He walked in love. And if we are to be in Him, we must follow in His way, and walk as He walked. As we follow in His way, we shall live in Him. But if we reject His way, and ignore His commandments, we shall have no place in Him.

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

—John 14:15 NASV

Do we say we love the Lord, but do not love others? Do we proclaim we are the children of God, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have not love in our hearts? Are we living the love of God, esteeming others as better than ourselves? Can we, as Christ's Church, take so lightly the gifts and blessings of God, and withhold that which our Lord is pleading for us to give?

Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are they that put their trust in Him. —Psalm 2:11-12 KJV

Our life in Christ is to be sacrosanct unto the Lord. We are to honor our Lord, hold precious His gift of salvation, and take solemnly His call to serve God and man. Our life is to be an offering and a sacrifice to God in love, to the praise of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? —James 2:19-20 KJV

To believe in Christ, and to call Him your Lord, is not the fulfillment of God's will. To be in God, you must first repent, surrender your heart and life to Jesus Christ, deny your own will, and give Christ dominion over all that you are, all that you have, and all that you do.

Afterwards, you are to follow Christ, walk in the Spirit, and live the love of God. Called as a servant, you are to bless the Lord with your life, to live according to His word, and for His good pleasure, by the power and leading of the Spirit.

What is important is not the faith you have, but the working out of your faith through love. Galatians 5:6.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

—Ephesians 5:1-2 KJV

Jesus was the manifestation of God's love on earth. I John 4:9. We who love the Lord will want to be like Him. We who cherish what the Lord has done for us will want to serve Him as well. For how can we deny our Lord our life, when it is He that is our life?

Shall we continue to turn from His calling, and ignore those in need? Can we close our eyes and harden our hearts to those around us, and still be able to look Christ in the face? How can He be our Lord, if we refuse to be His servant?

Little children, let us not love in word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. —I John 3:18 NASV

It takes more than empty words and praises to glorify God, and fulfill His will. The Lord wants us to share with others that which He has given us. Our possessions, our desires, and our life. He wants us to care.

If we do not heed His reproof now, will we not hear His rebuke later?

Turn to My reproof. Behold, I will pour out My Spirit on you; I will make My words known to you.

—Proverbs 1:23 NASV

Christ died for us all. We owe Him everything. We owe Him a debt we can not pay. Will you do nothing in return to show Him your thankfulness? What reward shall you be given if you have contempt for His calling to you? Will you try to justify your inaction with excuses on the last day?

O you foolish one.

Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

—Romans 14:12 KJV

THE SERVANT OF THE KING

There was a man who dwelt in the land of the great king. This man was near death, having nothing at all, and no way to live.

Now, there was no other king in all the earth as great as he. A man well known for his mercy and goodness.

So the man came to the good king, and bowed down before him, saying, "Lord, have compassion on me, and take me into your household. Let me drink of your water, and eat of your bounty, that I may live."

Wherefore the king said, "Come, be refreshed. Stay with us, and receive of my blessings."

The man dwelt in the king's house, and was blessed with all the goodness of the king. As time passed however, the man forgot his former state, and was no longer thankful for the king's kindness.

One day the king called for this man to come to him, for he had something he wanted this man to do for him. However, the man refused, saying, "I will not do what he asks of me."

Again the king called for this man to come to him, and again the man refused, saying, "I have not time for the king."

So the king sent his servants to the man saying, "Come let us go and serve our king." But the man replied, "I will not go, neither will I serve the king, for I have all that I need."

Now, there was another man. He was brought before the king, charged with many crimes. And he fell on his face before the king, and his throne saying, "Lord, have mercy on me. Forgive me for my transgressions against you. I'm heartfully sorry for all I've done, and I repent of my evil ways."

Therefore, the good king had mercy on the man, and forgave him all of his transgressions saying, "Come, live with me."

So the man worshipped the king, and loved him greatly. From that day on, he would not leave the king's side, seeking in every way to please his lord.

Which of these men, would you say, had the king's love and favor?

Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? —Luke 6:46 KJV

There are those who say yes to God, but do not do His will.

Life as a Christian is to be a servant. A servant of God and of man. To be a servant is to have the heart of our Lord. To have the heart of our Lord is to be like Christ, and follow in His way. For to be a follower of Christ, and His disciple, is to be His servant.

The Lord is calling to you. Will you come and serve Him? Do you love Him above all else? Are you thankful for His mercy and goodness towards you?

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love;
just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in

His love. —John 15:10 NASV

To abide in Christ and His love is to simply do as He says, according to His word, and the leading of the Spirit.

To be a Christian is to be Christ like.

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him.

—I John 4:16 NASV

The one evident quality of a Christian must be love. We are called to love our Lord, and our fellow man. As we live a life of love, we live in God. We are called to holiness, godliness, righteousness, but he that loves the Lord and man fulfills the law and commandments of God. Romans 13:8. If we have not love, we are nothing! I Corinthians 13:2.

We serve our Lord because we love Him. And we serve others, moved by the love and compassion of God through His Spirit. Otherwise, our works shall profit us nothing. I Corinthians 13:3.

The following Scriptures are a description of what love is. Take a moment and meditate on them, and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart.

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek it's own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

—I Corinthians 13:4-8 NASV

Although we can never measure up to Christ's perfect ensample of love, we should purpose to be like Him as much as we can, and to do what He is calling us to do. For His way is to be our way. And we are called to live the life of Christ.

Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. —John 20:21 KJV

We are all called to the work and ministry of Christ. Called to proclaim to all acceptance in Christ Jesus, and to minister to those in need. Called to love those that our Lord brings into our life. Called to be available to the leading of His Spirit for His good pleasure and to imitate Christ.

Although we as individuals are not all called to the same work, or to a ministry, we are still called to be as Christ in what we do. Called to place our Lord, and His purpose for us first, and above all else. We as Christians are to do as He would do, and respond to

the opportunities that He brings our way.

Our life in the Lord is much like the fruit tree. As the tree lives to grow, so too, we are to live in Christ to grow into what He would have for us. As the tree grows to bear fruit, we are to bear fruit unto righteousness and the glory of God. We are to continue to grow, just like the tree continues to grow to bear much fruit, that we may further do the works of our Lord.

Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. —Matthew 24:46 KJV

Let us, children, be about the work of our Lord. Let us guard our hearts against complacency, and redeem the time we have left. May we show the Lord our thankfulness and love for Him by attending to His call to us.

Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. —Hebrews 10:24 KJV

All the Lord wants for us, is to step out and do a little. You need not fear. All you need is to be obedient to His call, to be available. As you are born of God, you are already capable of service. The Lord shall do the work, all you have to do is be willing, and allow the Spirit of God to work through you. We are just the vessels through which God works for the furtherance of His purposes. He works within us to prepare us for service, and through us to accomplish His good pleasure.

The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men...

—I Thessalonians 3:12 KJV

The Lord is calling to you. Will you answer? He is pleading with you to care for those in need. Will you turn away? He is asking for you to give a little of your life to the One who has given everything for you. Shall you deny Him?

For many are called, but few are chosen.

—Matthew 22:14 KJV

We are called to love one another, to the edification of the body. Ephesians 4:16. Love builds up, and we are all called to love. We as His Church, and each one of us are called to be a light to the world, and share the good news to those lost in darkness. At the same time, every one of us are called to love the other members of the body of Christ. And our love for one another is a witness to Christ, and a light to the world.

The world shall know we are Christians by our love for one another, and through the caring and compassion we have for those outside the Church.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. —John 13:34 NASV

This is the heart of God. It is crucial that we look after the needs of our brothers and sisters in love. Our heart's desire must be that every one of the household of the faith is welcomed, befriended, and ministered to. We are to prefer them above ourselves! Romans 12:10. After all, we are all of the same blood. That is the blood of Christ! And

the children of God are now our family. What better witness can there be that we are the children of God than our love for one another?

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

—1 Peter 1:22 KJV

Some of the Church, however, are neglected, and cut off from the love of the body. Those that are lowly, or in some way just don't seem to fit in. This is not God's will for His Church. Christ was lowly Himself, and He came for the humble, the lowly, and the poor in spirit. These are the one's we need to reach out to the most! If we prefer some over others, then how does the love of God dwell within us? How can we say that we love the Lord, if we do not even love those of the Lord?

The one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

—1 John 4:20 NASV

If we do not do what is right before the Lord we shall have no place in Him. We cannot be of God if we do not love our brother. 1 John 3:10. Love is the fruit of a Godly life, and righteousness the evidence of new birth. We shall know that we live in Christ when we love those of Christ. Nothing dead can be of God, or abide in God. He who does not love, is not of God, but abides in death. 1 John 3:14.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

—1 John 4:11 KJV

Therefore, let us have Christ's heart of love and compassion for one another. Let us reach out to the lowly, befriend the lonely, be committed to one another in love, and give those of the Lord first place in our hearts and lives. Wherein all members of His body will be able to declare the love that we have for one another in the Spirit. Colossians 1:8.

Let those that have wealth share with the members of the body that are desperate and poor. May we care for the needs of one another in Christ.

Let us now love one another.

Weep for your brother. Stand up for the martyr. Reach out to the members of the Bride of Christ around the world. In the name of Christ help them!

Many are the habitations of wickedness, but an act of righteousness is rarely seen. May our works be a witness of the love we have for one another in our Lord. And let our good works in Christ be a witness of God's love unto the entire world.

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. —1 Peter 4:8 NASV

We all have shortcomings, and the Church is far less than perfect. But love makes up for our faults. As we overflow with the love of God, our blemishes will fade in the eyes of others.

At the same time, love overlooks the faults of others, and makes allowances for one's

failings and shortcomings. When we are filled with the love of God, we shall look upon others with hearts of mercy, compassion, and forbearance.

After all, did not God love us while we were yet in darkness, and sent us His Son. Is not love, in essence, self-sacrifice.

Love is essential to the will of God for our lives, and the healthy working of the Church. For us to reflect an image of Christ, we must be an image of God's love for all to see. As we wish to please our Lord, let us do so, bound together in love, and with the overflowing love of God towards all.

Rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep.

—Romans 12:15 NASV

When we rejoice with our brothers and sisters when they are glad, and weep with them when they are sorrowful, we show them we care. This builds a bond within the body, and it ties the hearts of the family of God together. It is a witness of love for the Church, and the manifest evidence that we are one body in Christ.

However, this can only happen when we truly have love in our hearts for one another. When we truly care! We must have the heart of Christ, and the love of God within us.

Children of the Lord, let your heart burn with transcendent desire to be filled with the love of God.

That they may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. —John 17:21 KJV

Let us join hands together in love, and allow the Spirit to unite our hearts as one. For the unity of the body of Christ is by God's Spirit of Truth, and His love. It is from heart to heart, one child of God to another, by the Holy Spirit of the Lord. God's love unites our hearts, and we are joined together by the fellowship of the Spirit of Truth.

There are some that say that theirs' is the only truth and communion with the Lord. But they which believe in such things are in error. God is much greater than you know. He is not constrained by the dogmas of man, but chooses who He wishes to choose, according to His will.

Unity within the bride of Christ is crucial for a healthy Church. We form a bond with each other when we share with one another in love. Learning from each other, we grow in the knowledge of God. Every congregation has its strengths and weaknesses. Each body of believers in Christ has something to teach, as well as to learn, from the next body. God has called us to come together as Christians in love and humility, and become as one before Him.

Therefore, let us abandon our religion, sectarianism, prejudices, and denominational dogma. Reach out to one another in humility, lowliness of heart and spirit, and in love. May we by all means look to learn from each other that we may be fully enlightened as to God's complete and perfect will for us, as individuals, and as the body of Christ.

Children of the Lord, may we allow the Holy Spirit to unite us as one in love, peace, and truth.

The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

—James 3:17-18 KJV

Let us approach all with God's wisdom, that we may be approachable ourselves. Let us reach out in love, gentleness and humility; being affable, so as to make the way open to all who seek the Lord. Let us act peaceably, and with compassion. May we with hearts of mercy and forbearance accept others as they are, and not judge or condemn anyone, for this is not of God.

Despise thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? —Romans 2:4 KJV

Christ is the judge of us all. Yet even Christ judged no one while he was on earth. John 8:15. Christ does not condemn anyone, and the day of the Lord's judgment is yet to come. So then, judgment and condemnation of anyone has no place in our hearts, or in the Church.

Build up, Build up, prepare the way, Remove every obstacle out of the way of My people. For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, I dwell on the high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite. —Isaiah 57:14-15 NASV

The Lord looks to the humble and the lowly, but His eyes are against the proud and the exalted. God hates pride and self-righteousness, but He loves humility, a contrite heart, and a broken spirit. Pride is the folly of man, and death to the believer!

If Christ was walking the earth today He would be with the sinner; ministering to the humble, the lowly, and the ones who are broken and poor in spirit. Jesus would attract the needy, and the impoverished, and would favor those of low esteem. The Lord opposes the proud, and the self-righteous and all those who would justify themselves with their religion, or exonerate their iniquity by reason of moral goodness. Jesus would probably rebuke such as these, just as He rebuked the Pharisees in His day. Matthew 23:13-36.

For the Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning Against everyone Who is proud and lofty, And against everyone who is lifted up That

He may be abased. —Isaiah 2:12 NASV

Do you not know that every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord? Truly they shall be punished! Proverbs 16:5. Repent of your pride, arrogance, and self-righteousness. Humble yourself before God in the fear of the Lord that you may be exalted. Cast away your haughtiness, and put on the cloak of the righteousness and holiness of Christ. Bow down before the throne of God, and exalt the Lord, that you may escape His judgment in the day of wrath.

And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.

—Hosea 2:19-20 KJV

Children, abandon your heart and life to Jesus in love, and allow the love of God to move you to serve your Lord. Walk on in the fear of the Lord, and obey His commandments. Live the love of God, and be imitators of Christ. Be yourselves holy, abiding in the Spirit, and conformed to Christ, so all may see God and find the way. Look to the needs of all of God's children, and have compassion toward those without. Turn to the poor and the lowly, for in such is a great harvest. Go into all the world and labor in the fields of the Lord. Come together as one, bound by the same faith, and united in the Spirit of Truth. Shine forth the light of God's love and grace to the world, so by all means that may be the mark of Christ's Church.

If there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ. —Philippians 2:1-5 NASV

THE WORDS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love, where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console, to be understood, as to understand, to be loved as to love, for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.