

The Pearl of Greatest Price



HENRY CLAY MORRISON



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THE PEARL OF GREATEST PRICE

A Sermon

on the Thirteenth Chapter of

First Corinthians

BY

HENRY CLAY MORRISON

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A SERMON
On the Thirteenth Chapter of
First Corinthians

BY

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EDITOR OF THE PENTECOSTAL HERALD



PENTECOSTAL PUBLISHING COMPANY,
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"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

"This is the first and great commandment."


"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."—Jesus.

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."—Paul.

"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."—John.

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HOSE persons who have read Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress will remember that when Christian and Hopeful approached the end of their journey, and the Celestial City shone up before them in its radiant beauty, they were surprised to find at the end of the way they had traveled, and sweeping between them and the City, a broad, deep river. Christian was grieved to find that there was neither bridge nor ferry, and that the only way to get over to the city they had sought so long, was to wade through this river. And wade they did, finding out, as they went forward, that to a strong faith, the ford was safe.

In my reading of the Scriptures, when I come to the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians, I am reminded of this closing incident in the history of Bunyan's Pilgrims.

This Thirteenth Chapter is a broad, deep river, but it sweeps between us and our desired city, and, by the grace of our Father, we must wade it. In this chapter, the inspired writer puts before us in the most striking manner, the one grand essential of Christianity, and in order that the importance of

this essential may be properly understood and appreciated, He takes pains to show us how all things else, however good they may be in their proper places, are useless, if this one indispensable thing be neglected. The apostle goes forward at some length, showing in such minute detail, what the fruits of this essential are that mistakes would seem impossible.

Man is prone to wander. Time and again the Church has backslidden, both under the Old and New Testament dispensation. The ancient Jews lost the true spiritual meaning of the forms and ceremonies of the Tabernacle and the Temple, and came to worship the mere form. When Christ came, they were handling the types which foretold His coming, but they hated and rejected Him.

The same is sadly true, in many instances, today. Men have and handle the forms, but deny the power of godliness. It is easy to drift into the *mere doing of religion*, while the heart is entirely preoccupied with other things.

Because of this danger which has ensnared so many, the Spirit has here shown us that if we speak with the tongue of angels, understand with a prophet's ken; give all our goods to feed the poor; and suffer our bodies to be burned, yet, if we are with-

out *love*, the one grand essential, all of these things shall profit us nothing.

The apostle does not mean to teach that an eloquent tongue is necessarily sinful. It may be a gift from God, and a useful instrument in the salvation of men. The torrent of Bible truth which flowed in eloquent sentences from Whitefield's impassioned soul, melted and moved to tears and repentance the eager multitudes which waited upon his ministry.

Men delight in sacred oratory, and the really good speaker is never without an appreciative throng to listen to his utterances. Every school of theology has its teacher of elocution, who undertakes to instruct young ministers in the captivating art of eloquent speech. There are not a few theological schools with their hall of elocution, who sadly neglect their upper room of prayer. Not infrequently there is more time spent in teaching the tongue, than there is in firing and filling the heart. The Holy Ghost comes to this generation, in its devotion to fine speech, and says, "Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not *love*, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

The times in which we live are all astir with seeking after knowledge, prying into secrets,

and solving mysteries. We would not underestimate learning. Sanctified scholarship has ever been an inestimable blessing to our race. But this wonderful chapter teaches us that there is something far superior to knowledge. If I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have faith that would remove mountains, and have not *love*, I am nothing.

It is quite proper to give of one's goods to feed the poor, and to be ready to offer one's life, if need be, for the sake of our fellow-men, or for the truth; but if I should give all my goods to feed the poor, and my body to be burned, and lack *love*, it would profit me nothing.

These are good things, *but love is the thing*. It would be well if an eloquent tongue, a learned mind, a strong faith, a liberal hand, and a spirit of heroic self-sacrifice were joined with *love*, but cast into the balance which fixes the destiny of the soul, *love* outweighs them all.

It would be well in these times, when the religion of the heart is discounted, and more is thought of what a man says, and what he knows and what he gives and does, than of what he is, if the church would sit down and give the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians

careful, prayerful study. Every thinking man must admit that today, the cultured mind, and the pocket with a golden lining count for more among many men, both in the church and out of it, than the *love* of Christ in the heart. In fact, saying, knowing, giving and doing, have come to count for more than *being*.

There is coming a time when the all-important question will not be how eloquently did the man speak, from how many schools did he graduate, how many mysteries did he solve, what amount of money did he give, or what sufferings did he pass through. The all-important question will be, What about the man's heart? What is the man himself, aside from all these things of such comparatively small importance? Could the inspired writer have laid more emphasis upon the importance of love, than he has in this comparison in which he shows us that all is useless and lost if we neglect *love*, the one supreme good?

This love spoken of in the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians is not the affection that a husband has for his wife, or a parent possesses for his children, or a friend feels for his neighbors, or a patriot feels for his native land. It is not antagonistic to any of these loves. In fact, it fosters them, but it is a far higher love than these. It is not the narrow

love a man may feel for his own notions, or the sectarian love a man may feel for that church of which he is a member. It is a far, deeper, broader love than this. *It is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*

To have this love given one is to be made a partaker of the Divine nature. It is to possess, at least in a small degree, that love which led Christ to give up the wealth of heaven, and walk the earth without a place to lay His head, to suffer, the willing victim of man's ignorance and malice, when He could have called to the rescue more than twelve legions of angels, and while he suffered the agonies of the cross, to pray for those who nailed him there.

This Thirteenth-Chapter-of-First-Corinthians love is not a product of this selfish world. It does not have its origin in the human breast. It is a flower plucked from the bosom of Jesus Christ, that feeds its tender rootlets at the fountain of infinite compassion, and can only open its petals, and shed its sweet fragrance in those hearts which have had plucked from them every weed of sin.

It is of luxuriant growth, but a tender plant which must have the most watchful care. It is a sweet heart-ease, beautiful as the Rose of

Sharon, white as the lily of the valley, fragrant as the orange groves of Canaan land, and from its rich blossoms, the busy bees of Christian activity go, laden with the sweetest honey. If enriched with the word of God and watered with prayer, its roots will fill and preoccupy all the heart, so that nothing contrary to itself can find entrance there, and its branches, beautiful with blossoms of joy, and laden with the fruits of good works, fond of the light, will be ever reaching heavenward.

This love is the love which fulfills all the law, and keeps the first great commandment, and the second which is like unto it. It loves the Lord God with all the soul, mind and strength, and the neighbor as one's self; it is that "*perfect love*" spoken of by the apostle John, "which casteth out fear." This love abiding in the heart is one of the most precious results, or fruits of entire sanctification.

In the first three verses of this chapter, the inspired writer shows us the great importance of this love. He then proceeds to show us those outward manifestations which unmistakably indicate its residence in the heart.

Those of us who claim to have been cleansed from all sin, sanctified wholly by the blood of Christ, make a high claim. Not higher,

however, than the atonement provides for, and the judgment will require. "*Ye are my witnesses,*" said Jesus, and it is perfectly proper that His "*witnesses*" bear testimony to the all-atoning merit of His precious blood. But those who bear this testimony should be ready and willing to submit to the severest scrutiny, and the most minute examination in the light of that Word which is "*quick and powerful.*"

We have said "*Saved, sanctified and kept.*" Amen. That Mighty One on whom God laid help, "*is able to save to the uttermost, and to keep in perfect peace.*"

In considering this subject, we have a kind of trinity of truths, neither one of which must be overlooked nor neglected: *Doctrine, Experience, Practice.* It is of vital importance that the mind fix and saturate itself in the doctrine of holiness. The Word of God is the only foundation, and it standeth sure. To fortify one's self in the Word, and to be ever ready to answer with a thus saith the Lord, is to be built upon the Rock.

But this is not enough. One must go forward into a gracious experience of the truth read and believed. We have read of Abraham's faith. We must lay our Isaac on the altar. We have read of the patience of

Job; we, too, must be able to sit in the midst of calamity, and say, out of a submissive heart, "I will trust in Him, though He slay me."

We have read the command of Christ to His disciples to tarry at Jerusalem. We must find our place of prayer, and wait with the perseverance of Jacob until our day of Pentecost is fully come, and we are filled with the Holy Ghost.

It is not enough that we read and believe the inspired statement. We may, and we must experience the truth of the things stated, in our hearts.

Now we come to the third, and by no means unimportant item, that of *practice*. It is possible that of late years, we have been so absorbed, proving from the Scriptures the doctrine of sanctification, and urging the people to seek the experience of perfect love, that we have to some extent, failed to place the proper emphasis upon the practice of holiness. The tree is known by its fruits. We believe the doctrine of entire sanctification, we profess the experience of perfect love, but do we have our fruits unto holiness?

The Thirteenth-Chapter-of-First-Corinthians love may be likened to the tree of life. It produces no less than twelve manner of

fruits, and "it never faileth." The bud, the blossom, and the ripe fruit may be found on this tree the year round. One of the most precious fruits found upon this tree is long-suffering kindness. Let us follow the order of the Apostle.

"Love suffereth long and is kind."

Do we possess this excellent quality of patience, that will actually suffer misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and mistreatment, yet remain kind, and full of that forgiveness manifested by our Great Teacher and Exemplar, who, when on the cross, not only prayed for those who nailed Him there, but pleaded their ignorance in palliation of their guilt?

To suffer in body or mind, or reputation, property and business affairs, is a severe test, but the perfect love of Christ is sufficient for such a test. It has gone to prison, the den of wild beasts, to the circle of fire about the martyr's stake without faltering, or a word or symptom of unkindness. Have we of the Holiness Movement this love? Do we manifest this long-suffering? Does this well-spring of kindness rise up in our breasts and flow forth in our words and actions? Is it characteristic of us in the home, the church, and in social life and business relations with our fellow-men? Higher education, careful self-

control, strict rules of every day action, none of these things, nor all of them, can bring us up to the high standard of this wonderful chapter ; but the indwelling Holy Ghost can. He can so purge from sin, and fill with holy love, so that long-suffering kindness is the normal state of the soul, and flows out from it into all the life.

“Love envieth not.”

The natural state of the human heart is one of envy ; a dislike of seeing our fellow-beings exalted above us, and especially if their shining means our obscurity. Has this envy been cleansed entirely from our natures?

“Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.”

There is nothing more common in our fallen nature than pride. It creeps into and taints with sin our very devotions. How prone men are to put themselves to the front, to strut and parade in their vanity. They will turn the blessings of the Lord into disadvantages to themselves, by becoming puffed up over the victories that grace has wrought for them. Men become vain and self-conceited over their actions, prayers, or soul-stirring songs, or eloquent sermons. The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost cleanses away all the remains of pride, and a soul truly sanctified doth not vaunt itself,

and is not puffed up, but like the Master whose yoke it bears, it is "*meek and lowly in heart.*" Do we who profess this experience of perfect love, possess this *meek and lowly spirit?*

Love "doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

The Holy Life is a life of good behavior, a life that shuns the appearance of evil; it shuns all unseemly rudeness or careless familiarity. It is discreet, simple and without ostentation or pretense. It does not make holiness, or righteous zeal, an excuse for rough, unkind and uncharitable behavior.

An excellent Greek scholar tells us the word "*easily*" ought not to appear in the text, that it is not in the original sacred manuscript. This, we are quite ready to believe, in so far as sinful anger is concerned. It would seem quite out of harmony with the spirit of the chapter, if we are to understand that this perfect love may become angry, but not easily so. Perfect love cleanses all anger from the heart.

"*Thinketh no evil.*" A distinction must be made between thinking of evil, and *thinking evil.*

We have evil about us everywhere, and must needs think *of it*, and grieve

because of it, but it is quite another thing to *think evil*. The heart that is filled with perfect love is not a suspicious heart. It does not keep a note book in mind of the weaknesses and discrepancies of our fellowmen, be they friends or foes. It forgives and forgets sins and faults, and only remembers to love and pray for all.

To remember, treasure up, note down, repeat, and enlarge upon the faults of those who have opposed and wronged us is quite out of harmony with this wondrous *love*. To talk of or meditate on the faults of others, or the wrongs they have done us, or upon the evil designs we suspect them of, is to quench the Spirit of perfect love, and grieve the Holy Ghost.

We who profess this great grace of entire sanctification—are we free from thinking evil? This is a point to be guarded with great diligence. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” What is more inconsistent and unseemly than that a person professing entire sanctification should make the sins, oppositions, or slights of others, the subject of chat and gossip, and that sometimes in a most indiscreet way? Persons professing holiness and indulging in this sort of thing, have need to learn the first principles.

Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

The heart that is cleansed from all sin turns away from iniquity, however enticing and beautiful it may be made to appear, but it seeks the truth, and delights in it, although it may be plain and rugged, and of the nature of the cross of a deeper crucifixion.

Love "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

What a cluster of gems we have here! What a soldier of the cross must one be who has this wondrous God-given love! He beareth all crosses, ridicule, indignities, and slights. This he will have much occasion to do, for the world hates holiness, and will not permit it to pass through to that better country unmolested.

He believeth all of the word of God. The Law, the Prophets, the Gospels, and the Epistles are the foundation and delight of his steadfast faith. His heart is full of hopefulness. To every cloud, however dark, there is for him the silver lining. During the night he meditates with glad thoughts of the coming morning. Hope anchors his soul to that which is within the veil, and if the worst comes, he can say with a glad and hopeful heart, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and

that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth ; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God ; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another." With what endurance such a soul is armed. "*All things*" are not too much for him. Persecutions do not daunt him. Threats do not intimidate him, or bend him one hair's breadth from the plain path of duty. Let come what may, his heart is fired with holy love. "Clouds of witnesses around hold him in full survey." He remembers the path in which he treads has from the first been stained with martyr blood, and dotted all the way from earth to heaven with ash heaps where fires of persecutions consumed the heroes of the cross.

LOVE "*never faileth.*"

It was this love that led Abraham out, not knowing whither he went, and laid Isaac, the son of promise, bound a willing sacrifice upon the altar. Jacob won this love in an all-night wrestle on Jabbok's bank. It kept Joseph unspotted in the house of Potipher, undiscouraged in the Egyptian prison, and unselfish in the palace of the king.

This love enabled Moses to endure, as if he saw Him who is invisible. It made Joshua strong and of a good courage to lead the hosts

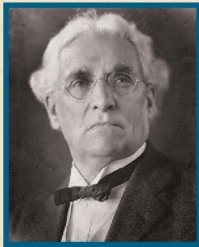
into the promised land, and kept old Caleb's eyes from waxing dim. This love kept Daniel in the lion's den and brought the Son of Man to walk with the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. It tuned the songs of Paul and Silas in the prison at Philippi and kept good John Bunyan while in Bedford jail.

It was this love which kindled the zeal in John Wesley's soul, which broke into a conflagration of revival fire, and swept over land and sea, until it has touched every shore beneath the sun, and today burns on in the great revival of full salvation.

“And now abideth faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Faith is the root of the tree, hope is the trunk of the tree, but *love* is the *fruit* upon the tree. *Love* is the glorious climax of all things. The great end and aim of the inspiration of the Bible, the predictions of the prophets, the visits of angels, the death of Christ, the writings of apostles, the organization of the church, and the preaching of the gospel, was and is that *“we might be made perfect in love.”*

About Henry Clay Morrison



Noted evangelist and founder of Asbury Theological Seminary, Henry Clay Morrison (1857-1942) was a Kentucky-born preacher, ordained in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, who served churches from 1878 to 1882. Feeling the call to evangelize with a dynamic message of conversion, entire sanctification and holiness of life, Morrison left the pastorate to focus on evangelism, even to the point of conflict with his own denomination. His evangelistic work was a lifetime endeavor, but reached a high-water mark with a year-long evangelistic tour around the world from 1909-1910.

Upon completing his world evangelistic tour, Morrison became the president of Asbury College from 1910 to 1925. At that time, he founded Asbury Theological Seminary to foster the development of preachers committed to holiness and evangelism. From 1925 until his death in 1942, Morrison served as president of Asbury Theological Seminary. He even resumed the mantle of president of Asbury College again from 1933 until he retired in 1940.

Henry Clay Morrison was also committed to proclaiming the Gospel through the written word, founding The Old Methodist newspaper (ultimately to become The Pentecostal Herald), which he edited for thirty-five years. Morrison wrote twenty-five books and published many more through the Pentecostal Publishing House, another of his many projects. The assets of this press were left to Asbury Theological Seminary in Morrison's will, and First Fruits is now proud to begin releasing these rare materials once again as part of our holiness heritage for a new generation.



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